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**Collaboration:**  
**The ubiquitous panacea for challenges in education**

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Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

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# ABSTRACT

Collaboration has long featured as a policy mechanism, an organisational structure, a tool to support professional practice, and a dominant discursive concept in the field of education. In the Scottish context, collaboration has been presented as the means through which persistent challenges like the poverty related attainment gap are tackled, and how what it means to be a professional has been re-characterised, particularly since the turn of the new century. As such, there is a lot at stake when it comes to how collaboration is understood and mobilised. With much emphasis across the domains of practice, policy, and research highlighting the forms collaboration takes and the purposes of it, this study examines the complex reality of collaboration and how understanding this could lead to better outcomes, particularly in relation to improvement agendas. Using Scotland as a context of study, the questions driving this study are:

- How is collaboration defined conceptually and practically in education?
  - How is collaboration presented in the literature, and in policy?
  - How is collaboration understood in practice?
- What role do policy actors and school leaders believe collaboration has in tackling challenges in education?
- What role could collaboration play in tackling challenges in education?

Deriving from an interpretivist paradigm and articulated within the frame of pragmatic social constructivism, a novel theoretical framework was created, emphasising the contextual influences centred around leadership and governance that enable collaboration to happen. This was utilised in order to analyse collaboration as understood within the literature. Following from this was a critical policy analysis focusing on six key policy texts from the Scottish education context with significance between the period of 2015 to 2020. This analysis drew upon both the novel theoretical framework and an original analytical framework emphasising policy drivers, mechanisms, and consequences. Through these frameworks, this study offers critical insight into dimensions of collaboration that are rarely examined. This went on to include insight into and analysis of the lived reality of collaboration in the Scottish context through semi-structured interviews with five primary school headteachers from two Scottish local authorities, and an exploration of the commonalities and contradictions, with the insights derived through critical policy analysis.

Through this analysis, the application of a postmodern lens, and in answering the research questions, a number of key findings were identified. It was clear that collaboration is frequently presented as the lynchpin to improvement and change, as well as being seen as characteristic of the contemporary professional, and of modern professional practice. There is a consistent emphasis on collaboration across policy and practice in the Scottish context, but its manifestation and utilisation are either left to chance, or reliant on specific governance arrangements initiated at various levels of the system. As such, collaboration frequently does not meet its intended aims, given that it does not reflect the complex realities within which it is frequently being imposed upon rather than emerging from. Collaborative mechanisms initiated at national and regional levels, complimented, or enabled by alternative forms of governance, were seen to result in the power to initiate or drive collaboration lying with fewer people. When collaboration was designed and utilised without the input of those required to be involved, there was seen to be more limited success in achieving the often-laudable goals of collaboration. Finally, it was clear that the Scottish policy context and its surrounding discourse enjoy a shared vocabulary when it comes to collaboration, but without a shared operational definition, or understanding of its inherent complexity, what results is varied outcomes from it.

What this study has begun to demonstrate is the limited advancement of thinking in recent years on the meaning and conceptualisation of collaboration. To achieve its intended impact, collaboration requires consideration of the need for shared conceptual clarity and the unique contextual influences and drivers of collaboration in its varied forms. Through the articulation of an alternative framework for understanding collaboration within the domains of practice, policy, and research, this research extends current thinking and presents a new means of planning for and understanding the mobilisation of collaboration. The framework for collaboration presented emphasises the complex consideration of the interrelated domains of the forms, drivers, and influences of collaboration. In doing so, the study demonstrates the need for further critical examination of where power is situated within systems in order to enable more responsive approaches to collaboration to emerge from within the communities they are intended to impact, and in doing so, more successfully strive towards broader systemic goals.

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## **AUTHORS DECLARATION**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: **Paul Campbell**

Signature:

11.10.2021

# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

## Prologue

Envisaging a career in primary teaching from the age of nine, and making plans through subject choices, and multiple work experience opportunities, one thing I did not anticipate, even early on in my initial teacher education, was that I would eventually want to and delve into the world of research. As my appreciation of the complexity of our practices, contexts, and systems grew, my professional and academic interests began to intertwine and expand beyond the singular focus on day-to-day teaching and learning. Also deviating from what I had envisaged as a student and early career teacher was my developing interest in the positioning and function of education policy, its implications for practice, but also the importance of education as a wider academic discipline and the relationship this has to the lived realities of our young people daily within and beyond learning communities.

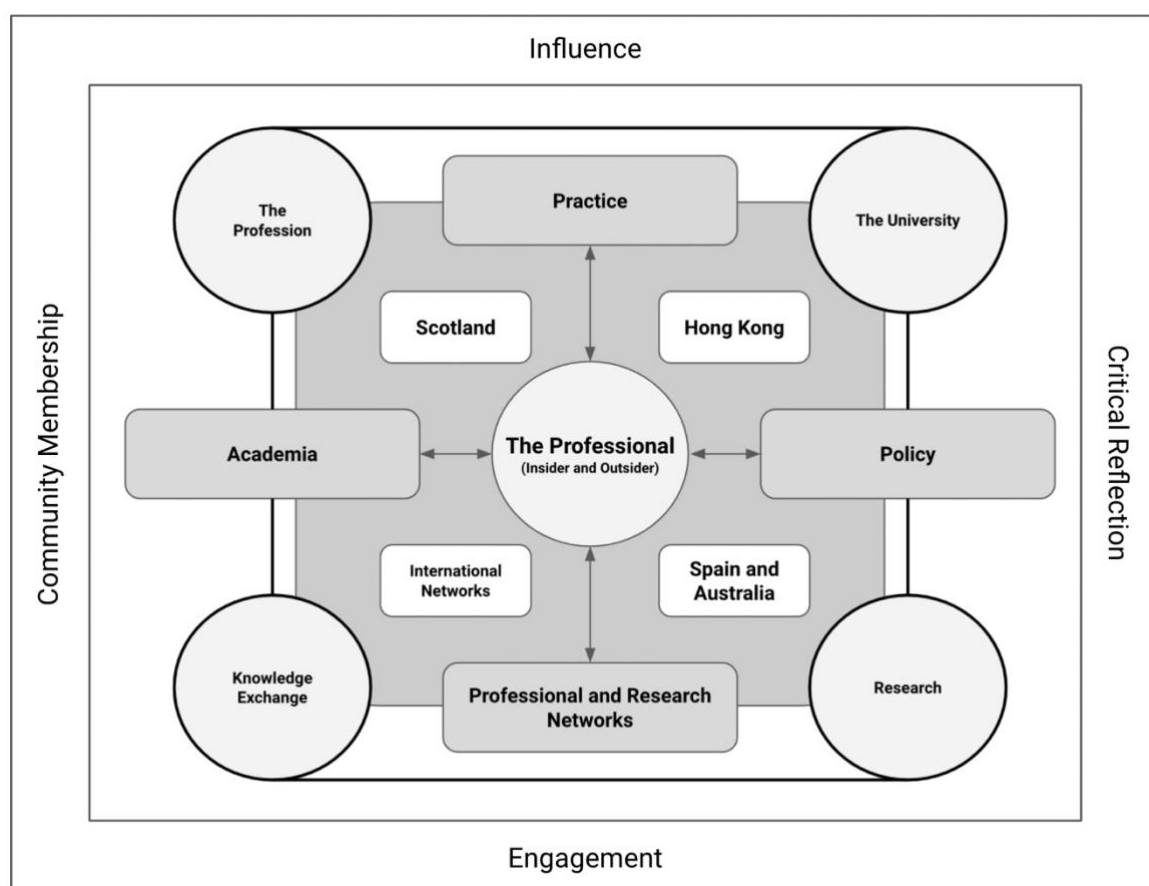
Teaching across continents (Europe, Asia, Australasia), in a range of roles (teaching, leadership, school evaluation, research engagement), and building my academic activity (visiting tutor, research network coordinator, journal peer-reviewer, editorial board member), the phenomena of collaboration came to life in a variety of ways, contexts, and for a range of purposes. However, what tied much of this together is summed up in the title of this dissertation ‘Collaboration: The ubiquitous panacea to challenges in education’.

I trace the genesis of this study’s focus on collaboration back to my undergraduate dissertation on a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme which looked at the role of norms of practice and language, and how that influenced the experiences and self-perception of learners and teachers, with a focus on gender norms and the discrimination, expectations, and opportunities that came with that. As an extension of this, and relating to the conclusions from that study, I wanted to explore how the professional learning of teachers could be supported to enable them to understand issues like this, but also to act in order to challenge these issues.

Reflecting further on the complex policy space that frames the work of teachers and schools, as well as change and improvement in systems, led to a Master of Education (M.Ed.) dissertation on teacher agency in education policy development in Scotland. In it, I concluded that if teachers had a greater role in the agenda setting and policy mechanism design process, there may be greater chance in achieving the aims of policy agendas which frame and influence the work and lives of learning communities.

The combination of experiences as both an insider and outsider of the Scottish system, I believe, gives me a unique position in studying the Scottish system. My experiences and

reflections align with the argument that there are no fixed boundaries between insiders and outsiders in qualitative research, instead that researchers experience a fluidity of status dependent on the research purposes, and a researcher's individual circumstances (Xu, 2017). The insights and expertise that I have developed through working and studying in different systems while maintaining a connection to Scotland, as well as my engagement in a variety of professional networks and spaces, has contributed to both this study, and the focus for it. This unique positionality is illustrated below in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Unique Positionality**

The professional choices and changes I have made throughout my career, whether that be the country I live and work in, or the nature of my professional roles and broader engagement, have been driven by a curiosity around systems, learning, and research, and how they interact in the pursuit of change and improvement. My unique positionality is characterised not only by experiences in different systems, but also by the maintenance of membership of professional communities that span these systems, as well as the domains of academia and practice. It is through this that I bring a critically reflective lens to all my work, which enables engagement with research in my work in policy and practice, and engagement with tacit lived experience in my writing, research, and postgraduate teaching and supervision. I see myself as being in a space where practice and research are

simultaneously engaged with one another, and where the membership of these communities, as well as my international experiences and networks, enable me to exercise influence within my profession, the university, and research spaces, and in the pursuit of knowledge exchange activity through international professional and research networks. My own critical reflection enables me to make sense of these spaces and the possibilities of my membership of them, engagement within them, and the influence I can exercise as a result (Hollweck & Doucet, 2020). With this comes the opportunity to use my knowledge as an insider within the system, and the provocations, challenges, and reflections that come with being an outsider, to critically examine both phenomena and complexities within the system, such as collaboration.

Critical reflection on this led me on my doctoral journey, and to an interest in the role of collaboration in ensuring policy agendas, intentions, and mechanisms truly reflect, and are reflected in, the realities of learners, teachers and all those involved in education.

## **Introduction**

Collaboration has become a central concept in policy and literature in relation to professional learning, leadership, and educational change in recent decades. This focus has come to characterise approaches to professional practice, and in large part now drives how systems tackle persistent systemic challenges such as the poverty related attainment gap in Scotland (OECD, 2015a; Sosu & Ellis, 2014). The increasing dominance in discourse and practice, matched with significant changes in governance in Scottish education in order to foster more effective collaboration (Scottish Government, 2017a), brought my attention to the complexity of defining and achieving successful collaboration in practice, and the varied influences and factors affecting the outcomes of it (Datnow, 2018; Ainscow, Muijs & West, 2006). This led to the initial aims of this study which are to:

- Explore the complexity of collaboration conceptually and the implications this has for practice;
- Investigate the dominance that collaboration, as a term, has in policy and discourse in education for tackling challenges and securing improvement;
- Determine how collaboration has developed such dominance in educational discourse, whether there is a shared understanding of its meaning, and how it is mobilised, and how this is reflected in practice; and
- Explore how understanding the complexity of collaboration conceptually, and the implications this has for practice, could relate to the outcomes of it.

## **Locating the Study in Research, Policy and Practice**

There is a rich body of literature on forms of collaboration and their role in contemporary professional practice, and improvement across systems. The work of CUREE (2005), Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman, and West (2011), Chapman & Muijs, (2013), and Chapman, Chestnutt, Friel, Hall, and Lowden (2016) highlight how the strategic use of collaborative mechanisms can successfully aid school improvement, reduce inequalities in education, and raise attainment.

Datnow (2018) highlights how periods of reform and collaboration centred around change can result in feelings of inspiration, excitement, and positivity, but can also lead to feelings of ambivalence, complacency, or even fear, anxiety, and frustration. While exploration of the emotional dimensions of collaboration is still relatively less common in comparison to literature on the forms collaboration can take, Cilliers (2000:41) in Robertson & Patterson (2016:1) highlight how collaboration at all levels of an education system needs to account for the ‘language, cultural, and social systems’, the complex interplay between which has a large influence on the forms, functions, and outcomes of collaboration. In doing so, those involved in collaborative endeavours can shift from what has traditionally characterised much professional work, such as independent control and the personal autonomy of the individual or institution, to more collective thinking and action (Ainscow et al., 2006). Accounting for these elements would include a focus on the development and maintenance of relationships characterised by trust, mutual respect, and understanding, developed over time, through the strategic rather than default use of collaborative mechanisms (Ainscow et al., 2006; Datnow, 2018).

Collaboration did not emerge suddenly as a central tenant to educational policy agendas and practice. The demands placed upon education and school systems continue to evolve and increase in complexity, including the need to cater for an increasingly diverse range of student and community needs, responding to and reducing social inequalities, and the demands that come with shifts in political expectations for education and schools. In addition, as systems of education develop and interdisciplinary knowledge in relation to education continues to grow, also evident has been an emphasis on effective education systems being research-informed, self-improving, and school led, with a focus on the range of professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and adaptive expertise needed by teachers in order to respond to these demands placed upon them (Brown & Flood, 2019). As a result, the argument for collaborative approaches in order to realise this has become gradually stronger and more visible in research and policy with implications for supranational, national, middle tier and local levels (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; OECD, 2015a).

This has also developed alongside a gradual re-conceptualisation of what it means to be a professional in the context of teaching and education in recent decades (Kennedy, Barlow & MacGregor, 2012). Collaboration has become so important in the field of education because of the status it has developed as a defining element of what at the turn of the century was being described as twenty first century professional practice; evident across research and publications in the fields of business, health, social services, and technology (Lawson, 2004). Within the context of education, Hargreaves (2000) similar to Brown and Flood (2019) notes the emergence of collaboration that has resulted from the changing demands placed upon schools and teachers, and the ever-increasing complexity that characterises a teacher's work. In order to develop the expertise needed, and to devise sufficiently responsive approaches to the complex challenges teachers and schools are now faced with, collaboration has become the focal point for developing both these domains of expertise and effective responses. As the role of collaboration has developed a dominant position in the work of schools and across education, a similar dominance can be noted in the discourse around education, professional learning, and particularly school improvement and tackling persistent challenges in education (Gajda & Koliba, 2007; Riveros, 2012:604). Much work has been done exploring forms of collaboration, and the influence or inferred impact they have depending on their area of focus (Ainscow et al., 2006; Cilliers, 2000; John-Steiner, Webber & Minnis, 1998; Henneman et al., 1995). However, despite many studies exploring forms of collaboration, and the dominance it has developed in policy, discourse and practice in education (Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman & West, 2011), Montiel-Overall (2005) highlights the challenges that emerge from the often under-appreciated complexity of the concept and practice of collaboration. She notes how as a concept with multiple definitions within and across fields, agreement on a shared 'operational definition or theoretical foundation' that spans beyond simply the forms collaboration takes can remain elusive (Welch, 1998:27; Head, 2003; Montiel-Overall, 2005). Indeed, since the time of writing, there has arguably been little theoretical or conceptual development of collaboration in this way.

The range in forms of collaboration that have emerged over time, much like the definitions of collaboration, vary greatly in form and function. Collaboration features highly in various forms of organisational self-evaluation, professional learning and development, improvement projects, professional review, the day-to-day practice of teaching embodied in co-teaching practices, and planning for and reviewing the support needs of students, families and communities at all levels of the system, as well as development needs of those that make up the system (Education Scotland, 2015; GTCS, 2012a). Elements of

collaboration can also be seen in the ways non-departmental public bodies, governmental agencies, and charitable organisations or non-governmental organisations consult and develop their support, programmes, and resources to support the wider system. The ongoing development of knowledge exchange and dissemination in the academic field, as well as through professional associations and bodies, places a large emphasis on fostering collaborative approaches in order to reach their goals. With the varying approaches and underpinning definitions of collaboration combined with the range of expectations, dynamics, histories, and sociological influences on collaborative endeavours, the outcomes and perceived or measurable success of them can differ greatly (Robertson & Patterson, 2016).

Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) highlight that with the emergence of collaboration as a key element to professional practice across fields, this has given rise to a range of theorising seeking to explain the phenomena. They highlight however that rather than seeking to provide a comprehensive explanation of the collaborative process, instead they seek to offer insights into specific aspects of the collaborative endeavour. A significant proportion of the literature on collaboration and its role in professional practice and wider improvement work in schools and systems offers exemplification and reports on collaborative approaches and mechanisms within the specificities of the local, middle tier, and national levels of particular systems. What remains is the need to theorise both these models and how they relate to the wider concept of collaboration with intentional exploration of what this also means in relation to policy, power, and professionalism, as well as how doing so relates to the success of collaboration.

When sharing this study at conferences at its various stages of development, the feedback and discussion around collaboration, its conceptualisation, definition, and the forms it takes has offered useful insights when considering the lines of inquiry and analysis of findings. One such case arose when presenting the emerging findings from this study at an international conference in 2019. One person in the audience working in a non-departmental public body in Scottish Education argued that we can become too caught up on concepts and definitions; we should worry less about this and just get on with doing it. Two headteachers, also from the Scottish context, countered this point by noting clarity of definition was exactly what they wanted and needed to ensure collaboration achieved the goals associated with it; a tension that will be explored later in this study. This was a useful reflection point to consider why conceptual clarity and further theorising around collaboration is necessary, as well as the contribution it could make both in the research and practice domains. Commonly, we hear a range of language used to describe and

advocate for collaborative approaches, be they inter or multi. Partnership, networks, collegiality, and teamwork are some of these terms, and while they all may refer to forms of collaborative activity, a range of differing dimensions are involved. These can include who and how many are participating, the interests of those that make up groups, the frequency of collaborative activity, the resources invested in the group, who and how those involved gain access to the group, and the power dynamics at play or influencing collaborative activity due to individual or organisational roles. But ultimately, as Biesta (2005:54) argues, ‘the language or languages we have available to speak about education determine to a large extent what can be said and done, and thus what cannot be said and done’. Understanding the language used and what this means for the lived reality of collaborative endeavours will be important in understanding the forms, functions, outcomes, and potential of collaboration.

### **Context of the Study**

In this study, collaboration as understood and mobilised in policy and practice will be explored within the Scottish education system. The dominance of collaboration has been evident in public service reform in Scotland, and particularly in the context of education since 2011. The public policy agenda in Scotland, while heavily driven by the government of the day, is also heavily influenced by the state of public services and the roles and functions placed upon them. The Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services in Scotland published their report in 2011 (Scottish Government, 2011a). This report highlighted how if the causes of disadvantage and vulnerability were not sufficiently tackled in the decade that lay ahead, there would be a dramatic increase in the demand placed upon public services, and this required the reform of public services. Key elements designed to underpin the reform process were to:

- ‘Empower individuals and communities’ in both the design and delivery of services; in education reflected in the parental engagement and pupil voice agendas, and the emphasis on locally developed and community responsive approaches to curriculum development;
- ‘Integrate service provision’ through closer partnership working with a focus on improved outcomes; increasingly seen through newly developed Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs), and models of validated self-evaluation which can span beyond those representing the education service;
- ‘Prevent negative outcomes’ through the prioritising of public expenditure; evident in Scottish education through the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and the

Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) both of which incorporate large amounts of financial investment from the national government into local improvement work; and

- ‘Become more efficient’ in avoiding the duplication of services and sharing where possible; evident through the development, establishment, and work of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) in Scottish education.

While the recommendations of the commission have arguably had an important influence on both national and local mechanisms of governance and practice or service delivery, particularly in relation to collaboration, the influence of supranational organisations such as the OECD have also come to play an important role in framing the policy agenda and associated mechanisms in the Scottish system.

Throughout this study, the terms local, middle tier, national, and supranational are used to describe the different levels of the system within which actors interact, decisions are made, and policy mechanisms are mobilised. Local refers to schools and the professionals working within these communities, the middle tier refers to local authorities, RICs, and the professionals working within and across these spaces. National refers to both government and non-departmental public bodies with national responsibility for education, governance, and policy development. Supranational refers to organisations characterised by multinational partnerships, agreements, and influence. However, this demarcation of levels within a system does not reflect on its own the complex relationships within and across them.

Resulting from globalisation over recent decades, there has been a growing influence of supranational organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Olssen, Codd, & O’Neill, 2004). Supranational organisations are able to exercise influence that can transcend national boundaries, visible in how countries reach out to them for expertise, while simultaneously these organisations are able to reach into national systems to shape policy agendas (Lingard & Sellar, 2014). This is down to the success of their large-scale advisory work; for example, in the case of the OECD through their testing and measurement programmes, such as the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), and their in-depth country studies which serve to exemplify effective policy approaches, and advise other countries on policy responses (Wieczorec et al., 2020). This has led to new multiscalar relationships between local, middle-tier, national, and supranational levels and spaces (Brenner, 2004). These new relationships result in power and influence over education governance, policy development, and policy mechanisms to

transcend national boundaries, frequently demonstrated by downward pressure from a supranational level, beyond the formal relationships and established ways of working, such as the OECD's intergovernmental committee structure (Lingard & Sellar, 2014).

With this comes the need for a more complex and nuanced understanding of how actors at various levels of the system come to interact and cross the boundaries of these levels as the influence of individuals or organisations begins to grow in various ways. The socio-political environment and the dominant ideologies that come with that, such as economic functionality and a focus on labour market demands, can influence policy development, implementation and the surrounding discourse at all levels within a system (Bell, 2020). In the context of Scotland, this has taken the form of seeking advice from the OECD on the state of the education system and priorities for change which can include direct engagement with those at the local, middle tier, and national levels (OECD, 2015a), as well as rationalising the government's own decision making through reference to advisory publications from the OECD (Scottish Government, 2016b). This influence of supranational organisations, as well as actors across different levels of the system is possible through the organisational principles of consultation and engagement, and operational practices and procedures that are used for policy enactment across levels of the system (Bell, 2020). In the Scottish context, the recommendations from the OECD in 2015 emphasised the importance of the middle tier, 'represented by districts, local authorities etc.; it may be the "meso" level combinations of the networks, chains, professional communities, initiatives, and groupings that are often invisible in the official charts of an education system' (OECD, 2015a:98). This led to a significant and far-reaching review of education governance in Scotland, with a renewed emphasis on the forms, purposes, and outcomes of collaboration, and consequences for policy priorities, the associated discourse, and the mechanisms through which policy priorities are enacted (Scottish Government, 2017b).

The OECD's 2009 report on the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) highlighted how, across OECD countries, teacher collaboration, beyond the sharing of ideas, remained relatively infrequent in many participating countries, despite what much research into teacher collaboration indicates as being the many benefits from doing so. A commitment to addressing this and cultivating further forms of collaboration was reflected in the OECD 2015 report 'Improving Schools in Scotland'. It was noted that while there was a great deal of reported collaboration happening across the Scottish system, greater clarity was needed on the forms of collaboration that are most effective in supporting innovation and improvement in student learning, including a more 'coherent and cohesive

culture of system-wide collaboration’ (OECD, 2015a:17). From this, it was suggested that traditional vertical governance structures were no longer sufficient to enable the type of collaboration needed to meet the contemporary challenges faced by the system. The OECD (2015a) recommended that the ‘middle tier’, frequently represented by local authorities, needed a greater role in fostering new forms of collaboration that involved more stakeholders through networks and professional communities, and new ways of organising elements of education services across local authorities. The report emphasised that these points were not recommendations for mandated collaboration to implement centrally defined strategies, rather, it should stimulate more effective collaboration that could positively influence student learning that was responsive to local or regional needs, but within the broader frame of a national framework or agenda for improvement, which is now embodied in the National Improvement Framework (NIF). This continues to be reinforced and advocated for from the OECD, most recently in the 2018 TALIS report which emphasises the importance of collaboration in developing peer control, self-regulated and collegial professional communities, and strengthening professional practices and the collective identity of the profession (OECD, 2019). This is illustrated in what is now visible within the Scottish system, five years on from the initial stimulus of the OECD (2015a) report on ‘Improving Schools in Scotland’. These recommendations are now reflected in:

- The Scottish Government (2016b; 2017b) review of governance which led to the establishment of RICs; bringing together local authorities to develop and action a shared agenda for improvement and closing of the poverty related attainment gap;
- The Scottish Government (2017a) NIF, published annually to frame the improvement agenda across Scotland; and
- The establishment and on-going investment in the PEF (Scottish Government, 2016a; 2020b), and SAC (Scottish Government, 2016c), both with the aim of stimulating innovative approaches to tackling the poverty related attainment gap within the broader NIF.

At both the national and supranational levels, collaboration was and still is featuring highly as both a way of working and a policy mechanism to support improvement. The same can be said at the middle tier and local levels within and across schools, local authorities, and regions, with the changing expectations during this period on how collaboration features as part of the professional role of those involved in schools. 2011 saw the publication of the Donaldson Review of teacher education in Scotland, ‘Teaching Scotland’s Future’ (Scottish Government, 2010), which created a new emphasis on the relationships, skills,

reflexivity, and forms of collaboration needed to support all forms of teacher education and professional learning. In the same year there was the publication of the McCormac Review of teacher employment in Scotland, 'Advancing Professionalism in Teaching', which saw recommendations for the recognition of teachers engaging in innovative collaborative practice, and a commitment to 'collaborative, consultative, and collegiate processes', with a focus on the best outcomes for schools and learners (Scottish Government, 2011b:49). The following year saw the introduction of the revised professional standards from the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) in the form of the Standards for Registration, Standards for Career-Long Professional Learning, Standards for Leadership and Management, and Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges (GTCS, 2012a). Collaboration featured highly across these standards, noting the importance of collaboration as a central tenant of professional commitment, as a key component of professional learning and enquiry, and in developing a collegiate culture characterised by dialogue, debate, and collaboration 'across disciplines, professions, and communities locally and globally' (GTCS, 2012b:8).

In this policy context, collaboration is being positioned as a core component of both teachers' work and their professional dispositions. Collaboration is positioned as being integral to developing the relationships, skills, and expertise needed to confront contemporary challenges in education (Gajda & Koliba, 2007; Riveros, 2012).

## **Positioning the Study**

With such an emphasis on collaboration to tackle important challenges in education in Scotland, appreciation of the complexity of collaboration as a concept and practice requires consideration. The dominance that collaboration has been developing and retaining in the discourse which surrounds policy and practice sits with the assumption that all actors within the system share an understanding of what collaboration is and what it looks like (Head, 2003). Montiel-Overall (2005) highlights how collaboration is a concept with multiple definitions within and across fields, and can be understood in a range of ways, such as being about systems, dialogues, creative problem solving, or inter-organisational relationships. What often remains, however, is the need for what Welch (1998:27) calls 'an operational definition or theoretical foundation of collaboration' that goes beyond the forms collaboration takes.

Ainscow et al., (2006) highlight how collaboration, while being a common mechanism for school improvement within and between schools, can still prove challenging. Ainscow, et al (2006:200) go on to argue that 'collaborative working is not a straightforward option, that can be easily introduced, nor is it necessarily suited to all contexts and challenges'.

Collaboration requires careful consideration of the surrounding conditions and needs to be used strategically with a focus on areas that are suited to a collaborative approach (Ainscow et al., 2006).

With multiple definitions and conceptualisations of collaboration, determining when and which collaborative mechanisms should be used, as well as the impact they have, can be difficult. Grangeat & Gray (2007) argues that determining the effect of collaboration between teachers and others involved in schooling and education is already challenging for contextual reasons. With complexity characterising systems of schooling and education, Robertson and Patterson (2016) argue that finding rules or direct consequences of interventions is rarely possible. Due to the complex interplay of a range of policy levers and mechanisms, the, in many cases, variation in practices and community contexts within an education system, and how these together result in varied outcomes and consequences from policy agendas, levers, and mechanisms, means that the direct consequences of these policy measures are not readily identifiable. However, relationships can be more accurately discerned, which can account for the variation in influence of these other factors beyond the specific policy measures. The pursuit of identifying and understanding these relationships can also enable an exploration of the historical, socio-cultural, and geographical contexts of the area under study, and where the current policy agenda(s) and associated measures sit within the broader policy context.

Considering this, the research questions driving this study are:

- How is collaboration defined conceptually and practically in education?
  - How is collaboration presented in the literature and in policy?
  - How is collaboration understood in practice?
- What role do policy actors and school leaders believe collaboration has in tackling challenges in education?
- What role could collaboration play in tackling challenges in education?

## **Dissertation Overview**

To explore these questions, a novel theoretical framework has been created in order to review collaboration as currently understood in the literature. This framework, both emerging from the literature, and driving the review of it, emphasises contextual influences centred around the leadership and governance that enable collaboration to happen.

Following on from this is a critical policy analysis focusing on six key policy texts, and two related texts, from the Scottish education context with significance between the period of 2015 to 2020. This analysis draws upon both the novel theoretical framework and an original analytical framework emphasising policy drivers, mechanisms, and consequences.

By utilising these frameworks, this study offers critical insights into dimensions of collaboration that are rarely examined. This includes insight into and analysis of the lived reality of collaboration in the Scottish context through semi-structured interviews with five primary school headteachers from two Scottish local authorities. Through a postmodern lens, analysis of these findings from both the critical policy analysis and interviews with headteachers is then presented. Finally, an emerging framework for collaboration is presented, with recommendations that have resulted for practice, policy, and research.

## **Conclusion and Dissertation Structure**

In this chapter, I have outlined the origins of this study and how it relates to my positionality within the study, as well as locating it within the context of research, policy, and practice. Exploring the range of forms and functions of collaboration at different layers and in different spaces within the Scottish system, I have highlighted the challenges in both defining collaboration and determining the influence or impact of it.

Chapter 2 explores how collaboration can be conceptualised, focusing on the forms and positioning of collaboration in the literature, how this relates to the leadership and governance of collaboration, and how it is utilised in the context of improvement agendas in education systems.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological decision making underpinning this study, linking my own positionality with the decision to engage in critical policy analysis, and exploring the lived reality of collaboration through interviews with Scottish primary headteachers.

Chapter 4 locates collaboration within the local, middle tier, national and supranational levels that feature in policy in Scottish education. Exploring first the supranational influences at play, the chapter goes on to explore how this relates to broader public service reform, and how this then connects with a genealogy of Scottish education policy leading to the contemporary context, and what a critical analysis of key policy texts illuminates.

Chapter 5 extends the themes brought out through a critical analysis of policy and presents findings from interviews with Scottish primary headteachers, along with the emerging dimensions and themes.

Chapter 6, through the application of a postmodern lens, connects the themes emerging from both the critical analysis of policy and the interviews, and explores the key ideas that result.

Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation by presenting a framework for collaboration emerging from the discussion and analysis presented in the study, what this might mean for the forms and functions of collaboration, the implications for practice, policy and research, and broader reflections on the study itself and lessons learned.

## Chapter 2: Conceptualising Collaboration

*‘When I think of collaboration, the first word that comes to mind is **ubiquitous**’.*

Friend & Cook (2000:130)

While this study has emerged from my experience of collaboration in a range of school and systemic contexts, it is also important as to how collaboration is understood and mobilised across the domains of practice, policy, and research. The purpose of this study is to further conceptualise and theorise how collaboration is understood and mobilised, and to explore the possibilities of this. An underpinning reflection throughout the genesis and completion of this study has been how the definition and conceptualisation of collaboration that individuals, communities, or systems utilise can influence both the discourse and practice of collaboration, but importantly, the potential influence, impact or outcomes of it. In reaching for greater conceptual clarity, it is hoped that it will be possible to understand the operational definitions at play across boundaries in education and, consequentially, increase the potential positive influence of collaboration as a mechanism for supporting learning, development, and improvement in all its forms.

With a keen awareness of the need to construct conceptual clarity not just as a methodological consideration within the study, but as a potential contribution of it, also being clear on the discursive terminology within the study is important. Throughout this dissertation, theories and theorising, concepts and conceptualising are all referenced regularly. As with collaboration, here both nouns and verbs are not easily defined. However, for the purposes of this study, a theory, a multi-dimensional concept in itself, refers to what Merton (1967) in Hammond (2018:1) articulates as a non-linear ‘interconnected set(s) of propositions’ which can be applied to understand phenomena, and can be abstractly and empirically developed. The process of theorising is a complex interplay between individual and social thinking and language development, with the aim of developing an explanation for phenomena that may result in a contribution to theory or a theory in and of itself (Hammond, 2018).

Concepts are the cognitive classification of phenomena experienced and their associated characteristics (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Pring, 2015). Conceptualisation is both the process and product of forming and attributing transferable meaning to a concept (Evans, 2002).

When considering this in relation to collaboration, a key criticism of the literature on collaboration has been the lack of conceptual clarity; a challenging starting point in trying to arrive at a definition, or understand it within the context of teachers, teaching, and

education more generally (Slater, 2004). The multiplicity of terms utilised in many domains within the education sphere can be viewed by some as unproblematic, as there is a clarity of intent. However, such terms that are used interchangeably with collaboration, such as collegiality, cooperation, and partnership, have differences in their implied demands of participation, interaction, and outcomes (Little, 2002; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Carnwell & Carson, 2014). Montiel-Overall (2005) highlights the added complication of how synonymous terms, particularly related to collaboration, can begin to deviate into not just different concepts entirely, but also a range of forms and definitions.

### **Definitions – Key Elements**

Collaboration is a word that comes from the Latin ‘collaborare’, which means to ‘labour together’. Many theories of collaboration stem from well-developed social constructivist theory. Vygotsky (1978) argues that collaboration as a joint activity between two or more people is the basis for the development of ideas and cognitive strategies for learning and psychological development. While Vygotsky’s work is usually applied to the development of children, it has been expanded to relationships between adults, with Moran & John-Steiner (2003:65) arguing in reference to Vygotskian theory that ‘All mental functions are first experienced socially, learned in interaction with others’. Drawing upon the work of key theorists and research in the field of collaboration such as Inger (1993), Crow (1998), Austin (2000), Fitzgibbons (2000), and Friend and Cook (2000), Montiel-Overall (2005) highlights that this range of forms and definitions, or synonymous terms, of collaboration can include: reciprocity, congeniality, partnerships, interaction between coequal parties, cooperation, information sharing, shared vision, joint negotiation of common ground, shared power, dialogue, and the joint construction of knowledge.

John-Steiner, Weber, and Minnis (1998:774) when discussing collaboration across organisational domains argue that ‘The principals in a true collaboration represent complementary domains of expertise. As collaborators, not only do they plan, decide, and act jointly; they also think together, combining independent conceptual schemes to create original frameworks’. This mobilisation of one definition of collaboration highlights the multitude of activity and inter-personal skills required for the realisation of it. This connects with what Cilliers (2000:41) in Robertson and Patterson (2016:1) identifies as key influencing elements of collaboration; the ‘language, cultural, and social systems’ that make up the local and middle tier levels of the education system and the intricacies of human interaction. Collaboration requires a move from independent control or complete autonomy within an individual’s domain to more collective thinking and action (Ainscow, Muijs, & West, 2006). To do this, relationships, trust, and mutual respect are necessary,

which are developed over time, and are a result of strategic rather than default use of collaborative mechanisms (Ainscow et al., 2006).

## **Defining Collaboration**

Drawing upon the range of empirical and theoretical explorations of collaboration and its defining elements, for the purpose of this study, collaboration will be defined as a process of joint work around a shared focus (Henneman et al., 1995; Ainscow et al., 2006), where individuals coming together to collaborate share connected domains of expertise (John-Steiner, Webber, & Minnis, 1998), a commitment to sharing this, and using this expertise to think, plan, decide, and act, based on a shared understanding of the respective social norms, expectations, and behaviours needed in order to work together successfully (Cilliers, 2000).

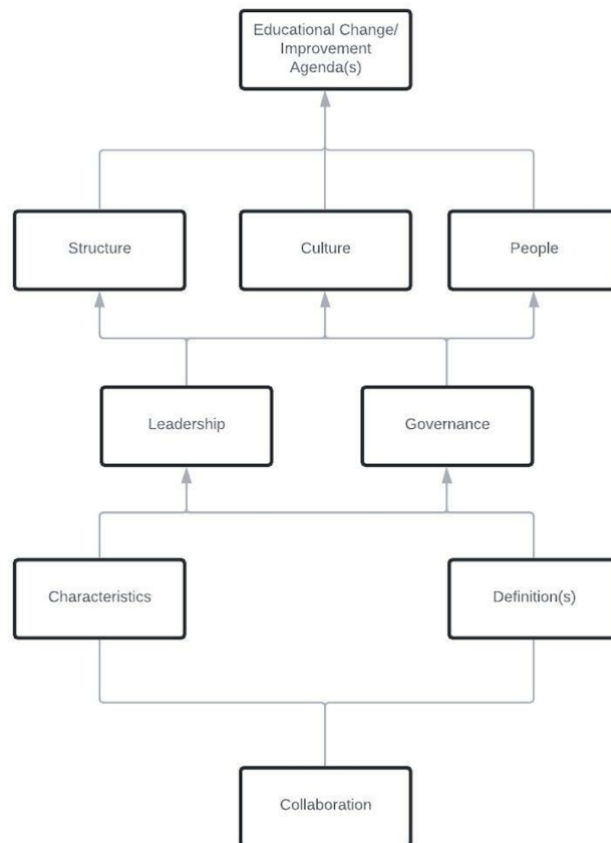
This definition purposefully does not specify this as being about teacher collaboration. Given the complex roles schools and teachers take on in order to respond to rapidly changing socio-political, environmental, and humanitarian challenges, collaboration that teachers and school leaders engage in has been and continues to span beyond those they share a professional domain or space of practice with (Hargreaves, 2012). With emerging discourses, policy mechanisms, and practices around the self-improving school system and role of collaboration (Armstrong, 2015; Ainscow, 2015) the leadership and governance of education systems are changing, as is the range of expertise and professional groups that now interact with education and engage in collaborative improvement work (Hadfield & Ainscow, 2018). As this has developed, traditionally dominant hierarchical structures and manifestations of well-spaced boundaries that have kept individuals within their tier or sphere, or practice have become a focus for critique and rethinking through new models of governance (OECD, 2015a; Scottish Government, 2017b). With the blurring of these, have come new forms of collaboration that defy the traditional categorisation based on role, position, and domain of expertise and the definition of collaboration used within this study aims to reflect that. Applying this to the exploration of collaboration as a concept and practice requires a commitment to analysing how individuals interact, collaborate, or make sense of the collaborative endeavours they engage in, and an understanding of how they are influenced by prior experiences and interpretations of them (Wenger, 1998). Regardless of the difficulties in defining or reaching agreement on the key attributing factors of collaboration, as a concept, practice, and policy mechanism, it has developed a dominant position in both policy discourse and professional practice as the key to achieving broad policy aims or as the panacea to the challenges faced by professionals and sectors. Friend & Cook (2000), referenced at the beginning of this chapter, argues that

collaboration has become so important in the field of education because of the status it has developed as a defining element of twenty first century professional practice.

While differences in systemic, organisational, and professional agendas and norms can affect collaborative activity, theorising collaboration can aid the understanding of why individuals and groups collaborate, how they do it, and what they collaborate on (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002).

Drawing upon the literature on collaboration, to enable this broader theorising of collaboration, I have developed a theoretical framework, represented in Figure 2, that places collaboration as one element within a larger socially constructed organisational process that is shaped by the complex interplay of personal and contextual factors.

Collaboration, as defined earlier in this chapter, will be explored by building upon what has come to characterise it, and how this constructs or relates to definitions of collaboration. How collaboration relates to and relies on leadership and governance will also be explored, illuminating the connections it has to broader organisational and systemic contexts and practices. Within that, the structures, cultures, and people involved in collaboration, and how these interact and influence collaborative activity will be explored, connecting each of these elements outlined in the theoretical framework with how they can, do, and could relate to educational change or improvement agendas.



**Figure 2: Conceptualising Collaboration: A Theoretical Framework**

## Characteristics of Collaboration

Research into collaboration within the context of education offers many examples of collaborative initiatives or approaches within national and international contexts; however, there remains a need to theorise and understand both the concept and models of collaboration in relation to broader concerns of policy, power, and professionalism (Datnow, 2011). In doing so, the contribution of research on collaboration moves beyond simply creating typologies and towards a more sophisticated understanding of the intricacies of collaboration that can be successful, as well as achieving the intention of its use as a policy and practice mechanism, be it knowledge exchange, a way of working, or securing improvement, among others.

With the developing interest in collaborative approaches in both the public and private sectors that has come with increasing political interest in the success of public services and global competition, research has been emerging around the form, function, and conditions for successful collaboration (Asheim, 2002; Hadfield & Ainscow, 2018). Sullivan and Skeltcher (2002) argue that forms of collaboration and their associated rule of governance can range from loose, informal relationships, to more formalised agreements which can include joint activity, the relinquishing of power from some parties to enable others, or even the coming together of previously separate groups for a new collaborative working relationship with a shared remit.

Within the context of education, however, research and the associated discourse in policy and practice appears to emphasise the conditions under which collaborative approaches can emerge and be effective. Much work on collaboration mobilises the concept as being interchangeable with networking, partnership, and joint working, rather than relying on theoretical development of collaboration as a concept in and of itself. This has long been a criticism of the literature on collaboration; in the past being described as lacking conceptual clarity, with related concepts being ‘conceptually amorphous’ (Little, 1990:509).

The question that persistently remains is ‘How do we collaborate effectively?’ Connecting with the stimulus for this study is my personal reflection and belief that teachers are by consequence of their day-to-day practice, skilled communicators, and knowledge exchangers. But this alone does not make collaboration easy, nor a naturally successful approach. It may be desirable in places to articulate a set of collaborative behaviours and skills, and to ensure that these are taught to professionals prior to engaging in collaboration. Nevertheless, the question arises as to whether this is possible, and whether or not the deficit does not, in fact, lie within those engaging in collaboration, but may

result from the design of the collaborative mechanism or approach itself. Much of a teacher's work is done in isolation from their peers, and while collaborative approaches to professional learning and school improvement have gained increasing dominance around the world, collaborative activity that teachers do engage in is frequently designed and organised on their behalf in order to fulfil a particular purpose in which they may not have had any input (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Bangs & Frost, 2016). What remains is the need to problematise the understanding of collaboration that drives professional practice and policy development, and whether or not a greater appreciation of the complexity of collaboration as a concept, practice, and experience could enable the better design of collaborative approaches, and the development of skills and capabilities for successful collaboration to emerge from those involved. In essence, rather than being a new set of skills and capabilities to be taught or acquired through models of teacher education, a question embedded within this study is whether the recalibration of the range of skills and capabilities that education professionals share could result in the emergence of more effective collaboration.

Much work has been done in establishing the conditions for collaboration and the forms that collaboration can take (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Sharratt & Plance, 2016). Where gaps remain is in understanding how collaboration is defined beyond using surrogate terms or concepts such as 'co-labouring' or a new form of professionalism (Sharratt & Plance, 2016:4). Given the significant variation in success of forms of collaboration that professionals at different levels of education systems engage in (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018:15), there is scope to look a fresh at the 'ground work' and preparation required for collaboration to authentically take place, what collaboration in education does and could actually look like, how it is practiced, experienced, and sustained, and how the effectiveness, influence, and impact of collaboration is evaluated. When exploring the characteristics of collaborative approaches, a key consideration is what Slater (2004:9) identifies: 'Collaboration is not based on like-minded consensus.' Rather, collaboration requires a complex interplay between the characteristics of 'collaborative diversity, conflict, respect, time, and hard work'.

While there remains an arguably significant gap in our conceptual understanding of collaboration in education, and how this might be reflected in localised practices as well as middle tier, national, and supranational structures, what has been explored in depth is networks, networking, and collaborative arrangements in education. This draws upon seminal and influential work that has theorised collaboration and collaborative practices in relation to learning, leadership, and improvement, which has come to influence much

contemporary thinking, research, and practice in relation to collaboration (Smith, 2001; Tynjälä, 2022). In addition, while there has been little substantial advancement in our understanding of the concept of collaboration, the work of seminal and influential authors that sought to conceptualise collaboration, its complex intricacies, and the social nature of human learning and interaction, is drawn upon here, and throughout this study (Wenger, 2010). Emerging from this seminal work is a growing body of literature on the importance of communities of practice, the mobilisation of explicit and tacit knowledge, and the development of social capital. For example, Wenger's (1998) work focuses on the informal 'communities of practice' formed over time through the pursuit of a shared agenda with the assumption that engaging in social practice is central to how we learn. Also, Senge's (1990; 2012) work explores the role of collaboration in learning organisations, and the contextual factors influencing planned and incidental sharing of explicit and tacit knowledge. Hargreaves (2003) argues that to share and construct such explicit and tacit knowledge, intentional development of social capital is necessary. These three characteristics of collaborative approaches will now be explored.

### **Communities of Practice**

Communities of practice as conceptualised by Wenger (1998) are understood as a key part of how individuals operate in their day-to-day professional lives. Often, communities of practice are informal and embedded in so many aspects of how individuals practice, that they do not often come under explicit focus or analysis, while simultaneously being easily recognisable. To analyse and understand these, and to consider how they relate to collaboration with school and systemic contexts, Wenger (1998) has identified some key concepts that underpin communities of practice.

For the collaborative elements of a community of practice to be realised, criteria and expectations of membership and participation in such a community are required (Wenger, 2010). In doing so, a collaborative group would develop a common purpose, established norms, expectations of practice and relationships, and the use of shared resources, language, tools, and standards to name a few (Smith, Hayes, & Shea, 2017). To sustain engagement and engender a sense of belonging within a collaborative community, Wenger (1998) argues that some work must be done together, reflecting on practice and aligning and coordinating actions towards a shared goal. While these elements share an element of interdependence, Wenger (1998: 228) highlights how collaborative learning communities depend on a 'dynamic combination of engagement, imagination, and alignment'. However, membership of a collaborative group, learning community, or community of practice requires consideration of the boundaries that individuals may be crossing in

relation to the spaces they inhabit or are accessing, as well as the influence of identity construction at various points of membership of a collaborative community. Depending on the focus, aims, and membership of a particular collaborative endeavour, individuals will be members of various communities of practice, or collaborative endeavours, which requires a crossing of boundaries (Smith, Hayes, & Shea, 2017), and the possible cross-fertilisation of knowledge, ideas, and various aspects of an individual's identity. Through participation in collaborative endeavours, and the boundary crossing that may come with it, individuals may voluntarily or involuntarily begin to acquire a new understanding of who they are, or who they want to be, as a result of knowledge exchange and collaboration in practice, but also the experience of collaboration itself and what they come to understand of themselves and others.

### **Social Capital**

The collaborative approaches that teachers and educators across school systems engage in are frequently centred around improvement agendas. Given the increased complexity of the purposes and functions of education in contemporary society, arguments for strengthened collaboration and networks have intensified (OECD, 2015a; Brown & Flood, 2019). However, the sharing, transfer and application of knowledge and expertise is not easy (Hargreaves, 2012).

Often, collaboration itself is seen as the vehicle through which the mobilisation of knowledge and practice can happen. As such, collaboration both emerges and can be mandated at a range of levels within education systems. This can be at the local level, improving instructional practices for student achievement, or at the middle tier and national levels by mobilising knowledge and expertise to support broader system development (Hargreaves, 2012). What these collaborative approaches often share, irrespective of the level of the system they manifest themselves in, is their positioning as part of a process to achieve the expected outcomes from a given improvement or policy agenda.

In Scotland, at the middle tier and national levels, with emphasis from supranational organisations such as the OECD, there has been a renewed emphasis on collaboration through RICs (Scottish Government, 2017b); directly tied to a policy focus on reducing the poverty related attainment gap and the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (NIF) (Scottish Government, 2020a). At a local level, collaboration is both evident and mandated in relation to planning for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) (Scottish Government, 2020b) and achieving the aims of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC), which brought together the aims of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), the

NIF, PEF, and the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) policy (Scottish Government, 2018).

These policy agendas and priorities place a large emphasis on the role of schools and teachers to tackle significant challenges facing the system, while also relying on forms of collaboration to mobilise knowledge and practice. Hargreaves (2012) argues that the social capital that exists within schools and across systems is a vital element to improvement agendas. The capacity to come together in a trusting environment, valuing knowledge-sharing, and doing this beyond the confines of a singular school community, is seen as necessary to sustained improvement in the varied forms that it may take (Hargreaves, 2012).

### **Explicit and Tacit Knowledge**

Tacit knowledge, or ‘tacit mental models’ as described by Senge (1990:8), offers insight into the practices of individuals in schools and education more broadly. But they also offer insight into what influences both teachers’ practices and how they are decided upon. By its very nature, teachers’ and leaders’ tacit knowledge can be difficult to identify and articulate; similar to what Schon (1983:239) describes as the ‘intuitive artistry’ of the professional. This sort of intuitive or tacit knowledge often exists below the radar of awareness and is consequentially under-examined (Senge, 2012). If this tacit knowledge is not engaged with or sought to be understood, new insights into contemporary practices may not be possible, either because the insight itself relies on engagement with difficult to articulate tacit knowledge, or the insight and reflection itself on practice may conflict with strong tacit mental models.

Engaging in collaboration requires a commitment to sharing expertise and thinking, explicit and tacit knowledge (John-Steiner et al., 1998; Senge 2012). In doing so, those involved in collaborative endeavours commit to seeing some new or with a new lens, and in doing so acknowledge the possibility that there is something new to be seen or done. The ‘tacit “truths”’ taken for granted in both practice and discourse that surround practice may be challenged, encouraging a rethink of the aspirations and expectations individuals have for practice, and the outcomes of education at the local, middle tier, and national levels (Senge, 2012:26).

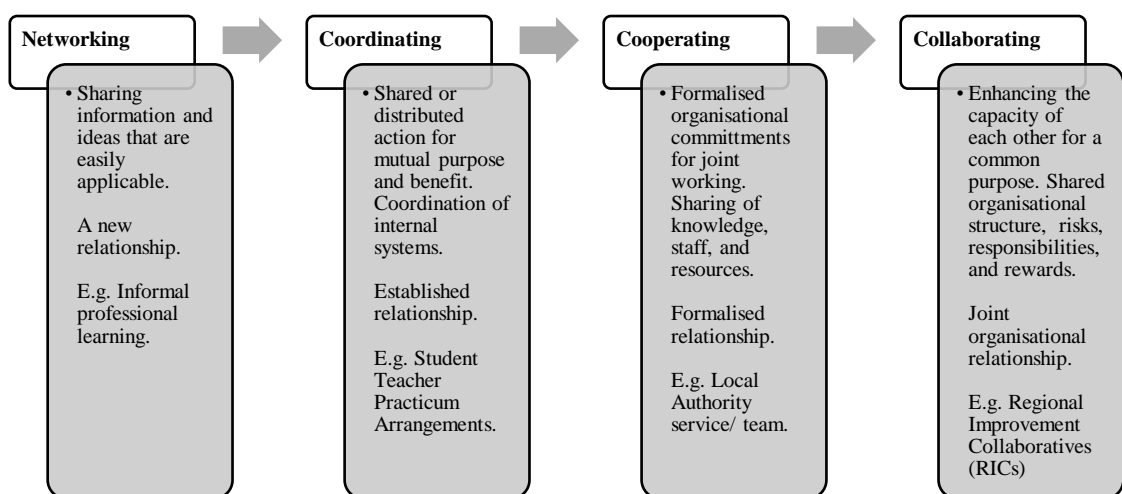
Consideration of how individuals come to know the tacit mental models that frame practice, and how this might interact with change or improvement agendas will be essential if these agendas are to have impact or be successful (Datnow, 2018). The relationships within and across spaces within the system affect the emotions felt during collaborative and change processes and, as such, the outcomes of such processes, be they related to

practice, identity, or beliefs (Saunders, 2013). Senge (2012:26) argues that in order to utilise and bring to the fore the explicit and tacit knowledge held by those across learning organisations and systems, redesign may be needed of both the formal structures of collaboration, and the ‘hard-to-see patterns of relationships’ across the system; relationships which will influence what and how knowledge is shared and put to use. The purposive analysis of the forms collaboration may take will offer insight into how collaboration could enable the development of professional practice and the thinking anew about outcomes for young people in systems of schooling and education.

## Collaboration

### Forms of Collaboration

The complexity of collaboration as a phenomenon itself makes it challenging to study. The range of influences on its emergence, and the variation in forms it can take, makes categorisation challenging (Hanford, Houck, Iler, & Morgan, 1997). Despite this, there is a plethora of literature on the effects of a range of forms of collaboration. As a collective, this literature constructs an understanding of what characterises collaboration broadly, the necessary conditions of different forms of it, and the possible outcomes of them (Atkinson, Springate, Johnson, & Halsey, 2007). This enables the broader theorising of the concept of collaboration, connecting with broader concerns of policy, and the influence of systemic structures, practices, and norms. To begin to understand key lessons from research on various typologies of collaboration, Himmelman (1992), cited in Hanford et al. (1997), describes a four-level typology of engagement and commitment in multi-sector collaborations in education; an adapted version of which is represented in the figure below.



**Figure 3: The Spectrum of Collaboration**

This adapted typology of engagement in collaboration, which I have reframed as a spectrum of collaboration, articulates the range of activity that could be labelled as collaborative, but illustrates the varied nature and requirements of each. Given the varied forms collaboration can take, it is difficult to comprehensively and accurately represent the varied forms of activity that could be characterised as collaborative within each. For example, what is characterised as ‘networking’ may not reflect the depth and complexity of the collaboration that could take place in ‘networks’ or ‘networked approaches’. The same could be said when comparing ‘coordinating’ with ‘coordinated approaches’, or ‘cooperating’ with ‘cooperative approaches’.

However, this articulation of forms of collaboration, with reference to inter- rather than intra-organisational collaboration, is useful for analysing the range of engagement and commitment required of the different forms collaboration may take. What must be acknowledged though is that with many forms of collaboration, irrespective of whether they can be grouped based on common characteristics, what the collaborative activity may look like can depend on the participants involved, the interest or focus, the frequency of interaction, and the power dynamics involved in the conception and sustenance of the collaborative endeavour (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). Therefore, while broad characteristics and considerations can be derived from analysis of various forms of collaboration, acknowledgement must be given to the complexity of each form and the groups they may fall within depending on the complex interplay of these associated factors.

Networking describes the mutually beneficial sharing of information that could be easily adopted in the various contexts of the persons represented in the networking process (Atkinson et al., 2007). Networks, or learning networks, are often characterised based on the coming together of individuals from different communities of practice with a focus on learning for improvement at the local, middle tier, and national levels (Brown & Poortman, 2018).

When a shared purpose has stakes shared by multiple groups, a process of coordinating begins to emerge. Seen in how individuals plan for and meet complex learning needs, engage in quality assurance, and support localised and wider system development, coordination is driven by a common purpose. With that comes the coordination of both intra- and inter-organisational systems to enable coordinated action (Atkinson et al., 2007). A coordinated focus for collaborative endeavours can be characterised by a commitment to sharing, learning, and joint work, while also working within the relevant positional and

structural power dynamics that exist within and across organisations and systems (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Cooperating can often include the alteration of practice, norms, and resources, to begin cooperating across organisational or institutional contexts for shared benefit (Atkinson et al., 2007). This can include the sharing of knowledge, staff, spaces, and finances, which has begun to emerge with Scotland's RICs. In doing so, information and resources can be shared when and where needed, while organisations will often retain their authority (Shinners, 2001). With this comes a reduced risk because of a more cooperative approach matched with the maintenance of authority; however, with less of a stake placed upon this form of collaborative activity, there could be consequences for the urgency of the cooperative activity, and the importance attributed to the outcomes of it.

Collaborating, in comparison with the other forms of collaborative activity, could be described as the willingness to come together to enhance the capacity and practice of others, either individually or collectively, within and beyond daily communities of practice, to share responsibility for action in the pursuit of improvement. This can involve deep learning for students and teachers, and coming together to think, support, act, and reflect together, while building a coherent approach to particular aspects of practice through collaborating (Datnow, 2019).

This spectrum of collaboration indicates the level of engagement and investment needed for different forms of collaboration within these different groups. Each form of collaboration and the extent to which these forms demonstrate collaborative characteristics could have relevance and importance in themselves within the context and groups they manifest in. They will also require the complex consideration and interplay of factors pertaining to participation, focus, and power if they are to successfully meet the aims of their conception (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002).

A key point to consider in the discussion of collaboration and the spectrum of collaboration for school and system-wide improvement, is that the forms that it takes can be as varied as the factors influencing their genesis and success. As such, consideration must be given to how all forms of collaborative activity are developed, enabled, and sustained.

Researching collaborative arrangements with a particular focus on networking, the work of Muijs et al., (2011) highlights how collaborative activity has to be driven by clear goals, with effective communication channels, the building of trust, opportunities for professional learning, and considering the timing of both the collaborative activity and when it might end. Highlighted also was the planned, purposeful, and strategic use of collaboration rather than it being a default practice. However, true collaboration cannot happen simply with the

adoption of new administrative or organisational practices to facilitate it (Ibrahim, 2020). Truly collaborative approaches require the construction of shared values and expectations of what collaboration entails and its purpose (Schein, 2004). A collective sense of responsibility for the agenda driving collaboration and ensuring the time and space for productive and shared engagement is key for such approaches to be both productive and sustained (Muijs et al., 2011; Hargreaves, 2004). Muijs et al. (2011) also highlighted how collaboration requires the foundation of the capacity, leadership, and targeted professional learning to enable it to happen. However, given that collaboration as a collective endeavour and individual experience is already complex, and complex to research as a phenomena and practice, understanding the learning, skills, or capabilities that might be required for successful collaboration are equally challenging to identify.

### **Theories of Collaboration**

What characterises collaboration, and what is required for it, draws upon related theoretical development in related disciplines and subdisciplines. While collaboration has only in recent decades begun to feature significantly in political and professional modernisation agendas (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002), collaboration has been widely theorised in relation to organisational development and learning (Reeves, Goldman, Martimianakis, Chatalasingh, & Dematteo, 2007).

Reeves et al. (2007) have synthesised much of the literature on theories that relate to collaboration, under the umbrella of organisational theories and educational theories. These were grouped under theories with an individual focus, theories with a group/ team focus, and theories with an organisational/systems focus which will be used below to explore theories relating to collaboration, and what this can illuminate as to how collaboration is understood and mobilised.

#### ***Theories with an individual focus***

In the context of leadership of collaboration and individuals' interactions and experiences during collaborative activity, the influential work of Adair (1988), which focuses on the importance of action-centred leadership, has gone on to influence how collaboration is understood and practiced. This approach, republished in a variety of forms over time, emphasises effective teamwork, and the role of the leader in ensuring that teams which are collaborating build shared values, purposes, and goals, alongside the necessary skills to collaborate effectively (Adair, 2010).

Developed by Weiner et al. (1972), the attribution theory of leadership offers an explanatory framework for the process individuals go through, particularly in collaborative endeavours, to interpret and explain the events and behaviours they experience. As such,

rather than leadership within teams and collaborative endeavours being positional, it could be argued with this theoretical lens that notions of leadership are constructed based on task achievement and the quality of relationships within a collaborative team (Reeves et al., 2007).

Situational leadership theory emphasises the situational appropriateness of particular styles of leadership (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008). This theory emphasises the need to consider the various influences of situational factors when it comes to collaborating, particularly in relation to team dynamics, motivation, productivity, and effectiveness (Reeves et al., 2007).

### ***Theories with a group/team focus***

Collaborative work frequently involves shared decision making. Depending on the relationships and trust that has been built within the collaborative group, decision making may not necessarily reflect the individual beliefs and preferences of the individuals within the team, irrespective of what the collective outcome may be. This was articulated in the conceptual approach developed by Harvey (1988), known as the Abilene paradox. Named after the example used in the author's book, this approach offers an additional lens to understanding the nature of interactions within collaborative teams. It usefully highlights and enables the exploration of where friction within a team may be hidden, where group decisions may not reflect the preferences of all those within the group, or where there has been a communication breakdown resulting in views or objections not being shared but the outcomes of collaboration appearing successful (Reeves et al., 2007).

When individuals come together to collaborate, the role of autonomy frequently comes into question. Baines' (1993) work on autonomous work groups, which has gone on to influence much literature around organisational teamwork and autonomy, highlights important considerations of ensuring collaborative activity includes opportunity for the group to self-regulate and develop joint accountability for the work they engage in. In doing so, motivation can be increased, as well as the efficiency of the work of the group, and the individual and collective satisfaction as a result of engaging in the collaborative activity.

Well known to educators are theories of collaborative and cooperative learning. Dewey, Vygotsky, and Piaget, among many others are well known philosophers who share an emphasis on the social nature of learning (Phillips & Soltis, 2004). Their theorising and the conceptual frameworks constructed both historically and in recent times direct focus towards the importance of group interactions for both individual learning and group success. Central to this is a recognition of the contributions and needs of all those involved

in collaborative endeavours, valuing diversity, and ensuring the attribution of value to the contributions of all within the group (Reeves et al., 2007). This is central to the development of both shared and new knowledge, as well as developing the needed skills and capabilities for effective collaboration.

Connecting with individuals' needs within collaborative approaches, Alderfer's (1969) theory of existence relatedness growth was an extension of Maslow's hierarchy of needs model. Here, Alderfer (1969), in Reeves et al. (2007), highlights the importance of the satisfaction of basic needs (existence), the capacity to develop and maintain positive interpersonal relationships with those you are collaborating with (relatedness), and the opportunity to be creative, productive, and engaging in meaningful activity (growth). Rather than these needs being hierarchical, as with Maslow, Alderfer argues that these needs exist on a continuum and could be equally important at a given point. Consideration of this within the context of collaboration will have particular application to motivation and productivity and the influences on them both (Choi, 2006).

### ***Theories with an organisational/systems focus***

Given the range of influences both structurally and organisationally on the experience and output of collaboration, consideration is necessary of organisational and systemic elements of collaboration. Traditionally, organisational development has focused on ideas of rationality and the maximisation of economic gains, or when applied to education, high attainment and academic outputs. Bartlett and Ghoshal (1993), drawing upon the work of Cyert and March (1963), apply principles of behavioural theory of the firm to argue the sociological and psychological elements of organisational behaviour. In their analysis, Bartlett & Ghoshal (1993) argue that organisational practices should be viewed as a political process that can change depending on time, circumstance, and area of focus. This theoretical lens, when applied to collaboration enables the exploration of the bargaining process that collaborators may engage in, as well as the complexity of working collaboratively when competing perspectives, ideas, and approaches come to the fore (Reeves et al., 2007).

Frequently, competing perspectives or practices are not necessarily competitive in nature, but have competitive connotations when some may challenge well established norms of practice and thinking. Diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 1962) explores how innovation is communicated within social systems. As discussed in Reeves et al. (2007), Rogers (1962) argues that innovations go through various stages of adoption. Introduction to assess value and applicability comes first. This is then followed by those involved in making a commitment to adopting this new approach or not, with a final stage of reflection

after adoption to decide whether or not it is worth continuing. While there is an argument to be made about the simplicity of these stages, Rogers' (1962) typology of adopters in such a process could be usefully applied to collaborative practice in education. Rogers' (1962) describes these five types of adopters as 'innovators', willing to be creative and take risks with new approaches; 'early adopters', taking the lead in utilising new innovations; 'early majority', joining in the adoption of new innovations under the leadership of others; 'late majority', who are initially more sceptical of adopting such innovations; and 'laggards', who remain sceptical of change. Ultimately, this theory of diffusion of innovation can be usefully applied to collaboration in education through consideration of the range of issues that may affect the adoption of new approaches or innovative ideas, particularly as it relates to the histories and preferences of those within the group or organisation (Reeves et al., 2007) .

Connecting with this, and considering these influencing factors within social systems on not just the adoption of new innovations but on the change process in organisations, May et al. (2009) developed the Normalization Process Theory. This theory explores the considerations for how practices are brought to life in organisations (implementation), how they are embedded into the everyday practice of those involved (embedding), and the long-term sustainability of these changes in practice (integration). By working with and acknowledging the complexity of embedding innovation in organisations, consideration is given to the rationale, purpose, and connection to prior practice. Establishing the participation and collaboration required to bring about such change is also considered. Compatibility and the role of resources, learning, and support to enable the change to come about and to stick, is vital in establishing both cognitive participation and collective action in the change process (Wood, 2017). Throughout such processes, intentional planning to monitor impact and participation in the change process ensures sustainability or integration into everyday practice.

Planning for change and for collaboration during periods of change is increasingly characterised by the use of blended or virtual approaches, where technology is integrated with face-to-face approaches. During the period of writing this dissertation, with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, what has emerged is the reliance on virtual learning communities in order to maintain the day-to-day work of educational organisations, but also to continue development and improvement processes. It should be noted how many teachers have utilised technology to continue engagement with professional learning networks, as well as to support learning (Schleicher, 2020). While this does not necessarily reflect what educators across systems have access to, or account for the complex interplay

of skills and capabilities required for access and success with such approaches, much theorising has been done around virtual learning communities as a means of collaborating and learning (Reeves et al., 2007). Be it through social media or other virtual platforms, incidental or planned, often what educators value about virtual forms of collaboration is the personalised and immediate nature of it, and the sense of community that can be fostered (Carpenter & Krutka, 2014). However, consideration does have to be given to accessibility, individual preferences, power dynamics based on the organisation and moderation of such virtual activity, how to ensure such collaboration can be sustained, and whether or not virtual collaboration can meet the individual or collective needs of those engaging in it (Carpenter, & Krutka, 2014; Willet, 2019).

Many of the points which emerge from the exploration of theories related to collaboration and collaborative endeavours are visible in contemporary discussion around collaboration in education across systems.

### **The Conceptualisation of Collaboration in Education**

At the supranational level, collaboration features as a policy lever and characteristic of effective school and education systems which will be explored in further detail in Chapter 4. Collaboration features as the key element to systemic improvement. UNESCO highlights how collaboration is vital if nations are to achieve the often ambitious and laudable policy aims for their education systems (UNESCO, 2020). The OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), conducted every five years, features much discussion about the importance of cooperation and collaborative cultures. A conflation of terms emerges between collaboration and cooperation, coordination, and participation in relation to how teachers and other stakeholders are involved in the development of practice and decision making (OECD, 2014). Here, a collaborative approach is characterised by the OECD (2014) as participation in decision making, shared responsibility for school issues, and enabling mutual support.

In 2019, teachers responding to the TALIS survey emphasised their view that access to high-quality professional learning was of high importance. Considering the quality of professional learning, teachers believed it had to be characterised by collaboration. This is also supported by the OECD's own analysis, which included an emphasis on opportunities to engage in observation, coaching, and reflection on practice both during induction to the profession for teachers and beyond (OECD, 2019). Effective leadership practice was also described, in part, as ensuring teacher collaboration to support professional learning and decision making.

In analysing collaboration that supports professional learning and development around the world, Kalisz (2018) highlights the importance of collaboration for growth. However, she cautions that collaboration itself will not bring results if consideration is not given to who is collaborating, what they are bringing to the group, and what the expected outcomes of this might be.

### **Leadership of Collaboration**

Collaboration has come to dominate discourse alongside an assumption as to its possibilities for improvement and practice (Head, 2003). Much literature explores various forms of collaboration and the lessons that can be derived from it for the role of leaders and leadership.

Featuring frequently in discussions around the role of leaders is the importance of building community through shared norms of practice, values, and an orientation towards student learning and sustained reflective dialogue (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Conner, 2015). To do so, acknowledging and starting from the cultural context and history of where collaboration is taking place is argued to be important, as well as recognition of the challenge of building cohesion particularly in times of change (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). As such, leaders have the complex task of ensuring that they and their teams keep knowledge fresh, enable the development of skills in collaborating, including making the relationships between adults a discussable element of their practice (Barth, 2006), engage with research, and keep a continual focus on the building and sustenance of trust (Sharratt & Planche, 2016).

However, school leaders alone are not the only stakeholders who will influence effective collaboration, particularly when it comes to system-wide development. The middle tier, often transcending the boundaries of the local and national levels of a system, often has a role in setting and monitoring the agenda, sharing leadership and positional power to enable collaboration to happen, and investing the time and resources that build capacity and offer support for collaboration (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012).

When this support for effective collaboration exists, an emphasis on fostering collective responsibility for the collaborative endeavour itself, as well as practice and improvement agendas, can emerge, ensuring access to relevant expertise between those collaborating, and maintaining mutual accountability for consequential action as a result of the collaboration (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). With that, however, emerges complex concepts and ideas of the role of accountability, and how collaboration is governed.

## **Governance of Collaboration**

The support and development of mutual accountability for collaboration requires consideration not just of the leadership of collaborative activity, but also the governance that supports, enables, or oversees it. There are many systemic structural factors that affect collaboration. This can include the size of the organisations involved in the collaborative processes, the time that is afforded to it, and the skills, experiences, and perceptions of those involved (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). As collaboration has emerged as a pivotal component of public services, professional practice, and a means through which to secure improvement, models of shared governance that support or enable collaboration have begun to emerge. This is frequently characterised by the devolution of decision making and organisational power, and an emphasis on the organic development of priorities and practices that reflect the individuals or groups coming together to collaborate (Slater, 2004).

However, not all collaboration is led or facilitated by leaders or the middle tier of a system. Beginning to emerge in recent decades has been more informal means of collaborating (Willet, 2019; Carpenter & Krutka, 2014). With this has come forms of self-governance through the formal and informal development of shared norms, values, and trust. This contrasts the more formal forms of collaboration which come to require external governance and agreements on ways of working, more often including hierarchical structures for their facilitation and sustainability (Sullivan & Skeltcher, 2002).

## **Structuring Collaboration**

Irrespective of whether or not a collaborative endeavour is brought about by formal organisational processes or informal emergence within related groups, how that collaboration is structured influences the experiences of participants within the process, the possible outcomes of it, and how sustainable it may be. Ensuring support from those involved, a commitment to sharing, and the allocation of time and resources to be together are essential elements to the effective structuring of collaboration (Harfitt & Tavares, 2004; Liu & Tsai, 2017). Given the varying contexts, histories, or experiences of individuals coming together, consideration has to be given to the extent to which the forms of collaboration reflect prior experiences, a sharing of values, and shared goals (Little, 2002; Doppenberg, Bakx, & den Brok, 2012).

Ultimately, when structuring collaboration, those involved in the genesis and maintenance of such collaboration have to consider how they design approaches that enable genuine working together, sharing of knowledge, contribution of ideas, and the formulation of plans and actions for achieving the goals for change or improvement articulated by the

organisation or organisations involved, or the collaborative group themselves (Leonard & Leonard, 2001). Consideration also has to be given to whether or not organisations or systems are structured in such a way that collaboration is able to emerge based on those with a desire to come together with a shared focus or goal.

### **The Role of Culture**

However, establishing these structures or enabling collaboration to emerge is not only a process of intelligent or intentional design. Culture is the habits and beliefs that inform action and practice (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). Despite collaboration being assumed as having value and importance for school improvement and professional learning (Head, 2003), establishing collaborative cultures can prove challenging. Across contexts, not all share an appreciation of the value of collaborative activity, particularly when it is or perceived to be externally imposed (Leonard & Leonard, 2001). Although any time together can be viewed as valuable in establishing relationships and shared understandings of practice and values, formally structured or designed collaborative activity is frequently reported as being minimally effective in supporting authentic change or innovation (Leonard & Leonard, 1999). When it is effective, it is reliant on the clarity of goals for improvement, a shift in culture from a focus on the individual to the collective, and structures that support sustained collaboration (Muijs et al., 2011).

Where collaborative activity has been experienced as valuable and positive, it has been characterised as incorporating norms of sustained communication orientated towards improvement (Datnow, 2018). To get to this point, organisations have to consider individuals' sense of efficacy as collaborators and in relation to professional expertise, as well as the time needed, the coherence of the vision driving improvement or change, and how conflict can be addressed (Leonard & Leonard, 2001). Louis et al. (1996) argues that to develop this sort of culture, at its foundation is conversation and discourse centred on practice, pedagogy, and student learning; revisiting and reinforcing the core beliefs, norms, and values of the community or group coming together to collaborate.

### **The People Dimension**

Collaborative cultures are cultivated through respect for participants as people; people who, rather than becoming consumed by the collaborative group, are fulfilled as individuals through it (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). What this emphasises is the importance of the people involved in collaborative processes. Sullivan and Skelcher's (2002:121) social process framework for understanding collaborative dynamics highlight the importance of starting collaborative endeavours with assessment of the value and possible outcomes for collaboration connecting with the goals of the participants

themselves. This requires consideration of the social nature of constructing collaboration and the ongoing structuring and restructuring of it based on the actions, perceptions, and interpretations of those involved (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002).

Perceptions constructed during collaborative activity are frequently influenced by the interactions experienced. When the expertise of each participant is valued, and those leading the collaboration or leading the organisation within which the collaboration is emerging, demonstrate support, openness to innovation, guidance, trust, and respect for those involved, collaboration is likely to be more successful (Liu & Tsai, 2017; Datnow, 2018).

### **Collaboration and Educational Change or Improvement Agendas**

Even when ensuring the personal fulfilment of the individuals involved in collaborative endeavours, more often than not, collaborative activity is centred around the identification of challenges, the reframing of persistent problems, the development of innovative responses to secure improvement, and building in reflection on action or progress (Sharratt & Planche, 2016). Collaborations can emerge naturally because of the problems of practice or circumstances that individuals share. Frequently, however, due to the influence of systemic and organisational norms and structures, much collaboration can ‘appear contrived, inauthentic, grafted on, perched precariously (and often temporarily) on the margins of real work’ (Little, 1990:510), hence the varied perception and beliefs as to the benefits of collaborative activity.

Both organisationally driven and naturally emerging forms of collaboration can come about because of the shared characteristics of those collaborating (Atkinson et al., 2007). Sharing of expertise to support other institutions, organisations, or individuals with their development priorities can be a driver. Frequently, where organisations have a shared stake in the communities they serve, collaboration can emerge in order to meet the needs of those communities, irrespective of political support or input (Spillane & Seashore, 2002). Where individuals or organisations share common needs, collaborative activity can emerge to collectively address common challenges. Where innovation or creativity emerges, individuals and organisations may come together to extend, scale up, or innovate together based on shared interests (Atkinson et al., 2007).

Overall, when collaboration is done well, individuals can have a significant impact on improvement agendas within the communities of practice they operate in, and frequently report increased confidence in their own abilities, greater self-efficacy, and a higher degree of job satisfaction (OECD, 2013).

## Conclusion

Figure 2, at the beginning of this chapter, aimed to broadly outline how the phenomena of collaboration can be theorised and conceptualised. Characteristics of collaborative approaches highlight joint working around a shared focus, where individuals and organisations can come together to take joint action. This can be manifested and understood through communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), the development of social capital (Hargreaves, 2003), and the sharing and mobilising of explicit and tacit knowledge (Senge, 2012). The forms collaboration can take can be articulated, as in Figure 3, on a spectrum of collaboration, ranging from networking and coordinating to cooperating and collaborating. The forms that collaboration takes and how it might be grouped within that spectrum, will depend on the purpose and aims articulated by those involved in the collaborative activity (Hanford et al., 1997).

Whether or not collaboration emerges naturally between individuals and organisations sharing a common goal, or if it is mandated as an organisational or systemic construct in response to improvement priorities, consideration has to be given to the leadership, governance, and structure of collaboration. These three elements will influence the genesis, impact, both in relation to the stated aims of the collaborative activity and the professional development that results for those involved, and the sustainability of such collaboration (Leonard & Leonard, 2001). Alongside this, culture, the individuals involved, and the educational change or improvement agendas that collaborative activity can be tied to, will all influence the genesis, impact, and sustainability of collaboration. Through consideration of each of those elements, an appreciation of the complexity of collaboration as a concept, and as a form of activity or way of working begins to emerge. While there exists a plethora of literature looking at forms of collaboration and the conditions for it, relatively little is still known about how this complex interplay of various factors affecting collaboration affects how collaboration is defined, utilised, and evaluated. The next chapter outlines the methodology of this study in order to begin to understand the nature of collaboration, how it is understood and operationalised across systems, the discourse that surrounds it, and how this relates to the lived reality of collaboration using Scotland as a case. In doing so, possibilities will be explored as to how consideration of this could enable more sustainable and successful forms of collaboration that match the intention behind their use.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## Introduction

Outlined in the first two chapters has been the complex forms and functions of collaboration in education and the centrality it has in policy responses in education systems around the world. Added to this are the complex influences that affect the engagement with and outcomes of collaboration as a policy mechanism and lived experience in education contexts. This highlights a possible gap in how what characterises collaboration is understood, how the influencing factors that affect it interact, and the consequences this has for how collaboration is conceptualised, utilised, and evaluated in the various forms it takes across systems.

This study emerged from an acute appreciation of the complexity of collaboration as a lived experience, and by consequence, the complexity of its application as a policy mechanism and in contexts of practice. Given the dominance it has in global education policy, particularly with recent policy development in Scotland (OECD, 2015a), the central thesis of this study was to build an understanding of how collaboration is understood in the literature and policy contexts, how that is brought to life in practice, what influences it in the range of forms it emerges in, and in doing so, obtain greater conceptual clarity and understanding of the possibilities of collaboration for a variety of applications across education systems. From this emerged the following questions:

- How is collaboration defined conceptually and practically in education?
  - How is collaboration presented in the literature and in policy?
  - How is collaboration understood in practice?
- What role do policy actors and school leaders believe collaboration has in tackling challenges in education?
- What role could collaboration play in tackling challenges in education?

## Epistemology

Deciding on the most suitable approach to answer these research questions arose from a reflection on and analysis of my own epistemological, and methodological assumptions. Doing so brought to light the assumptions and beliefs I held as to the nature of knowledge and the knowledge that might be derived from the study, as well as my role as a researcher within it, and the possible outcomes of it. Underpinning this are ontological assumptions relating to held beliefs on what constitutes reality, and this influences the epistemological stances taken on the nature of knowledge and how it can be constructed through research (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011; Coe et al., 2017). In trying to decide the best

methodological approach to answer my research questions, while also trying to understand my own positionality as a researcher, I found it challenging to align exactly within particular ontological and epistemological paradigms.

To understand collaboration in the contexts of policy development and implementation, I opted for an interpretive approach to policy analysis. Such an approach required the analysis of representations of policy problems and mechanisms, how they are framed, and the forms of representation they take (Browne et al., 2018). In doing so, such research can offer insight and contribute to informed judgement in relation to the research questions, and the possible practical consequences that could result (Trowler, 2003).

As such, I affirm that knowledge or reality is constructed as a result of how individuals both construct and share perspectives on reality and phenomena (Young & Collin, 2004). While epistemically, I believe knowledge is socially constructed through active cognition and perception that can be individual and shared (Cohen et al., 2018), I hold an element of pragmatism in the sense that such perceptions and constructions of knowledge can have an element of plasticity, as a result of the social actors influencing the knowledge derivation process (Krauss, 2005). For this plasticity to influence the construction of knowledge and new practical reality, such knowledge and ideas have to be applied to practice and the outcomes of this must be reflected on (Dewey, 1938;1997). As such, knowledge is not fixed, and based on new understandings, there is the possibility of coming to new understandings of realities and phenomena that individuals experience and have already developed perceptions of. In addition, broader application can be derived for knowledge that emerges from such research, alongside reflection on and within the context of emergence and application.

By aligning with a particular research paradigm, I recognised my positionality as a researcher as being within the interpretivist paradigm and the social constructivist tradition. While recognising that social constructivism is thoroughly relativist, to align directly with this I found too limiting, in the sense that while all pictures of reality might give us an understanding of phenomena under study, they are not all necessarily equal (Marshall, Kelder, & Perry, 2005) in terms of applicability to lived realities of policy making and practice. This is where I saw a place for pragmatism within socially constructed, interpretivist research.

Within a positivist paradigm, researchers would search for true knowledge based on how closely it corresponds to reality; however, within an interpretivist domain, a pragmatist searches for knowledge based on how particular propositions, theories, or knowledge can be productively applied to practice (Wicks & Freeman, 1998). Thus, as a school-based

professional and post-graduate researcher on a professional doctorate programme, I describe my positioning as a researcher within the interpretivist paradigm as a pragmatic social constructivist; committed to understanding the multiple realities and what shapes them, with an emphasis on understanding how this can aid and be applied to practice. Such positioning aided this research by enabling the analysis of broader concerns of empowerment, politics, and the historical and cultural localities that influence experience (Dewey, 1938; 1997; Morgan, 2014).

## Positionality

Awareness and clarity of the positionality of the researcher aids not only the transparency of the study and its approach but can increase the nuance and complexity of the insights derived from the research (Breault, 2017). The nature of a professional doctorate demands a huge amount of reflexivity where, in my own case, it positions researchers uniquely in relation to the actors and contexts under study (Burnard, Dragovic, Ottewell, & Lim, 2018). The intersection of place, space, actors, and each of their associated influences required on-going self-reflection on how the interpretation of this may offer new insights or ways of being as a professional and a researcher. I believe that my alignment with pragmatic social constructivism was a product of this and was what has stimulated my interest in the intersection of policy, practice, and theory. Burnard et al., (2018) affirm that policy is the background to which practice, theory, and knowledge operate, as demonstrated in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: ‘The Professional Doctorate’ (Burnard et al., 2018:42)**

Figure 4 aligns with my experiences as a researching professional operating in the spaces or domains of practice and research. I recognise the influence, as a consequence of engaging in a professional doctorate, my stake as a member of the teaching profession, my

workplace(s), and the university through which I engage in learning and research, has on my practice, the knowledge I develop, and the theorising I am able to do as a result of this. The illuminating insights into the interconnections between and influences on the local, middle tier, national and supranational levels of systems that doctoral level learning offers (Fox & Slade, 2013), and how this is often tied together through the framing of policy agendas and landscapes (Burnard et al., 2018), is what led me to a research study centring on the policy context and aiming to understand the phenomenon of collaboration both in discourse and practice. In addition to the influence of doctoral studies on this interest in policy, the significance of the policy context that has become increasingly clear in practice and in the literature around collaboration was significant. The far-reaching influence of supranational policy making and advisory work in how collaboration has developed a dominance in local, middle tier, and national level policy, practice, and discourse around school improvement and educational change (Datnow, 2018), all contributed to my professional and research interests in how policy has influenced our framing and understanding of collaboration. This also expanded into how actors within the system interpret and make sense of this framing of collaboration in policy, and bring it to life in practice, and what this could mean for the possibilities of collaboration as a policy mechanism and characteristic of professional or organisational practices.

The policy context, particularly in public education, exercises significant influence on how practice, knowledge, and theory, and the theorising of these is shaped and understood (Burnard et al., 2018). Given the most common model of policy development being one directional, from those governing policy agenda development processes, to implementation in contexts of practice, there can be an ongoing negotiation of what policy can actually offer practice, and how those charged with implementation actually bring policy priorities and mechanisms to life (Trowler, 2003). Often, policy eschews the complexity of systems or the realities within which goals or visions of reformed systems need to come to life (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Considine (1994) describes policy as being more of a recipe than a blueprint, given the level of interpretation that is required to operationalise much of it. As such, policy could be described as being ‘designed to steer understanding and action without ever being sure of the practices it might produce’ (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010:5). In essence, it is not always a given that the policy goals or mechanisms necessarily become the reality in practice, irrespective of the buy in of actors or the forms of governance that surround it. It is necessary to understand the interpretative and meaning-making processes that happen in order to understand the practices that emerge and the policy goals that are or are not met. Consequentially, I argue that the outcomes of policy tend not to necessarily be

a direct consequence of policy text, goals, and mechanisms; rather, they are shaped by influences and characteristics of the context of practice, knowledge development, and wider theorising related to this (Trowler, 2003). With that, I believed policy analysis had to be central to constructing a broader understanding of the phenomenon of collaboration, if an understanding of the complexity and possibilities of it was to be possible.

## **Context Under Study**

Being Scottish, having completed my initial teacher education in Scotland, as well as my first two jobs as a teacher, masters-level study, and now a doctoral degree at the University of Glasgow, I have a strong investment and interest in the Scottish education system.

Discussion of the Scottish education system most often centres around compulsory education from the ages of 5-16 years, while also incorporating the significant role and contribution of early years settings (0-5 years), additional support for learning provisions, and post-school education including colleges, universities, and community education (Smith, 2018).

As outlined in Chapter 1, the Scottish education policy context over the past decade has had a renewed emphasis on the role of collaboration. For the purpose of this study, the conceptualisation of policy, as articulated by Rizvi and Lingard (2010:5), is utilised, where policy given its level of generality in relation to practice, is viewed as ‘more like a recipe than a blueprint’. Given the function of policy in guiding understanding, direction, and action, offering ‘an imagined future state of affairs’, a significant level of interpretation is required in sites of practice that form the context the policy is aimed at (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010:5). Stimulated by the Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services in Scotland, and the report from which it was published in 2011, there was a renewed emphasis on partnership working, empowering individuals and communities, and increased efficiency through the sharing of services across the public sector in Scotland. This combined with the OECD’s 2015 report on ‘Improving Schools in Scotland’, lay the foundations for a significant emphasis on collaboration across the education system, and particularly collaboration that brings about improvement. The OECD (2015a) highlighted that while there was a great deal of collaboration being reported, further exploration was needed into the forms it was taking and which would be most effective in supporting improvement agendas and innovation in the education system; culminating in a more ‘coherent and cohesive culture of system-wide collaboration’ (OECD, 2015a:17).

Since its publication and the associated discussion across the system of how these agendas for policy development should be brought to life, there has been three key policy outcomes that have had significant implications for how collaboration is understood and

operationalised in the Scottish system. The Education Governance Review (Scottish Government, 2017b) led to the establishment of RICs, which emphasise sharing across local authorities, being tied to empowerment agendas, and the integration of service provision where possible (Scottish Government, 2011a). Since their inception in January 2018, the 'Regional Improvement Collaboratives: Interim Review' (Scottish Government, 2019a) highlighted the need for RICs to develop further collaboration, and instead of formulating new bodies, use the RICs as an opportunity to work in partnership and add value to the system through collective effort and endeavours.

Even with collaboration in the Scottish policy context being linked with governance and the associated structures across the system, it is tied to improvement work as well. The NIF (Scottish Government, 2016a) and its associated delivery plan (Scottish Government, 2017b) were stimulated by the OECD (2015a) report and sought to offer a framework for improvement activity across all layers of the Scottish education system. Now published annually alongside an improvement plan, the function of the NIF is to focus on the two aims of excellence and equity in Scottish education, and to act as the single plan to secure improvement across the education system. Central to these improvement agendas is the Scottish Government's vision of developing 'with our partners an empowered and collaborative system, where everyone's contribution is heard and valued, and improving children and young people's outcomes is at the heart of everything we do' (Scottish Government, 2019b:2). Here, collaboration is tied directly to both the vision for education in Scotland, as well as how policy goals will be met, with potentially significant consequences for the lived reality of collaboration at all levels of the system.

## **Methodology**

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that the focus and purpose of policy analysis are important in deciding on the best methodological fit for the study. Linked with this, Ball (2008) affirms that it is the research purpose alongside the researcher positionality that should frame the methodological considerations for a study. Bell and Stevenson (2006) argue that it is not possible to build a complete understanding of social phenomena and practices that take place within educational institutions, without analysis of the policy and policy context that underpin or influence it.

As such, I selected interpretive policy analysis for this study. In doing so, I was able to explore the meanings policies have for a broad range of actors involved or affected by them (Yanow, 2000). This links directly with the aims of the study in trying to establish how collaboration is understood in policy, how it is brought to life in practice, and the definition and intentions of collaboration that could be derived from the policy texts. This

also enabled insight into what this could mean for the possibilities of collaboration as a policy mechanism and a specific goal of policies.

While this study did not utilise interpretive policy analysis to understand one policy or social problem, and how it was addressed through policy, as is the case with much interpretive policy analysis, this study looked at particular policy mechanisms relating to collaboration, and how they connect to the stated objectives of policy, using Scottish education as a case. How the collaborative elements of these policy mechanisms are defined, and the narratives that surround and influence the possibilities of them in relation to a range of policy aims and objectives is explored.

The analytical focus of an interpretive orientation to policy analysis is establishing meaning (Browne et al., 2018). Given the significance of the emergence of collaboration at a policy level and the consequences this has for the forms that emerge in practice, and the associated lived experiences, interpretive policy analysis enables the exploration of the complex factors that influence the genesis, sustenance, and outcomes of collaboration, as well as the application of a range of methods to do so.

## **Methods**

This study explores the complexity of collaboration conceptually and the implications this has for practice in the literature, and in the domains of policy and practice. In addition, this study investigates the dominance that collaboration, as a term, has in policy and discourse in education for tackling challenges, such as the poverty related attainment gap and sustained school improvement, how it has developed such dominance in educational discourse, establishing the extent to which there is a shared understanding of its meaning and how it is conceptualised, and how this is reflected in practice. Finally, this study discusses how understanding the complexity of collaboration conceptually and the implications this has for practice could foster new ways of understanding, analysing, and planning for collaboration.

### **Policy Analysis**

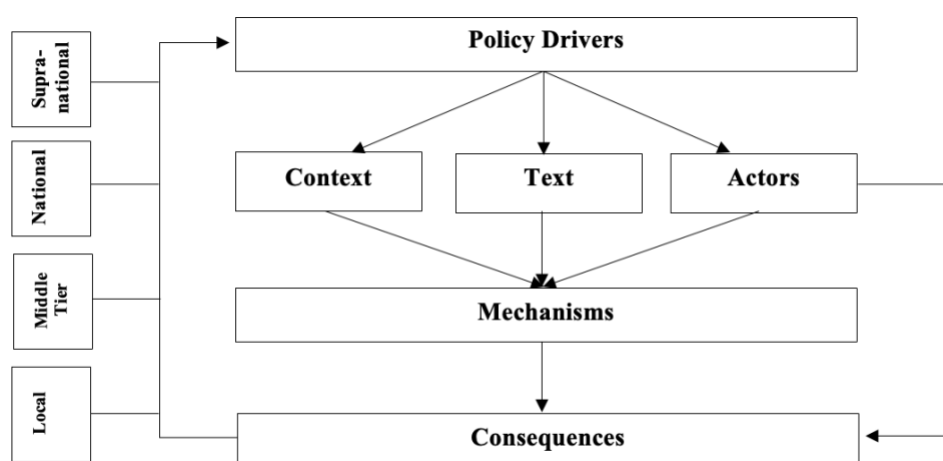
Adamson and Åstrand (2016) and Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Sellar (1997) highlight that to truly understand the historical and contemporary contexts of national education policy, it is necessary to appreciate the dominant influences of a range of local, middle tier, and national level actors, as well as supranational forces that favour dominant ideologies visible the world over. To understand the complex interplay between policy agendas, actors, and broader influences in the realisation of policy goals, Walt and Gilson (1994) highlight the need for analysis of policy content, context, process, and actors. Content refers to the key components, plan for implementation, and what is identified as the

problem(s) and solution(s); context is the political conditions, wider systemic factors, and broader socio-economic conditions that influence the policy agenda; process encompasses how policy is formed, the process or strategy for implementation, and the challenges that may come with this; and actors are the policy makers, influencing groups (e.g. non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs)), and communities with a stake in the policy agenda (O'Brien et al., 2020; Walt & Gilson, 1994). Rather than focusing on only one of these elements, a focus on all four enables accounting for the complexity of the policy making process, what is problematised and what is not, the chosen mechanisms and their implications for practice, and why certain goals of policy decisions may become a reality or not (Browne et al., 2018).

In addition, Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) highlight the importance of considering the 'context', 'text' and 'consequences' of education policy during the process of critical analysis. The policy 'context', when analysing policy initiation, development, and implementation, refers to the socio-economic and political drivers, the varying influence of a range of policy actors and the history of a given policy. The policy 'text' refers to the content of the policy, its presentation, and the associated discourse at different levels of policy development from initiation to implementation. The policy 'consequences' refer to the outcomes of a given policy, intended or otherwise, or the varying impact and realisation of policy goals (Bell & Stevenson, 2006:13, Taylor et al., 1997).

However, these influences are not solely located within the local and middle tier levels within national education systems; there are supranational influences often at play. The framework developed by Adamson and Åstrand (2016:7) serves as a model to support the analysis of education policy, focusing on 'policy drivers', 'economic rationales', and 'education mechanisms'. When exploring these internationally, dominant global socio-political cultures become clear to see across diverse national or regional systems. This is exemplified through examples such as neoliberalism, evident through free-market dominance, deregulation and decentralization, and the economic efficiency or return of education, versus public investment, emphasising social democratic models of public investment and state management of education (Adamson & Åstrand, 2016). This framework offers an added dimension to the analysis of aims, context, and the consequences of policy mechanisms or policy themes. Analysing these three elements in the context of collaboration in Scottish education policy offers interesting insights into the emergence of particular forms of collaboration within specific areas of focus, the mechanisms utilised with a focus on implications for practice, and the relationship between each of these elements.

The application of what Walt and Gibson (1994), and Taylor et al., (1997) outline as critical elements of any framework for policy analysis, complimented by the framing offered by Adamson and Åstrand (2016), enabled this study to explore the drivers, outcomes, implications and wider socio-political contexts and agendas influencing the growing dominance of collaboration in Scottish education policy, the meanings, understandings, and assumptions inherent within both policy and policy processes, and what the implications are and could be for practice at the local, middle tier, and national levels of education in Scotland. Considering this, I have represented my analytical framework in Figure 5.



**Figure 5: A Framework for Analysis**

Analysis of policy drivers enabled the exploration of how problems are set, solutions are developed, and how policy goals and mechanisms overall are rationalised and legitimised within broader national and supranational drivers (Adamson & Åstrand, 2016). Given the significant role of collaboration as a mechanism for and characteristic of contemporary policy development, aligned in recent decades with modernisation agendas in the public sector in Scotland, the U.K., and beyond (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Head, 2003), analysing the policy drivers was key to establishing the definition or defining elements of collaboration in policy, what this means for the lived reality in practice, and consequentially, the possibilities for it conceptually and practically.

The contexts of policy development and implementation require analysis in order to understand the contextual influences and interactions within and across the system, also known as policy conditions, that affect how policy agendas are received, negotiated, implemented, and evaluated (Cairney, 2012). This enables a process of sense making of the complex policy process, and in the context of collaboration, the development of an understanding of what affects the form, nature, and success of collaboration that emerges through policy mechanisms, or as a consequence of them. The text associated with a

policy, referring to the content of a given policy, is what frames the discourse that surrounds it, and this discourse goes on to influence how a policy agenda is implemented (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Within the context of collaboration in Scotland, how collaboration is presented and framed in the text of associated policy offers insights into the definition or defining characteristics of collaboration and collaborative approaches, as well as the narrative that surrounds the rationale of their use; shedding light on why collaboration has developed and retains such a dominant place in policy and practice in education.

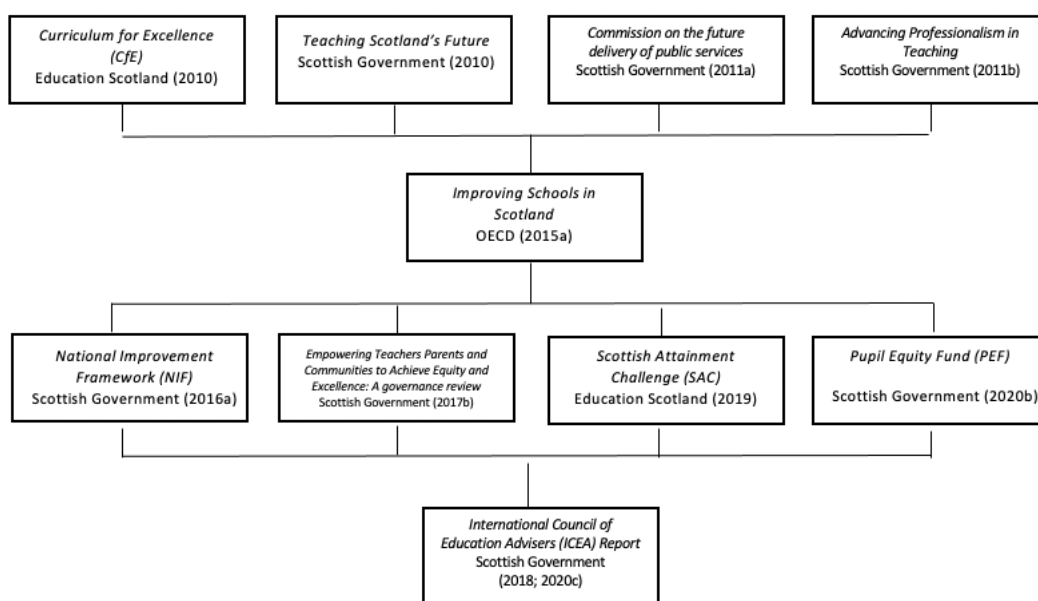
Frequently, in policy analysis, mainstream orientations address the role of actors in the policy development and implementation processes through exploration of the voices, values, and political agendas that are at stake in relation to areas of policy. However, this study is concerned with how actors within the system, both in policy development and implementation processes, define policy problems and their associated mechanisms, and how they interact with the context of practice, the text of policy, and the other contextual factors such as culture, norms, resources, and expectations (Browne et al., 2018). Through such analysis, insight is offered into how collaboration is framed in policy, understood in practice, the possibilities of it, and new insights that can be gleaned, which can then inform further policy development processes.

Collaboration features as a key mechanism embedded within education and broader public policy agendas, the forms of which can feature as policy goals themselves (Chapman, 2019a; Datnow, 2018; Sullivan & Skeltcher, 2002). Inherent within collaboration as a mechanism, and forms of collaboration as a policy goal itself, are possibilities to derive definitions of collaboration and the conditions necessary for it. As such, within the context of this study, analysis of the policy mechanisms related to collaboration in education in Scotland further enables the exploration of how collaboration is understood in relation to how it is mobilised in practice, how it supports the meeting of broader policy goals, and the possibilities of collaboration in relation to improvement agendas.

As a result of the implementation of policy, and the mobilisation in practice of associated policy mechanisms, it is possible to begin to derive the consequences of policy. There is a complex interplay between the stated intention of policy texts, and how actors interpret this. This can lead to variation in how policy is implemented, and a range of consequences that result from a policy agenda and its associated mechanisms. In addition, varied consequences can result depending on the actors or contexts involved. Analysing all of this offers insights into how particular policy goals are met, as well as the role of particular policy mechanisms in achieving those goals (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Within the context

of collaboration in Scotland, understanding the consequences of collaboration as a policy mechanism for a range of policy goals offers insight into the complexity of collaboration as a concept and practice, and what this means for the possibilities of it in the pursuit of improvement and other policy agendas in Scottish education.

Key milestones in education policy development in Scotland can arguably be traced to key policy texts which signified a shift in discourse and practice. Some of these that have had a significant impact on the Scottish education system are outlined in Figure 6.



**Figure 6: Key Scottish Education Policy Developments (2010-2020)**

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (Education Scotland, 2010), the McCormac review ‘Advancing Professionalism in Teaching’ (Scottish Government, 2011b), and the Donaldson review ‘Teaching Scotland’s Future’ (Scottish Government, 2010), together marked a shift in thinking and practice in relation to school education across the system. CfE placed a new responsibility on both local and middle-tier level actors for locally developed approaches to curriculum, learning, teaching, and assessment. This sat alongside the far-reaching consequences of both the Donaldson and McCormac reviews for teacher education and employment, with implications for collaboration across the system embodied in new means of supporting the professional learning of teachers and characterising the professional work of teachers through revised professional standards (GTCS, 2012b). Collaboration emerged as a renewed component of conceptions of what it means to be professional, embodied both in professional standards for provisional and full registration with the GTCS, but also in the national model of professional learning (Education Scotland, 2020). Education as a public service was not alone in seeing a renewed emphasis on collaboration. The Christie Commission on the future delivery of

public services in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2011a) highlighted a future direction for the efficiency and impact of public service delivery, with implications particularly for the middle tier of the system or local authorities. A few years later saw the OECD (2015a) report 'Improving Schools in Scotland', with many connections to McCormac, Donaldson, and Christie, which marked a clear emphasis on the governance, leadership, and practice of collaboration across the Scottish education system. Consequentially, the OECD (2015a) report then stimulated a renewed emphasis and associated work within the Scottish system on equity and excellence. This emphasis on equity and excellence was evident in the development of the annual NIF (Scottish Government, 2016a), a review of education governance in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017) leading to the development of RICs, and the establishment of the SAC (Education Scotland, 2019), including the PEF (Scottish Government, 2020b). Monitoring and supporting these developments has been an International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA). This council was established to advise the Scottish Government on their priorities for education through policy and practice, ensure international exemplification influences their decision making, and advise the government on how they report and plan as a result of the annual NIF. This council publish biennial reports on the progress of the Scottish education system (Scottish Government, 2020c).

Each of these policy developments feature collaboration to varying degrees. To explore how collaboration is presented in policy, and its function as a goal or mechanisms, analysis of these key policy texts is presented. The texts selected were:

Title	Text	Note(s)
OECD, 2015 – Improving Schools in Scotland	OECD. (2015). Improving Schools in Scotland. An OECD Perspective. Paris: OECD.	The report, which placed a renewed emphasis on collaboration, linked directly with national and more localised improvement agendas.
Scottish Government, 2016a – NIF	Scottish Government. (2016a). National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education. Edinburgh, Scottish Government.	Published annually alongside an improvement plan to drive the national and localised improvement agenda for education in Scotland.
Scottish Government, 2020a – NIF	Scottish Government. (2020a). National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education. Edinburgh, Scottish Government.	
Scottish Government, 2017b – Education Governance Review	Scottish Government. (2017b). Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: governance review. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.	The review of education governance in Scotland.
Education Scotland, 2019 – SAC – PEF	Education Scotland. (2019). Scottish Attainment Challenge Self-Evaluation Resource (DRAFT). Retrieved from: <a href="https://education.gov.scot/media/">https://education.gov.scot/media/</a>	Together aimed at enabling and supporting innovative practice to tackle the poverty related attainment gap in

	qwpkexmm/sacselfevaluationresource draft .pdf	Scotland within the context of the NIF
Scottish Government, 2020b – SAC	Scottish Government. (2020b). Pupil Equity Funding: national operational guidance 2020. Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-equity-funding-national-operational-guidance-2020/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/ pupil-equity-funding-national- operational-guidance-2020/</a>	

**Table 1: Key Policy Texts**

During the period of 2015-2020 that is under study, the Scottish Government has sought to address significant inequities in the system, with a particular focus on the poverty related attainment gap (Sosu & Ellis, 2014). The documents selected and presented in Table 1 form the basis for the analysis of policy related to collaboration in Scottish education, using the framework outlined in Figure 5. The inclusion criteria for these texts were their emphasis on collaboration as a goal or mechanism to achieve the stated goals, their contemporary relevance at the time of the study, focused on 2015-2020, and how collaboration was being linked to improvement agendas at different levels of the system. Given that this emphasis was stimulated in a large part by the OECD (2015a) report, these texts identified in Table 1 were also selected based on their genealogy being linked back to this report. Each of these texts in Table 1 are the basis for analysis of the policy drivers, policy text, the wider context, the interaction of actors at different stages of the policy development process, and the consequences of the mechanisms outlined or that result from the policy text. This is supported with associated documents such as press releases, media output, and practical exemplification.

The policy texts selected illustrate the actions that the Scottish Government sought to and are taking in order to address perceived policy problems, with these developments illustrating an emphasis on the devolution of decision making to more local levels, and

‘collaboration’ and ‘partnership’ (Scottish Government, 2017b:32). As such, associated policy and policy mechanisms have centred on the necessary structural reform that is hoped will result in the needed changes and improvements across the system (Humes, 2020).

The professional standards for teachers (GTCS, 2012a) could have been a focus for analysis in this study, given the important role they play as a tool to support policy implementation and as a support for professional dialogue (McMahon, 2021). However, for the aims and parameters of this study, the key policy texts were selected based on their explicit connection to a change or improvement agenda, and their articulated reliance on collaboration as a tool, process, and outcome in order to secure improvement and change. These texts enable an investigation of the dominance of collaboration as a discursive term and a focus in policy that seeks to tackle systemic challenges. While the professional standards could usefully illuminate important insights into how collaboration is understood and mobilised to support policy and its implementation, this was judged as being beyond the scope of this study. In addition, during the period of 2015-2020 that this study focuses on, the professional standards were under a period of review, with the revised set of professional standards not being published until 2021. Future research could productively explore the nature of collaboration as presented in the professional standards, and how this relates to its manifestation and the outcomes of it in practice.

### ***Analysis of Key Policy Texts***

Drawing upon the analytical approaches associated with a general inductive approach as outlined by Thomas (2006:241) and King and Horrocks (2010:153), alongside the framework method, also known as qualitative content analysis or thematic analysis as articulated by Braun and Clark (2006), the general inductive analysis of the key policy texts followed a five-stage process, more frequently applied to transcribed data from qualitative research methods. These included:

- An initial reading of the key policy texts;
- The identification of key words, patterns and themes arising with segments of text selected;
- Labelling of selected segments of text using descriptive coding;
- The collation of the descriptive codes into broader themes; and
- Based on the interpreted relationship, the overarching dimensions of collaboration as understood in these key policy texts, were created (see Appendix 2).

This drew upon the matrix element of a framework method. As with the process above, a framework method to qualitative data analysis requires the use of interconnected stages for a systematic approach, from the initial coding of data to the development of broader themes and dimensions that emerge (Smith & Firth, 2011). This methodical approach to the collation, initial analysis, and connecting across texts, ensured the process of analysis was transparent, rigorous, and credible (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In Appendix 4, it is illustrated how the theoretical framework outlined in Figure 2, and the framework for analysis outlined in Figure 5, were also utilised to support the subsequent analysis and discussion of the emerging themes from the policy texts.

Drawing upon the exemplification of Gale et al. (2013) in the context of interview data analysis, the defining elements of a framework matrix method to the collation, analysis, and presentation of the data and the coding process that were used were of a tabular format. Rows identified the data sources (see Table 1), and columns highlighted keyword usage, quotations from the policy text, and connections to the framework for analysis (Figure 5), the theoretical framework (Figure 2), the literature, and emerging themes (see Appendix 4).

Frequently, the critical analysis of policy relies solely on policy text(s) and sources that exemplify the associated discourse in order to understand a given policy focus, approach, or challenge. However, Dee, Jacob, and Schwartz (2011:150) argue that ‘given the complexity of the policy and the nature of its implementation’, one analytical tool or discussion is not sufficient to develop an understanding of patterns or tensions that may emerge from such a study; instead, a breadth of sources and approaches to analysis is required. Considering this, the present study utilised a range of analytical tools and methods which enabled a comprehensive study of the emergence of the concept of collaboration in policy, discourse and practice, and what this can tell us about the function and possibilities of collaboration in education in Scotland.

## **Interviews**

Historically, research that focuses on education policy has failed to address issues of how policy relates to the actors involved in its implementation or sense-making (Ball, 1994). Ball (1994:19) argues that ‘We tend to begin by assuming the adjustment of teachers and context to policy but not of policy to context. There is a privileging of the policymaker’s reality’. As such, I wanted to ensure that this study explores the conceptualisation, meaning, forms, and consequences of collaboration, both through the policy and its associated discourse, as well as the lived reality of professionals working across the system to bring it to life.

Bernstein (2000) highlights that policy is often re-contextualized or reshaped through the process of implementation by policy actors and those often charged with implementation. Considering this, interviews were conducted with five headteachers from two local authorities in Scotland, utilising my own professional networks and colleagues to recruit participants to glean their understanding, as policy actors, of collaboration as a concept, the role it plays as presented in policy, the role it plays when manifested in practice, and the opportunities and challenges that come with this. This enabled the exploration of any alignment or tension that arose with how collaboration is defined or understood conceptually, both in policy and in practice, and what this may mean for the form that it takes, and the possible consequences or outcomes of it (see Appendix 3).

### ***Participants***

When it comes to the enactment of policy or the change processes that come with it, school leaders and the stakeholders that surround practice in school at both the local and middle tier levels of education systems are key in bringing these changes to life and making decisions on both the form that changes may take, or whether they happen at all (Bell & Stevenson, 2015; Viennet & Pont, 2017). To gain an insight into how school leaders and other stakeholders go about enacting policy in relation to collaboration in education in Scotland, random sampling, with an element of a purposive sampling method was used to recruit five primary school headteachers working in different local authorities. Initially, the broadest range of local authorities and RICs within the scope of this study was sought. However, due to insufficient responses to the invitation to participate, and the time and travel constraints of the research and headteachers involved, two local authorities and one RIC were represented. The purposive element was in the range of local authorities, school sizes, and community type (geographical characteristics). Given the potential volume of data possible through the use of vignettes as well as related questions, alongside the analysis of policy and the conceptualisation of collaboration in the literature, five interviews were determined as offering a sufficient data set, and insight into the emergence of collaboration in practice, within the scope of this study. Once ethical approval was obtained from the University of Glasgow's College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1), invitations were sent directly to headteachers, with permission from the local authority to invite them to take part. Invitations were sent to a range of headteachers, selected based on their school size and context type (geographical characteristics) (see Table 2).

This combined method of sampling was chosen in order to ensure that there was limited bias that could have emerged had I relied only on my own professional networks to select

participants in a solely purposive sample. In addition, a random sampling method for the recruitment of participants through invitation, with a purposive element to the invitation based on the characteristics outlined in Table 2, ensured that there would be a possibility of varied perspectives offered, and maximum scope for the exploration of a range of professional characteristics, experiences, and influencing factors on understanding and enabling collaboration in practice (Morse, 2017; Tongco, 2007). While multiple participants from a shared context, school type, or local authority on their own could have offered multiple perspectives with shared systemic factors or influences, given that collaboration in the contemporary Scottish policy context remains under researched, it is arguably more important at this stage to build a broad picture of how collaboration is understood and cultivated across a range of contexts. While participants do share a RIC, the purpose of this study is not to draw conclusions in relation to this particular RIC, however, consideration is given to this in the analysis of the data that makes reference to experiences as part of a RIC.

The primary education sector was selected due to my own familiarity with the sector as a Scottish primary teacher. Headteachers were selected given the complex role they play in the cultivation and enabling of collaboration in their schools and communities (Troman, 1996), and the complex process of negotiation between competing stakeholder and policy demands that influence their work and the work of their school (Rauch, 1999).

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Local Authority (LA)</b>	<b>School Size (Roll)</b>	<b>Early Years Provision and Primary (Y/N)</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
1	A	400+	Y	10+ Years' service to LA.
2	A	200-300	Y	Multiple LA experience.
3	A	300-400	N	
4	B	200-300	N	Non-Mainstream Headteacher.
5	B	< 100 (per school*)	Y	*Headteacher of multiple semi-rural schools.

**Table 2: Participant Information**

When conducting the interviews, participants were given a copy of the participant information sheet and asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 2). Withdrawal was possible at any stage. All participants agreed to having their interviews recorded

electronically, which was done using a Dictaphone, and then latterly transcribed (see Appendix 6).

### ***Vignettes***

Given the political importance and high priority placed on collaboration in educational discourse, policy, and practice, and the relationship collaboration has to both governance and accountability structures in the Scottish education system, discovering individuals' perceptions, ideas and definitions related to collaboration becomes increasingly complex. Barter and Reynold (1999) describe this as possible sensitivity of certain topics due to potential personal or professional connections or consequences; hence, methodological consideration had to be given to this. Barter & Reynold (1999) go on to discuss the use of vignettes as a tool for interviews that offers a less personal means of exploring potentially difficult or sensitive topics compared with direct questions, irrespective of whether they are open or closed.

While not necessarily being a sensitive topic, given that collaboration has a dominant position in contemporary discourse and policy, using solely open-ended interview questions could result in responses simply aligning with dominant discourse to avoid speaking against policy or practice, rather than eliciting personal perspectives on the nature, forms, and outcomes of collaboration, regardless of intention. Referenced in Barter and Reynold (1999), Hill (1997:177) describes vignettes as 'short scenarios... to elicit responses to typical scenarios'. Hazel (1995:2) notes they could also be 'concrete examples of people and their behaviours on which participants can offer comment or opinion'.

Utilising this tool was intended to enable a more comprehensive and honest discussion around the complexities and practical factors and influences on collaboration in practice, illuminating complimentary insights on the role of collaboration in tackling educational challenges, as well as the factors that could be influencing any role it might play. Barter and Reynold (1999) go on to highlight the consideration that must be given to the unknown extent to which participant responses to vignettes reflect authentic action. To account for this, I used follow-up or related open-ended questions to also extend the responses obtained from the vignettes (see Appendices 3 and 6).

### ***Analysis of Interview Data***

As soon as the data were collected and transcribed, through a general inductive approach, the process of identifying patterns and the themes that arose began. The approach to the analysis of key policy texts, as discussed above, drew upon the analytical approaches associated with a general inductive approach, as outlined by Thomas (2006:241) and King

and Horrocks (2010:153). This approach has also been employed for the analysis of interview data. The five-stage process (Braun & Clark, 2006) employed included:

- An initial reading of the transcribed data;
- The identification of patterns and themes arising;
- Segments of text labelled using descriptive coding;
- The collation of the descriptive codes into broader themes; and
- Then based on the interpreted relationship, overarching dimensions of collaboration were created (see Appendix 6).

As already outlined in the discussion of the analysis of key policy texts, this methodical approach ensured the process of analysis of the data was transparent, rigorous, and credible, while also remaining true to the voices of participants (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). To support this process, a tabular format with rows identifying the anonymised data sources, columns with codes, themes, and dimensions, and cells with summarised data and excerpts were utilised (see Appendix 6). Initially, the data were transcribed using a secure transcription service, and the transcripts were checked for errors by listening back to the audio recording while simultaneously checking the written transcript and notes from the interview. Alongside the interview transcripts were my own notes from the interviews on the key points and impressions that had emerged during the interview itself. Living in Hong Kong and conducting the research in Scotland resulted in the interviews taking place between July and December 2019. As each interview was completed and transcribed, the initial thoughts, connections and emerging themes were noted in the transcript copies and my notes from each interview as I completed each transcript.

When all the interviews had been transcribed and checked alongside the audio recordings, I began the process of coding the data as a means of describing, signalling, and organising key parts of the data to support later analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). These codes were created through multiple readings of the transcribed data independently from each interview, and then together as a collected set of data. From this, I was able to generate themes, and broader dimensions, connecting the initial coded data with the research questions, and identify quotations from the data to convey the essence of each theme and category (Thomas, 2006). In following these clearly identified steps of a general inductive approach, utilising elements of a framework method matrix to support the organisation of the data, I was able to engage with the data set more deeply. This ensured the coding and subsequent analysis remained true to the intentions of the participants, and identifying the emerging themes and dimensions as they related to the research questions.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Fairclough (2003) argues that when employing a range of analytical methods, as is the case in this study, both in relation to interpretive policy analysis and interviews, consideration must be given to the possibility that the adoption of a particular model for analysis could result in interpretation of text and discourses in a way that aligns with my own ideological standpoints. If this is the case, it could result in the construction and maintenance of a homogenous interpretation, which could be just as oppressive or limited as the one I may be aiming to explore or challenge. The Economic and Social Research Council (2015:4) emphasises the need for the design of research to reflect the high standards of integrity, quality, and transparency, including regular review of this to ensure that high ethical standards are maintained (SERA, 2005). This has underpinned the development of the framework for policy analysis, and the framework matrix used for the analysis of interview data, already outlined earlier in this chapter.

Consideration was required of the possibility that some participants may have been uncomfortable or unwilling to share a critical perspective on collaboration in relation to their professional practice and the contemporary policy context, especially given how closely it relates to governance and accountability structures within the system. However, in addition to this, there was also the possibility too that some interviewees may not have welcomed the research or the scrutiny placed on collaborative structures in which they may have a large stake or investment in relation to their time, efforts, and practice (Keemis et al., 2014). As such, participants were told that, while it would not be possible to guarantee anonymity in light of the relatively small size of the Scottish education community and networks, everything would be done to ensure anonymity as far as possible (see Appendix 2).

Notes and transcripts used codes rather than participant identifiers, were stored electronically on an encrypted USB stick, and placed in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home. In any follow-up publications or associated writing, participants will not be identified and any reference to their contribution to the research will be through the use of pseudonyms. In addition, consideration of the wider professional and political context of the study was why vignettes were chosen to support the data collection through interviews; a tool well documented in enabling the in-depth collection of data through interviews that may not be possible through just open-ended questioning (Barter & Reynold, 1999).

## **Discussion of Findings**

The data collated from the interviews are initially presented under the dimensions

identified as a result of the analysis process (see Figure 9 and Appendix 5). In doing so, the identified codes, themes, and dimensions are related, linked, and orientated towards the research questions; a continuation of the analytical and interpretation process (Richardson, 2000). From this, taking the themes that have emerged from the policy analysis in relation to collaboration in education in Scotland, and connecting this with the themes and dimensions that emerged from the investigation of the lived reality of collaboration by means of interviews, a discussion of these findings in relation to the research questions, and an exploration of the connections, tensions, and understandings that emerged from them, is then presented.

### **Postmodernism**

Given the situatedness of this study firmly within the policy domain, understanding of the lived reality of this requires consideration that goes beyond insight through interviews. Policy contexts in education systems around the world are increasingly characterised by the influence of the market, managerialism, and performativity (Ball, 2003). As education policy has moved towards more centralised forms of control, postmodernism, and ideas of postmodernity and the postmodern have increasingly offered a powerful and critical voice as to the power relationships at play within systems (Atkinson, 2000). While postmodernism, postmodernity, and the postmodern individually and collectively remain elusive to agreed definition, looking at them collectively highlights postmodernism as the problematising of established forms of thought and ways of working (Usher & Edwards, 1994). Instead of an established theoretical stance embodied in ‘postmodernism’, reference is more frequently made to postmodernity or the postmodern condition as a series or collection of socio-cultural changes that lead to the challenging of established notions of modernity, and the promises of the beliefs and values that underpin them (Burbules, 2010). Postmodernity suggests something that comes after modernity, a period described by some, yet still contested, as originating post-enlightenment in the eighteenth century, where societies witnessed the beginning of ‘economic and social disruptions which founded industrial capitalism and the nation-state’ (Usher & Edwards, 1994:8). The postmodern emphasises to some the resistance to what Lyotard (1984:xxiv) describes as ‘meta-narratives’ which emerged from this period; established and given ways of thinking and practices that traditionally remain unchallenged, and the promises for individuals and societies that come with them (Burbules, 2010). With definitions of postmodernism highly contested and varied across disciplines, times, and places (Anderson, 2005), characteristic of postmodern logic (Usher & Edwards, 1994), a common theme that does emerge is the critical lens and scepticism of ‘cultural certainties’ which emerged throughout the

twentieth century (Parker, 2015:455). Replacing these meta (or grand) narratives could be what Lyotard (1984) advocates as micro-narratives, described by Powell (1998) as a collection of diverse stories and voices expressing the realities of those typically not able to articulate or share them.

However, postmodernism has not been immune to critique. Criticism includes: (1) with the objective of postmodern thinking to challenge grand narratives, it cannot exist, given that as soon as it comes into being, it itself becomes a new grand narrative (Atkinson, 2000). (2) While emphasising the giving of voice to those typically marginalised, the incredulity towards objective knowledge or singular narratives to represent reality is argued to prevent the emancipation of marginalised groups (Carr, 1998; Siegel, 1998). (3) With postmodernism emphasising discourse and meaning, it can be characterised as ‘a plaything of intellectuals’, with little benefit to social reality (Atkinson, 2000).

Responses to such criticism emphasise that rather than a concern of what it is and is not, postmodernism exists with all its contradictions in order to engage with and in important arguments (Stronach, 1996; MacLure, 1995). Atkinson (2000) highlights how this postmodernism enables the amplification and acknowledgment of the multiple voices and identities within those traditionally marginalised groups. Rather than resulting in mere wordplay, postmodernism challenges what Foucault (1969) calls regimes of truth, challenging the power exercised over social groups, opening possibilities through envisaging such change.

These patterns of language use which come to characterise the political rationality used across many aspects of society and within the education system ‘colours and shapes our ways of living and being in the world’ (Burbules, 2010:527). Analysis characterised by postmodernity situates communication, be it for the purpose of explanation, justification, or rationalising, as expressions originating from languages that we have within our discursive system at a given point in time; as such, these communication practices will always be open to scepticism and critique as products of the language available, place, and time, rather than language describing an objective reality (Burbules, 2010).

As such, I aim to locate meaning through a reading of data collected, and the analysis that results from this (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). It reflects a commitment to understanding, illuminating, and sharing the ambiguities and contradictions of collaboration both conceptually and practically, and what this means for the mobilisation and possibilities of it (Mifsud, 2017). I intentionally discuss this here, rather than situating it within the broader discussion of my positionality as a researcher, given the rejection of postmodern thinking of such a label, be it for individuals or a theory or philosophical position by name,

and also to emphasise how it is one system of analysis and means of situating the self. This study has been designed by positioning myself within the interpretivist paradigm, while acknowledging the difficulty with that given the parameters of such paradigms feeling more fluid than fixed. At the stage of presenting the discussion and analysis of both the documentary analysis and the lived realities as shared by primary school headteachers in Scotland, I begin to realise and question the anticipated or hoped for outcomes of such analysis, and realise that it is by embracing postmodern thinking as a researcher, both at this stage and upon reflection throughout this study, I am hoping to offer a questioning of assumed or long-held beliefs and entrenched practices as they relate to collaboration and educational change more broadly, and in doing so, engage in what Bogdan (1990:116), cited in Mifsud (2017:26), calls ‘ostranenie: the process of defamiliarization, the making strange of reality in order to create it anew’.

### **Foucault on Power, Discourse, and Governmentality**

Discussing postmodernism does not come with the implication of a fixed body of ideas, approaches, or theories; instead, it is a ‘loose umbrella term under whose broad cover can be encompassed at one and the same time... an attitude and mode of analysis’ (Usher & Edwards, 1994:7). While resisting categorisation, the work of philosophers such as Michael Foucault is frequently associated with postmodernism. His resistance to the categorisation of his work, alongside his critique of discourses and practices that govern modern power-knowledge relations; ‘problematizing the root assumptions of the modernist project’ (Usher & Edwards, 1994:83) result in his frequent association with postmodernism. Given that Foucault (2002:240) resists being seen as offering researchers a ‘general system, an overarching theoretical framework or worldview’, I draw upon what Mifsud (2017:29) citing Allen (2012) and Megill (1987) calls a piecemeal approach to Foucault’s work; a toolbox aiding analysis.

In this study, Foucault’s concepts of power are utilised, defined as the establishment and maintenance of systems of truths through which power is enacted and embodied rather than possessed, and in a constant state of negotiation and change (Gaventa, 2003). In particular, how power is enacted and embodied through the use of discourse and governmentality are utilised in order to analyse and discuss themes emerging from the data presented. Foucauldian theory offers the possibility to explore how power flows within, across, and throughout the system as a result of the discourse, tools, and mechanisms that individuals and social groups have available to them. For Merquior (1991:114), power, as described by Foucault, is ‘ubiquitous, anonymous and comprehensive... making cogs in its machinery of all of us, high and low, ruling and ruled’. Power, therefore, is both an enabler

and a tool of coercion; existing not from those higher up hierarchical chains, but instead within and across social groups, ‘rooted in the whole network of the social’ (Foucault, 2002: 345).

At play within social groups, Foucault emphasises discourse, not characterised as analysis of text, discourse, and statements, as a technical activity; rather, the discernment of ‘the rules by which certain statements, or truth claims, as opposed to others, can emerge, operate, and come to comprise a discursive system’ (Doherty, 2007:194). Discourse here being, as Olssen et al. (2004) describe, an alternative to how ideology is understood. Discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, refers to the broader socio-cultural discourse that frames how social groups speak about and understand objects and concepts, and an expression of power-knowledge relations (Mifsud, 2017).

Connected with this exercise of power, and the role and mobilisation of discourse, is Foucault’s concept of governmentality. While resisting any descriptive logic of a theory, governmentality brings together the words ‘government’ and ‘rationality’, offering a lens through which it is possible to critically examine and challenge the exercise of power of those governing over and within social groups through the objectives, discourses, tools, and individuals at their disposal, and their aims for doing so (Rose et al., 2006; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). The utilisation of Foucauldian governmentality allows for the discursive analysis of how collaboration has come to be rationalised and mobilised by governments, and the process of rationalising and justification that comes with it.

Given the focus of this study and the collection and analysis of data focusing on the language that surrounds collaboration as a policy focus and mechanism, a postmodern lens and the utilising of Foucault’s concepts of the exercise and manifestation of power through discourse and governmentality offer a means to critically analyse and challenge commonly held understandings and practices within the social world of education and education systems (Doherty, 2007). As such, drawing upon postmodern ideas and Foucauldian ideas on the exercise of power, discourse, and governmentality, rather than offering a definitive account of the emergence of collaboration as a prominent concept in policy discourse, and as a policy mechanism, I intend to grapple with the ideas of how collaboration has emerged in discourse and practice, the role of power within the dominance it enjoys in the policy domain, as well as the lived reality of it, and contribute to the debate as to what this could mean for the outcomes and possibilities of collaboration in the Scottish context.

Throughout this discussion, to aid the analysis of the data that has emerged from the interviews and policy analysis, and to place this within the context of what can be gleaned from the literature on collaboration, the theoretical framework outlined in Figure 2 is used

to understand how it connects with what is already known about collaboration, and the possibilities that come with the insights drawn from the data analysed (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

## **Conclusion and Limitations**

I have contested and positioned this study with the understanding that how individuals make sense of the phenomena they observe and experience is done socially and constrained by what Darlaston-Jones (2007:24) describes as ‘the socio-cultural-historical-temporal space in which it occurs and by the persons involved in it’. Because of the varied bodies of thought and lack of agreement within the interpretivist domain as to the nature of the social construction of knowledge, critics of research within this paradigm argue that it lacks reliability due to its subjectivity and perceived lack of scientific rigour in comparison with methods within the positivist paradigm (Crotty, 1998). However, given that interpretivist research is in itself concerned with subjective understandings of the phenomena individuals experience, in this case collaboration, it is the combination of these, and the analytical frameworks, as outlined earlier in this chapter, used to present and make sense of the data that can respond to these challenges in relation to rigour and transparency that is different in form from more quantitative approaches in a positivist paradigm (Nuzdor, 2009).

Rather than becoming concerned with the ongoing arguments as to the validity and rigour of research paradigms themselves, arguably, the overall quality of a research study is related to the skill of the researcher, the articulation of the purpose of the research, and the coherence of the methodological approach employed ethically to achieve that purpose (Nuzdor, 2009; Merriam, 1998). As a pragmatic social constructivist, concerns of rigour, value, and consistency, as opposed to validity and transferability that may align more with a positivist methodological approach, are important for my own reflection on the quality of this study.

It could be argued that a study focusing on the policy texts themselves and a comprehensive document and discourse analysis of them could have offered an insight into the limitations within the policy context preventing the realisation of the potentially positive effects of effective collaboration (Olssen, Codd, & O’Neill, 2004). Similarly, conducting a case study on an emerged form of collaboration within the Scottish system could have enabled the in-depth study of how this came about, the contextual conditions behind it, and the lessons that could emerge for other such cases (Yin, 2014). However, I have argued that this characterises much of the literature that already exists in relation to the forms of collaboration that emerge within systems, the conditions necessary, and the

outcomes of these specific forms of collaboration. I have also attested that, as illustrated in Figure 5, given the complex interplay between the various drivers behind policy development, the text of policy, the actors involved, and the complex process of negotiation and implementation in practice, a combination of methods was required in order to understand the complex process of truly defining and enabling collaboration, to answer the research questions, and ultimately to reflect the intended purpose of this study (Merriam, 1998). While this means that the possibilities for practical application as a consequence of the findings and conclusions from this study may be limited, what it does offer is a deeper understanding of the complexity of collaboration as a concept, the consequences this has for its emergence, application, and sustainability as a policy mechanism, and the approach to practice.

Through the interpretive analysis of policy relating to collaboration in Scottish education and drawing upon the interview data to understand the lived reality in practice within a sample of contexts within the system, this study offers greater and new insight into how collaboration is defined and understood, the role it may play in tackling challenges in education, and what an understanding of this offers for collaboration as a means of improving education in Scotland, along with possible future implications.

# Chapter 4: Locating Collaboration

## Introduction

Collaboration as a feature of education policy, discourse and practice is not unique to Scotland, and in many ways emerges as an instinctive practice, especially in challenging or complex times (D'Auria & De Smet, 2020). Policies of decentralisation and deregulation have come to characterise public education systems; systems which now rely on 'partnership, shared responsibility and consensus-building' in new forms of network governance (Milner, Browes, & Murphy, 2020:226). Intrinsic to this, both explicitly and implicitly, are a range of forms of collaborative activity, broadly conceptualised as teacher, professional, or organisational collaboration (Lavie, 2006). Collaboration has been characterised as the panacea to the challenges faced at the local, middle tier, and national levels of systems, as well as how nations learn from each other at the supranational level (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Datnow, 2018), with a renewed emphasis on forms of collaboration and related concepts and practices during the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2020). While collaboration and its synonymous terms or related concepts feature widely in policy and discourse, relatively little is known about how this relates to specific contextual systems of governance and organisation within nations or devolved administrations. Locating collaboration in the discourse, policy and practice within education systems can illuminate the intended and possible outcomes of the definitions, as well as the consequential forms collaboration may take (Milner et al., 2020). This requires an exploration of the discursive, governance, and contextual influences on collaboration as presented in education policy and the consequences this has for bringing policy to life in practice (Lavié, 2006).

Utilising the Framework for Analysis outlined in Figure 5, in this chapter, policy drivers at the supranational and national levels are explored. Connection is made to the national and localised Scottish contexts, including their histories, at the middle tier level of the system, alongside the role of policy texts and actors, and the associated mechanisms used to mobilise policy in the Scottish context, at the middle tier and local levels of the system. The consequences of this, and how it relates to policy focused on collaboration specifically are explored. A critical analysis is presented of key policy documents driving practice, discourse, and connected policy development in Scottish education currently; namely, the Education Governance Review (Scottish Government, 2017b); the NIF (Scottish Government, 2016a; 2017a); and the PEF (Scottish Government, 2020b), as part of the broader SAC (Education Scotland, 2019). This chapter concludes with a discussion on the

themes arising, and the consequences of these for practice in Scottish education, particularly the lived reality at the local level of the system.

## **Globalisation and Education Policy Making**

Education, while arguably one of the most important social endeavours in supporting human development and societal advancement, remains not only a contested term in how it relates to learning, teaching, and broader experience, but also its purpose in society (Biesta, 2015). This is reflected in the dominance education has in public policy making globally (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), and also the varied interrelated approaches to governance, economic priorities, and education approaches within public education policy domains (Adamson & Åstrand, 2016). This has implications for all of society and the impact education policy can have on the practice and lived realities of educational institutions, making it a key area for critical analysis and research (Humes, 2013).

While education policy development was historically often a manifestation of the values of those actors within a nation-state, globalisation has transformed national policy spheres into transnational and globally networked spaces (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Globalisation remains a highly contested notion. Earlier definitions within the context of education articulate globalisation as a change in 'the rules of eligibility, engagement and wealth creation' (Ball, 1998:119). Globalization Theory does not act as an explanatory tool when analysing policy development, but it does contribute to building an understanding of policy drivers, stimuli for initiation and design of policy, and the broader contextual influences on the various stages of policy development (Dale, 1999). With governments having less control over the activity of multi-national corporations (MNCs), there are broader implications for public policy, particularly in relation to education given the authority held by MNCs over market influence and demand for skills, workers, and support in order to maintain their presence in the national economy (Ball, 1998). While this is the product, to a degree, of economic internationalisation and technological development, globalisation is the outcome of economic and political actors, often based in nation states themselves, constructing agreements related to their interests, with powers attributed to supranational organisations such as the OECD, the European Union (EU), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Rinne, 2008).

In the context of education policy, globalisation does not signal a shift of education policy making into the hands of economic actors or those in the private sector within nation states and beyond following a global neoliberal culture. Rather, it signifies an alteration of the economic and political conditions, based on the dominant global socio-political culture,

currently neoliberalism, which frames the processes of problem setting, choosing responses, the interventions made and the scope of choices nations themselves have (Bonai, 2003; Verger, Novelli & Altinyelken, 2012). These global economic and societal demands are spread through globalisation forces, such as the shifting markets, political and cultural configurations, and advancements in information and communication technologies (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This has consequences for the problems that are recognized as being important by nations and the breadth of their repertoire of responses, paving the way for supranational organisations such as the OECD to exert growing influence on decision making within national policy making spaces (Muhr, 2010; Robertson, 2012).

### **The Role of the OECD**

This growing influence enjoyed by supranational organisations is described by Brenner (2004) as a rescaling of geographies of power that comes with globalisation which result in new multiscale relationships across local, national, regional, supranational, and global domains. With the period of globalisation since the 1980s dominated by neoliberalism, the context for education policy development has changed, where nations increasingly develop education policy with attention to what Usher and Edwards (1994:175) describe as ‘fulfilling the requirements of the economy under conditions of global competition’; a selective lens through which the OECD, along with other supranational organisations such as the EU, have increasingly established as the logic through which success and value is attributed within systems and education policy making (Rinnie, 2008).

This economic foundation to the shifting purpose of education and policies to support national education systems has a close relationship with Human Capital Theory (HCT). HCT describes skills and knowledge as a form of capital which people can invest in to expand the scope of choices they have and increase economic success, with the implication that national investment in human capital would result in economic advancement and success at broader levels (Schultz, 1961; Little, 2003). HCT implies that it is possible to quantify the outcomes or returns from education investment and apply a cost benefit analysis to determine appropriateness or effectiveness of policy instruments and inform subsequent decision-making (Little, 2003).

The OECD, initially formed as the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) with the aim of administering the Marshall Plan funding for rebuilding European economies post-WW2, has developed into a ‘global centre for the production and publication of comparative data on the economies of member and, increasingly, non-member nations’, with a dedicated directorate for education and skills (Lingard & Sellar, 2014:11). Initially this work related to education focused on supporting education systems.

This then grew into qualitative assessments of policy through their coordination of a range of actors from the OECD, their global policy advisor networks, and companies, philanthropies, consulting agencies, and think tanks which share complimentary expertise relevant to education system development globally (Wieczorek, Munch, Brand & Scwanhauser, 2020). Importantly, and a very well-known development to the OECD's work and influence, is also their quantitative assessments of comparative performance of school systems, much of which is based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); funded by philanthropic foundations, with participation funded by systems themselves, and administered by private providers within these systems. The success of PISA, and the importance national governments place on this comparative instrument, has contributed to the rise of the OECD's education work and their growing capacity to influence national and sub-national, including federal or devolved systems, education policy. This is evident in places such as Scotland and the other constituent nations of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Germany, in terms of the scope of what they are gathering data on, the scale of their assessments, and the growing influence is characterised by the explanatory power of the OECD's work through increases in the range of data collected, analysed, and made easily accessible (Lingard & Sellar, 2014). Additionally, it has increased the interest in, and the development of wider accountability mechanisms often administered by or in collaboration with private providers within nation states or in federal or devolved systems. The combination of the success and growing importance placed upon the PISA test, alongside the collaboration required between public, private, and philanthropic sector actors, has led to what Ball and Junemann (2012) call networked governance. This describes the new form of governance by and through networks on the local, national, and global scales and across the public, private, and philanthropic sectors (Lingard & Sellar, 2014; Milner, et al, 2020). While the capacity to bring in new actors to the public policy domain could be described as more efficient and democratic (Klijn & Skelcher, 2007), such networks can also be designed with the goal of serving distinct purposes (Milner, et al, 2020). Wieczorec et al. (2020) argue that the OECD, with their global network of policy advisors and actors, the informal relationships and formal collaborations that exist within this sphere of network governance, the policy making power held by the actors involved, and the legitimating power of the PISA test itself, results in the formation of a relatively small group of actors designing transnational standards and measures for national education policy. This sits alongside the involvement of the many organisations and individuals needed to bring about associated education reforms at the middle tier and local levels, but who remain excluded from the collaborative

work within the network at a national and supranational level (Wieczorec et al., 2020). Ultimately, this gives the OECD, through their networks and legitimising power embodied in PISA, the power to set problems and offer solutions to nations on the authority of their well-established reputation, capacity for data collection and analysis output.

While the form that network governance takes within individual nations varies, this global reach and influence of the OECD in Scotland has been increasingly clear since the publication of the 2015 ‘Improving Schools in Scotland’ report (McIlroy, 2018). The subsequent NIF aligned both its vocabulary use and policy mechanisms with that advised by the OECD in their Education Policy Outlooks. This includes vocabulary and phrases such as, the importance of ‘evidence-informed strategic’ approaches, ‘metrics’ that support the building of an accurate, comprehensive picture of the system, ‘leadership of the middle’, ‘targeted, networked and evaluated innovation’, a ‘framework for assessment and evaluation’, and ‘contemporary views of knowledge and skills and on widely-accepted tenets of what makes for powerful learning’ (OECD, 2015a,b). Much of the discourse aligns with other high profile OECD documents and projects, such as the work done by their Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) on ‘Schooling Redesigned – Towards Innovative Learning Systems’ (OECD, 2015a), and ‘Governing Education in a Complex World’ (OECD, 2016), but it also utilises vocabulary such as ‘widely-accepted’ to reinforce the legitimising role it plays as a supranational influencer. While this discourse is evident and cited regularly in the NIF, the Scottish Government also cite the OECD publication ‘Education Policy Outlook 2015 – Making reforms happen’ (OECD, 2015b).

While there is an argument that OECD advice may be useful and reflective of valid data sets to aid understanding of the system, as well as global perspectives providing insights and possibilities for policy responses to national improvement priorities, some can appear inconsistent with previous or concurrent government positions in Scotland (Gillies, 2018). However, with the OECD’s well-established global role in economy and public policy, and documented assertions that ‘A broad consensus exists on many aspects of the policy requirement for a globalizing world economy’, governments seeking to establish prosperous well-respected economies, and market themselves as effective governments, will be keen to follow the recommendations of such an organisation (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010:440). As such, it is notable the importance the Scottish Government place on the advice of the OECD at what was a time of huge political importance and significance post-election for the Scottish Parliament and post-referendum on membership of the EU, as Scotland was placed centre stage, with a clear desire for the country to be seen as an independent, competent, and successful economy and nation (Lingard & Sellar, 2014;

Arnott & Ozga, 2016). This desire, in itself, is not the focus of this analysis. It is the legitimising forces utilised to support policy development that have the possibility of deviating policy, discourse, and practice away from what the system truly needs, and ensuring policy decisions reflect meaningful improvement priorities, and the responses which reflect that.

Exploring the role and function of both globalisation and supranational organisations has important relevance when understanding the broader policy drivers, and the influence these have on policy contexts, texts, and actors within national or devolved governments such as Scotland. OECD publications are frequently cited in policy documents such as the NIF, particularly in relation to the need for collaborative leadership and working, and in the education governance review, with its emphasis on collaboration in the middle tier of the system (Scottish Government, 2016a & 2017a). The NIF is presented as offering the direction and strategies that facilitate successful change, with reference made to the OECD (2015b) 'Education Policy Outlook 2015 – Making Reform Happen' (Scottish Government, 2017b). The same document emphasises how it 'provides a comparative review of policy trends and explores specific reforms across the OECD to help countries learn from one another and choose the reforms best adapted to their needs and context' (OECD, 2015b). In doing so, the OECD is emphasising particular foci for the identification of policy problems, as well as solutions, and presenting these to be chosen by nations wishing to exercise what is presented to be logical judgement based on comparative successes in other OECD countries. While there remains scope for the problematising of the metrics used in the comparative judgements made to then influence policy making in Scotland or other places, the positioning of the OECD in their policy advisory capacity, and amplification of examples of success based on their analytical lenses and outputs, illustrate the potential of their influence on policy initiation related to agenda or problem setting and the repertoire of solutions nations and devolved governments have access to (Verger et al., 2012).

Dominant global ideologies manifested through supranational influences and influencers begin to frame the politics and associated policy making within national and federal jurisdictions, with consequences for the agenda, possibilities, and outcomes of policy and associated practice. This next section goes on to explore how this relates to policy, the associated discourse, and governance arrangements within the Scottish context, and the emergence of collaboration within that.

## Education Policy Making in Scotland

The role of supranational organisations in Scottish education is one that can be traced alongside the genealogy of the Scottish education system. The influence of dominant socio-political ideologies in Scotland has changed historically alongside shifting constitutional infrastructure and global standing. Prior to the reinstatement of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and the devolved powers for that parliament that coincided, the Scottish Office in Edinburgh, led by the UK government in Westminster, was where decision making related to education in Scotland rested. Since 1980 and the election of Margaret Thatcher's government, the private-sector culture in education began to rise along with the neo-liberal discourse surrounding public policy reform, evident through, for example Public Private Partnership schemes for school building and finance, amended by New Labour latterly as the Private Finance Initiative. Furthermore, the rise of neoliberal public service reform agendas has brought with it crudely simplified discourses related to attainment, improvement, data collection, and a rise in quantitative models of targets and performance indicators used to measure school improvement and hold schools and school leaders at local levels of policy development increasingly accountable by organizations and institutions at the supranational level (Codd, 2005; Priestley, 2015).

In the 1980s, advocates of monetarism, such as Keith Joseph on the libertarian wing of the Conservative party, strongly resisted moves towards a 'national' curriculum in England, arguing for individual, locally determined curricula and decision making. Along with this were possibilities for school opt-outs from local authority oversight, and increased selectivity (McGinley, 2018). However, these ideas did not make their way to Scotland; Scotland retained its traditionally unique approach to education, with an emphasis on public ownership and responsibility for education (Humes, 2013). Broadly, Scottish society appeared to accept the importance of comprehensive education and issues of equity and social justice over elitism and promoting or maintaining social advantage (McGinley, 2018). This commitment to public education in Scotland is also characterised by a long-held belief and perception that Scotland's education system is of high quality and effective (Forde & Torrance, 2021).

However, with the arguably fragmented and highly variable implementation of the 'Primary Memorandum', the Scottish curriculum from 1965, which embodied a typically 'whole child curriculum and pedagogy', in 1987, the 5-14 curriculum for Primary and Early Secondary school replaced it and now saw the government stipulating curriculum structure, design, time allocations for subjects, and associated standardised assessment mechanisms (Anderson, 2013; Humes & Bryce, 2013; Gillies, 2018). Rather than

signalling that this was a government stating what it believed all children and young people are entitled to in a comprehensive public education system, arguably, it was a clear indication of strong input regulation, being the specification of content and methods, and with the programme of national testing and high importance being placed on external inspection, this was also an indication of strong output regulation, being mechanisms that support public accountability through measurement tools (Priestley, 2015; Leat, Livingston, & Priestley, 2013).

The governance and oversight of Scottish education has remained complex pre- and post-devolution in 1999. Education, a key devolved matter, initially enjoyed broad agreement amongst the main parties that made up the Scottish parliament in the first year's post-devolution in the reinstated Scottish parliament. However, while being a key area of public policy and a fundamental feature of Scottish life and identity, Scottish education was not immune to the influences of a broader 'New Public Management' (NPM) agenda, which added a layer of complexity and increased the political tension between local autonomy and central control (McGinley, 2018).

New Public Management, a term coined by Christopher Hood in 1994, described the broad new mode of exercising power and re-engineering the structures and functions of public sector services. This had significant consequences for the emerging forms of collaboration, how collaborative they were and remain, and the outcomes of it. NPM influences on education led to 'the wearing away of professional-ethical regimes in schools and their replacement by entrepreneurial-competitive regimes – a process of “de-professionalisation”' (Ball, 2008:55). While this refers more broadly to the English education system, the emphasis on broader forms of accountability with performative aspects was visible through input and output regulation at the national and middle tier level of policy making in relation to the curriculum, assessment and inspection, and the hierarchical nature of the system in Scotland (Leat et al., 2013; Scottish Government, 2020). While the move to CfE signalled a possible decrease in the input regulation in the system, the reintroduction of standardised testing in primary schools, and the hierarchical framing of collaborative and relational aspects of the system, are now gaining attention as a barrier to both school and system-wide improvement, as noted by the Scottish Government's International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) in 2020 (Scottish Government, 2020c).

Since the turn of the century and the devolution of education amongst other public policy domains to the Scottish Government, initially known as the Scottish Executive, a broad level of consensus has existed within the policy community. This was most visible during a

time of ‘National Debate’ on education initiated by the Scottish Executive in 2002; a consultation open to all those with a stake in Scottish education. This led to significant curricular reform, with unilateral endorsement and subsequent implementation of CfE. This is a national 3-18 curriculum, focusing on the values, purposes, and principles of education in Scotland, with teachers positioned as ‘agents of change’ in bottom-up school-based curriculum development within a national framework; initially, a shift from tight to more relaxed input regulation and output regulation at the middle tier and national levels of policy making (Priestley, 2010; Leat et al., 2013). The consensus enjoyed across a range of actors within the education policy community at the local, middle tier, and national levels, to some, appeared surprising (Weston, 2014). Humes (2013) argues that despite the range of actors that make up the policy community in Scotland, while they may experience some divergence in certain policy areas, they all share a ‘received wisdom’ which results in a lack of criticality when formulating and accepting new policy; ‘All of these bodies see their role as working in partnership with central government and do not have a track record of taking an independent line’ (Humes, 2013:100). Given the diversity of the organisations that make up the policy community; a group comprised of national and local government, NDPBs charged with professional regulation, qualifications, the curriculum and inspection, leadership development, skills development, and qualifications frameworks; all with diverse roles and remits, the broad and regular consensus is notable, as is the lack of critique of government policy development (Barr, 2018).

While policy development in Scotland is often characterised by democratic and representative processes leading to broad consensus, to a greater or lesser extent even appearing collaborative, there is a consequential lack of critique and elaboration of possible ideological difference, as policy actors’ cooperation and supportive stance maintains their membership of the ‘policy community’ or ‘the community of matter’ (Forde & Torrance, 2021; McPhearson & Rabb, 1988:433). What this cohesive community also does is support a process of legitimisation of government education policy through communal processes that ‘draw on shared normative cultures as their starting points; and... these normative foundations are subject to communal deliberations, namely, by moral dialogues, but are not based on them’ (Etzioni, 2011:106). The broad moral underpinning of government policy supports not just the justification of policy but also the development of associated discourse by the policy community to legitimise the aims, content, and outcomes of it with little or no criticality as to the aims, content, or consequences themselves (Etzioni, 2011). To maintain this support, a key element of the Scottish Government’s policy development and implementation processes are the mobilisation of

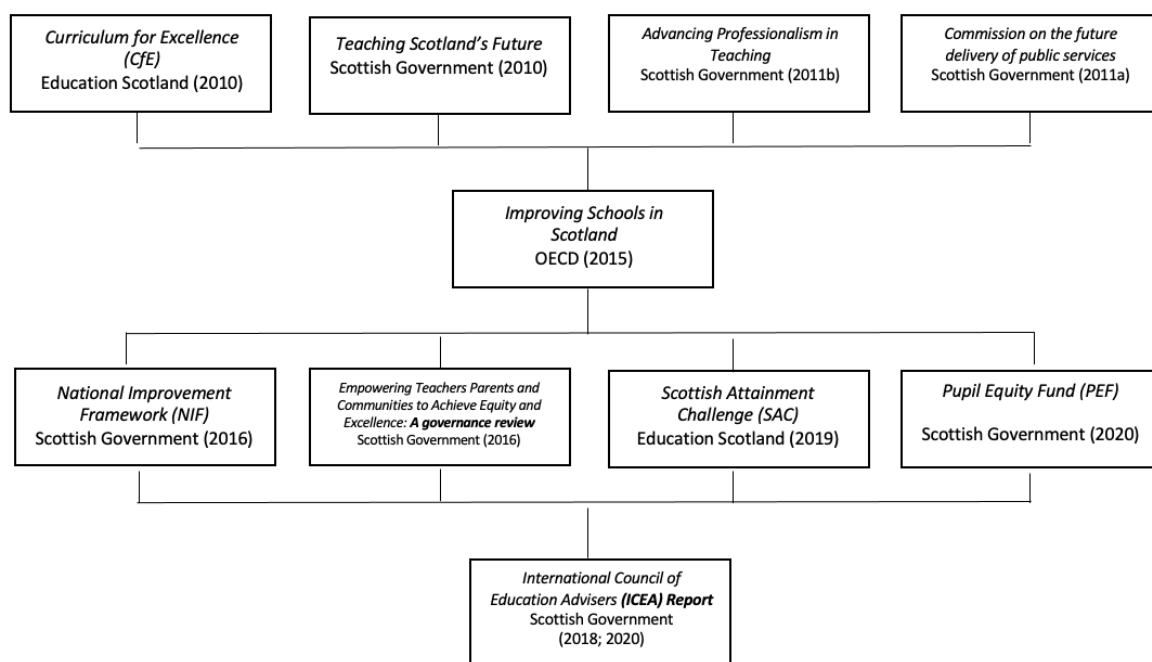
associated discourses (Arnott & Ozga, 2016). Doing so is an attempt to manage the perceptions of policy actors, broader stakeholder groups, and the public more generally (Forde & Torrance, 2021). This mobilisation of discourse is significant in Scottish education policy development, particularly in ensuring that either as a minority government, or one pursuing an agenda of significant constitutional reform, they are positioned as effective, competent, and collaborative (Arnott & Ozga, 2012).

This has been seen recently in Scotland with the development of RICs, a shift in education governance that forces a rethink of local authority boundaries and scope, which Gillies (2018:89) describes as ‘inconsistent’ given the ‘stated Scottish Government antipathy’ towards shifts in governance seen in England ‘which rests on the removal of local authority involvement’. The stimulus for this can be traced back to the OECD ‘Improving Schools in Scotland’ report in 2015, which recommended a strengthened ‘middle-tier’, a reference which the Scottish Government now uses as the basis of this shift in governance.

### **Collaboration in Scottish Education Policy**

The purpose of analysing the policy drivers at play in education policy making, both globally and nationally, is to situate collaboration within this broader context of what influences it as both a policy mechanism and term in the surrounding discourse. As discussed in the previous chapter, and outlined in Figure 6, there are a range of key policy texts that can support the analysis of collaboration in Scottish education policy.

While this critical analysis focuses on six key policy texts, it is important to acknowledge the significance of and the additional context offered by the other policies or policy texts identified in Figure 6; namely Curriculum for Excellence (Education Scotland, 2020), Advancing Professionalism in Teaching (Scottish Government, 2011b), Teaching Scotland’s Future (Scottish Government, 2010), and the Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services (Scottish Government, 2011a), with the reports by the ICEA offering an important context to the actioning and outcomes of the NIF, governance review, and SAC.



**Figure 6: Key Scottish education policy developments (2010-2020)**

### **Curriculum for Excellence**

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) has been widely acknowledged as one of the most important and far-reaching developments in Scottish education for a generation. The key distinction it has as both a curriculum framework and a vehicle for change is its reliance on teachers, school leaders, and other educators at the local and middle tier levels of the system to interpret and adapt guidance in order to meet the needs of their community instead of centrally prescribed approaches (Priestley & Humes, 2010). The reliance on collaboration, and the mobilisation of actors charged with the implementation of policy, highlights the important cautionary notes regarding how the aims of CfE authentically translate into sustainable social practice (Priestley & Humes, 2010). However, this did not just mark a shift in the empowerment of local and middle tier level actors, repositioning teachers as ‘agents of change’ and curriculum developers; instead, what has also emerged over the decade since its introduction are increasingly high stakes forms of accountability and a culture of performativity as a result of a renewed emphasis on the evaluative use of attainment data (Shapira & Priestley, 2018:75).

Agency begins to emerge as a significant concept both explicitly in and through analysis of policy developments in Scotland. Agency can be understood as being an emergent phenomenon that results from ‘the ecological conditions through which it is enacted’ (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015:136). Drawing upon this, for the purpose of this study, agency is defined as how individuals are able to act by means of their environment through the understanding and complex interplay of individual effort, available resources,

and contextual and structural influences within the place and space of which an individual operates (Biesta and Tedder, 2007).

The seemingly competing forces of extending the agency of the teaching profession while simultaneously developing more high-stakes forms of accountability have arguably led to the current state of affairs with CfE. More than a decade since its introduction, the potential and aims of CfE are still to be realised as articulated by the Scottish Government (2020b:4) who state that they are aiming to develop ‘a self-improving education system, where a culture of collaboration and empowerment is evident throughout...critical to ensuring the potential of CfE is achieved’. The year 2020 also saw the commissioning by the Scottish Government of an independent review of CfE led by the OECD featuring input from education professionals across the system through a ‘Scottish Practitioner Forum’ as well as young people (Scottish Parliament, 2020:1). Ultimately, with the introduction and development of CfE came a reconceptualising of the professional, as well as the expectations of those practicing at the local and middle tier levels of the system. This also included consistent emphasis on collaboration in its varied forms and definitions; however, this was not exclusive to CfE.

### **Teaching Scotland’s Future**

Published in December 2010, ‘Teaching Scotland’s Future’, known as the Donaldson review, was a review of teacher education led by the former Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland, Graham Donaldson. The report also emphasised the conceptualisation of the role of the teachers in curriculum implementation, securing improvement and the best outcomes for young people, and how this requires collaboration. Additionally, the report highlighted the need for teachers who are responsible, accountable, and ‘prime agents in that change process’ (Scottish Government, 2010:14). Again, visible here is both the importance of agency or empowerment, tempered with a simultaneous emphasis on accountability. The report highlighted the need for collaboration across all phases of teacher learning, specifically tied to improvement or policy agendas.

Stimulated at least in part from this report, was a revised set of professional standards, and a national model of professional learning. These aspects embody a re-conceptualisation of what it means to be a professional, firmly embedding the role of collaboration and partnerships, and tying this to raised standards, improved outcomes, and a modernisation of the profession (Kennedy & Doherty, 2012; Patrick et al., 2010).

### **Advancing Professionalism in Teaching**

Published in September 2011, ‘Advancing Professionalism in Teaching’, known as the McCormac review, was a review of teacher employment, led by Professor Gerry

McCormac, University of Stirling. This particular review has further influenced the professional context within which teachers are working. With CfE requiring a shift – at least in intent if not reality – in the scope that teachers have to act with agency, the McCormac review also had implications for the positioning of teachers in where responsibility lies for improvement and outcomes across the education system. Early in the report, it states that there is ‘strong political and professional consensus that Scotland’s young people should benefit from teaching of the highest quality, designed to allow them to become responsible, well-rounded, productive, and successful individuals and citizens’ (Scottish Government, 2011b:4). This aim formed the basis for how teachers were positioned in the McCormac report as having the core responsibility for reducing inequalities and working collegially to meet the goals of Scotland’s education agenda. What is clear, and beginning even before the McCormac report, was that the work of teachers is no longer conceptualised or understood as being in relation to individual action or work, and instead, what they are able to achieve collectively and in collaboration with others (Patrick et al., 2010).

### **Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services**

The Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services, led by the former General Secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), Dr Campbell Christie, was published in June 2011. From this, there is a clear emphasis both on the modernisation in delivery of public services, and also of the professions that sit under the umbrella of public services. The commission’s report emphasised partnership working, empowering individuals and communities, and having increased efficiency both in work carried out through the sharing of services, and also through data collection, measuring, and monitoring across public services in Scotland. This aligns with characteristics of New Public Management (NPM) in public services, emphasising managerialism, performance measurement, and accountability (Tolofari, 2005), as well as in political and professional modernisation agendas (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002),

Reflecting on the report, Browne (2018) highlighted how while the commission recommended important action in relation to collaboration within and across public services, there can remain a mismatch between the intention and plan to collaborate, and an understanding of how to achieve this in practice. Questions also remain as to how genuine empowerment, partnership, or collaboration is if agendas, priorities, or decisions have already been set prior to the initiation of such a collaborative or consultative activity (What Works Scotland, 2018).

## **Conceptualising Collaboration in Scottish Education Policy**

The McCormac and Donaldson reviews, as well as the Christie commission, to varying degrees, have driven the development of the education system over the past decade, and the emphasis on collaboration has been a central theme. However, the OECD (2015a) report and the subsequent publication of the NIF, governance review, and the SAC, all exemplify the dominance of collaboration in contemporary Scottish education policy. Through setting the context to practice and mobilising actors across the system, while also using the text of these policies to set the discourse around collaboration and improvement, these key policy texts are important in terms of contributing to, in part, answering the research questions:

- How is collaboration defined conceptually and practically in education?
  - How is collaboration presented in the literature and in policy?
  - How is collaboration understood in practice?
- What role do policy actors and school leaders believe collaboration has in tackling challenges in education?

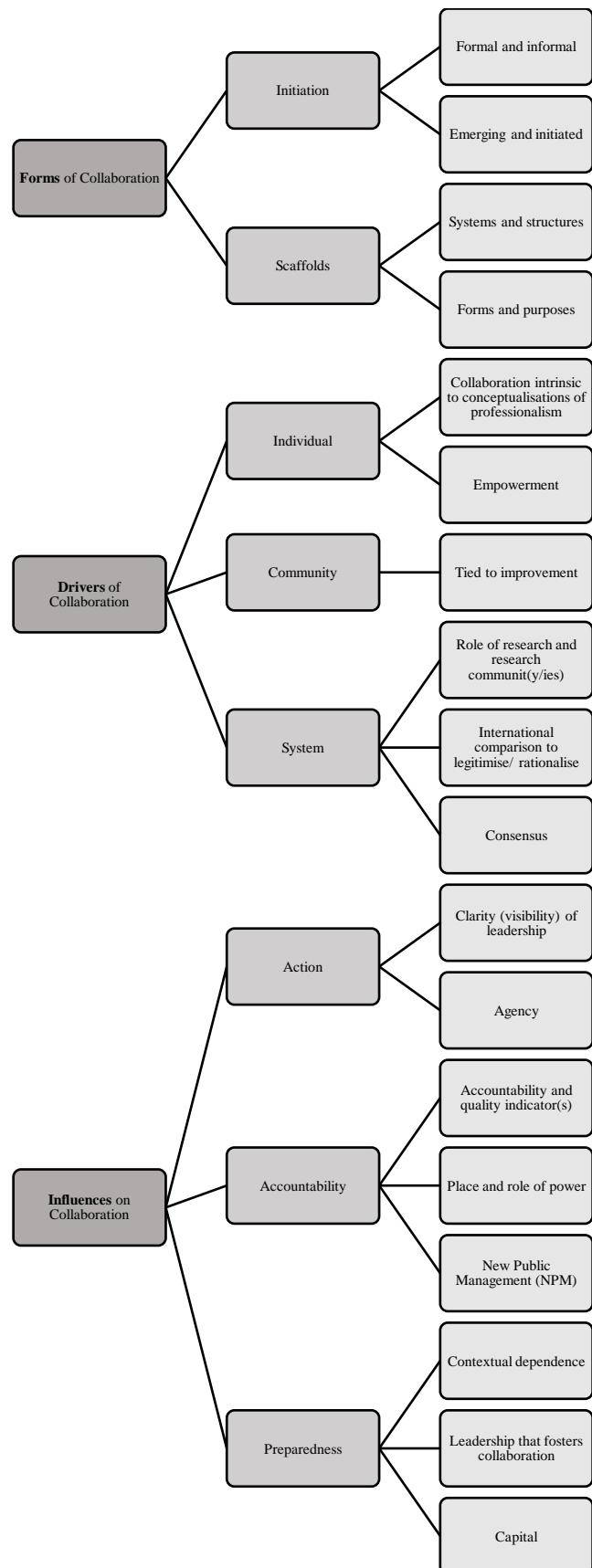
Utilising the analytical approaches associated with a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006; King & Horrocks, 2010), alongside the framework method, also known as qualitative content analysis or thematic analysis as articulated by Braun & Clark (2006), the texts in Table 1 were analysed with the aim of answering the aforementioned questions:

Title	Text	Note(s)
OECD, 2015 – Improving Schools in Scotland	OECD. (2015). Improving Schools in Scotland. An OECD Perspective. Paris: OECD.	The report which placed a renewed emphasis on collaboration linked directly with national and more localised improvement agendas.
Scottish Government, 2016a – NIF	Scottish Government. (2016a). National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education. Edinburgh, Scottish Government.	Published annually alongside an improvement plan to drive the national and localised improvement agenda for education in Scotland.
Scottish Government, 2020a – NIF	Scottish Government. (2020a). National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education. Edinburgh, Scottish Government.	
Scottish Government, 2017b – Education Governance Review	Scottish Government. (2017b). Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: governance review. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.	A review of education governance in Scotland.
Education Scotland, 2019 – SAC – PEF	Education Scotland. (2019). Scottish Attainment Challenge Self-Evaluation Resource (DRAFT). Retrieved from: <a href="https://education.gov.scot/media/">https://education.gov.scot/media/</a>	Together aimed at enabling and supporting innovative practice to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap in

	qwpkexmm/sacselfevaluationresource draft .pdf	Scotland within the context of the NIF
Scottish Government, 2020b – SAC	Scottish Government. (2020b). Pupil Equity Funding: national operational guidance 2020. Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-equity-funding-national-operational-guidance-2020/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/ pupil-equity-funding-national- operational-guidance-2020/</a>	

**Table 1: Key Policy Texts**

After an initial reading of the key policy texts, key words were selected that also connected with what had emerged from an earlier review of the literature on collaboration in education (see Appendix 3). The frequency of keyword usage in each of the policy texts were noted, as well as any patterns and themes arising. Segments of text were selected, labelling of selected text segments were made using descriptive coding, and connections were made to aspects of the theoretical framework outlined in Figure 2, and the framework for analysis outlined in Figure 5. These descriptive codes were collated into broader themes, then based on their interpreted relationship, overarching dimensions of collaboration as understood in these key policy texts were created (see Figure 7 and Appendix 5).



**Figure 7: Dimensions, Themes and Codes from Key Policy Texts**

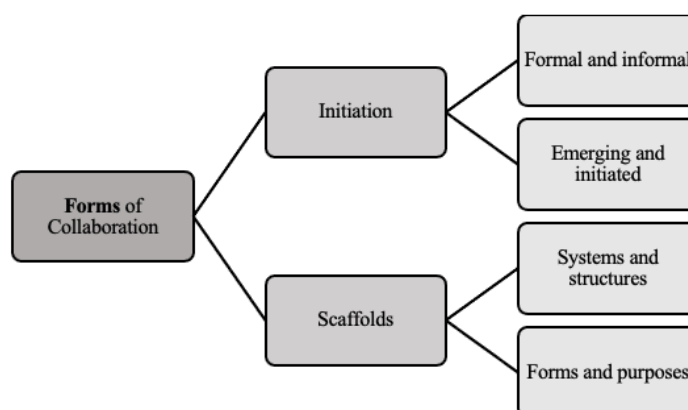
## Locating Collaboration Locally, at the Middle Tier, Nationally and Supranationally

Driving this analysis of the policy texts was the pursuit of answering the research questions:

- How is collaboration defined conceptually and practically in education?
  - How is collaboration presented in the literature, and in policy?
- What role do policy actors and school leaders believe collaboration has in tackling challenges in education?

Appendix 4 outlines in detail the emerging themes from the analysis of the policy texts outlined above. Quotations were taken from each of the texts and the stage of the framework for analysis (Figure 5), connection to the theoretical framework (Figure 2), connection to the literature, and identification of emerging themes were outlined. The key points of this analysis are discussed below.

### Forms of Collaboration – Initiation and Scaffolds



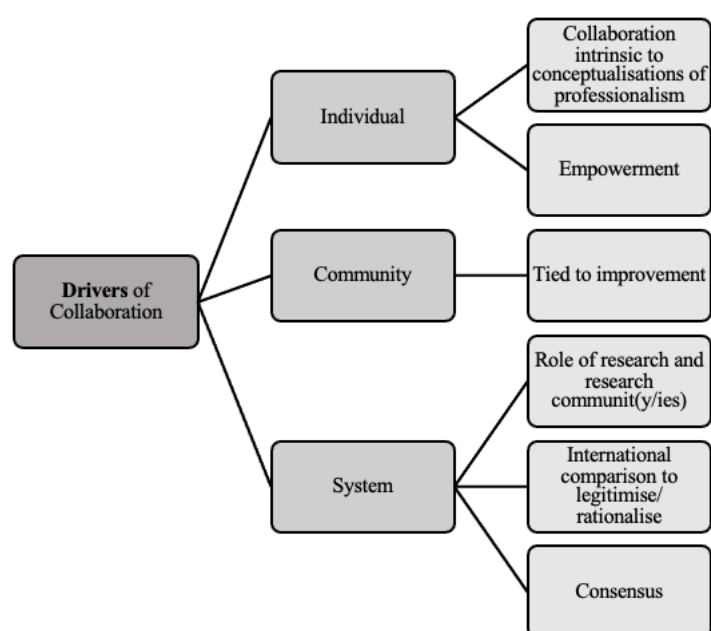
(Taken from **Figure 7: Dimensions, Themes and Subthemes from Key Policy Texts**)

Across the policy texts under analysis, it was clear that already existing to varying perceived degrees of effectiveness were formal and informal means of collaborating across various layers of the system; be that the collaboration that emerges from across clusters of schools, or that which is planned for at regional levels, illustrated pre-OECD report through the Northern Alliance. The forms of collaboration emerging, and who initiated them frequently depends on the governance, leadership, and culture within the spaces they emerge. Framed by actors themselves within the system, the form of collaboration, as well as its impact and sustainability, is frequently influenced by the positional power they hold at one or more layers of the system. With a focus on the sustainability and effectiveness on forms of collaboration, it was noted by the OECD (2015a:17) that,

‘There needs to be clarity about the kinds of collaboration that work best to bring about the innovations and improvements to enhance student learning, and to create coherent and cohesive cultures of system-wide collaboration. This is not an argument for mandated collaboration or contrived collegiality to implement centrally-defined strategies. But it is to argue for greater consistency in collaborative professionalism and of moving towards the higher quality collaborative practices that have the most positive effects on student learning’.

The texts analysed, including the review of education governance and subsequent national improvement frameworks highlight the need to consider the scaffolds in place that develop and sustain collaboration, particularly the systems and structures across the local, middle tier, national, and supranational levels of the system. However, depending on the actors involved in the initiation, such systems and structures could limit the forms and purposes of collaboration, as well as the culture and norms across the system.

### Drivers of Collaboration – Individual, Community, and System



(Taken from **Figure 7: Dimensions, Themes and Subthemes from Key Policy Texts**)

Aligning with the norms of professionalisation and modernisation agendas, Scottish policy has begun to position collaboration as being intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism and professional practice. Not only how public services operate, but how professionals interact and what characterises their professional behaviour now is presented as requiring the inclusion of collaboration, or a recently emerged phrase ‘collaborative professionalism’; a reference to the influential work of Hargreaves and O’Connor (2018),

Hargreaves having been a co-author of the OECD (2015a) report, ‘Improving Schools in Scotland’ where much reference is made to this.

Power again arises as a related theme, as emerging in the texts is a recognition, implicitly, of the influence of power dynamics, and the distribution of power to enable collaboration to happen. Empowerment of the individual or actor within the system is presented as being central to enabling collaboration to emerge in ways that are effective, meaningful, and sustainable to those collaborating. The Scottish Government in the 2020 NIF emphasised,

‘We will continue to create a culture of empowerment and collaboration to enable the teaching profession to work together and to use their skills, judgement and creativity in the way they think best to develop the high-quality teaching practice, and effective pedagogy, that are crucial to securing better outcomes for children and young people.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:45)

However, this is arguably at odds with the persistent emphasis on collaboration, which is nearly solely being tied to improvement agendas. Frequently, forms of informal and formal collaboration are centred around professional learning, which of course likely leads to improvement in practice. However, where collaborative activity is so closely tied to improvement in the form of pre-determined improvement agendas, the empowerment, ownership, and agency individuals are able to exercise in collaboration, or collaborating arguably could become limited. With pre-established agendas for collaboration set by actors at different levels often responsible for leadership and governance of different aspects of the system, collaboration that emerges could deviate from what those expected to be engaged in the form of collaboration deem to be important, meaningful, and valuable. This, by consequence, risks the collaborative activity being unsustainable or of minimal impact.

The role of research and research communities in identifying forms and approaches to collaboration was identified as being important in driving collaboration. This was because,

‘Not all kinds of professional collaboration are equally effective...Chapman and Muijs (2013) found that many of the networks had no positive impact on student outcomes. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) warn against professional collaboration that is unfocused and vague, on the one hand, or contrived to support top-down accountability, on the other.’

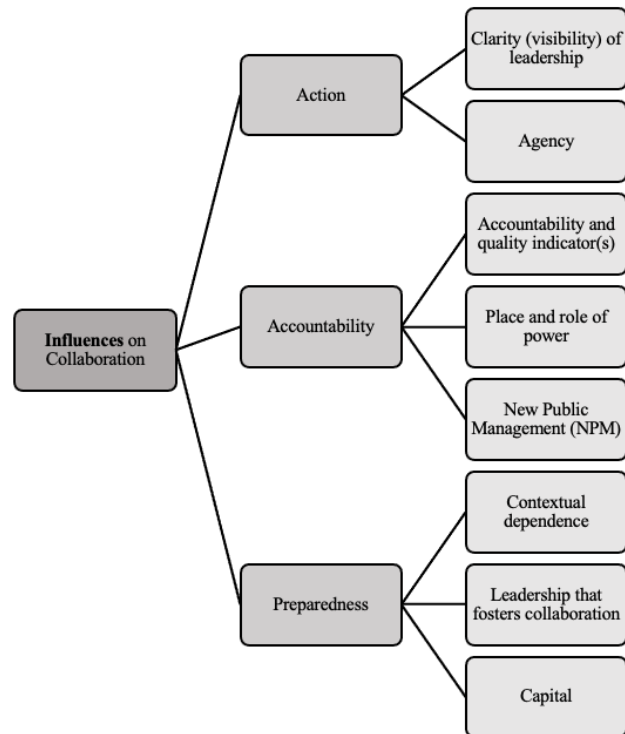
(OECD, 2015:133)

It is vital to acknowledge the importance of research in identifying effective means of collaboration. However, greater research exploring how systems, structures, culture, and

the people involved in collaboration can influence it could offer insights into more effective and sustainable models of collaboration. Given the hierarchical nature of many aspects of the system, and how they are positioned as possible barriers to improvement (Scottish Government, 2020), consideration still needs to be given to the leadership and governance within the system that affects or frames the collaboration that emerges or is possible. Consensus emerged from the policy texts as being key, visible clearly when connecting consensus with clarity and coherence. Consensus however could be a dangerous goal when it comes to both the forms and drivers of collaboration. Not only because it is something notoriously elusive, but also because at a systemic level, be that at the middle tier or more broadly at a national level, it could result in greater standardisation in collaborative practices that do not necessarily reflect the needs nor desires of the professionals and communities involved in them, and by consequence, lacking in impact and effectiveness.

A more sophisticated understanding of the complex interplay of the factors and influences mentioned above are necessary for building a research informed understanding; not only on forms of collaboration that are or could be effective, but also how a system is built that enables actors across the local, middle tier and national levels of the system to develop and maintain meaningful approaches, which is driven by their knowledge of context, selves, and others involved in the collaboration.

## Influences on Collaboration – Action, Accountability, and Preparedness



(Taken from **Figure 7: Dimensions, Themes and Subthemes from Key Policy Texts**)

Given the complex negotiation required at all levels of the system of community needs, policy contexts, and the range of professionals involved in education in all its forms, it is unsurprising that across policy texts, clarity of leadership was viewed as being central to building and maintaining effective and impactful means of collaboration. Leaders at the local, middle tier, and national levels of the system influence the structures, culture, and interaction of individuals within the spaces they operate. As such, it can set the context, or act as a barrier to meaningful collaboration. Tied to the action of leaders was also the agentic action possible of individuals within and across the system to engage and sustain forms of collaboration that are meaningful to them.

Connecting with the formal and informal forms of collaboration that exist already and could emerge, the agency individuals are able to exercise could enable more unique and sophisticated means of self-sustaining collaboration to be developed. Over time, this has been seen in the Scottish system with TeachMeet, the rise of networks through social media, Scottish Teachers for Enhancing Practice (STEP), and even at the middle tier level with the coming together of local authorities to form the Northern Alliance, to name just a few. However questions remain as to the value attributed to these varied forms of collaboration. For instance, the Northern Alliance set an example for the future development of RICs in Scotland. However, with the more informal, peer-led, and self-

sustaining collaborations embodied through professional networks, the value attributed to them arguably varies given their lack of visibility in the structures and culture of the system. Outlined in the OECD (2015a) report was that,

‘Not all kinds of professional collaboration are equally effective. In their study of school-to-school collaboration in England, Chapman and Muijs (2013) found that many of the networks had no positive impact on student outcomes. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) warn against professional collaboration that is unfocused and vague, on the one hand, or contrived to support top-down accountability, on the other.’

(OECD, 2015a:133)

This reflects the fact that there is a growing body of literature around types of collaboration and their effectiveness within particular contexts. However, there is still a gap in understanding the effectiveness and scalability of both emerging collaboration from within groups of professionals at local levels of the system and those led and scaffolded at the middle tier and national levels. While there may be a relatively low proportion of professionals engaged in the emerging and self-sustaining networks and collaborative activity outlined above at the local and middle tier levels of the system, where initiation is not reliant on leadership or governance structures, given that they are able to bring together a range of professionals from across the system and sustain networking, collaboration, learning, and sharing, their lack of broader visibility in the policy domain should be acknowledged. Additionally, these forms of collaboration are characterised by agency, distributed forms of leadership, and empowerment for the pursuit of improvement and learning. As such, there could be a lot to learn from them in a time where policy is aiming to enhance and utilise collaboration across the system and position it as intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.

Many forms of collaboration are evident across the system, as well as forms of collaboration being advocated for as a consequence of both the OECD report and education governance review, are visibly connected explicitly or implicitly in the policy texts analysed to improvement agendas. They are also tied to the leadership and governance of the collaborative activity or the system itself, to enable collaboration to happen. As such, themes of accountability, and quality indicators emerge. Tied to characteristics of new public management (NPM) models, collaboration, while being positioned as a key component of professional dispositions and practice, as well as effective and well-functioning systems from the local to the national level, is also positioned as something that both keeps actors within the system accountable but has to itself also be accountable for positive outcomes and improvement. Reference is frequently

made throughout the policy texts to the need for collective responsibility, the exemplification offered by ‘high performing’ systems, ‘consistency in collaborative professionalism’ (OECD, 2015a:133), strengthened inspection, clear accountability structures, and the variation in performance of education authorities and the need for collaboration to rectify that.

While the learning and sharing benefits of collaboration emerge as a focus in the policy texts, the definition of collaboration emerging from the policy texts is arguably simplistic, as it focuses on a sharing of practice that could be productively adopted by others seeking to make improvements and keep those involved accountable for such improvements. This was notable where Education Scotland tied collaboration directly to evaluating practice and progress in relation to the SAC and tackling the poverty related attainment gap, stating as features of highly effective practice:

‘a) Governance and management

Building the leadership capacity of staff through professional learning and collaboration.’

(Education Scotland, 2019:9)

‘f) Professional learning and sharing practice

- High levels of staff engagement at all levels within a culture of collaboration, and with partners.’

(Education Scotland, 2019:14)

Instead of joint work, around a shared focus, bringing together connected domains of expertise, the collaboration emerging from the policy texts appears to be characterised by any form of people coming together, an improvement focus, sharing of ideas or approaches, and supporting or ensuring accountability.

While accountability is a prominent feature, acknowledged also throughout the policy text explicitly as well as by implication was the importance of the preparedness of individuals as well as the different layers of the system to engage in collaboration. Well documented is the importance of teachers’ self-efficacy, prior experiences, and their willingness and opportunities to engage in collaboration (Forde & McMahon, 2019). With the emergence of themes around preparedness for collaboration, reinforced in the policy texts is the contextual dimensions and factors of collaboration. Noted throughout was the contextual variance or dependence of the success as well as forms of collaboration. Collaboration at a school level was highlighted by the Scottish Government as a strong feature of Scottish education, but this was not universal. The International Council of Education Advisers noted that a stronger emphasis was warranted as collaboration was not a sufficiently

embedded feature across the system. Much of the collaboration occurring was dependent on the contextual freedoms or space, as well as the enthusiasm and motivation of individuals. However, at the time of the review of education governance in Scotland, it was the governance structures that were identified as making collaboration harder. Later, emphasis rested on local authorities and how they should be collaborating more to share what was described as ‘best practice’ in order to perform better. As such, emphasis on regional models, similar to the Northern Alliance, then came to form the basis of the restructuring of the middle tier within the system through RICs.

The emphasis on collaboration, enabled through the restructuring of the middle tier within the system, illuminates elements of the definition and influences on collaboration as understood within the policy domain. A culture of leadership and collaboration was highlighted, with both concepts being closely connected to enable improvement in the system, but also connected in the review of education governance with data on children’s progress, as well as clear accountability structures to ensure that demonstrable or measurable improvement is visible. The leadership being discussed here was broadly in schools but also in local authorities and RICs with the purpose of ensuring relevance and fostering collaboration. Teacher leadership, a concept that has also gained prominence in recent years in Scottish education, was also highlighted particularly in the OECD (2015a) report as being a key mechanism through which teachers develop their professional skills and dispositions to foster more effective collaboration and collegiality.

Notable throughout all of the policy texts and discussions around the forms, drivers, and influences is the variation in concepts used interchangeably to discuss collaboration. The emphasis and choice of ‘partnerships’, ‘peer-review’, and ‘relationship’ highlight some of the interchangeable concepts, as well as defining attributes to the definition of collaboration being utilised across the policy text under analysis. Clearly emerging is the utilising of non-tangible attributes of collaboration rather than the exemplifying characteristics of particular forms of collaboration and how it is engaged in. When presenting and sharing much of this work at conferences throughout the research process, and as noted earlier in Chapter 1, a consistent response from headteachers was the need for a shared understanding of collaboration itself, which then leads to the associated characteristics and enablers to allow true collaboration to emerge. Instead, with the conceptual confusion evident throughout policy texts, emerging is a lack of clarity on the characteristics of the collaboration those within the policy community hope to enable. However, the emphasis on the broad attributes that should describe all forms of activity

that could be called ‘collaboration’ or ‘collaborative’ do helpfully indicate what influences successful collaboration.

To support this, throughout a number of the policy texts, capital was highlighted explicitly and implicitly throughout. Capital, referring to the expertise, networks, resources, and ideas individuals are able to draw upon, was characterised throughout the policy texts as social capital (Hargreaves, 2003). This emphasised collective efficacy, being the shared beliefs in the capacity a group collaborative have to make a positive difference collectively, as well as collaboration and collective responsibility. While much work has been done around social capital and its role in successful collaboration, there remains a gap in understanding how, for example, the development of shared social capital through networks, trust, norms, and meanings or definitions (Bagley et al., 2004) would be fostered through collaboration within the Scottish system.

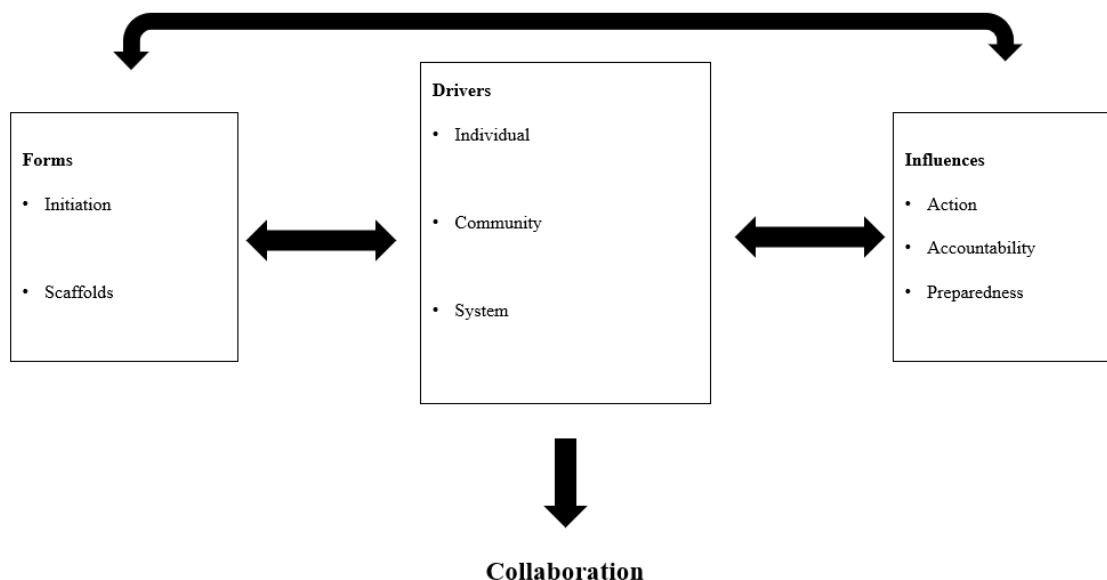
## **Conclusion**

In trying to establish how collaboration is defined conceptually and practically in education through exploring how collaboration is presented in the literature, and in policy, it is clear that collaboration remains an elusive and shifting concept despite it being presented as a panacea within the policy domain. Through an analysis of policy development over the decade with a particular focus on collaboration, clearly seen is the re-establishing or resetting of norms of practice and what it means to be a professional across all levels of the system to more clearly emphasise or be characterised by collaboration.

However, collaboration is not clearly defined within policy texts or the broader discourse around it, and instead enjoys an assumed understanding of its characteristics and component features, even when only related concepts are used. In the policy texts analysed, there was frequent description of the non-tangible attributes of collaboration as a process and characteristic of contemporary professional practice. However, there was not an exemplification of the characteristics that would illustrate its manifestation in practice. While there is a lack of clarity on the characteristics and forms of collaboration intended in the policy texts, there was a notable emphasis on the broad attributes that should characterise all forms of activity labelled ‘collaboration’ or ‘collaborative’. What begins to emerge from the analysis of these policy texts is a complex and overlapping relationship between the forms, drivers, and influences on collaboration, outlined in Figure 8: Understanding Collaboration, and revisited throughout the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

Given that collaboration is viewed as the panacea for challenges or improvement priorities, or as the key policy mechanism to reach particular goals, it is the drivers of collaboration

that could influence the form it takes. As such, the influences could impact the forms of collaboration that are possible, and depending on the forms in existence already, and the broader influences on collaborative activity, various forms of collaboration would emerge or be chosen for the particular policy goal driving collaborative activity.



**Figure 8: Understanding Collaboration**

While this critical analysis of key policy texts that emphasise or utilise collaboration in Scottish education has illuminated that collaboration is presented as:

- a lynchpin to successful implementation of policy,
- a core component of what it means to be a professional,
- a key characteristic to modernisation and improvement agendas, and
- connected to or interchangeable with ‘partnership’, ‘collegiality’, ‘cooperation’, ‘communication’ and ‘relationships’.

there are more complex dimensions behind how it is mobilised in practice. This added complexity is the result of how in these policy texts and associated discourse, collaboration is:

- connected with shifting and emerging accountability mechanisms,
- aimed at securing measurable improvement and change,
- interdependent with ‘empowerment’ and ‘agency’, and
- most frequently driven by pre-determined agendas, beyond the control of those involved.

Given that collaboration is presented in a way that conflates it with related concepts, places it central to the professional work and achievements of those across the system, yet more

frequently is based on agendas or priorities not within the control or scope of influence of those that make up the collaborative group or endeavour, further investigation is required in order to answer the following:

- How is collaboration defined conceptually and practically in education?
  - How is collaboration presented in the literature and in policy?
  - How is collaboration understood in practice?
- What role do policy actors and school leaders believe collaboration has in tackling challenges in education?

This requires further understanding as to how actors involved in policy implementation, and its associated sense-making, understand the concept, role, and function of collaboration (Ball, 1994).

With policy intent offering insight into how collaboration is understood and mobilised, exploration of the lived reality of this in contexts and sites of practice can illuminate the complex manifestations of policy intentions in the realities of practice. Presenting data from interviews conducted with five headteachers from two local authorities in Scotland, the next chapter explores the lived reality of collaboration through insight into how headteachers understand, as policy actors, collaboration as a concept, the role it plays as presented in policy, the role it plays when manifested in practice, and the opportunities and challenges that come with this; in part answering and offering new insights in relation to the questions outlined above.

# Chapter 5: Understanding the Lived Reality of Collaboration

## Introduction

While education policy serves the function of framing direction and articulating systemic goals, given the relative generality of policy texts, they can be viewed ‘more like a recipe than a blueprint’ (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010:5). Given the broad frame policy offers, the space for interpretation for those in sites of practice who are charged with making goals a lived reality is large. As discussed in the previous chapter, while policy itself may not be able to articulate exactly what practices and outcomes may directly result as a consequence of it, it can guide understanding and action across the jurisdiction over which it exercises influence. Given that the policy process itself no longer is located primarily within national contexts given the increasing influence of supranational organisations guiding understanding and practice that results from policy, gaining an understanding of the lived reality of emerging and established policy priorities illuminates important factors around the connection, relevance, outcomes, and possibilities of these priorities (Robertson, 2012). In this chapter, the concept of practice and the lived reality are briefly explored, following on from which data from interviews with five headteachers from two local authorities in Scotland is discussed. This discussion explores their understanding, as policy actors, of collaboration as a concept, the role it plays as presented in policy, the role it plays when manifested in practice, and the opportunities and challenges that come with this.

## Practice and the Lived Reality

As a school leader situated primarily in sites of practice, while simultaneously being immersed in the research domain and study of education policy, critically exploring the complexity of practice and the variation of lived realities for those in sites of practice has come to characterise my professional learning over time. While defining practice remains elusive given its historical, societal, philosophical, and cultural connotations (Steadman, 2018), Mahon et al. (2017:7-8) explore practice as being characterised by ‘socially established cooperative human activity’ with an associated discourse, ways of understanding and acting, and the relationships between individuals. Keemis et al. (2014) discuss how practice architectures which can also frame other practices are made up of cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements. Keemis et al. (2014) utilise these aspects in the context of developing critical praxis; morally, socially, and politically informed action or practice. While this is not my focus, I utilise their ideas

here to illuminate the complexity of practice and acting within sites of practice. Cultural-discursive arrangements describe what can be said and by who, and the language use and meaning derived from it that make up the norms of interaction within a group. Material-economic arrangements bring together the influences that frame what can and cannot happen within practice contexts, be it time, space, and access to related resources. Social-political arrangements are the social relations within a site of practice, the formal, informal, planned, and unplanned interaction, embedded within which is the role and presence of power and collectivity.

I have used these aspects of practice and its architectures for the purpose of this study as a means of illustrating the complexity of the lived reality of actors within the system; in this case, school leaders. The complex negotiation of each of these elements results in what Bernstein (2000) has described as the re-contextualisation and reshaping of policy goals, intent, and mechanisms in sites of practice. The purpose of the interviews with primary headteachers, which will be discussed in the following section, is to illuminate some of this complexity, but also to better understand the definitions of collaboration being mobilised in practice, the implications this has for practice, experiences, and consequences of collaboration, and the role those leading in sites of practice believe collaboration has in tackling challenges or securing improvement. In doing so, the cultural-discursive arrangements which illuminate what can be said and by who, and the language use and meaning derived from it that emerges from the interviews is discussed, with further exploration of this through a postmodern lens in the following chapter.

### **The Lived Reality of Collaboration in Scottish Education**

Positioning myself as a pragmatic social constructivist, recognising and accounting for this complexity within practice, matched with similar complexity in the domain of education policy making, I deemed it important to gain insight into both domains of policy and practice. Doing so enables the outcomes of this research to have the possibility of meaningfully informing related action. After conducting interviews with the five primary headteachers from two local authorities and one RIC, my analysis began with a general inductive approach to begin identifying patterns and themes arising, key segments of text, associated codes, and the grouping of these into broader themes and overarching dimensions based on their interpreted relationships. This process incorporated five stages after the initial analysis of the data:

- Stage 1 – Collation of codes.
- Stage 2 – Identifying frequency across transcribed interviews.
- Stage 3 – Categorising based on frequency then alphabetical order.

- Stage 4 – Identifying theme and broad dimensions using categorised codes and frequency.
- Stage 5 – Presentation of dimensions, broader themes, and codes.

Outlined in Appendix 6, following this process, quotations were collated from all the interviews and analysed further focusing on,

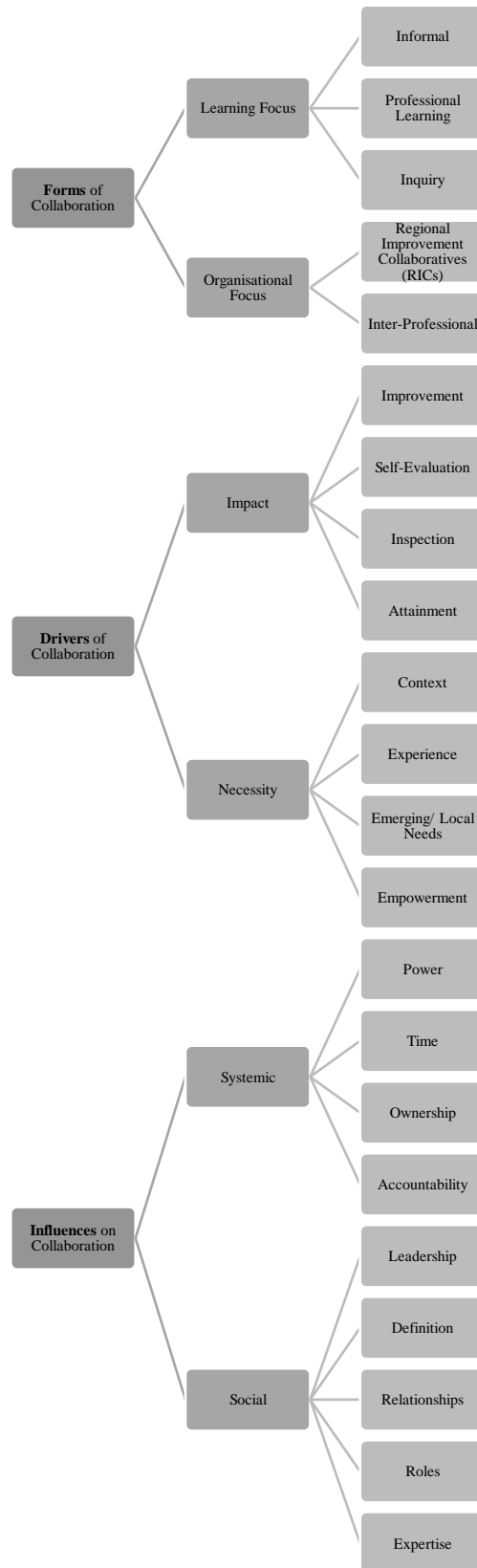
- Codes
- Broader themes
- Dimensions
- Connection to the theoretical framework

This was done for each transcript and the questions and vignettes together, with Question 1(a) separated ‘Concept of Collaboration: What does ‘collaboration’ mean?’ in order to analyse how participants defined collaboration, linking directly with one of the research questions, but also offering possible new insights into a new means of conceptualising collaboration, which explored further in the following chapters.

Throughout this process, the following questions guided my thinking:

- Have I utilised the theoretical framework sufficiently in the collation and presentation of the data?
- How might I structure the presentation of this in terms of a broad descriptive presentation of the data before a discussion of the bigger ideas and points emerging?
- When bringing together both data sets, how do I meaningfully connect with the literature, answer the research questions, and explore an emerging conceptual framework for understanding collaboration along with definitions?

Resulting from this and illustrated in Figure 9 are the overarching dimensions of collaboration as understood by the participants interviewed, alongside the related broad themes, and descriptive codes collated from the interview transcripts.



**Figure 9: Dimensions, Themes and Codes from Interviews**

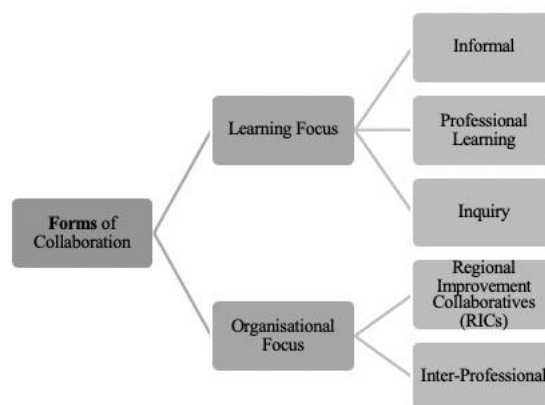
## Understanding the Lived Reality of Collaboration

Also driving this analysis of the interview transcripts was the pursuit of answering the following research questions:

- How is collaboration defined conceptually and practically in education?
  - How is collaboration presented in the literature and in policy?
  - How is collaboration understood in practice?
- What role do policy actors and school leaders believe collaboration has in tackling challenges in education?

Appendix 6 outlines in detail the emerging themes from the analysis of the interview transcripts, where quotations were taken from each along with their code, and connection made to the broader themes, dimensions, and the theoretical framework (Figure 2). The key points emerging from this analysis, with particular connection to the theoretical framework in Figure 2, are discussed below. Notably, upon analysis, there was significant connection with the analysis of the policy texts analysed in Chapter 4. The overarching dimensions of the forms, drivers, and influences on collaboration also emerged from this data set. Shared in Figure 8: Understanding Collaboration in the previous chapter, while the broader dimensions were the same, the themes emerging varied.

### Forms of Collaboration – Learning Focus and Organisational Focus



(Taken from **Figure 9: Dimensions, Themes, and Codes from Interviews**)

To a much greater degree, the forms of collaboration were much more specific from participants during interviews than those that could be gleaned from policy analysis. From those shared, they could be grouped into two themes: those with a learning focus, and those with an organisational focus. The opportunity to share knowledge with others, develop skills, and position the leader as being in a coaching capacity to enable all of this to happen, was how many participants characterised collaboration. This depended on, but

also fed into, the culture of the school or learning organisation, and was influenced by those who made up that group coming together to collaborate.

For a learning focus to be maintained in the collaborative process, participants articulated the importance of teachers having the autonomy to make decisions about what is being shared,

‘Teachers having the autonomy to share skills and share practice. I think that’s really important. And that needs to feed into your improvement agenda.’

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

However, tensions emerged, not necessarily recognised by participants, but visible during analysis where this still had to connect with the school’s, local authority’s, RIC’s, or a national improvement priority. Given individual priorities may not always fit with these broader agendas, some participants felt that when individual priorities or goals do not fit, it should not feature as a priority for collaboration.

For autonomy to be possible, and for collaborative endeavours to retain a learning focus that reflects those who are involved in the collaboration, participants highlighted the pivotal role of the leader and the culture that is set where individuals are listened to, and mechanisms like Professional Review and Development (PRD) are utilised as learning conversations. Autonomy and a learning focus, along with the varying conceptualisations of empowerment, also utilised by participants, be that focused on devolving of responsibility, or repositioning accountability, were highlighted as enabling a more bottom-up model of collaboration. Such models emphasise emergence based on need and at the discretion of those involved. This characterises collaborative approaches as being less focused on structure through governance models, but based on culture, people, and leadership within the community where collaboration emerges from.

Some of the forms that this collaboration took were collaborative professional inquiry, as well as the curriculum, thematic, or role focused collaboration and networking opportunities now led through the RICs. While these opportunities were identified by participants as having potential for supporting both professional learning and improvement, some highlighted that the shared goal for the RIC itself is not sufficiently clear, and with that, the collaboration is characterised only by sharing rather than genuine collaboration. However, establishing the true nature of genuine collaboration was something that remained uncertain for those participants. Questions remained for them around whether collaboration was partnership, trying something together, or another experience altogether. One participant concluded that,

‘I think for real collaboration to take place there needs to be a joint piece of practice, a joint piece of work because I think that then gets you over the individual bit.’

Participant 3 (see Appendix 6)

While collaborative inquiry was highlighted as being one of the most impactful forms of collaboration characterised by joint working for professional learning and tackling challenges or persistent problems of practice, challenges were identified that were believed would always exist around the individuals coming together being ready and prepared to see something new, or that there is a better way of doing something.

While many tied collaboration to improvement agendas irrespective of the form it takes or where it emerged from, some participants highlighted how collaboration was a means of organising interaction and joint work, or organising at the middle tier and national levels of the system the collaboration that needed to happen to have tangible impact on improvement at the local level. A key example of this was the RIC. While the intention was to enable greater collaboration within and across local authorities, one participant described it as,

‘...we’re going to collaborate but there’s a lot of talking and not a lot of collaboration.’

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

This, alongside the reported lack of clarity around the goals of the RIC, indicated that there is not a sufficient rationale underpinning the nature and outcomes of the various forms of collaboration that could or should emerge through the RIC structure.

More natural collaboration that focused on joint work for a shared outcome that participants highlighted, was the joint working that happens with partner agencies involved in supporting and meeting the needs of young people. This form of inter-professional collaboration was viewed as adding strength, insight, and effectiveness to the work being done with young people. Given the effectiveness of this form of collaboration and how central it was to meet the needs of young people, one participant highlighted that they were regularly looking for

‘...planned opportunities to get together to network and know each other and by professionals, I mean headteachers, speech therapists, our health visitors and educational psychologists, our third sector colleagues so the charities who are working in our area...’

Participant 3 (see Appendix 6)

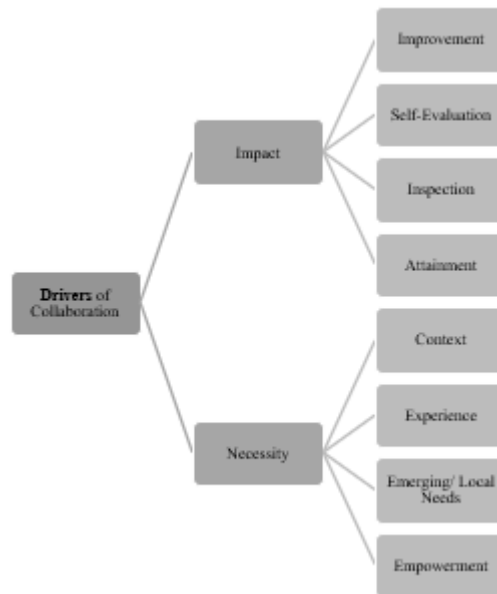
This highlights the emerging norms of practice that appear to be central to effective collaboration. Collaboration that moves beyond talking to genuine joint working was also highlighted throughout participants' responses as being reliant on the people and structures within the school. Those that had access to stage partners, being partner teachers teaching the same age group in the school, by consequence had more opportunities to collaborate and engage in joint work that was described as natural or instinctive. Those who did not have these people in their school relied on the leadership of the headteacher or their leadership team to organise opportunities to collaborate across those teaching within the same Curriculum for Excellence level. However, many of the participants highlighted the challenges posed by Working Time Agreements (WTAs), which is a collective agreement reached at school level between the trade union(s) and the headteacher in relation to the distribution of working time for teaching, planning and preparation, and collegiate working. A total of 195 hours are set aside for what is described as 'collegiate working' across the year. While this ensures there is regular, planned, and sustained opportunities to come together to collaborate as part of the working week, participants identified constraints it places upon the planned collaboration that the headteacher may lead or facilitate within the school as well as the naturally emerging collaboration that would happen within teams. Some participants discussed how a certain amount of collaboration that emerged through their leadership or within teams had to be pitched to all staff as being optional as it sat outside the working time agreement. As such, success depended largely on the motivation and engagement of those involved. Motivation emerged numerous times, with one participant noting,

'People's motivation can hinder collaboration, people's understanding of collaboration can hinder collaboration. And people's confidence can hinder collaboration.'

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

This motivation, also connected here to understanding and confidence, can be influenced by the drivers behind various forms of collaboration that emerge and the perception that results from this, be it the impact collaboration has or will have, or the believed necessity of collaborating.

## Drivers of Collaboration – Impact and Necessity



(Taken from **Figure 9: Dimensions, Themes and Codes from Interviews**)

Drivers however that were believed to feed the motivation to collaborate were not all necessarily of intrinsic origins. One participant made regular reference to self-evaluation and inspection that led to improvement, including direct reference to quality indicators from the How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) Framework (Education Scotland, 2015) which drives self-evaluation and inspection in Scottish schools. Much collaboration that emerges within schools appeared to focus on Quality Indicator 2.3 ‘Learning, teaching and assessment’. It was shared by one participant that collaboration encourages self-evaluation, and with a shared goal, multiple possibilities are able to drive action.

However, while many of these benefits were noted, one participant cautioned that collaboration should not be used as the persistent default approach. Instead, it should be used in a more strategic way considering the purpose, goals, and intended impact of collaborating.

‘I think we’re constantly looking to see what can we do, managing it actually as well so it’s not just a scatter gun approach, it’s got to have value. ‘

Participant 4 (see Appendix 6)

They also shared that this should involve critical evaluation of the collaborative processes themselves to truly understand the purpose, value, and next steps of the collaboration in which they are engaged.

Self-evaluation and inspection both feature as recognisable mechanisms to support improvement within the system. One participant noted that schools will go through their own self-evaluation process, which will identify targets for action. Frequently prior to

inspection from Education Scotland, their local authority Quality Improvement Officers (QIO) will also conduct a mock inspection with the school to identify further targets. Next, an inspection is carried out by Education Scotland, also resulting in new targets. This sits within a broader regional and national context with the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) framing improvement agendas around raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap. As such, while collaborating with these partners within and outside the school was viewed as valuable, it can result in an overload of areas to focus on and action as a school community. Additionally, a complex process of negotiating them all and identifying meaningful priorities has to happen if the results of such collaboration are to lead to meaningful impact.

Negotiating these priorities linked back to the importance of the context of the schools themselves, and the people and culture(s) within it. For collaboration to bring about genuine and meaningful improvement, participants identified the importance of identifying colleagues who would be able to lead on various areas of priority.

‘I think I would be looking at trying to identify staff that would be able to lead this. So the headteachers have had this input, what training is then needed for the people who are going to be leading and taking this task forward?’

Participant 4 (see Appendix 6)

Tensions emerge here, where while devolving leadership was identified, this could sit at odds with what was also articulated around enabling a more agentic approach where individuals could identify needs, aspirations, and goals for collaborating. With the multiple priorities, targets, and improvement areas participants identified that they need to negotiate, there could be a tendency to set the agenda and frame the collaboration that needs to happen while also devolving leadership and associated accountability for it. One participant highlighted that,

‘I’ve seen it have the biggest impact on experiences and achievements of students, has been when it’s been a focused collaboration, so a planned collaboration, not the incidental collaborations that you get which I also do love because of the energy and life that they have.’

Participant 5 (see Appendix 6)

However, it was also acknowledged when referring to peer-led or bottom-up professional collaboration and learning that,

‘I think if you make it in your own school in that way sometimes you take away why it is special and people are doing that in their own time and therefore they are committing to it, and it suddenly becomes something you have to do.’

Participant 3 (see Appendix 6)

Here emerges an understanding of the various motivations for collaboration, and the challenge of negotiating need, goals, improvement priorities, and motivation, harnessing the key elements of each to design meaningful collaboration. Tensions were also identified with collaboration that was led and scaffolded on behalf of others, such as within the RIC. There were many possibilities for a range of opportunities that were described as collaborative or collaboration for individuals to engage in but given the growing perception that these were more about sharing than joint work, participants felt that they had to prioritise themselves and their school over collaborating within the RIC as it was felt to be more important and meaningful.

Other participants noted that emerging and localised needs were easily identifiable by themselves, and their teams given their rigorous and sustained self-evaluation. Thus, by consequence, meaningful collaboration emerged, action was taken, and positive outcomes were reached. Sharing an example of this, one participant noted,

‘...people went off and investigated different aspects of reading difficulties that they were interested in and we brought it together and from that we eventually pulled together our P1 approach to reading. So that completely changed the practice in school and I think had a really good impact on learners.’

Participant 5 (see Appendix 6)

For this to happen, it cannot be solely led by the headteacher, as shared already. The participants noted that it is about identifying and empowering those able to lead, and giving them the space to do so. However, varying characteristics and definitions of empowerment emerged from the participants’ responses. One participant shared how,

‘We’ve got a collective of all the different schools in our cluster where there’s a nurture group that runs in all these schools, and it’s all about building on that capacity of nurture staff, so they all meet every six weeks and share good practice, paperwork, information that they’ve done. And actually, do you know what? It’s about empowering them. It’s about developing what they’re doing, and making sure their practice is as strong as possible.’

Participant 4 (see Appendix 6)

The use of the concept of empowerment implies the devolving of power to other individuals to enable agentic action. However in this example, there is a pre-determined

structure for collaborating, using a set of criteria for those who participate, with a focus on sharing, but with the accountability of ensuring the focus is effective practice. While the aims of doing so can be described as well intentioned, whether or not this illustrates genuine empowerment remains open to debate.

This was acknowledged by another participant who shared,

‘That definition of empowerment and that can mean many things...

... I think that there’s that empowerment of accountability that you can give to people.

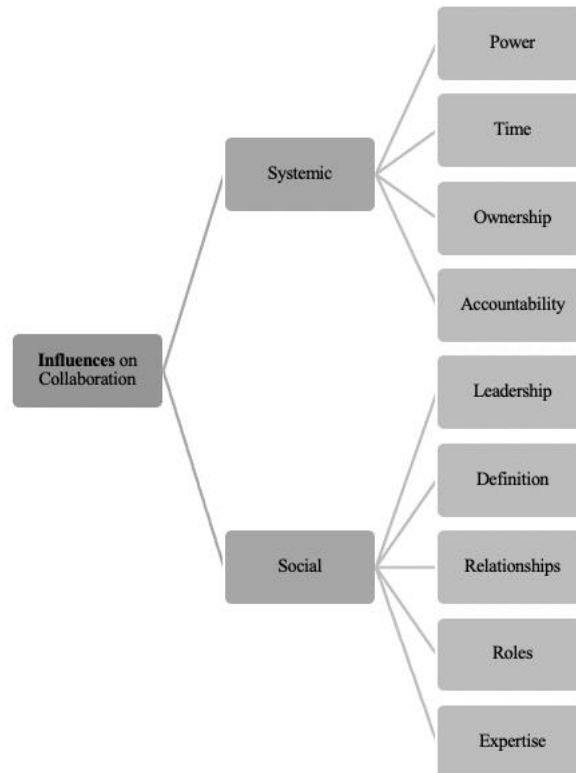
You need to be open to new ideas, you need to really believe in a bottom up model.

You also have to have confidence in your own abilities. You have to feel secure at having challenging conversations but also believing in team, and that I’m only one cog in the wheel.’

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

Here, there is a recognition of the possible variations in defining empowerment, but at the same time, acknowledging that it is about believing in others to lead, and understanding that the headteacher plays one role in a bigger system. The emphasis of this explanation of empowerment on accountability arguably highlights the recognition that control for collaboration and change process do not need to sit solely with the headteacher as the leader. Considering the structures, culture, and people within the school, capacity to exercise leadership and taking on the associated accountability for outcomes can be devolved to others. In doing so, participants noted that when there is an emphasis on devolving responsibility to others, and enabling expertise to be built, collaboration can emerge that reflects the people, culture and structure within the school, and ensures relevance to the shared improvement agenda(s) that focus the collaboration. This of course has implications for broader influences on not only the people, culture, and structure of the school, but also the leadership and governance at the local, middle tier, and national levels of the system.

## Influences on Collaboration – Systemic and Social



(Taken from **Figure 9: Dimensions, Themes and Codes from Interviews**)

As participants began to explore and talk through their experiences and thinking around collaboration, what began to emerge was the human dimension that influences the experienced social reality of collaboration and collaborative working. This human dimension was evident through both systemic and social influences ranging from power, roles adopted, and relationships, to how this manifested itself through leadership practices, accountability, the ownership of collaborative processes, and the definition and expertise that was mobilised to enable collaboration to happen.

Participants noted how collaboration was a core feature of discourse and practice across the system, but also began to question what actually characterised true collaboration. One participant noted that while collaboration is talked about frequently, models are often imposed with a pre-determined agenda,

‘...collaboration is a process and people need to have a firm understanding of what that means for them.’

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

However, the complex negotiation of how leaders enable the construction of an operational definition of collaboration, and foster ownership over the process by those involved remains a challenge when often headteachers and leaders often have an end goal in mind, and hope for models that will foster ownership, but reach that pre-determined goal. With

multiple and possibly competing improvement agendas, who actually owns the process and what accountability looks like in relation to it not only affects the success of collaboration, but also what collaboration can actually happen and who it is initiated by.

While the various forms of collaboration: formal and informal, planned, and unplanned was believed to feature as a common daily default practice by leaders and teachers, time was still believed to be a challenge to productive and sustained collaboration. Ultimately, collaboration takes time, time is finite, and if teachers are to be given the time to engage in collaboration, there are resource and budget implications. With workload being an emphasis within the policy arena as an area of focus, alongside the established agreements in the construction of Working Time Agreements (WTAs), one participant noted that as a consequence, when planning for collaboration they have to say to their teams,

“Well, I’m not telling anybody to do that but there’s this opportunity should anyone wish to.”

Participant 2 (see Appendix 6)

Here, we begin to see the implications of where power rests across the local, middle tier, and national levels of the system. The positional power and the consequential implications of how others then respond to these opportunities proposed by leaders, alongside the power of the Working Time Agreement, impacts not just leaders trying to facilitate collaboration, but all those engaging in it.

The culture of the school and the messages, perceived or intentional, sent from the leadership and governance systems that influence collaboration were believed by the participants to have an impact on how teachers attribute value to and engage in collaboration. At this point when one participant was discussing what influences individuals’ engagement in collaboration, who initiates or owns it, and the agenda for it, they began to question how they understood and defined collaboration, sharing,

‘...now that I’ve started thinking... is collaboration always just working together? Or is it something more? I don’t know if collaboration to me is working towards... achieving some kind of shared goal or working towards a shared vision. Whereas an example I just gave, I don’t know if I feel that is collaboration because it’s just working together and... is that the same thing? And I think that’s when something becomes a buzzword, for want of a better phrase, then I think the meaning does get a bit skewed....’

Participant 2 (see Appendix 6)

As participants shared further perspectives on collaboration, their conscious and subconscious definitions began to emerge which some were able to acknowledge while

others were not. As this emerged, some participants moved from using interchangeable concepts such as ‘partnership’ and ‘collegiality’ to breaking down further what ‘meaningful collaboration’ actually was. The defining characteristics of collaboration that went beyond supporting professional learning and improvement agendas, for many participants, were meeting the needs of and supporting families, children, and staff proactively (Participant 4 (see Appendix 6)).

For this to actually happen, relationships were identified as being key to building and sustaining meaningful collaboration. Where relationships were strong and characterised by trust and shared goals, the participants identified that not only is collaboration more successful, but collaboration also emerges from individuals themselves based on goals and needs. One participant noted,

‘Teachers are very good at this because they have their own connections and their own networks, so they bring this to discussions and say, “Well actually I’ve got this connection that I’ve made,” or, “I follow this Facebook page,” or, “I’ve come across this article, would we be interested in that?”

Participant 4 (see Appendix 6)

This naturally emerging and collectively owned form of collaboration sits alongside established norms of collaborative practice framed by leadership and governance at various levels of the system. Local authority clusters featured across participants responses as being an important driver of collaboration, be that sharing or joint working. The collaboration that developed within that context was believed to be effective and meaningful for the community. This sat in contrast to how the RICs were described given their pre-determined agendas, and insufficient consideration of the dynamics of collaboration.

When collaborating together, shared focus and relationships were important factors. Additionally, one participant highlighted the necessity of research engagement to build expertise and develop new ideas. The capacity to access and critically evaluate research was viewed as being an important addition to the expertise that individuals bring to collaborative activity.

Ultimately, collaboration was acknowledged as being complex, and importantly not an activity or organising mechanism. One participant shared,

‘...collaboration is a process and people need to have a firm understanding of what that means for them.’

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

The defining characteristics and operational definitions of collaboration emerged throughout the participants' responses, as did the importance of those collaborating understanding what it meant for them. Two explicit questions were asked of the participants, 'What does 'collaboration' mean?' and 'Where does your definition of collaboration come from?'. This next section explores the participants responses to those questions, how they defined collaboration, as well as its possible implications.

### **Defining Collaboration**

Given the conceptually amorphous nature of collaboration (Little, 1990), reaching a shared definition is notoriously challenging (Slater, 2004). Based on the participants' responses to questions 1a and 1b, defining characteristics were identified, which were common across the responses. These included vision and goals, equal membership, working together, and utilising what individuals bring.

The participants described how developing a common vision (P1), working together to achieve that (P2), and how both should be centred on producing positive outcomes for children and young people (P5) was characteristic of authentic collaboration. One participant highlighted the importance of the equal membership of those involved in collaboration (P2), and while only one participant mentioned this in response to that question, this was visible in how many described the relationship dynamics or the human dimension of collaborating. The interactions and relationships involved in collaboration were evident in participants' definitions in how they spoke about working together.

Working collectively and developing others in the process of doing so (P1) was viewed as being characteristic of collaboration. This sat alongside the range of people you may work alongside for various purposes (P4), including across agencies (P5). Mentioning of other agencies in the definition is an important inclusion, as it highlights how individuals rely on established norms of practice, in this case, related to collaboration, to construct an operational definition. Importantly, when working together, the participants also shared the importance of considering how what individuals bring to the collaboration is utilised. Noted was how individuals bring their own personal strengths and skills (P1), share their thoughts, ideas, experiences, and enthusiasm (P3), and recognise the value of what everyone offers (P4). As with how Participant 5 framed working together, here they add that collaborating across sectors and across different professions gives different strengths to the work.

### **Conclusion**

What has begun to emerge is that to understand the complex reality of planning for and engaging in collaboration, identification and analysis of the relationship between multiple

people, spaces, and parts of the system within which collaboration emerges, or is planned for, is required. This was clearly visible after analysing the interviews with these headteachers, and extends the prior analysis of related policy texts in Chapter 4, which led to the articulation of Figure 8: Understanding Collaboration. This representation sought to make visible the complex interplay between the forms, drivers and influences of collaboration. Given how this relates to the lived reality of collaboration and the sense making or definition process individuals go through when understanding and engaging in collaboration, brought to the fore has been the related and equally complex interplay identified between the people, culture, and structure at the local, middle tier, national, and supranational levels of the system, which is indeed visible both in policy and in practice. While the process of understanding and engaging in collaboration was driven so clearly by individual, community, and systemic factors, what emerged from the interviews was a clear emphasis on the impact collaboration can have, and at times, the necessity of collaborating. In the related policy texts, the forms that collaboration took were presented as being dependent on how or by whom they were initiated and the scaffolds in place to enable them to happen. The headteachers that were interviewed took this further, noting that frequently, collaboration will have either a learning or an organisational focus which comes to characterise the forms that it may take and its intended goals. Throughout, the actions and preparedness of those involved and as a result of collaboration, as well as the role and form of accountability that framed collaboration, were seen in the policy text to be large influences on collaboration itself.

Additionally, through an analysis of the interview responses, these influences could also be understood as systemic and social; systemic being how the broader context within which collaboration emerges is influenced by where power rests and how this enables or acts as a barrier to collaboration, and social being the relationships, roles, and mobilisation of definitions and expertise through collaboration. As such, the influences and drivers of collaboration could vary from context to context, and system to system, with diverse outcomes for the forms it can take and the impact of them.

Evident throughout the participants' responses, and the discussion of the findings from them, has been the complexity of practice and how that relates and is manifested through a social endeavour like collaboration. Connecting with the cultural-discursive arrangements that characterise practice, the complexity of norms of practice, and how relationships, positional power, and the broader role of power and agency that is possible within the context of collaboration arose as important dimensions. Emerging needs and those articulated across the system both through policy but also by those at different tiers of the

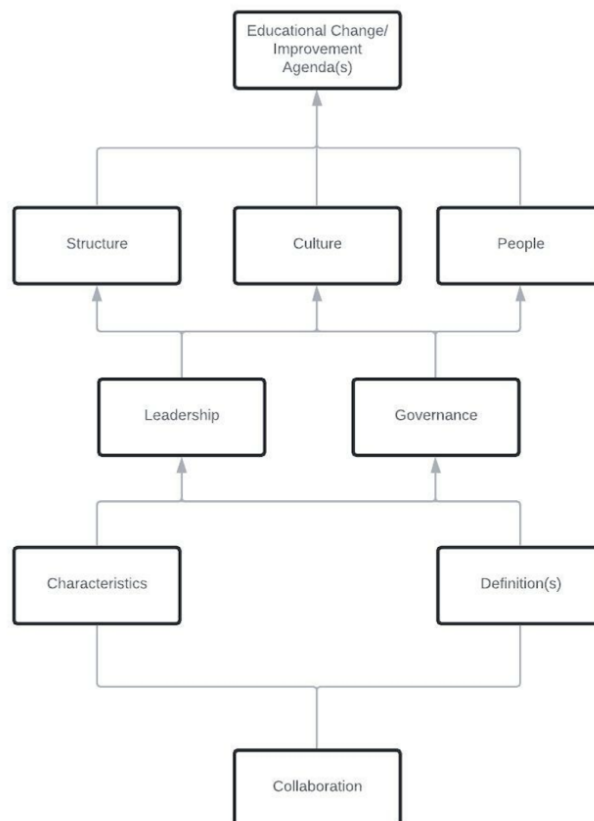
governance structure of the system appeared to drive collaboration, yet questions arose around the utility and authenticity of this as collaborative or as forms of collaboration. Material-economic influences also emerged around the success or otherwise of the collaboration. This was viewed as being connected to the perceived utility, goals, and possible impact of collaboration. This also relied on the time, space, opportunity, and access to others that those involved in collaborating had. Importantly, this related to the social-political dimensions of collaborating. The relationships, ownership, and agency individuals were able to utilise and develop through the forms collaboration would take, the goals of it, and how and when they engaged in it, was seen to influence how genuine the collaboration was, and whether or not positive outcomes resulted from it.

With the emerging ideas from both the policy analysis and interviews with headteachers emphasising the role of power, agency, discourse, and governance, and how this relates to collaboration, there is a need to question the assumed or long-held beliefs and entrenched practices that continue to surround collaboration and educational change more broadly, even within dynamic policy and practice contexts. As more centralised forms of control come to influence the forms, influence, and drivers of collaboration across the system, postmodernism, and ideas of postmodernity and the postmodern, offer a critical voice as to the power relationships at play within systems (Atkinson, 2000). In summarising the ideas emerging from the data discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the next chapter, Chapter 6, offers a critical analysis of the ideas emerging, and how this relates to the power relationships at play within systems through a postmodern lens. Insight is also offered as to how this affects the understanding of and engagement in collaboration, and how the intentions behind this, how it frames or limits the possibilities of collaboration, and how a more connected and sophisticated understanding of these elements, could enable the reimagining of collaboration. The final chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 7, then draws upon these insights and explores possibilities for the future of collaboration in relation to policy, practice, and research, and how this relates to my own positioning in practice, policy, and research spaces.

# Chapter 6: Collaboration in Scottish Education – A Postmodern Lens

## Introduction

Chapter 2 of this study contended that while much literature exists on collaboration within the field of education, there has been little theoretical advancement beyond typologies of forms collaboration takes. In order to begin to conceptualise the complexity of collaboration, Figure 2 represents the theoretical framework developed for this study, and a means through which understanding can be derived of the characteristics and definitions of collaboration, the role of leadership and governance of collaboration, and the role of structure, culture, and people within collaboration, and how this relates to educational change and improvement agendas in education.



**Figure 2: Conceptualising Collaboration: a theoretical framework**

This framework lay the foundation of and was mobilised throughout the analysis and discussion in Chapters 4 and 5 exploring how collaboration is presented, understood, and mobilised through policy, and the lived reality of that in practice. What began to emerge was an illumination of the intended and possible outcomes of collaboration based on the definitions utilised, and the consequential forms they took (Milner et al., 2020). However, with exploration of the discursive and contextual influences on collaboration as both

presented and understood in policy and practice, the consequences of this began to emerge with scope to critically analyse the complex sense making process required to understand the purpose, function, and possibilities for collaboration in Scottish education. From the analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5, the following ideas begin to emerge:

1. Collaboration is presented as the lynchpin of improvement and change.
2. Collaboration is seen as being characteristic of the contemporary professional, and professional practice.
3. There is a consistent emphasis on collaboration across policy and practice within Scottish education, but its manifestation and utilisation are often left to chance, or reliant on specific governance arrangements initiated at the middle tier or national levels of the system.
4. These emerging collaborative mechanisms at the national and regional level matched with alternative forms of governance, result in power to initiate or drive collaboration lying with fewer people; particularly the forms collaboration can take, its purpose, and intended impact.
5. The Scottish policy context and surrounding discourse enjoy a shared vocabulary when it comes to collaboration, but without a shared understanding, or operational definition, varied outcomes from collaborative endeavours result.

The complexity of these emerging ideas become more complex given the grand narratives that sit alongside them, which situate collaboration as a feature or norm in understanding and how educational change, improvement, and contemporary professional practice or public services are talked about. It is through both analysis of the emerging ideas, and the associated grand narratives that frame them, that it is possible to begin to examine how collaboration is understood, the implications this has for its outcomes, and what new possibilities can result from this for collaboration across systems.

As discussed in Chapter 3, where methodological considerations were presented, these ideas will be explored utilising a postmodern lens. I return here explicitly to postmodernism, and the work of Foucault, with the intention of highlighting that while this study overall – characteristic of postmodern thinking – aims to reflect a ‘process of defamiliarization, the making strange of reality in order to create it anew’ (Bogdan, 1990:116, as cited in Mifsud, 2017:26), postmodern thinking, and what is frequently characterised as postmodernism, by its own logic, rejects grand narratives and systems of thought, and does not signify a philosophical position to take on particular subject matter, nor an established set of theories for application to analytical work (Harrison, 2004). Nor is

this what I believe is necessary for this study. Instead, I revisit postmodernism and the work of Foucault at this stage of the study to situate this discussion and analysis as a process of illuminating the narratives and ways of thinking that surround collaboration; ‘the postmodern moment is an awareness of being within a way of thinking’ (Marshall, 1992:3), and in doing so, problematising established ‘systems of thought and organisation’ (Edwards & Usher, 2002:1) on collaboration, and reimagining the possibilities of it within education systems.

This study goes beyond the aim of creating a new model of collaboration or aiming to articulate what constitutes the most effective forms of collaboration. Instead, it challenges the assumptions and norms that have been established through the discourse that surrounds collaboration, and the power that is interrelated to, originating from, and maintained through it. In doing so, new possibilities of understanding, and analysing collaboration that are reflective of the multiple and dynamic lived realities of those involved with it are possible. As is a critical awareness of the influences, drivers, and narratives that are situated within our discursive norms, knowledge of which open up new possibilities as to not only what individuals collaborate on, and how they might do it, but why collaboration has come to dominate discourse and practice within education, and how understanding this can illuminate new or alternative possibilities for it (Foucault, 1969; Atkinson, 2000; Burbules, 2010).

In this chapter, through a postmodern analysis, I will explore these ideas, as well as the forms, drivers, and influences of collaboration that have emerged from the data presented in the previous two chapters. This will be discussed within the broader context of a shifting global neoliberal culture, and the associated grand narratives that frame this. What this means for collaboration when understood alongside concepts related to empowerment (e.g., power, agency, discourse, and governance) is examined, as well as what this may illuminate regarding the possibilities of collaboration. Finally, I will analyse how a sophisticated understanding of the complex political and practical context through which collaboration emerges can support a reimagining of collaboration, and the impact of this, is explored.

## **A Lynchpin of Improvement and Change**

*Collaboration is presented as the lynchpin of improvement and change.*

As discussed in Chapter 4, with a broader neoliberal culture and globalisation characterising contemporary society, there has been a restructuring of education policy and decision making within nation states (Bonai, 2003). The autonomy that governments are able to exercise, as well as the political rationality needed to affect change, has become an

important area of critical policy research (Humes, 2013; Adamson & Åstrand, 2016). Historically, education in Scotland has deviated from dominant global orthodoxies, and has enjoyed and retained a unique identity as a nation that values education with effective systems to enable and organise it (Humes, 2013). Alignment within the Scottish system of discourse and policy mechanisms with supranational discourse, organisations, and ideologies has emerged most notably with the publications of the OECD (2015a) report and how that went on to frame policy making and discourse since. Lingard and Sellar (2014) argue that the alignment seen in Scotland with broader and more dominant ideologies and policy directions in education since a pro-independence government came to power, indicates a more politically driven agenda that is reflective of the government of the day's aim to establish Scotland as a global competitor in times of constitutional uncertainty around the UK's place in Europe and Scotland's position in the UK. New educational orthodoxies which have emerged over the past two decades rely on neoliberal ideologies and grand narratives that frame how nations understand and rationalise challenges and priorities, and the policy mechanisms that sit alongside them (Sahlberg, 2016). In the Scottish policy context, where collaboration has enjoyed dominance as a policy mechanism, questions have emerged around whether or not dominance in the discourse around policy and practice sufficiently leads to collaboration that achieves its intended outcomes. One of the starting points for the Scottish Government as they commenced the review of education governance in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017b), leading subsequently to what is commonly known as the 'empowerment agenda', was an understanding that:

'Collaboration at a school level is already a strong feature of Scottish education, particularly where schools work in clusters. Many schools and establishments are working collaboratively as are many teachers and practitioners, however, this is not universal. The model of collaborative working differs and the governance structures often make collaboration harder. Where it does take place effectively, it has a demonstrable and positive impact on children and young people.'

(Scottish Government, 2017b:31)

While it was acknowledged that collaboration was already a feature of practice within Scottish schools, this was not something that could confidently be said to characterise practice across the local, middle tier and national levels of the system, with impact from that collaboration being just as variable. Notable also was the role of governance structures in some cases actually making collaboration harder. However, little was said around the forms in which current collaboration took, and what type of collaboration was hoped for.

Irrespective of this, the emphasis was clear in how collaboration was again being presented; when collaboration is effective, it has a tangible impact on learners and learning. This was reinforced by the participants that were interviewed, with one sharing:

‘Ultimately, you know, we’re trying to raise attainment with everything we do; we’re trying to close the attainment gap. So we’re understanding what our gap is and what that looks like, and recognising that the interventions and collaborations that we have are aimed at reducing that.’

Participant 4 (see Appendix 6)

The National Improvement Framework (NIF), and the associated priorities have to some extent dominated how headteachers discuss, frame, and mobilise collaboration with the purpose being focused on improvement that tackles persistent challenges, in Scotland’s case, such as the poverty related attainment gap. While this emphasis in the governance review and the NIF reflect a need across the system, the discourse and focus on improvement could be understood as a form of governance or control over collaboration that exists or can emerge within the system, given that some leaders are now being forced to question what they are able to prioritise in terms of their own improvement agendas and collaborative work within their school community. One headteacher interviewed was trying to make sense of the experience of making such a decision, sharing:

‘...actually we should all be working to the 4 national improvement priorities? I have had lots of discussion actually around that, particularly in terms of development of curriculum because I am not sure it actually sits within the National Improvement Framework in that way. Because it is, I mean rightly focused on those key features but if you want to develop social studies for example, it feels quite random and yet if you’ve had the same social studies approach or you want to develop your STEM and look at your science skills and something, you tend to feel like you are pushing it into one of the national improvement ... I mean I know it is about raising attainment but sometimes it is actually just about developing or enhancing your practice and therefore the children’s experiences that lead to achievement.’

Participant 3 (see Appendix 6)

Here, there are some possible discernments of truths or rules of the system which emerge through the language of the NIF and how this has come to frame thinking and decision making within contexts of practice. Through a Foucauldian lens, emerging here is a system of thinking or ideas within a broader social order framed as the governance system, where when direct or explicit links may not be measurable or observable as a result of improvement activity and collaborative professional work, headteachers, illustrated by this

participant, find themselves questioning whether or not they were able to focus on that or dedicate time to it. Ultimately, the policy texts embodied in the NIF and review of education governance can be seen to be underpinned by aims of setting the agenda for improvement activity across the system, and maintaining control of this through the mechanisms used to evaluate the associated work, be it school self-evaluation, inspection, allocation of funding, or how collaborative mechanisms are used to legitimise the focus on this pre-determined agenda, or retain collective focus on it, leaving limited room for anything else to emerge.

This is where questions begin to emerge about the true nature and definition of collaboration. One participant noted that:

‘It can prevent collaboration if the improvement agenda is not made collaboratively.

Let’s collaborate or let’s just have a model of I’ll tell you what to do, and we’ll collaborate on that, and you’ll just do it.

So, collaboration is a process and people need to have a firm understanding of what that means for them.’

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

Here, tensions emerge between discourse within the policy context, and the reality of this in practice. While collaboration featured heavily within both policy and practice discourses, there were much more nuanced understandings required in order to appreciate the complexity of making collaboration a reality with impact in practice. A more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of collaboration is needed if it is to have the intended impact as being characteristic of professional work, modernisation of public services, and improvement agendas. The influencing factors surrounding collaboration must be considered, given that policy markers whether embodied in the positioning and expectations of teachers in policy texts, or how professionals themselves talk about their work come to establish norms and expectations. These norms are reinforced through how all those with a stake in the system come to talk about and engage in professional activity, and the focus or purpose of it. It also frames not just how collaboration might be defined, but also the possibilities that can result from it depending on the figurative space that does or does not remain within the discursive domain, where new ways of explaining and planning for collaboration can emerge, and where power lies to enable this to happen. In professional spaces where those comprising them came to better understand how we learn through social practices (Wenger, 1998), social learning process through what was

being termed as collaboration came to characterise the norms of professional working. This has been evident whether it is through forms of self-governance through how relationships, norms, and ways of working were established within groups, or through external governance and agreements on ways of working, reliant on hierarchical structures for their facilitation and sustainability (Sullivan & Skeltcher, 2002). Be it through Curriculum for Excellence (Education Scotland, 2020), Teaching Scotland's Future (Scottish Government, 2010), Advancing Professionalism in Teaching (Scottish Government, 2011b), or the Commission on the future delivery of public services (Scottish Government, 2011a), this was also evident where collaboration, in a range of forms, came to characterise how professional work in education was conducted and discussed.

While the review of education governance and the OECD (2015a) report both emphasised collaboration at the middle-tier of the system if collaboration was to become more effective and impactful, notable was the importance headteachers placed on the collaboration between individuals and groups that reflects a co-constructed improvement agenda. More informal means of collaborating across systems have emerged in recent years (Willet, 2019; Carpenter & Krutka, 2014). While there were elements of these more informal means of collaboration that headteachers thought would be useful to emulate through planned collaboration, they also noted that it was important for individuals in the system to be able to self-organise and bring collaboration to life in order to meet the needs they have identified, irrespective of political support or input (Spillane & Seashore, 2002). Where individuals across schools, or schools and partner organisations within a cluster were able to identify shared common goals or needs, collaborative activity frequently emerged naturally from this, leaving room to extend, scale up, or innovate together based on shared interests (Atkinson et al., 2007).

Therefore, collaboration is presented as a lynchpin of improvement and change, however without sufficiently considering its definitional attributes, the forms it can take, and what it actually means for the individuals collaborating, the impact from it remains variable. While collaboration is seen to be a central way of working for contemporary professionals within education, further analysis of the implications and requirements of collaboration being seen as characteristic of the contemporary professional, and professional practice is required if it is to reach its true potential.

### **The Contemporary Professional**

*Collaboration is seen as being characteristic of the contemporary professional, and professional practice.*

Policy shifts in Scotland and many other Anglophone nations have been characterised by a drive for performativity, centred around the achievement of policy aims, with consequences for the positioning and expectations to professions, professionals, and their organisational contexts (Bourke et al., 2013).

In Chapter 4, I argued that with the period of globalisation dominated by neoliberalism which has emerged over recent decades, the context for education policy making and implications for practice have shifted greatly. This neoliberal culture has manifested itself through new multiscale relationships spanning the local, middle tier, and national levels of systems, and beyond, through supranational organisations (Usher & Edwards, 1994).

While confusion and ambiguity can characterise how the concept of neoliberalism is used, it can be argued that in the context of education policy making, neoliberalism emphasises a more technical rationalist approach to knowledge and its value (Patrick, 2013). This situates economic imperatives as the focus for educational policy and practice rather than those that may emerge from individuals and communities (Bonnett, 2009). Such an emphasis has significant consequences for systemic norms, practices, and their associated narratives (Patrick, 2013), which is already evident in Scotland through alignment with organisations such as the OECD, and the emphasis on improvement, outcomes, and learner destinations (Lingard & Sellar, 2014). Relating this to how Biesta (2015) articulates the multidimensional purpose of education, emphasis on qualifications comes to dominate both the practice and culture of schools and systems, and hence the purpose for education. However, Biesta (2015; 2021) also articulates the importance of socialisation, or enabling learners to understand themselves, and their place within their communities and the world, as well as the social, cultural, and political context within which they operate. However, Biesta (2021) argues that what often receives the least attention, but should actually be our focus due to the complexities of current society, is subjectification; subjectification being the capacity to decide to act or not act through an individual's understanding of themselves, the context they operate in, built through the educative processes that enable learning.

This focus however sits in contrast to dominant ideologies and specifically the broader economic imperatives that characterise the goals and culture of education in many places. Wacquant (2004:97), as cited in Patrick (2013:5), argues that to resist the 'continued hegemony' through 'established forms of thought and established forms of collective life', further critique and questioning through research is required. While the purpose of this study is not to deconstruct and challenge the dominance of neoliberalism within the context of Scottish education, it is intended that through a critique using a postmodern lens

that the narratives and established patterns of thinking around collaboration are illuminated, understood, and critiqued with a view to reconsidering the possibilities it offers the system.

Emergent from both the policy analysis and interviews in this study was the emphasis on collaboration being seen as characteristic and an expectation of the contemporary professional, and professional practice. This came with a caveat from one participant:

‘But it is around giving people ownership and people potentially in life, in the daily life of schools, the word collaboration probably wouldn’t come up because it’s the name of a process.’

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

This perspective appears to position collaboration as being so intrinsic to professional practice and naturally emerging when individuals have decision making power over how they work. However, it also assumes individual and collective preparedness to collaborate. Participant 2 highlighted that when it does come to collaboration, there can be some hesitation, where their experiences included thinking ‘... don’t tell them how we do it because they’ll copy us’, and where everyone ‘kept everything a wee bit guarded...’. However, this participant went on to note:

‘Whereas now, people are just putting their resources freely online, or mostly freely online, and we try this and it works really, really well. I think there’s more of an openness and more of a goodwill around sharing...

It has happened with the Regional Improvement Collaboratives, and I think that’s maybe given people a bit more permission to share...

...reduce the teacher workload and to create what is now a very positive and nurturing ethos.’

Participant 2 (see Appendix 6)

This shift was also highlighted as a positive characteristic of how some forms of collaboration already emerge in the system, with the Scottish Government (2020b:6) highlighting the micro forms of collaboration; online communities and sharing of practice:

‘Access to collaboration and communication tools on Glow including the Scottish Attainment Challenge community, Teams, Yammer, Sharepoint, and Blogs. These tools all ensure educators can have online discussions, ask questions, post responses, exchange ideas, access additional resource materials and share examples of practice across the Scottish Attainment Challenge, with the ability to host regular discussions and securely control visibility where required.’

(Scottish Government, 2020b:6)

However, access to resources and tools without consideration of the broader ecological influences that enable collaboration to happen can result in limited, piecemeal, or sporadic forms of collaboration being the only possibility. Participant 2 continued, ‘But our EIS rep is very union minded, so I would say blocks more attempts to collaborate where our staff would like to do that...’ and this resulted in the headteachers having to say:

“Well, I’m not telling anybody to do that but there’s this opportunity should anyone wish to”

I don’t know if it’s just what you’re used to. So, that’s how it always was, you just went into your classroom, you shut the door.

And I think it’s feeling safe and confident to share your practice.

But it’s those teachers that keep everything to themselves because I think then they feel they’re being personally judged rather than we’re all coming in to see how we can work together to make things better for our children.

I think everyone still thinks what they do is the best and it would take a big shift to say that’s actually a better way of doing it. And I think there’s such policy and protocol, and processes in place, kind of at a systems level, it’s hard to enact change.’

Participant 2 (see Appendix 6)

In this instance, this headteacher is grappling with the broader contextual or systemic influences on what enables collaboration to happen. Here, where the union representative is described as blocking attempts to collaborate, reference is made to the union representative’s responsibility to monitor the Working Time Agreement. This agreement is ‘a collective agreement reached at school level between the trade union(s) and the Headteacher’ as to how contracted hours are to be allocated, most often centred around teaching, professional learning, and reporting (EIS, 2021: para 1). Not only do working or contractual arrangements that frame professional work within the Scottish system add parameters around the possible collaborative work that can happen, this headteacher also notes how culture and perception can affect how collaboration and the individual’s role in it are both understood.

Culture is referenced in some of the surrounding policy text and discourse, most explicitly by the OECD (2015a:22), highlighting that:

‘Teachers who work in cultures of professional collaboration have a stronger impact on student achievement, are more open to change and improvement, and develop a greater sense of self-efficacy than teachers who work in cultures of individualism and isolation.’

While a rationale is beginning to build around the importance of collaboration and how it should characterise how individuals might understand the professional practice and work of teachers and the benefits that can arise from it, acknowledgement of the complexity of establishing effective forms of collaboration is needed. The headteachers interviewed in this study emphasised how the strategic use of collaboration, and the clarity of purpose behind it, needs to be clear if it is to achieve its associated aims (Muijs et al., 2011). Collaborative activity must be driven by clear goals, with effective communication channels, the building of trust, opportunities for professional learning, and considering the timing of both the collaborative activity and when it might end (Muijs et al., 2011). However, this arguably requires a critical awareness and understanding of the systemic structures and mechanisms, as well as the positional power needed if collaboration is to truly reflect these necessary considerations.

With earlier acknowledgement of the role of governance structures within the system that enable or hinder collaboration, emerging could be the foundations needed for a rethink of the necessary governance structures to enable collaboration to happen in more systematic, sustainable, and scalable ways across the system. The OECD (2015:98) began by emphasising that the Scottish system needed to consider the role of the ‘middle-tier’ in securing and enabling the improvements that were driving practice and development in the system, highlighting that:

‘As top-down strategies are often inappropriate given the emphasis needed on professional and community action, yet with bottom-up strategies by themselves unable to achieve improvement at any significant scale, it is natural to focus strongly on the “middle” (Hargreaves and Ainscow, 2015). This may be the middle of the formal system organigram represented by districts, local authorities etc.; it may be the “meso” level combinations of the networks, chains, professional communities, initiatives, and groupings that are often invisible in the official charts of an education system. The “middle” may thus also be defined vertically and horizontally; we argue in this report that it needs to include both.’

(OECD, 2015a:98)

This emphasis on the middle tier along with its function being to enable collaboration in the pursuit of improvement came to characterise a new system of thought, reflected in how the system operates, and how individuals operate within it. The narrative of empowerment and improvement that sits neatly with collaboration in the surrounding discourse of collaboration and the associated governance arrangements, came to include accountability and forms of performativity characteristic of dominant neoliberal ideology:

‘This is a good moment to lead CfE from the middle in creating coherence and collective responsibility for implementation and results through local authorities, as well as through networks driven by professional associations and principal-driven collaborations.’

‘These organisations and associations might take on leadership in specific areas such as literacy, mathematics, ICT, special education inclusion, assessment for learning, and high-impact professional collaboration.’

(OECD, 2015:136)

RICs are becoming a central focus to enabling this to happen. With that, and the surrounding discourse exemplified above, the possibility was identified of harnessing collaboration and collaborative activity to focus on areas of interest or foci for improvement which could be varied and multiple across the system.

In 2020 in the Scottish Government’s fifth National Improvement Framework, they highlighted that:

‘Alongside COSLA we are currently in the process of commissioning external research into the establishment, reach and impact of Regional Improvement Collaboratives. This follows an interim review of RICs published in February 2019 and is scheduled to report by June 2020. Findings will be used to take steps to further embed regional collaboration and the support available to schools.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:71)

At this point, the Scottish Government had already published a report in 2019 highlighting that while there was some consultation in the development of the RICs, ‘given the timescale, the approach was mainly top down’ (Scottish Government, 2019a:10). As such:

‘In most cases, regional and national stakeholders believed that there was a shared vision and aims for the RIC at senior officer level within participating authorities. However, a few regional stakeholders were unsure about the rationale of the RIC concept, and there was some lack of clarity about the concept of additionality and what it meant in practice.’

(Scottish Government, 2019a)

While some of the participating stakeholders highlighted a lack of clarity in relation to what the RICs could actually offer, the forms and purposes of collaboration remained a focus for the Scottish Government in the next year’s NIF where they highlighted that:

‘We will continue to create a culture of empowerment and collaboration to enable the teaching profession to work together and to use their skills, judgement and creativity in the way they think best to develop the high quality teaching practice,

and effective pedagogy, that are crucial to securing better outcomes for children and young people.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:45)

Here, the emphasis in discourse and policy is on forms of collaboration that centre on the empowerment of the profession to decide what they need, with the overall frame of ensuring the best for children and young people. Throughout the discussion on the forms of collaboration that do, could, or should emerge across the system, themes of empowerment and accountability through inspection begin to feature. Visible here is a positioning of teachers that could indicate alternative rationales for more collaborative approaches. From the emphasis on teachers who are ‘more open to change and improvement’ (OECD, 2015:22), one inference could be made that this emphasis is about ensuring capacity and preparedness for delivering policy agendas, changes, or intended outcomes, rather than agentic and empowered decision making and action possible at local levels within the system. This positioning, and themes of accountability begin to emerge with the extension of this point:

‘In line with current commitments of the Scottish College of Education Leadership, the Standards Frameworks could emphasise even more the importance of and expectations for collaborative professionalism and leadership.’

(OECD, 2015:22)

While the roles and functions of the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) transferred to Education Scotland in 2018, the Professional Learning and Leadership (PLL) work of Education Scotland, closely aligned with the professional standards produced by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), have since incorporated and attributed significant value to collaboration. This is also evident in the National Model of Professional Learning (Education Scotland, 2020), where a key feature and principle is ‘Learning-as-collaborative’, as well as in the GTCS Standards for Career-Long Professional Learning’s introductory section under ‘Being a Teacher in Scotland’, where it states that ‘Enquiring and collaborative professionalism is a powerful force in developing teachers’ agency and delivering our commitment to engaging children, young people, their families, and communities in the education process’ (GTCS, 2021:4).

The discourse visible within the OECD text and the GTCS professional standards highlight significant implications for the forms of collaboration that will be developed, who will be involved, and given how connected it is with accountability, simultaneously with empowering teachers, there are clearly implications to be had for governance within the system, which the OECD recognised in their report:

‘With the complex nature of education, including the necessity to involve more stakeholders and to encourage professional collaboration and networking, the traditional mode of vertical governance by itself is insufficient (Hooge et al, 2012).’

(OECD, 2015:98)

Therefore, with the consistent emphasis on collaboration as being characteristic of professional practice and effective contemporary ways of working, there still remains a gap in the forms collaboration can and does take beyond the forms governance and accountability mechanisms take within the system. As outlined in Chapter 4 and 5, given how dominantly collaboration now features within policy discourse and practice, questions remain as to how collaboration, and more specifically localised forms of collaboration, can emerge as a result of empowered individuals and a restructuring of the governance arrangements of the system. Questions remain around the intention and reality of collaboration as a mechanism for improvement and empowerment, or accountability and control.

### **A Consistent Emphasis, but Left to Chance**

*There is a consistent emphasis on collaboration across policy and practice within Scottish education, but its manifestation and utilisation are often left to chance, or reliant on specific governance arrangements initiated at the middle tier or national levels of the system.*

Despite the consistent emphasis on collaboration visible within policy and practice contexts, it was recognised that this was inconsistent across the system. The work that followed the review of education governance used this point as a catalyst for change, with the Scottish Government (2017b:20) noting that:

‘The Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee noted that the “variation in performance of education authorities is concerning. Education authorities should collaborate more effectively to share best practice.”’

‘However, a number of models of regional collaboration are beginning to emerge, but these models do not yet have sufficient depth, pace or impact as they are currently constituted. The International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) told us in March that in Scotland “collaboration was uneven and was not sufficiently ingrained throughout the education system”.’

(Scottish Government, 2017b:20)

Here, through an alignment in discourse and points from various actors within and across the system, emerging is the foundations being laid for a rethink of the necessary governance structures to enable collaboration to happen in more systematic, sustainable,

and scalable ways across the system. The intention behind renewed or new approaches to collaboration across the system was that:

‘This is a good moment to lead CfE from the middle in creating coherence and collective responsibility for implementation and results through local authorities, as well as through networks driven by professional associations and principal-driven collaborations.’

‘These organisations and associations might take on leadership in specific areas such as literacy, mathematics, ICT, special education inclusion, assessment for learning, and high-impact professional collaboration.’

(OECD, 2015:136)

However, within the policy domain, and at the national level of the system where much of the emphasis on collaboration was being driven from, there remained minimal, if any, articulation of what forms of collaboration should or could emerge with the specificity needed to envisage the reality. While the possibilities were highlighted of harnessing collaboration and collaborative activity to focus on areas of interest or foci for improvement, in 2020 in the Scottish Government’s fifth National Improvement Framework, they highlighted that:

‘Alongside COSLA we are currently in the process of commissioning external research into the establishment, reach and impact of Regional Improvement Collaboratives. This follows an interim review of RICs published in February 2019 and is scheduled to report by June 2020. Findings will be used to take steps to further embed regional collaboration and the support available to schools.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:71)

At this point, the Scottish Government had already published a report in 2019 highlighting that while there was some consultation in the development of the RICs, ‘given the timescale, the approach was mainly top down’ (Scottish Government, 2019a:10). As such:

‘In most cases, regional and national stakeholders believed that there was a shared vision and aims for the RIC at senior officer level within participating authorities. However, a few regional stakeholders were unsure about the rationale of the RIC concept, and there was some lack of clarity about the concept of additionality and what it meant in practice.’

(Scottish Government, 2019a)

Here, emerging was what was also highlighted by the headteacher participants of this study. While collaboration was emphasised to a large degree, it was left to chance for what emerged, resulting in the main focus of new collaboration in the system embodied through

the RICs being criticised for lack of tangible impact or contribution in addition to what already existed. Discussing what characterises collaboration and the role of RICs,

Participant 2 noted:

‘I don’t see what the shared goal is for everyone to be working together on. It’s more just sharing, and sharing ideas, and I’m all for that, and I think that’s fantastic, and it is breaking down barriers from within local authorities, but I don’t see that it’s true collaboration.’

Participant 2 (see Appendix 6)

While some of the participating stakeholders in the Scottish Government’s review of RICs highlighted a lack of clarity in relation to what they could actually offer, the forms and purposes of collaboration remained a focus for the Scottish Government in the next year’s NIF, where they highlighted that:

‘We will continue to create a culture of empowerment and collaboration to enable the teaching profession to work together and to use their skills, judgement and creativity in the way they think best to develop the high quality teaching practice, and effective pedagogy, that are crucial to securing better outcomes for children and young people.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:45)

This demonstrates an emphasis in discourse and policy regarding the forms of collaboration that centre on the empowerment of the profession to decide what they need, with the overall frame of ensuring the best for children and young people. However, this leaves the forms collaboration takes to emerge through chance, or given the emphasis on collaboration for improvement, particularly focusing on closing the poverty related attainment gap, this could leave scope for only collaboration that resulted in measurable, tangible outcomes focused on this agenda to emerge, and therefore a possible reliance on what has already existed, along with their documented inconsistencies across the system:

‘...how they actively engaged with 2.3 and the challenge questions, and how they collaborated with each other, and how they disseminated that across the school with other people.’

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

Here, this headteacher participant is naturally focusing on not just accountability that comes with collaborating, but also referencing the indicators that directly come from the national inspection framework (2.3 - Learning, teaching and assessment) (Education Scotland, 2015:15). One headteacher also noted that when natural or self-initiated

collaborations emerged based on localised decision making, when they did have an inspection, they were advised to cut back, sharing:

‘And I think, being honest, we had a recent Education Scotland inspection recently and they felt there was quite a lot of interventions and partnerships, and maybe we should cut back a little bit and evaluate the impact of them more.’

Participant 4 (see Appendix 6)

While this could be seen as good advice in terms of being more strategic with collaborations, if the narrative that surrounds collaboration is more focused on national improvement agendas, and the associated governance initiated, monitored, and kept accountable at the national level of the system, those at the local level understandably begin to question what collaboration they decide to engage in, what form it takes, and what outcome will occur. Moreover, while the limited discussion within policy texts as to the forms collaboration takes could be viewed as a unique or open opportunity for those at the local level of the system to creatively reimagine the form collaboration takes, if the emphasis remains on being accountable to predetermined national goals, the discourse comes to not only govern individuals’ ways of thinking, but actually could serve to prevent them from seeing anything a new.

Participant 4 went on to share how not only were the collaborations a focus for the inspectorate when visiting, but also the multiple priorities and goals came to cloud the possibilities of collaboration and what activity they could productively engage in that they might initiate and sustain with other colleagues they could or should be working with:

‘As a school we did – we had a school self-evaluation where our QIO Team came into schools and did an inspection recently, and that was a precursor to a full Education Scotland inspection. So from that visit we had priorities identified by the authority staff who came in, who did a mini inspection. And then six months later Education Scotland came to the door and gave us a whole new set of targets. So we need to look at, what is the priority?’

Participant 4 (see Appendix 6)

This alludes to a possible overcrowding of the system in relation to priorities and recommendations, with overspecification of areas of focus, and forms of governance, and too little specification or room for manoeuvre for those at the local level of the system to design productive and meaningful ways of working in collaboration to meet the needs of the communities they are serving.

With this, it becomes evident that a positioning of teachers and headteachers becomes evident that could indicate alternative rationales for more collaborative approaches. From

the emphasis on teachers who are ‘more open to change and improvement’ (OECD, 2015:22), and greater emphasis on governance of the system and the discourse around it, instead of rethinking the structures and mechanisms that act as tools for empowerment across the system, instead there is strong output regulation in the system through mechanisms that support public accountability through measurement tools (Priestley, 2015; Leat, Livingston & Priestley, 2013). Some of the only tangible tools that are connected with national priorities take the form of inspection, centrally allocated funding through the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) and Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC), and the establishment of RICs. In addition, it could be argued that there has been little consideration of the forms collaboration takes, or the influences on it emerging in practice, or being sustained. From this, it could be contended that the empowerment agenda and dominance of collaboration in policy and practice simply serves the outcome of ensuring capacity and preparedness for delivery of policy agendas, changes, or intended outcomes, determined at the national level of the system.

While contemporary discourse could be understood as establishing a grand narrative of empowerment and community responsive improvement through collaboration, instead this could be a new grand narrative emphasising command and control through how improvement can be talked about, and the nature of governance arrangements that frame what collaboration and broader improvement activity can emerge at the local level of the system.

## **Power Lies with Fewer People**

*These emerging collaborative mechanisms at the national and regional level, matched with alternative forms of governance results in power to initiate or drive collaboration lying with fewer people; particularly the forms collaboration can take, its purpose, and intended impact.*

Discussed already has been the emergence of the concept of empowerment within the discourse around collaboration. The Scottish Government (2020a:45) highlighted that:

‘We will continue to create a culture of empowerment and collaboration to enable the teaching profession to work together and to use their skills, judgement and creativity in the way they think best to develop the high quality teaching practice, and effective pedagogy, that are crucial to securing better outcomes for children and young people.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:45)

The emphasis here on a culture of empowerment alongside the exemplification offered in relation to decision-making power, as well as focusing on improving outcomes, illustrates

the intention behind possibilities of collaboration. However, what remains is insight into the mechanisms and forms of collaboration that will enable this to happen. Without a critical analysis of how this becomes a reality, any insight into how this is manifested and how it does or could lead to improvement in outcomes or practice remains elusive. Where design and intention play a role within policy and practice spaces, understanding where power lies and the implications of this for the realities of collaboration offer insight into not only how collaboration is understood, but also what possibilities can and do emerge from it.

Policies of decentralization, deregulation, and more networked forms of governance, framed as empowering those within systems or public services with more decision-making power, are often characterised as being part of modernisation agendas. However, they frequently sit alongside stronger forms of control and accountability, which are characteristic of a broader neoliberal culture that has come to permeate nation states, and education policy making (D'Auria & De Smet, 2020; Milner et al., 2020), and as presented in the previous section, have come to characterise some of what is emerging in Scotland. This emergence of collaboration and the role of power within or related to it becomes clearer when examined alongside how accountability and empowerment emerge across policy texts and the discourse surrounding it, which became evident after interviewing the headteachers. As discussed earlier with the review of education governance, noted early in that was the variation of collaborative activity and the outcomes from it. That arguably forms the basis of the argument made for why a centralised approach to oversight and change of governance arrangements with implications for the local and middle tier levels of the system is needed. Absent from this is the more nuanced and individual stories as to why the variation in governance structures, or more broadly, the variation in successful collaboration as defined, with a degree of ambiguity, by impact on children and young people, exists and persists, and how this can sufficiently be addressed by a culture of empowerment.

The participants interviewed in this study began to both notice and challenge this ambiguity, but also the lack of apparent understanding of the complex reality of collaboration and what empowerment actually means in practice, noting frustration where one participant shared:

‘That definition of empowerment and that can mean many things...

... I think that there's that empowerment of accountability that you can give to people.

You need to be open to new ideas, you need to really believe in a bottom up model. You also have to have confidence in your own abilities. You have to feel secure at having challenging conversations but also believing in team, and that I'm only one cog in the wheel.'

Participant 1 (see Appendix 6)

The implication here is that power is something that is held, perhaps even positionally, that has to be given to others to enable them to act and make decisions. Power, understood as the capacity to influence or make decisions and action, which can result in behavioural change through interaction, is understood here as something that is fluid, leading to empowerment, or coercion (Cameron, 2005). In Scotland, where leadership across school contexts can still be characterised as hierarchical, a culture of empowerment becomes a much more complex goal. Where leadership privileges an individual or individuals based on their role within the school or organisation, the exercise of power is based on positional authority rather than being collaborative, which is characterised by shared power and equal status (Turton & Wrightson, 2017).

Instead of this power being situated within school communities, here the exercise and distribution of positional power happen within the middle tier level of the system. This appeared to begin with the role and function of those working within and across local authorities and subsequently, RICs:

'We will extend the reach and impact of the Attainment Advisers, through regional alignment, to promote collaboration and joint delivery across local authorities from October 2016. Using the data available from the Framework, the Attainment Adviser team will work directly with schools where they can make the biggest difference to accelerate efforts to close the gap.'

(Scottish Government, 2016a:16)

'Alignment', 'joint delivery', 'using the data available' are important markers in the discourse around collaboration and the function it serves within a broader context of policy goals and improvement agendas. Rather than emphasising the earlier mentioned varied forms of collaboration in the middle tier that often are not recognised or accounted for in policy development, here, there is an emphasis on rethinking 'the middle of the formal system organigram represented by districts, local authorities etc.' embodied in new structures and means of organisation to enable or ensure collaboration happens (OECD, 2015:98). In this instance, collaboration here is beginning to be understood as something that needs to be advocated for, and something that people must be held accountable for. As discussed earlier, this was already emerging in terms of how it features as central to

conceptualisations of professionalism through professional standards and the national model of professional learning, but also:

‘There will be a new duty on local authorities to collaborate to support improvement on a regional basis. They will also be responsible for improvement through their provision of education support services, their regional collaboration, and in securing leadership in their schools.’

(Scottish Government, 2017b:7)

The distribution of power and the establishment of this new grand narrative that collaboration is central to improvement, while also now something that individuals and groups will be held accountable for, how power is mobilised, used, or distributed also begins to form part of this grand narrative. This “visibility is a trap” (Foucault, 2002, p. 200), positioning teachers, headteachers and local authorities as accountable within a larger political field, but in reality, with limited scope to exercise that power given the narrow predetermined means and parameters of accountability if that power is to be exercised (Bourke et al., 2013). In this case, teachers, headteachers, and local authorities are here being presented as part of the power relations that exist within the system, but without the agency to exercise power within a context of openness, and possibility. Rather, they are able to exercise power in a way that renders them productive in relation to the predetermined national goals laid out for them. Success becomes dependent on visibly meeting and measuring outcomes based on performance criteria, which is regulated by the disciplinary technologies of the self (Blackmore, 2004; Osgood, 2006); the situating and understanding of one’s self and role through the discourse and systemic structure they find themselves in, but cannot exercise control over.

Throughout this chapter, and connecting with the definition presented earlier in this study, alignment is evident in policy and practice discourses with the literature that defines collaboration as a process of joint work around a shared focus (Henneman et al., 1995; Ainscow et al., 2006). However, there remains little about the connected domains of expertise, and coming together to think, plan, decide, and act based on a shared understanding of respective social norms, expectations, and behaviours that are necessary in order to work together successfully (Cilliers, 2000).

Over the years, with the parameters of this study being 2015-2020, the drivers behind collaborative working, in form, purpose, and outcomes, have remained consistent. They are based on the recommendations of supranational organisations and advisory groups evaluating the work and policy of the education system in Scotland and centre on

demonstrable and measurable improvement. These drivers continue to be evident both in the governments evaluation of progress and planning of next steps, as noted in the NIF:

‘These activities are aimed at building a self-improving education system, where a culture of collaboration and empowerment is evident throughout. This is critical to ensuring the potential of CfE is achieved, and that we improve outcomes for children and young people.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:4)

The ‘Self-improving education system’ is an important vocabulary marker which highlights the alignment to broader work done by supranational organisations like the OECD and philanthropic organisations, as well as well-known authors who have featured in previous policy documentation such as ‘Self-improving schools: Four features of the world’s best school systems’ published by the RSA (Smith, 2018), and ‘Towards Self-improving School Systems: Lessons from a City Challenge’ (Ainscow, 2015). Illustrated here, are examples from other systems and contexts where notable improvements have been made, and where collaboration has been a core tenant of the selected approach. This alignment of discourse, in many ways a productive tool to legitimise and rationalise policy choices and decision making, frames the discourse and subsequent narratives on collaboration within the system – irrespective of the challenges that may be illuminated in practice. This approach, where discourse is used to build consensus through shared language, arguments of logic and comparison, and agreed upon by those that make up the system (Lyotard, 1984; Lingard, Sellar, & Lewis, 2017), results in a discourse being established, and means of action and engagement within the system that builds ‘...consensus on the rules defining a game and the ‘moves’ playable within it’ localised to the context within which it has application (Lyotard, 1984:66). With the ‘rules of the game’ established for the function collaboration serves, and how power is and can be used in relation to it, what still remains is a shared understanding or operational definition as to what collaboration is. Through analysing this within the broader context of what is influencing and driving collaboration, an understanding can begin to be derived of the varied outcomes that may result from it.

### **Shared Vocabulary Without a Shared Understanding**

*The Scottish policy context and surrounding discourse enjoy a shared vocabulary when it comes to collaboration, but without a shared understanding, or operational definition, varied outcomes from collaborative endeavours result.*

At the beginning of this study, collaboration was defined as a process of joint work around a shared focus (Henneman et al., 1995; Ainscow et al., 2006), where individuals coming

together to collaborate share connected domains of expertise (John-Steiner, Weber, & Minnis, 1998), a commitment to sharing this, and using this expertise to think, plan, decide, and act, based on a shared understanding of respective social norms, expectations and behaviours needed in order to work together successfully (Cilliers, 2000). In the interviews with primary school headteachers, they were explicitly asked what their definition of collaboration was and where it came from. While no succinct definition was shared, nor identical ones offered across each of the participants, in answering this question, it was clear that what emerged from their definitions was:

- **Vision and goals**
  - (P1) develop a common vision
  - (P2) working together on a shared goal or to achieve a shared vision
  - (P5) produce a positive outcome for children and young people
- **Equal membership**
  - (P2) everyone – all members being equal
- **Working together**
  - (P1) working collectively, develop others in the process
  - (P3) working together to achieve something
  - (P4) working with partners; working alongside and having meaningful partnerships with a variety of services and stakeholders
  - (P5) working together with other people; working across different agencies
- **Utilising what individuals bring**
  - (P1) bring their own personal strength and skills
  - (P3) share thoughts, ideas, experiences, and enthusiasm
  - (P4) everybody we work with brings something of value to our school, be it parents, carers, pupils, and partner services
  - (P5) collaborating across different sectors and professions offer diverse strengths to the work

As articulated by the interview participants, connecting these defining elements with the definition presented at the start of this study based on the literature, similarities can be seen. A ‘process of joint work around a shared focus’ is evident through **working together** and **vision and goals**. ‘Individuals coming together to collaborate share connected domains of expertise’, and ‘a commitment to sharing this, and using this expertise to think, plan, decide, and act, based on a shared understanding of respective social norms, expectations and behaviours needed in order to work together successfully’ are both evident through **equal membership** and **utilising what individuals bring**.

The connection to and similarities between how participants defined collaboration and the literature is of interest, given that some reported their definition came from their experience of it, while others mentioned that it came through professional learning and reading. Of further interest was how asking this question early in the interview led participants to think about their definition of collaboration throughout. One participant noted:

‘Or is it something more? I don’t know if collaboration to me is working towards, I think I said at the start, towards achieving some kind of shared goal or working towards a shared vision. Whereas an example I just gave, I don’t know if I feel that is collaboration because it’s just working together and if, to me, is that the same thing?’

And I think that’s when something becomes a buzzword, for want of a better phrase, then I think the meaning does get a bit skewed with – I found that with nurture as well.’

Participant 2 (see Appendix 6)

Here, this participant, upon reflection, begins to question whether or not the examples they were giving were actually examples of collaboration, recognising that it is in the design and form the collaboration takes that makes it genuine collaboration rather than any activity where people are coming together. A criticism of the literature on collaboration discussed in Chapter 2 was the lack of conceptual clarity, and the interchangeable use of other related concepts with collaboration, and with that unacknowledged variation in demands of participation, interaction, and outcome, as well as broader drivers, influences, and considerations (Little, 2002; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Slater, 2004; Carnwell & Carson, 2014).

While some form of shared definition emerged from the interviews with the primary headteachers, the analysis shared in Chapter 4 highlighted how collaboration lacked definitional clarity, but has an assumed understanding of its characteristics and component features, even when only related concepts are used. Despite it being situated as a lynchpin to successful implementation of policy, and achievement of broad policy goals, conceptually, it was presented and mobilised as being interchangeable with ‘partnership’, ‘collegiality’, ‘cooperation’, ‘communication’, and ‘relationships’. However, the headteachers warned that while collaboration was important for growth and learning, without sufficient consideration of the influencers and drivers of collaborative activity, it will not necessarily bring the results intended (Kalisz, 2018), and to do this, a definition of collaboration is arguably required (Montiel-Overall, 2005).

While clarity of definition was not possible from policy texts, a shared vocabulary was clearly being utilised across them. Emerging from how collaboration was presented in these key policy contexts, was the reliance on actors exercising agency, the role of power in enabling or preventing this, the contextual variation possible, the importance of leadership, and the capital actors had at their disposal. Also visible throughout this are discourse and policy mechanisms aligning with principles of New Public Management, resulting in political tension between local autonomy and central control, which is also evident throughout the analysis presented in this chapter (McGinley, 2018).

Permeating the key policy texts was a clear emphasis on the action that could or needed to be taken to enable collaboration to happen, or were intrinsic to conceptualisations of collaboration as presented in the policy domain. The drivers were consistent across policy texts; equity, excellence, and closing the poverty related attainment gap. The factors influencing the manifestation and success of collaboration were articulated in the review of education governance:

‘These factors, which will inform our approach to collaboration, are:

- a clear focus on outcomes;
- partnerships must be founded on a clearly articulated shared moral purpose;
- transparency, trust and honesty are crucial;
- commitment to and capacity for peer review;
- peer review needs to be carried out within a long-term relationship and a commitment to continuously improving practice and systems;
- partnerships must have a plan to move from collaboration to co-responsibility to a position of shared professional accountability;
- partnerships should go beyond school leaders and engage with students, families, teachers and communities; and
- partnerships welcome scrutiny and support from other partnerships as their contribution to a connected local, regional, and national system.’

(Scottish Government, 2017b:32)

The emphasis and choice of ‘partnerships’, ‘peer-review’, and ‘relationship’ highlight some of the interchangeable concepts, as well as defining attributes to the definition of collaboration being utilised throughout this governance review, and across related policy texts since. A distinction is clear between the utilising of these non-tangible attributes for how collaboration is engaged in, rather than exemplifying the characteristics that drive particular forms of collaboration. What results is a lack of clarity on the characteristics of

the collaboration the policy is intended to enable, but the emphasis on the broad attributes that should describe all forms of activity that could be called ‘collaboration’ or ‘collaborative’ do indicate what influences, and to a degree, constitutes successful collaboration in the eyes of the government.

Also emerging once more is the potential influence of accountability on the definition and possibilities of collaboration. Similar to the use of system output regulation mechanisms such as inspection, and professional standards, the use of ‘moral purpose’, emphasising ‘outcomes’, ‘shared professional accountability’, and ‘co-responsibility’ make clear that accountability is at the centre of plans for collaboration within the Scottish system. The OECD (2015a) report itself highlighted the importance of this, referencing other systems when rationalising such an emphasis:

‘As Scotland’s bold curriculum becomes truly excellent, its accountability and improvement processes should resemble high-performing systems in Europe and North America such as Finland, Estonia, the Netherlands, and Alberta, Canada. Scotland might benefit from collaboration with Norway and Sweden who are also building stronger cooperation and collective responsibility among groups of municipalities, to share and monitor their different strategies of leading from the middle.’

(OECD, 2015:135)

Accountability and improvement, featuring highly throughout the policy texts, are positioned as being key to achieving a demonstrable high performing system, using the metrics of the OECD; in large part being based on their PISA instrument. The emphasis on forms of measurement and clear means of keeping actors accountable is also highlighted:

‘The organising system of education must be focussed on providing the most effective framework for teachers to work within. We also recognise that any framework must be supported by a culture of leadership and collaboration, building capacity for improvement in the system, data on children’s progress, and clear accountability structures.’

(Scottish Government, 2017b:11)

Data collection mechanisms sitting alongside clear accountability structures, now visible through professional standards that drive Professional Review and Development (PRD) processes and Professional Update (PU) (GTCS, 2019), as well as the emphasis on standardised testing (Scottish Government, 2016a), will inevitably have a large influence on the definitional attributes of collaboration that does emerge, as well as the purpose, possibilities, and outcomes of collaborative activity (Hadfield & Ainscow, 2018). While

these influences on collaboration could also indicate a shift towards market driven models and competition in the pursuit of improvement (McGinley, 2018), the Scottish Government highlighted the focus on collaboration not competition:

‘Collaboration between local authorities and schools. We know that the level of performance and capacity varies across local authorities and across schools and that system-wide collaboration could help to address this variation. There are some emerging examples of collaboration but this is not consistent. Responses to the Governance Review consultation highlight the need to promote greater use of joined-up approaches at a national, local, schools and practitioner level.’

(Scottish Government, 2017b:16)

‘Performance’, referred directly in the governance review to performance in PISA and the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN), reemphasises the government’s definition and utilisation of collaboration as being a mechanism through which attainment can be improved, and is measured through standardised assessment at various stages of education. Education Scotland, the organisation tasked with inspecting and regulating school education provision, also tied this directly to evaluating practice and progress in relation to the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and tackling the poverty related attainment gap:

‘b) Data and closing the gap...

How effectively do we use data across the local authority and region to encourage collaboration to achieve equity?’

(Education Scotland, 2019:10)

Moving beyond data collection mechanisms based on pupil attainment on their own, in the context of the SAC, Education Scotland (2019:11) also emphasised the need for ‘robust self-evaluation process...well-embedded at all levels and... supported by strong and effective governance arrangements.’ However, more than just data and improved performance was influencing the emphasis, forms, and governance of collaboration resulting from various related policy agendas. There was also the aim of reducing variation and increasing capacity across schools:

‘Culture and capacity within the system. There is considerable variation in the level and quality of support provided to teachers, headteachers and parents. There is no clear and consistent framework of support for teachers to be able to build their professional skills or to support collaboration.’

(Scottish Government, 2017b:16)

Importantly, it was highlighted that to bring about this more consistent approach across the system, there had to be support to enable it to happen. As such, while there is a consistent focus on the non-tangible attributes for how collaboration is engaged in throughout the policy texts instead of the exemplifying characteristics, the government did begin to articulate what support may be needed in order to bring about more effective collaboration at scale. The foundations of these suggestions begin to be outlined by the OECD where they state:

‘Social capital is about the capital people possess together, about collective efficacy (their shared belief in their capacity to make a difference together), collaboration, and collective responsibility.’

(OECD, 2015:125)

Still tied to accountability, there is an emphasis on the need for social capital and its role in effective collaboration. The report also goes on to highlight that:

‘Teacher leadership develops teachers’ competence and confidence as educators, advances their professional learning, promotes change and improvement in schools, encourages professional collaboration and collegiality, and boosts professional status and recognition.’

(OECD, 2015:130)

Here, there is an emphasis on leadership close to practice in developing ‘competence and confidence’ tied to securing ‘change and improvement in schools’. This emphasis on leadership and capital, as well as its influence on the preparedness of actors and the system more generally to engage in collaboration, emerged subsequently in other key policy texts:

‘It is a collaborative effort, which starts with leadership in our schools and should be complemented by our local authorities and supported by new Regional Improvement Collaboratives which are relevant to, designed by, and close to the communities they serve.’

(Scottish Government, 2017b:2)

This articulates in the rationale for both the varied forms of leadership, and new approach to governance through local authority involvement and collective efforts in RICs, the importance of leadership and capital on preparedness to collaborate. Education Scotland later tied this directly to evaluating practice and progress in relation to the SAC and tackling the poverty related attainment gap, stating as features that highlight effective practice:

‘a) Governance and management

Building the leadership capacity of staff through professional learning and collaboration.’

(Education Scotland, 2019:9)

‘f) Professional learning and sharing practice

- High levels of staff engagement at all levels within a culture of collaboration, and with partners.’

(Education Scotland, 2019:14)

Becoming clear is the emphasis on governance, leadership, and professional learning in order to build the capital or behaviours in order to collaborate effectively to achieve the aims of contemporary education policy focused on closing the poverty related attainment gap. While being a consistent focus, the Scottish Government acknowledged that:

‘The ICEA said the Scottish Government and Education Scotland should be doing more to match leadership skills and competencies to problems in a more strategic way, promoting a culture where collaboration is underpinned by ongoing professional challenge.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:6)

To address this, they since emphasised in the 2020 NIF that their focus will be:

‘School Leadership

- Improving the leadership skills of middle and senior leaders through career long professional learning, sharing good practice and collaboration.

Teacher Professionalism

- Collaboration between teachers supported by local authorities and the Regional Improvement Collaboratives
- Increasing the spectrum of career long professional learning for teachers
- Develop opportunities for practitioners to engage in collaboration and career long professional learning, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:7)

Again, there is a consistent emphasis on developing leadership and capital through professional learning, with areas of focus aligned to policy priorities. While in the OECD (2015a) report, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) cautioned against professional collaboration that is unfocused and vague, or more contrived forms that support top-down accountability (OECD, 2015:133), the question of who should be setting the agenda, particularly when it appears to be singularly focused on the government’s policy agenda, remains. The

emphasis on an empowered system and the subsequent government policy documents begin to address this question:

‘In an empowered system, it is important to ensure that the curriculum support needs of teachers influence and guide the priorities for local collaboration and improvement.’

(Scottish Government, 2020a:10)

While this appears to indicate a focus on tailoring collaboration and improvement priorities to the needs of teachers, with an emphasis on curriculum, and the implication of measurable improvement, questions remain as to who really holds the decision-making power in the purposes and forms of collaboration. Given that ‘local authorities will evaluate their progress on empowerment and collaboration in 2020’ (Scottish Government, 2020a:46), it remains to be seen how empowerment sits with the emphasis on collaboration defined as the key mechanism through which improvement is achieved.

Early in the OECD (2015a) review, collaboration was noted as being an important aspect of securing improvement both in quality and equity within the system, yet a lack of clarity remained around the forms of collaboration that best stimulated or scaffolded collaboration:

‘There needs to be clarity about the kinds of collaboration that work best to bring about the innovations and improvements to enhance student learning, and to create coherent and cohesive cultures of system-wide collaboration. This is not an argument for mandated collaboration or contrived collegiality to implement centrally-defined strategies. But it is to argue for greater consistency in collaborative professionalism and of moving towards the higher quality collaborative practices that have the most positive effects on student learning’.

(OECD, 2015:17)

Here, while there is acknowledgement of the need to carefully consider the forms of collaboration that support innovation or improvement, and the strategic use of collaboration (Ainscow et al., 2006), there is also a shift in vocabulary aligning with increasingly dominant phrases and discourses such as Hargreaves and O’Connor’s (2018) ‘collaborative professionalism’ likely alluding to conceptualisations of professionalism that reflect a commitment to democratic participation, inclusion, and collaborative approaches and cultures (Whitty & Wisby, 2006).

Throughout all the policy texts analysed, the most frequently used words across the texts were improvement, leadership, and collaboration. Visible from this is the consistent focus within the policy domain on all action and mechanisms being centred on improvement, the

pivotal role of leadership within this, and the role collaboration is being positioned as playing within this. However, when considering the forms that this collaboration can take, and its interdependence with leadership and improvement agendas, the report also cautions that:

‘Not all kinds of professional collaboration are equally effective...Chapman and Muijs (2013) found that many of the networks had no positive impact on student outcomes. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) warn against professional collaboration that is unfocused and vague, on the one hand, or contrived to support top-down accountability, on the other.’

(OECD, 2015:133)

With cautions around the effectiveness of forms of accountability, what is clear from both the critical analysis of policy texts, and analysis of how collaboration is understood in practice exemplified by the headteachers interviewed for this study, is the need to consider what drives and influences collaboration, the forms it consequentially takes, and how this might relate to the purpose(s) it is being mobilised for.

This has been possible within the parameters of this study through the application of a postmodern lens, challenging notions of modernity (Burbules, 2010) within the context of the professional, and professional practice, and how this emerges through policy. The critical examination of the certainties that have surrounded collaboration both in policy through the texts analyses, and practice through the interviews with headteachers, have illuminated the importance of seeking out and understanding the diverse realities manifested in different ways that may not be frequently understood or represented in the discourse surrounding how something such as collaboration is understood (Parker, 2015; Powell, 1998).

A postmodern lens, and the utilising of Foucault’s analytical tools enables the challenge of regimes of truth embodied in the discursive markers that frame how concepts and practices can be discussed, and how this comes to manifest as power being exercised over social groups (Atkinson, 2000; Foucault, 1969), such as in the context of collaboration; framing what is and is not possible, and what is and is not important in relation to it. The justification, rationalising, and explanations that sit within the policy and practice spaces for the purpose of legitimising the forms, drivers, and outcomes of collaboration, illuminate where power more often than not is situated (Burbules, 2010), and the implications this has for the possibilities of rethinking or reimagining collaboration. However, by questioning and critically examining the narratives and discursive practices that surround collaboration, it is hoped that the ambiguities and contradictions inherent

within the forms that it takes, and how it is defined and understood, illuminate the complexity of it, and in doing so, enables the critical exploration of possibilities for rethinking, and reimagining collaboration through how it is influenced, what drives it, and the forms that it can take.

## **Conclusion**

The five key ideas presented in this chapter emphasise that while collaboration is presented as the lynchpin of improvement and change, as well as being characteristic of the contemporary professional, and professional practice, it's manifestation and utilisation are often left to chance, or reliant on specific governance arrangements initiated at the middle tier or national levels of the system. This includes alternative forms of governance both tangible and through discourse and broader grand narratives, which results in the power to initiate or reimagine collaboration lying with fewer people. Despite the shared vocabulary enjoyed for collaboration in the Scottish system, the lack of operational definition results in persistently varied outcomes from collaborative endeavours.

Greater analysis and consideration of the implications and requirements of collaboration is required if it is to have the impact possible from it. Without this, there remains a gap in the forms collaboration can and does take beyond the forms governance and accountability mechanisms take within the system.

Questions remain as to how collaboration, and more specifically localised forms of collaboration, can emerge from the local levels of the system, led by teachers, headteachers, and the communities it is supposed to serve. Without this, questions remain around the intention and reality of collaboration as a mechanism for improvement and empowerment, or accountability and control. The emerging grand narrative of empowerment and community responsive improvement through collaboration may persist within the system. However, upon closer inspection, this could be a new grand narrative of command and control through how improvement can be discussed, and the nature of governance arrangements that frame what collaboration and broader improvement activity can emerge within the system.

If the emphasis on collaboration is at the expense of the understanding and accounting for the complex and varied lived reality of collaboration, I am left with the following question: will collaboration ever attain to the aims so frequently associated with it? Using a postmodern lens, or in trying to understand collaboration within the context of the postmodern, I am purposefully exploring and imagining the 'politics of possibility' (Atkinson, 2000:87); the possibilities of which will be explored further in the next and final chapter.

The next and final chapter of this dissertation explores the opportunity to imagine the possibilities for the future of collaboration in relation to policy, practice, and research, and how this relates to my own understanding, and positioning of myself in practice, policy, and research spaces. Doing so offers the opportunity to imagine and illuminate what might be possible for collaboration across local, middle-tier, national, and supranational levels of systems, and how future forms of research engagement could enable more sophisticated forms of collaboration to emerge.

# Chapter 7: A Framework for Collaboration

## Introduction

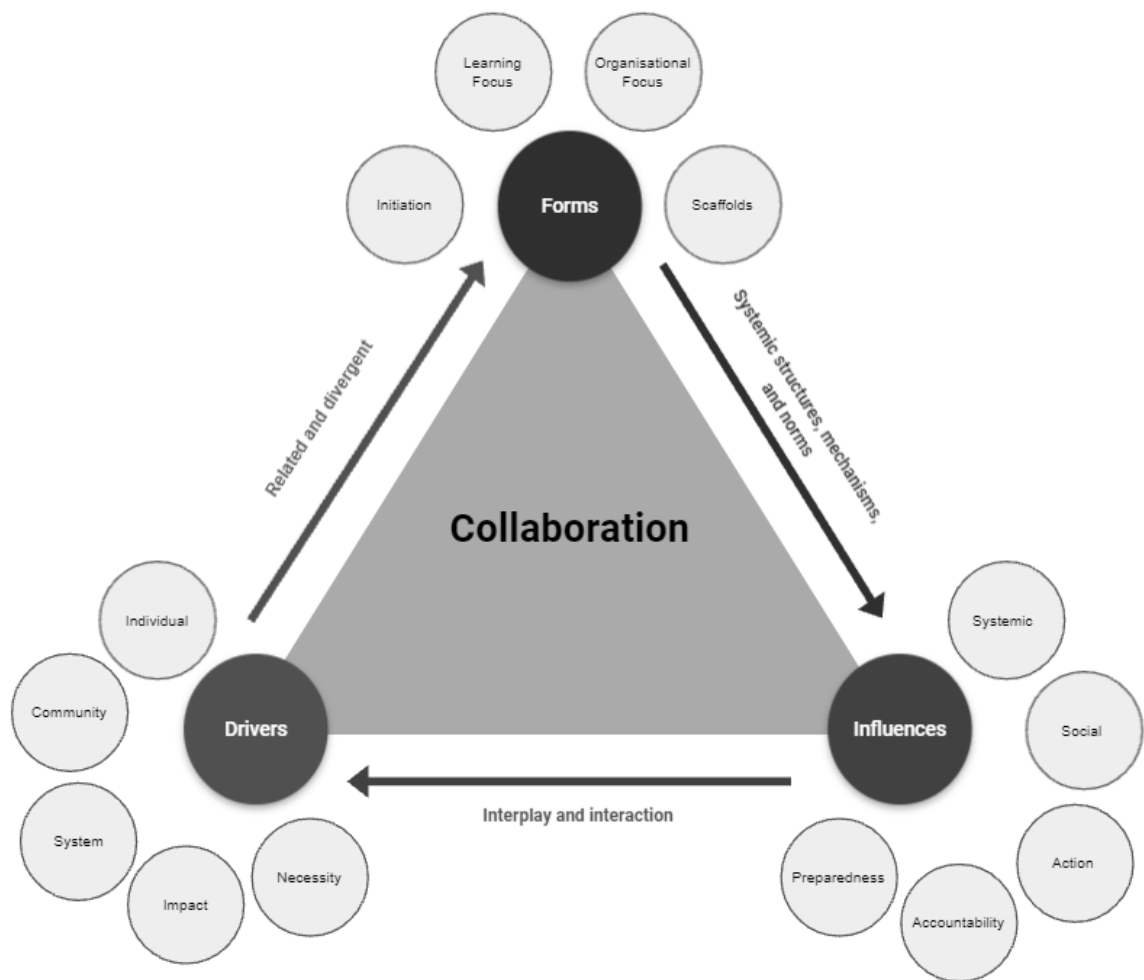
At the beginning of this dissertation, I articulated that an emphasis on conceptual clarity was not just an important methodological consideration, but also a potential contribution of this study. Similarly, as a result of both the empirical and abstract development of collaboration, I have engaged in a process of theorising collaboration. In this study, the definition of theorising that has been mobilised is a process of making an interconnected set of propositions regarding a phenomena like collaboration, constructed both abstractly and through empirical means (Hammond, 2018). With concepts being understood as the cognitive classification of phenomena experienced and their associated characteristics (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; Pring, 2015), conceptualisation is both the process and product of forming and attributing transferable meaning to a concept (Evans, 2002).

I begin the conclusion of this study by revisiting what is meant by theorising and conceptualising intentionally in trying to place what contribution this study makes to what can be understood of and as collaboration. With the varied definitions that came through the critical analysis of key policy texts and the interviews with primary headteachers in Scotland, it is clear that attaining to a new definition of collaboration that could be agreed on across a system or field such as education would neither be possible nor useful given the emotional and cognitive repertoires that influences how individuals make sense of collaboration as a practice and experience (Datnow & Park, 2019). The definition that arose from the participants of this study and compared with the definition I presented in Chapter 2 based on literature on collaboration, illustrated commonality in understanding that could lead to an operational definition of collaboration. These definitions are characterised by joint work, based on a common vision or goals, and the bringing together of expertise that will be utilised together, with equal value attributed to what each member of the collaborative endeavour brings.

In this final chapter, and based on this definition of collaboration, I present a Framework for Collaboration (Figure 10) that has been developed through the process of conceptualising and theorising collaboration that has happened both through and as a consequence of the empirical and analytical work presented in this study. I go on to consider the function and possibilities of such a framework, how this relates to my own development and practice, and recommendations for collaboration and how it is used in education in the future.

## A Framework for Collaboration

What is clear from how these concepts are understood, defined, and mobilised, evident through the literature explored, the policy texts analysed, and the participants interviewed, is the complexity of not just defining collaboration, but also enabling it to take place. In Chapter 4, what began to emerge was a framework for understanding collaboration, first presented as Figure 8. This became apparent after analysing the key policy texts and the resulting complex and overlapping relationship between the forms, drivers, and influences that led to various collaborative activity and resulting impact. As these themes were further explored and extended in Chapter 5, through interviews with primary headteachers and brought together with further analysis connecting what emerged from the critical policy analysis and interviews together, further thematic elements and considerations were added, now represented as Figure 10: A Framework for Collaboration.



**Figure 10: A Framework for Collaboration**

While the field of education contains a plethora of literature and research on forms of collaboration, and collaboration enjoys a significant place in discourses in policy and practice, what this study has demonstrated is there has been little substantial advancement

in thinking on the meaning and practice of collaboration. Advancement in thinking must consider the implications of contextual influences and drivers on the forms collaboration does and can take, which also includes the consequential outcomes of this. As Kalisz (2018) highlights, collaboration is important for learning and growth. However, without consideration of what and who is influencing and driving collaboration, the intended outcomes of collaboration may not be met. The purpose of this framework is to enable a critical examination of collaboration from a research, practice, or policy perspective, in order to understand the individual, community, or systemic drivers of collaboration, and the intended impact or perceived necessity of them. In doing so, not only can their use and mobilisation be more strategic (Ainscow et al., 2006), the possibility of a more sophisticated understanding of what forms of collaboration are most effective, and what is meant by effective, could be possible (OECD, 2015a).

At the time of writing this chapter, the world is still in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic, and educators are still trying to make sense of the implications for the purposes and functions of schools, and how this relates to the systems and structures of our education systems (Scanlan, 2020). Prior to this pandemic, collaboration has been understood as the means through which schools are able to take ownership of change processes, which has frequently been a challenge for large scale reform programmes (Chapman & Muijs, 2013; Muijs et al., 2011). As a school leader, teacher, and researcher, this has been at the forefront of my thinking throughout the pandemic, and added further productive insight into this study, as well as the possibilities of this framework for collaboration. As society has shifted and changed over time, the range of professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and adaptive expertise that are needed by our teachers and leaders has significantly increased. With this, has come a newfound rationale for collaboration, given that not every teacher and leader is able to have all the expertise and skills needed to comprehensively meet the needs of the communities they serve (Brown and Flood, 2019). This was demonstrated throughout the pandemic, and what this also illustrated was out of necessity during such an emergency, the power to respond meaningfully and quickly to these shifting demands lay within the affordances or barriers to localised decision-making at a political level within the systems that teachers and leaders are operating in.

Figure 10 aims to illustrate that a range of forms of collaboration can and do already exist within systems, often with either a learning focus, be those professionals or students, or an organisational focus, being the means through which functions are carried out efficiently in the pursuit of shared aims. However, the forms of collaboration can still vary depending on

who and how they are initiated, and the scaffolds that are in place within contexts or systems that enable it to happen. While this has emerged from the context of the Scottish education system, there is broader application here. The systemic structures, mechanisms, and norms manifested through collaborative activity, processes of organising, decision making power, resource allocation, and the means through which change comes about, can be applied across systems and contexts in order to understand how the forms of collaboration that do and can emerge are informed by a range of influences. It is through these structures, mechanisms, and norms, visible through collaboration, that the habits and beliefs that inform action and practice are formed (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012).

The influences on collaboration articulated in Figure 10 highlight the complex interplay and interaction these systemic structures, mechanisms, and norms have both on the form collaboration can and does take, but also what comes to drive collaboration too. How prepared individuals coming together to collaborate are, the social structures, norms, and organisational devices that influence how people come together to collaborate, and the role accountability mechanisms and scope for action based on role and function within organisational contexts and systems both have significant implications for not just what and how collaboration emerges, but what is actually possible from it. Without a clear and shared articulation of the criteria for participation, and the expectations of the collaborative endeavour, often meaningful collaboration cannot be reached (Wenger, 2010).

The drivers of collaboration as situated within Figure 10 highlight how drivers of collaboration, and the resulting impact from it can often relate and diverge from each other. Given that collaboration can emerge from an individual, community, or systemic goal or focus, shared emphasis or drivers are possible, however given the fact that divergence in focus can be possible depending on role, function, or context within the system, questions remain as to whether drivers of collaboration have greater or lesser significance or impact depending on the structural or systemic norms and practices that may give them priority or scope to ensure it happens. If forms of collaboration are to emerge that enable the mobilisation of knowledge and building of collaborative relationships across systems, and across levels of systems, rethinking of the organisational structures, and leadership and governance arrangements that formalise means of collaboration, or enable decision making power for collaboration to emerge may be needed (Senge, 2012). Not just during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also as needs emerge across communities and society, collaboration can be driven by perceived necessity emerging from school, community, or systemic priorities. Notably, as discussed in many of the interviews, questions remained around the associated reasoning underpinning collaboration that was driven from different

levels within the system, and the impact that resulted from it being influenced by the power individuals were able to exercise with and on behalf of their communities. In considering the perceived relevance of, accessibility to, and individual preferences for collaboration, alongside the possible power dynamics based on the organisational structures and norms that may influence it, collaboration is likely to be more sustainable and impactful (Carpenter, & Krutka, 2014; Willet, 2019). For this to become a reality, further and sustained critical analysis is needed of the discursive tools that are used to legitimise, rationalise, and explain the forms, drivers, and outcomes of collaboration across the system, where the power lies to enable collaboration to happen, and what this may illuminate in relation the possibilities that can result from it (Burbules, 2010).

A wider analysis is still needed of the process of how policy and practice are developed that enables a range of collaboration to emerge in a sustainable way. The intention of articulating Figure 10 as a framework for collaboration in this way is for it to be more than a framework which can be applied to how individuals and groups come together to collaborate, but instead offer a framework for understanding how individuals collaborate, why, and how it might be possible to reimagine it in practice, policy, and research.

The pivotal role of collaboration within and across systems has been reemphasised in this study, especially when situating this framework and its possibilities in the context of the pandemic, and the sustained emphasis in the Scottish context at a systems level on equity and access, which has driven much of the policy agenda in Scotland in the period of 2015-2020 under analysis in this study. The OECD (2020:11) publication focusing on systemic trends as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for systems to focus on ‘strong and responsive school communities’ through a focus on ‘collective reflection, enhanced collaboration, and distributed leadership’. While this will require a much broader and critical re-conceptualisation of the purposes and functions of our education systems (Chapman & Bell, 2020), the framework for collaboration outlined in Figure 10 will enable a critical analysis through research, reflection in practice, and through meaning-making processes at a policy level in order to build a more sophisticated understanding of the complex and interdependent influences, drivers, and forms of collaboration, and how this relates to the collaboration that results across systems, and the impact it does or could have.

## **The Future of Collaboration**

The emergence of collaboration as a lynchpin of improvement (Datnow & Park, 2019), requires a greater appreciation of what makes successful collaboration, and the systemic structures and mechanisms that enable it to happen (OECD, 2015a). While there are many

well documented benefits to collaboration, particularly for student achievement, what still remains less clear – also noted by participants in this study – is what genuine collaboration looks like, the relative benefits of its varied forms, and when collaboration may have negative as well as positive influences on practice and change processes (Hargreaves, 2019). In the context of Scotland, Chapman (2019) highlighted how the middle tier of the system requires more flexible structures to enable diverse collaboration to emerge. However, Hargreaves and Fullan (2020) caution that collaboration in itself is not necessarily the answer to all policy or systemic challenges. Rather, for it to be meaningful, consideration must be given to how collaboration is focused, purposeful, and supported with high levels of trust from those involved or enabling it to happen (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020).

Emerging from the findings of this study, I see a number of recommendations for how a better understanding of the complexity of collaboration could lead to better outcomes from it. Connecting with the framework for collaboration presented in this chapter, consideration of the related forms, drivers, or influences of collaboration will be essential.

## **Policy**

Governance and the associated structures and operational mechanisms that have been developed within the system in Scotland have emphasised collaboration as the backbone to systemic improvement. However, the Scottish Government's International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) highlighted that, 'The challenge of central government is to balance necessary consistency of purpose with local energy, innovation and ownership' with a particular emphasis on 'collaboration within a framework of common purpose' (Scottish Government, 2020c:20). Given that collaboration enjoys dominance in policy discourse and practice, the fact that much of it is left to chance poses significant challenges to the possibilities of collaboration leading to the change and improvements intended or hoped for. Hargreaves (2020) notes that when collaboration is intentionally planned for through deliberate actions and designs, rather than being left only to spontaneous, informal forms of collaboration, change and improvement processes are likely to be more successful. As such, recommendations within the policy domain would be:

- Map, audit, and critically analyse forms of collaboration that already exist and emerge within the system, and plan for systemic structures and operational mechanisms that enable collaboration to happen in both planned and emerging ways, led at different levels within the system.

- Develop, share, and sustain a common definition of collaboration that accounts for the varied possible influences, drivers, and forms of collaboration, with this reflected in partnerships, networks, and governance models across the system.

Given that drivers of collaboration can emerge within multiple layers of the system, there is an argument here for these layers to be represented in any process to map, audit, and critically analyse the collaboration that does or could happen within the system, as would be the construction of common definitions of collaboration. While collaborative approaches to professional learning, practice, and educational change have gained increasing dominance globally, forms of collaboration are frequently designed and organised on their behalf of those expected to engage in it, in order to attain to a goal they may not have had any input into (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Bangs & Frost, 2016). Given that the related shifts in structures or systems to enable collaboration typically happen without the input of those being expected to collaborate, rethinking what representation, consultation, or engagement in processes like this could add depth to the possibilities that result from it. While schools and RICs in some cases may already consider what collaboration means to them, situating this defining exercise within the broader framework for collaboration in order to understand how it may relate to or illuminate broader drivers, influences, or forms of collaboration would be important.

### **Practice**

With collaboration being seen as characteristic of the contemporary professional, and professional practice, this study has demonstrated how collaboration emerges in a variety of forms in practice. However, the varying degrees of success could arguably be attributed to a lack of consideration of the varied cultures, social systems, and discursive norms that make up schools and education systems (Robertson & Patterson, 2016:1). Datnow (2018) also highlights that during periods of change, collaboration focused on attaining to related goals can result in positive and productive feelings, as well as negative and counterproductive feelings. This combined with the reliance of collaboration on relationships, trust, and mutual respect that is developed over time emphasises the need for collaboration to be used strategically rather than as a default (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020). With that comes many possibilities for how collaboration could be utilised for change and improvement across sites of practice and education systems more broadly, be it the dialogue, creative problem solving, or relationships that enable knowledge exchange, mobilisation, and creation in the pursuit of common purposes (Montiel-Overall, 2005). However, this also requires ensuring that those coming together to collaborate are doing so

with an understanding of what the domains of expertise individuals are bringing and sharing a commitment to utilising this with equal value attributed to what each person brings (John-Steiner, Weber, & Minnis, 1998; Cilliers, 2000). However, the tacit knowledge and expertise required of this is often an element of an individual's personal or professional disposition that is rarely explicitly examined (Senge, 2012), and to utilise this in order to share, transfer, and apply knowledge and expertise is not easy (Hargreaves, 2012). Based on this, recommendations within the domain of practice, with connections to the policy domain, would be:

- Develop, share, and sustain a common definition of collaboration that accounts for the varied possible influences, drivers, and forms of collaboration, with this reflected in the collaboration that can emerge through necessity or interest, and the collaboration that is planned to achieve organisational goals.
- Building an understanding of the professional behaviours, needs, expertise, and experiences that those coming together to collaborate bring with them, and ensuring this is collectively understood and utilised.

The development of operational definitions, and what they intrinsically demand of those involved, require the engagement of those coming together to collaborate. Leadership in contexts of practice should privilege collaborative activity that is characterised by shared power and equal status that enables this co-construction of the collaborative activity, and the mutual expectations placed upon the individuals coming together (Turton & Wrightson, 2017). In doing so, those involved in collaboration are able to recognise not only the value of their participation, but their recognisable place within it, built upon a shared understanding of focus and priorities, and drawing upon a repertoire of resources individuals and groups coming together have built up over time (Wenger, 2010). The interaction of practice and research domains that goes further than the traditional framing of bridging the theory and practice divide would be important here, where research offers the opportunity for those coming from sites of practice and research to use research to frame and construct an understanding of collaboration, the goals of it, and how it is influenced and driven in different ways depending on context (Tseng, 2012). This is something that could be critically explored through initial teacher education, and postgraduate study aimed at educators and leaders.

## **Research**

A key criticism of the literature on collaboration in the past has been the lack of conceptual clarity, with related concepts such as partnership, networking, and coordination being

‘conceptually amorphous’ (Little, 1990:509). More contemporary reflections on how collaboration is understood and mobilised emphasise the work still to be done in understanding the nature and varied outcomes of genuine collaboration (Hargreaves, 2019). As a result of this study, what has become clear is the space within the contemporary literature on collaboration for further advancement in how systemic approaches to collaboration are understood and analysed, with consideration of the contextual influences, drivers, and forms of it. This study contributes both a critical analysis of the complexity of collaboration both as a policy mechanism, and a lived reality in education, as well as a framework that could enable the critical exploration of collaboration across systems. With collaboration in Scotland presented as being central to achieving systemic reform, there is scope for further consideration of the social processes and their influences on collaboration, upon which successful change in culture and practice depends (Chapman, 2019b). With that, recommendations that emerge are:

- Further theoretical development of collaboration as a systemic mechanism for change exploring how it is mobilised within different tiers of the system, and the unique influences, drivers, and forms that emerge in order to better inform how collaboration is mobilised in policy and practice.
- Acknowledging the knowledge, skills, and shared purpose needed in order to collaborate, further insight into the preparedness of individuals across systems to come together to collaborate, what may drive this, what influences engagement and success, and how this could relate to the forms of collaboration that emerge.
- In the Scottish context, given the significant role of the professional standards in framing professional discourses around practice, improvement, and change across the system, further research critically examining how collaboration is presented in the professional standards, and how this relates to broader concerns of policy, power and professionalism could offer important insights into the definition and utilisation of collaboration as a concept, practice, and political tool.

With the alignment seen in recent years in Scotland with broader, dominant global ideologies, emerging has been a more politically driven agenda reflective of the government of the day, with an emphasis on Scotland being established as a global competitor in times of constitutional, and socio-political uncertainty (Lingard & Sellar, 2014; Humes, 2020). Further critical policy research could helpfully illuminate the tensions that may emerge between policy change focused on short-term political need, and policy change that reflects the needs of the communities and young people it is intended to serve (Gillies, 2018). In addition, such research within the Scottish system could offer

important and productive insight into the ever increasing complexity of collaboration and the function it is intended to serve. Additionally, broader theoretical insights could be derived from this in order to extend the understanding possible of collaboration as a practice, tool, and process in education, and how it might be possible to reimagine the possibilities for illuminating and mobilising related ideas across systems and fields; an aspect this study and the doctoral process more broadly has led me to reflect on.

### **Research, Practice, and Policy – Positioning the Self**

Drawing upon and connecting with my initial reflections on my positionality represented at the start of this dissertation in Chapter 1 as Figure 1, this study has led me to consider anew the possibilities of mobilising ideas and new thinking across systems and fields. This also draws upon the desire to move beyond the traditional dichotomy between research or theory and practice that frequently comes with discussion on mobilising research into practice. Through engaging in the Doctor of Education (EdD) programme, I have spent a great deal of time considering the implications and possibilities of how this has or could transform my perspective and thinking on collaboration, how the findings in this study could be productively utilised across the domains of research, practice, and policy, and what my role could be within that. Broadly, what I have recognised as my own context of professional practice has evolved throughout the period of the EdD, as has the broader context for teachers and teaching, has been an observable shift in focus for how and why teachers and other professionals collaborate across the system.

Throughout this study, I have spent time presenting this work as it has been emerging, and as it was reaching a conclusion. Alongside this, I have been utilising it in my role as a senior leader within a school system and considering the possibilities of it. In 2020, reflecting on the pandemic experience with leaders from across the foundation of schools I work in, what began to emerge through exploration of the forms and drivers of collaboration was these leaders tendency to want to illuminate broader influences on the collaboration they were engaged in or leading. This connects with the alignment of discourse around the form, drivers, and influence on collaboration that was discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study, illuminating the role of language in building consensus, and arguments of logic and comparison across the system (Lyotard, 1984). This too often serves to set the parameters of what can be discussed, and how it is discussed, as well as establishing norms around what should drive particular forms of collaboration, and who should be engaging in them and when.

What has emerged both as a result of this study, and exploring their connection to or application in practice, is an appreciation of the complex negotiation of power structures

required of educators in order to not only devise or engage in their own meaningful and sustainable forms of collaboration, but also to pursue change that may productively go beyond the discursive parameters set out in the surrounding policy context.

The professional doctorate, or EdD, has been a means through which I have been able to not just rethink how I understand collaboration in the abstract and in practice and try to connect the two, but it has also forced me to rethink what I had anticipated from a programme such as the EdD. The EdD has traditionally been characterised as a unique programme given its goal to make significant contribution in practice as a result of it, and aimed particularly at established professionals within the field (Scott et al., 2004). What I see it has done is not just impact how I understand, evaluate, and critically analyse what drives and influences the forms of collaboration I engage in or lead, but much less tangibly, it has forced me into a perpetual state of what Fox and Slade (2013) described as a disruption in my own thinking, and the near inability to take things at face value anymore. Initially, this led me to question the sureties that have characterised my professional self and how I understood the relationships between research and practice, and how policy sat alongside that. What I realise now is that the process of completing an EdD has equipped me with the capacity and tools to take a critical systems view of problems of practice at the local, middle tier, national, and supranational levels of our systems, and consider the interrelated, connected, or dependent components that make up a context, experience, or challenge under focus. This has moved me away from the more common goals of bridging the divide between theory and practice to reimagining what Tseng (2012) describes as the social ecology of research use.

Prior to engaging in postgraduate research, the process I have just described and the mobilisation of ideas across research, policy, and practice, I understood as being part of specialised roles, or within the parameters of a university's engagement with the profession or field. This understanding relied on the commonly understood parameters and discourse around what constitutes practice and research. As I began to share this study throughout the years of the EdD at a range of conferences and forums, I began to realise that how I understood the relationship between research and practice relied heavily on forms of engagement and dissemination, but instead had to focus on the interaction and influence needed to be able to mobilise and build these ideas, and with who or where this might be possible (Hollweck & Doucet, 2020).

Tseng (2012) highlights that a broader consideration of the social ecology of research use must account for the relationships, contexts, and political and policy influences that frame the work of those engaging with or in research. The common focus on the 'cognitive,

affective, and motivational processes' of research engagement oversimplifies the complexity of how individuals acquire, understand, and apply knowledge or learning across the boundaries of the communities they are a part of (Tseng, 2012:7). This was personally significant, as I gradually became increasingly involved in research, policy, and practice networks, as my professional role changed, and as I began to move between the domains of practice, policy, and research more confidently. This forms the basis of my engagement with the emerging concept of pracademia and the pracademic in education; concepts I have been exploring as a sense-making process both individually and with colleagues through professional networks.

The pracademic and pracademia draw upon the words practitioner or practice and academia or academic. Drawing upon the work of Panda (2014) and Posner (2009), practice could refer to the spaces in which practice-based professionals primarily operate such as schools, and across governance and policy making within an education system. Academics could refer to those situated primarily within the university. The pracademic is consequentially represented as individuals who may primarily be situated in either practice or academia, but exercise influence across both practice and academic-based places and spaces.

Articulating pracademia and the prademic as a space and an identifying community emphasise the complex relationships, networks, expertise, and recognition individuals can enjoy across domains within a field such as education. This is done in the pursuit of learning, improvement, change, and goals, particularly relevant when societies around the world are facing such complex, persistent, and sustained challenges. With the multiple membership that characterises this understanding of the prademic and pracademia, it offers a unique approach to the forging of relationships and utilising of networks to enable collaboration that leads to change.

While this is not solely attributed to those who may self-identify as pracademics or operate in spaces of pracademia, the purpose of its conceptualisation is to emphasise the complimentary knowledge, experience, and networks that pracademics can bring in collaboration with and between practice-based professionals, policy makers, and academics (Willis, 2016).

While not necessarily identifying as a prademic, I recognise my work as a consequence of this study as being situated within the space of pracademia. The multiple membership within spaces of practice, academia, and policy that I enjoy as a result of both my professional practice and research engagement is what draws me to the possibilities of

pracademia, and my aim of the findings of this study having influence across research, policy, and practice.

## **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated even further the possibilities and potential of collaboration within and across systems, and with that I believe comes a responsibility to not leave collaboration to chance. As national and international socio-political contexts have shifted over the years, the role education is expected to play has also evolved alongside. This has required a rethink as to how teachers and schools meet these changing demands in increasingly uncertain times. Whether a consequence of the pandemic, or the result of constitutional uncertainty, forced migration, or national disasters, both teachers and leaders across systems continue to focus their thinking and efforts around issues of justice, equity, wellbeing, identity, and community, and with this has come a repositioning of teachers and school leaders as key decision makers within their learning communities. Careful consideration is required with regards to how individuals within systems negotiate the visible yet complex power structures that enable and constrain collaboration that reflects community and professional needs and goals. While elusive, it remains to be seen how a collective understanding, or operational definition, of collaboration, and a co-constructed approach to measuring its success, could enable more successful and sustained outcomes from it.

However, the continued critical analysis of the structures and mechanisms that exist in systems that enable or constrain collaboration could aid a further developed understanding of how collaboration and collaborative activity can meaningfully reflect the needs and goals of societies, communities, and educators alike. Through the intentional development of a shared understanding on what influences and drives collaboration in a range of forms, and a co-constructed approach to measuring the success of it, it is possible that along with the dominance collaboration enjoys across systems, successful outcomes from collaboration will come to characterise how it is mobilised.

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# APPENDIX 1

## Ethical Approval



College of Social  
Sciences

04/02/2019

Dear Paul Campbell

**College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**

**Project Title: Collaboration – the ubiquitous panacea for challenges in education**

**Application No: 400180089**

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 11/03/2019
- Project end date: 01/09/2020
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research:  
([https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_490311\\_en.pdf](https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf))
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used:  
<https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/>

Yours sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Dr Muir Houston.

Dr Muir Houston  
College Ethics Officer

**Muir Houston, Senior Lecturer**  
**College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer**  
Social Justice, Place and Lifelong Education Research  
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## APPENDIX 2

### Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form



College of Social  
Sciences

#### Participant Information Sheet

**Study:**

*Collaboration – the ubiquitous panacea for challenges in education.*

**Researcher:**

*Paul Campbell*

(Doctoral Researcher, School of Education, University of Glasgow)

*You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.*

*Thank you for reading this.*

**What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of what collaboration is and looks like in the context of tackling challenges in primary education in Scotland. The research will discuss how collaboration is understood in literature and policy and explore how this does or does not link with the understanding school leaders have in primary education in Scotland. It will also explore perspectives on what collaboration means and looks like in practice and the consequences this has for tackling persistent challenges in education such as raising attainment and supporting teacher and leadership development.

The results of this study could enable those involved in policy development and implementation as well as teachers and school leaders in Scottish education and internationally to consider different definitions of collaboration, and the consequences this has for teachers', leaders', authority, regional and national practice, and how each of these could be enhanced in order to effectively tackle persistent challenges in Scottish education.

**Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen to participate in this study because of your professional role and expertise within the Scottish education system. The research focusses on the perspectives of primary school headteachers from a range of local authorities and regional collaboratives with a range of experience and these perspectives will offer important insights into collaboration in Scottish education.

**Do I have to take part?**

Taking part in this study is not compulsory. If you choose to take part, and at a later stage decide you no longer want to, you are able to withdraw at any time. Should you withdraw, any data collected up until that point would not be used without your consent.

### **What will be involved?**

Participation will involve a one-hour interview at your school which will consist of eight questions and two short scenarios to read and offer your thoughts on. The interview will be recorded using an audio recorder, then transcribed in writing by the researcher after the interview.

### **Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Taking part in this study will be kept confidential. The notes taken by the researcher will use a code rather than your name and will be stored in a secure electronic location. In any articles or presentations by the researcher based on this study, participants will be referred to using pseudonyms. Because of the relatively small community within your local authority/ region, it may be possible that those who know about the research and those choosing to participate could identify you through your responses, but all steps will be taken to maintain anonymity.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of this study will be used in the researcher's doctoral dissertation and shared in articles and presentations at conferences.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

### **Contact for Further Information**

For further information, please contact the researcher, Paul Campbell:

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact Dr Muir Houston, [Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk), College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer.

## Consent Form

**Title of Project:** Collaboration – the ubiquitous panacea for challenges in education.

**Name of Researcher:** Paul Campbell

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my employment arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- Name and contact information will be destroyed once the project is complete, and information relating to local authority represented will be retained for further work related to the project.
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

.....End of consent form .....

## APPENDIX 3

### Interview Questions and Vignettes

#### Introduction:

Clarify purpose of the interview.

Explain recording and transcription procedure.

#### Interview Questions:

##### Concept of Collaboration

1. What does 'collaboration' mean?
2. Does 'collaboration' play a role in your day-to-day work?
  - i. Does it/Could it have an impact on the experiences and achievements of your students?
3. Where does your definition of collaboration come from?
  - i. Is it based on reading? Experience? Other?

##### Collaborative mechanisms and approaches in participants' context

4. In your context, what collaboration takes place? When and for what purpose?
5. What impact does this have on:
  - i. Teachers and leaders' practice and development?
  - ii. Learners' experiences, achievements, attainment and outcomes?
  - iii. Community engagement?

#### Vignettes

- A. **National Example:** You have been invited to a national launch event for all primary headteachers for a new policy aimed at raising attainment in Maths. When you attend, presented are expectations of pedagogical approaches, resources and time allocated to Maths learning that has been stipulated for all primary schools in Scotland. This will include a suite of professional learning programmes for all staff with the expectation that it will be a focus on school improvement plans for the coming school year. Afterwards, there is some discussion between headteacher colleagues. Some have said that this is exactly the clarity and specification they have been looking for as attainment in Maths is a priority for them. Other colleagues are saying that they wish the time and resource could be spent on other areas that are a higher priority for them as Maths attainment is an area of strength for them. Others are saying they are not sure whether this will help close the attainment gap in the context of Maths.
- B. **Regional Example:** The new regional collaborative have established new regional sharing of practice events that are focused on curricular areas as well as general pedagogy. These have been organised for both during school hours and as twilights. At the first few, there was high attendance and positive feedback. Now a year later, there is reduced attendance, and the feedback around what is being shared and the focus for the sharing events is not as positive as it had initially been. Feedback from the regional collaborative leads and organisers of these

sharing events have said that they intended for these events to bring together groups that were working on similar challenges and areas for development to enable them to collaborate and develop common solutions. However, they report that they could not get past just sharing individual practice and no successful collaboration took place.

- C. **Local Authority/ School Example:** A Quality Improvement Officer is making an informal visit to a school and meeting with the headteacher. The manager intends for the relationship between them and the headteacher to be a collaborative one with an element of question and challenge to support improvement. The manager begins the meeting by outlining the region's improvement focus, the local authority improvement priorities for education, and then listing the school's improvement priorities. There is not a lot of commonality between them, and read more like a long list of improvement items. The headteacher is thinking to themselves that they have a lot of external improvement priorities and pressure to make the impact and improvement visible within the school which means less time to actually focus on what they believe should be the priority for the school. They are unsure of how to articulate this and what good it could do to articulate it to the manager.
- D. **Informal/ Peer-led Example:** A headteacher walks into their staff room where they overhear a number of staff talking about a 'Teachmeet' style event they went to on Saturday morning. They said that the informal, peer-led nature of it was great and that it made it one of the most enjoyable and impactful professional learning experiences they have had in a long time. The headteacher is pleased that they are engaging with this sort of professional learning in their own time, but also wishes that was how the staff viewed the professional learning they engage in weekly within the school. The headteacher isn't sure what to do next but feels like they need to do something to be able to create and channel that sort of energy and enthusiasm for professional learning.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Policy Text Analysis**

<b>Policy Text</b>	OECD. (2015). <b>Improving Schools in Scotland. An OECD Perspective.</b> Paris: OECD.			
<b>Keyword Usage</b> (Initially identified from theoretical framework (Figure 2), with root word and the addition of related suffixes).	<b>Collaboration:</b> 37 Collaborate: 5 Collaborating: 0	<b>Network:</b> 8 Networks: 49 Networking: 7	<b>Governance:</b> 58 Govern: 1 Governing:	<b>Culture:</b> 15 Cultures: 8
	<b>Partnership:</b> 40 Partnerships: 14	<b>Leadership:</b> 140 Lead: 22 Leader: 7 Leading: 34	<b>Structure:</b> 39 Structures: 2	<b>Improvement:</b> 82 Improve: 29 Improving: 201
<b>Quotation</b> (Direct from the text).	<b>Stage of Framework for Analysis</b> (Figure 5)	<b>Connection to Theoretical Framework</b> (Figure 2)	<b>Connection to the Literature</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Pg. 16 and 123 'It will need to increase the value assigned to data and research evidence alongside professional judgment, on the one hand, while maintaining the consensus that comes through <b>collaboration</b> and <b>partnership</b> , on the other. It means going to the full conclusion of a curriculum that is to be built by teachers, schools and <b>communities</b> , alongside a strengthened " <b>middle</b> " and clear system leadership.'	Middle tier and local levels of the system.  Mobilisation of actors focused on consequences/ outcomes of collaboration.	Leadership (with governance implicit).  Improvement agenda(s).	Conceptual confusion, interchangeable terms (Slater, 2004).  Leaders must ensure that they and teaching teams keep knowledge fresh, enable the development of skills in collaborating, including making the relationships between adults a discussable element of practice (Barth, 2006).	Empowerment.  Consensus.  Clarity (visibility) of leadership.  Forms and purpose of collaboration.
Pg. 17 'There needs to be clarity about the <b>kinds of collaboration</b> that work best to bring about the	Mechanisms.	Improvement agenda(s). Structure, culture, people.	Strategic use of collaboration (Ainscow et al., 2006).	Contextual dependence.

<p>innovations and improvements to enhance student learning, and to create <b>coherent and cohesive cultures</b> of system-wide <b>collaboration</b>. This is not an argument for mandated collaboration or contrived collegiality to implement centrally-defined strategies. But it is to argue for greater consistency in <b>collaborative professionalism</b> and of moving towards the higher quality <b>collaborative practices</b> that have the most positive effects on student learning.’</p>	<p>All levels of the system (local, middle tier, and national).</p> <p>Middle tier and local level mechanisms, practices, and mobilisation of actors within these spaces.</p>	<p>Culture.</p> <p>Characteristics of collaborative approaches.</p>	<p>Culture of collaboration (Fullan, 2016).</p> <p>Collaborative professionalism (Hargreaves &amp; O’Connor, 2011).</p> <p>Public service reform/modernisation agendas (Sullivan &amp; Skelcher, 2002).</p>	<p>Empowerment.</p> <p>Agency.</p> <p>Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.</p>
<p>Pg. 21 and 105 ‘Given the ambition that CfE should be built in schools, local <b>communities</b> and <b>networks</b> of educators, it is important to reduce the bureaucracy that can stymie the bold <b>collaboration</b> and innovation on which CfE <u>depends for its success</u>.’</p>	<p>Middle tier and local level mechanisms, practices, and mobilisation of actors within these spaces.</p>	<p>Improvement agenda(s). Structure, culture, people.</p>	<p>Innovative responses to secure improvement and building in reflection on action or progress (Sharratt &amp; Planche, 2016).</p> <p>Collaboration can emerge to meet the needs of those communities irrespective of political support or input (Spillane &amp; Seashore, 2002).</p>	<p>Contextual dependence.</p> <p>Systems and structures.</p>
<p>Pg. 22 ‘Teachers who work in cultures of <b>professional collaboration</b> have a stronger impact on student achievement, are more open to change and improvement, and develop a greater sense of self-efficacy than teachers who work</p>	<p>Actors – mechanisms – consequences.</p> <p>Policy drivers.</p> <p>Context – text.</p>	<p>Improvement agenda(s). Structure, culture, people.</p> <p>Culture.</p> <p>Characteristics of collaborative approaches.</p>	<p>Deep learning for students and teachers, and coming together to think, support, act, and reflect together, while building a coherent approach to particular aspects of practice through collaborating (Datnow, 2019).</p>	<p>Tied to improvement.</p> <p>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</p> <p>New Public Management (NPM).</p>

<p>in cultures of individualism and isolation. Not all kinds of professional collaboration are equally effective. We suggest that collaboration in improving teaching, assessing CfE, and connecting schools to take collective responsibility for each other's improvement and results, should be top priorities. In line with current commitments of the Scottish College of Education Leadership, the Standards Frameworks could emphasise even more the importance of and expectations for collaborative professionalism and leadership.'</p>				<p>Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.</p> <p>Systems and structures.</p>
<p>Pg. 98          'With the complex nature of education, including the necessity to involve more stakeholders and to encourage professional collaboration and networking, the traditional mode of vertical governance by itself is insufficient (Hooge et al, 2012).'</p>	<p>National and middle tier levels.</p> <p>Context and actors.</p>	<p>Governance.</p> <p>Leadership.</p>	<p>With this has come forms of self-governance through the formal and informal development of shared norms, values, and trust. This contrasts the more formal forms of collaboration which come to require external governance and agreements on ways of working, more often including hierarchical structures for their facilitation and sustainability (Sullivan &amp; Skeltcher, 2002).</p>	<p>Systems and structures.</p> <p>Contextual dependence.</p>

<p>Pg. 98 ‘As top-down strategies are often inappropriate given the emphasis needed on professional and community action, yet with bottom-up strategies by themselves unable to achieve improvement at any significant scale, it is natural to focus strongly on the “middle” (Hargreaves &amp; Ainscow, 2015). This may be the middle of the formal system organigram represented by districts, local authorities etc.; it may be the “meso” level combinations of the networks, chains, professional communities, initiatives, and groupings that are often invisible in the official charts of an education system. The “middle” may thus also be defined vertically and horizontally; we argue in this report that it needs to include both.’</p>	<p>National and middle tier levels.</p> <p>Context and actors.</p> <p>Mechanisms.</p>	<p>Governance.</p> <p>Leadership.</p> <p>Characteristics of collaborative approaches.</p> <p>Structures and people.</p>	<p>Both organisationally driven and naturally emerging forms of collaboration can come about because of shared characteristics of those collaborating (Atkinson et al., 2007).</p> <p>Collaboration has come to dominate discourse alongside an assumption as to its possibilities for improvement and practice (Head, 2003).</p>	<p>Formal and informal.</p> <p>Emerging and initiated.</p>
<p>Pg. 98 ‘So, it is not enough simply to emphasise the middle compared with central agencies or schools but there needs to be collaboration in the middle sharing resources, ideas, and expertise and exercising collective responsibility for their</p>	<p>Actors – mechanisms – consequences.</p>	<p>People.</p> <p>Improvement agendas.</p> <p>Characteristics of collaborative approaches.</p>	<p>The middle tier, often crossing the boundaries of the national and local levels of a system, has an important role in setting and monitoring the agenda, sharing leadership and positional power to enable collaboration to happen, and invest the time and resources that build capacity and offer</p>	<p>Formal and informal.</p> <p>Emerging and initiated.</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p> <p>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</p>

<p>students' success (Hargreaves &amp; Ainscow, 2015).'</p> <p>'The <b>collaboration</b> in the middle is both <b>between local authorities</b> and <b>engaging schools</b> and stakeholders through various forms of networking.'</p>			<p>support for collaboration (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012).</p>	<p>New Public Management (NPM).</p> <p>Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.</p> <p>Place and role of power (Between = equal partners; Engaging = inviting in an unequal partner?).</p>
<p>Pg. 120</p> <p>'There was a call for a "more vibrant <b>research community</b>" of <b>collaboration</b> among the different universities that could inform and respond to government policy.'</p>			<p>This has implications for all of society and the impact education policy can have on the practice and lived realities of educational institutions, making it a key area for critical analysis and research (Humes, 2013).</p>	<p>Role of research and research communit(y/ies).</p>
<p>Pg. 125</p> <p>'Social capital is about the capital people possess together, about collective efficacy (their shared belief in their capacity to make a difference together), <b>collaboration</b>, and <b>collective responsibility</b>.'</p>	<p>Actors.</p> <p>Mechanisms.</p>	<p>People.</p> <p>Culture.</p>	<p>However, the sharing, transfer and application of knowledge and expertise is not easy (Hargreaves, 2003).</p> <p>This can be at the local level, improving instructional practices for student achievement, or at middle tier and national levels mobilising knowledge and expertise to support broader system development (Hargreaves, 2003).</p>	<p>Capital.</p> <p>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</p> <p>Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.</p>

<p>Pg. 130  ‘Teacher leadership develops teachers’ competence and confidence as educators, advances their professional learning, promotes change and improvement in schools, encourages professional collaboration and collegiality, and boosts professional status and recognition.’</p>	<p>Policy drivers.  Context, actors.</p>	<p>Leadership.  People.  Structure.</p>	<p>Ensuring support from those involved, a commitment to sharing, allocation of time and resources to be together are essential elements to the effective structuring of collaboration (Harfitt &amp; Tavares, 2004; Liu &amp; Tsai, 2017).</p>	<p>Leadership that fosters collaboration.  Accountability and quality indicator(s).  Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.</p>
<p>Pg. 133  ‘Not all kinds of professional collaboration are equally effective. In their study of school-to-school collaboration in England, Chapman and Muijs (2013) found that many of the networks had no positive impact on student outcomes. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) warn against professional collaboration that is unfocused and vague, on the one hand, or contrived to support top-down accountability, on the other.’</p>	<p>Actors.  Mechanisms.  Consequences.</p>	<p>Leadership.  Structure.  People.  Characteristics of collaborative approaches.</p>	<p>Chapman, &amp; West (2011) work highlights how collaborative activity has to be driven by clear goals, with effective communication channels, the building of trust, opportunities for professional learning, and considering the timing of both the collaborative activity and when it might end. Highlighted was the planned, purposeful, and strategic use of collaboration rather than it being a default practice.</p>	<p>Forms and purpose of collaboration.  Accountability and quality indicator(s).  Leadership that fosters collaboration.  Tied to improvement.</p>
<p>Pg. 133  ‘Scotland (and other systems) need greater clarity about the kinds of collaboration that work best to bring about the innovations and improvements that will enhance student</p>	<p>Mechanisms.  Consequences.</p>	<p>Characteristics of collaborative approaches.  Culture.  Improvement agenda(s).</p>	<p>Much collaboration can ‘appear contrived, inauthentic, grafted on, perched precariously (and often temporarily) on the margins of real work’ (Little, 1990:510) hence the varied perception and</p>	<p>Forms and purposes of collaboration.  Formal and informal.  Emerging and initiated.</p>

<p>learning, and to create coherent and cohesive cultures of system-wide collaboration. The McCormack Committee suggested that school-level planning should not only be collaborative but should focus more clearly on the best outcomes for pupils. This is not an argument for mandated collaboration or contrived collegiality to implement centrally defined strategies. But it is to argue for greater consistency in collaborative professionalism and of moving towards the higher quality collaborative practices that have the most positive effects on student learning.'</p>			<p>beliefs as to the benefits of collaborative activity.</p>	<p>Tied to improvement.</p> <p>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</p> <p>Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.</p>
<p>Pg. 135          'As Scotland's bold curriculum becomes truly excellent, its accountability and improvement processes should resemble high-performing systems in Europe and North America such as Finland, Estonia, the Netherlands, and Alberta, Canada. Scotland might benefit from collaboration with Norway and Sweden who are also building stronger cooperation and collective responsibility among groups of municipalities, to share and</p>	<p>National, middle tier, and local levels of the system.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Mechanisms.</p>	<p>Leadership.</p> <p>Governance.</p>	<p>Establishing Scotland as a high performing independent economy, aligning with the political agenda of the government (Lingard &amp; Sellar, 2014).</p>	<p>International comparison to support legitimisation/ rationalising.</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p> <p>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</p> <p>Systems and structures.</p>

monitor their different strategies of <b>leading from the middle.</b>				
<p>Pg. 136          ‘This is a good moment to lead CfE from the middle in creating <b>coherence and collective responsibility for implementation</b> and results through <b>local authorities</b>, as well as through <b>networks driven by professional associations</b> and principal-driven collaborations.’</p> <p>‘<b>These organisations and associations</b> might take on leadership in specific areas such as literacy, mathematics, ICT, special education inclusion, assessment for learning, and <b>high-impact professional collaboration.</b>’</p>	<p>Policy drivers.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Consequences.</p>	<p>Leadership.</p> <p>Structure.</p> <p>People.</p>	<p>Ensuring support from those involved, a commitment to sharing and allocation of time and resources to be together are essential elements to the effective structuring of collaboration (Harfitt &amp; Tavares, 2004; Liu &amp; Tsai, 2017).</p> <p>Given the varying organisational contexts of the individuals coming together, consideration has to be given to the extent to which the forms of collaboration reflect prior experiences, a sharing of values, and shared goals (Little, 2002; Doppenberg, Bakx, &amp; den Brok, 2012).</p>	<p>Formal and informal.</p> <p>Emerging and initiated.</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p> <p>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</p> <p>Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.</p>
<p>Pg. 161          ‘Shared approaches to assessment by the local authorities would in any case help to strengthen the room for <b>“leading from the middle”</b> and this is an area for <b>useful collaboration and coherence across LAs.</b>’</p>	<p>Policy drivers.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Consequences.</p>	<p>Leadership.</p> <p>Structure.</p> <p>People.</p>	<p>This contrasts the more formal forms of collaboration which come to require external governance and agreements on ways of working, more often including hierarchical structures for their facilitation and sustainability (Sullivan &amp; Skeltcher, 2002).</p>	<p>Systems and structures.</p>

<b>Policy Text</b>	Scottish Government. (2016a). <b>National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education.</b> Edinburgh, Scottish Government.			
<b>Keyword Usage</b> (Initially identified from theoretical framework (Figure 2), with root word and the addition of related suffixes).	<b>Collaboration:</b> 1 Collaborate: 0 Collaborating: 0	<b>Network:</b> 1 Networks: 0 Networking: 0	<b>Governance:</b> 8 Govern: 0 Governing: 0	<b>Culture:</b> 0 Cultures: 0
	<b>Partnership:</b> Partnership: 3 Partnerships: 1	<b>Leadership:</b> 28 Lead: 2 Leader: 0 Leading: 2	<b>Structure:</b> 1 Structures: 1	<b>Improvement:</b> 132 Improve: 9 Improving: 9
<b>Quotation</b> (Direct from the text).	<b>Stage of Framework for Analysis</b> <b>(Figure 5)</b>	<b>Connection to Theoretical Framework</b> <b>(Figure 2)</b>	<b>Connection to the Literature</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Pg. 16 'We will extend the reach and impact of the Attainment Advisers, through regional alignment, to promote collaboration and joint delivery across local authorities from October 2016. Using the data available from the Framework, the Attainment Adviser team will work directly with schools where they can make the biggest difference to accelerate efforts to close the gap. Educational leadership of the programme will be extended through a new Chief Adviser role.	Middle tier and local levels.  Actors.  Consequences.	Governance.  Structure.  People.  Improvement agenda(s).	When this support for effective collaboration to take place, an emphasis on fostering collective responsibility for the collaborative endeavour itself as well as practice and improvement agendas can emerge, ensuring access to relevant expertise between those collaborating and maintaining mutual accountability for consequential action as a result of the collaboration (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009).	Systems and structures.  Contextual dependence.  Leadership that fosters collaboration.

<b>Policy Text</b>	Scottish Government. (2020a). <b>National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education.</b> Edinburgh, Scottish Government.			
<b>Keyword Usage</b> (Initially identified from theoretical framework (Figure 2), with root word and the addition of related suffixes).	<b>Collaboration:</b> 39 Collaborate: 3 Collaborating: 2	<b>Network(s/ing):</b> 20 Networks: 4 Networking: 2	<b>Governance:</b> 2 Govern: 0 Governing: 0	<b>Culture:</b> 17 Cultures: 2 <b>(Empowerment: 49)</b>
	<b>Partnership(s):</b> Partnership: 41 Partnerships: 18	<b>Leadership:</b> 126 Lead: 0 Leader: 5 Leading: 22	<b>Structure:</b> 2 Structures: 0	<b>Improvement:</b> 234 Improve: 61 Improving: 40
<b>Quotation</b> (Direct from the text).	<b>Stage of Framework for Analysis</b> (Figure 5)	<b>Connection to Theoretical Framework</b> (Figure 2)	<b>Connection to the Literature</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Pg. 4 'These activities are aimed at building a self-improving education system, where a culture of collaboration and empowerment is evident throughout. This is critical to ensuring the potential of CfE is achieved, and that we improve outcomes for children and young people.'	Policy drivers.  Middle tier and local levels.  Consequences.	Governance.  Structure.  Culture.  Improvement agenda(s).	Christie (2011) 'empower individuals and communities' in both the design and delivery of services; in education reflected in the parental engagement and pupil voice agendas, and the emphasis on locally developed and community responsive approaches to curriculum development.	Tied to improvement.  Empowerment.
Pg. 6 'The ICEA said the Scottish Government and Education Scotland should be doing more to	Actors.  Mechanisms.	Leadership.  Culture.	Muijs et al., (2011) also highlighted how collaboration requires the foundation of the capacity, leadership, and targeted	Accountability and quality indicator(s).

match leadership skills and competencies to problems in a more strategic way, promoting a culture where collaboration is underpinned by ongoing professional challenge.’	Consequences.	Improvement agenda(s).	professional learning to enable it to happen. However, with the complexity of collaboration as a collective endeavour and individual experience, matched with the complexity of researching collaboration as a phenomena and practice, understanding what learning, skills, or capabilities that might be required for successful collaboration are equally challenging to identify.	Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.  Systems and structures. Tied to improvement.
<p>Pg. 7 ‘...drivers of improvement: School Leadership... ... Improving the leadership skills of middle and senior leaders through career long professional learning, sharing good practice and collaboration.</p> <p>Teacher Professionalism • ... • Collaboration between teachers supported by local authorities and the Regional Improvement Collaboratives • Increasing the spectrum of career long professional learning for teachers • Develop opportunities for practitioners to engage in collaboration and career long professional learning, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy.’</p>	<p>Actors.</p> <p>Mechanisms.</p> <p>Consequences.</p>	<p>Leadership.</p> <p>Culture.</p> <p>Improvement agenda(s).</p>		<p>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</p> <p>Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.</p> <p>Systems and structures. Tied to improvement.</p>
Pg. 10 ‘In an empowered system, it is important to ensure that the curriculum support needs of	<p>National, middle tier, and local levels.</p> <p>Policy drivers.</p>	<p>Leadership.</p> <p>People.</p>	Collaboration has come to dominate discourse alongside an assumption as to its possibilities	<p>Empowerment.</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p>

teachers influence and guide the priorities for local collaboration and improvement.’	Context.  Actors.  Consequences.	Improvement agenda(s).	for improvement and practice (Head, 2003). However, where collaborative activity has been experienced as valuable and positive, it has been characterised as incorporating norms of sustained communication orientated towards pedagogical improvement (Datnow, 2018).	Forms and purposes of collaboration.
Pg. 11 ‘This need for empowerment has been a common theme running through the advice and recommendations from the ICEA, as is the need to strengthen collaboration at all levels of the system.’	National, middle tier, and local levels.  Policy drivers.  Context.  Actors.	Leadership.  Governance.  Culture.  Structure.  People.	They argue that forms of collaboration and their associated rule of governance can range from loose, informal relationships, to more formalised agreements which can include joint activity, the relinquishing of power from some parties to enable others, or even the coming together of previously separate groups for a new collaborative working relationship with a shared remit (Sullivan & Skeltcher, 2002).	Empowerment.  Forms and purposes of collaboration.  Place and role of power (Between = equal partners; Engaging = inviting in an unequal partner?).  New Public Management (NPM).
Pg. 12 ‘June 2018 we published a Joint Agreement setting out a shared ambition of empowerment and collaboration to improve outcomes for children and young people. Reflecting this joint commitment to collaborative system leadership, three working groups were established to take forward	National, middle tier, and local levels.  Policy drivers.  Context.  Actors.	Leadership.  Governance.  Culture.  Structure.  People.	They argue that forms of collaboration and their associated rule of governance can range from loose, informal relationships, to more formalised agreements which can include joint activity, the relinquishing of power from some parties to enable others, or even the coming together of previously separate groups for a new collaborative	Empowerment.  Forms and purposes of collaboration.  Place and role of power (Between = equal partners; Engaging = inviting in an unequal partner?).  New Public Management (NPM).

<p>the actions identified in the joint agreement covering guidance, self-evaluation and an evaluation strategy. The groups bring together representatives from teaching unions, headteacher associations, local and central government, parents and carers, the General Teaching Council for Scotland and Education Scotland. Together we developed new draft guidance and resources to support the empowerment of learning communities across Scotland.'</p>			<p>working relationship with a shared remit (Sullivan &amp; Skeltcher, 2002).</p>	
<p>Pg. 13 'The actions set out later in this plan under each of the drivers of improvement explore how a culture of empowerment and collaboration will help to achieve the ambitions of the NIF.'</p>	<p>Policy drivers.</p> <p>Context.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Consequences.</p>	<p>Culture.</p> <p>People.</p> <p>Improvement agenda(s).</p>	<p>In Scotland, we have seen at a middle tier and national levels a renewed emphasis on collaboration through 'Regional Improvement Collaboratives' (RICs) (Scottish Government, 2017b); directly tied to the policy focus on reducing the poverty related attainment gap and the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (NIF) (Scottish Government, 2020a).</p>	<p>Tied to improvement.</p> <p>Empowerment.</p> <p>Forms and purposes of collaboration.</p>
<p>Pg. 32 'Parental involvement includes parental representation in decision-making, collaboration between parents and educators in matters such as school improvement planning, using the</p>	<p>Context.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Consequences.</p>	<p>Culture.</p> <p>People.</p> <p>Improvement agenda(s).</p>	<p>To sustain engagement and engender a sense of belonging within a collaborative community, Wenger (1998) argues that some work must be done together, reflecting on practice, and aligning and</p>	<p>Forms and purposes of collaboration.</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p>

skills of parents and carers to enrich the curriculum, and communication between home and early learning and childcare settings and school.'			coordinating actions towards a shared goal. While these elements share an element of interdependence, (Wenger, 1998: 228) highlights how collaborative learning communities depend on a 'dynamic combination of engagement, imagination and alignment'.	
Pg. 45 'We will continue to create a culture of empowerment and collaboration to enable the teaching profession to work together and to use their skills, judgement and creativity in the way they think best to develop the high-quality teaching practice, and effective pedagogy, that are crucial to securing better outcomes for children and young people.'	Context.  Actors.  Consequences.	Culture.  People.  Improvement agenda(s).		Empowerment.  Tied to improvement.  Forms and purposes of collaboration.
Annex A Pg. 46 'Local authorities will evaluate their progress on empowerment and collaboration in 2020'	Policy drivers.  Consequences.  Middle tier and local levels.	Governance.  Improvement agenda(s).	New Public Management, a term coined by Christopher Hood in 1994, described the broad new mode of exercising power and reengineering the structures and functions of public sector services.	Empowerment.  New Public Management (NPM).  Forms and purposes of collaboration.
Annex A Pg. 48 'In 2020 Education Scotland will extend engagement in approaches to systems leadership via the expansion of the Evolving Systems Thinking Programme, and the Leading System Change Programme, and will contribute to whole system developments	National and middle tier levels.  Policy drivers.  Mechanisms.	Leadership.  Governance.	Networking describes the mutually beneficial sharing of information that could be easily adopted in the various contexts of the persons represented in the networking process (Atkinson et al., 2007). Networks, or learning networks, are often characterised based on the coming together of	Systems and structures.  Formal and informal.  Tied to improvement.  Leadership that fosters collaboration.  Capital.

through collaboration and networking with other areas such as public health.’			individuals from different communities of practice with a focus on learning for improvement at local, middle tier, and national levels (Brown & Poortman, 2018).	
Pg. 71 ‘Alongside COSLA we are currently in the process of commissioning external research into the establishment, reach and impact of Regional Improvement Collaboratives. This follows an interim review of RICs published in February 2019 and is scheduled to report by June 2020. Findings will be used to take steps to further embed regional collaboration and the support available to schools.’	Policy drivers.  Mechanisms.	Leadership.  Governance.	We have seen at a middle tier and national level a renewed emphasis on collaboration through ‘Regional Improvement Collaboratives’ (RICs) (Scottish Government, 2017b); directly tied to the policy focus on reducing the poverty related attainment gap and the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (NIF) (Scottish Government, 2020a).	Role of research and research communit(y/ies).
Pg. 75 ‘Working together at national, regional and local level, we will increase our collective efforts across all levels of government and build on the momentum of empowerment and collaboration, to identify, take responsibility for, and tackle the causes of the attainment gap at all levels.’	National, middle tier, and local levels.  Actors.  Consequences.	Leadership.  Governance.  Improvement agenda(s).	Hargreaves (2003) argues that the social capital that exist within schools and across systems is a vital element to improvement agendas. The capacity to come together in a trusting environment, valuing knowledge-sharing, and doing this beyond the confines of a singular school community is seen as necessary to sustained improvement in the varied forms that it may take (Hargreaves, 2003).	Systems and structures.  Empowerment.  Forms and purposes of collaboration.  Tied to improvement.

<p><b>Pg. 99</b>  ‘Following initial review work, further focused engagement took place in early 2019, with a view to ensuring that the key drivers relating to effective school-level collaboration were identified and where appropriate built into the wider Education Reform programme.’</p> <p>‘An outline to take forward further work with Education Scotland over the 2019/20 academic year has been prepared. Proposals seek to embed the key drivers and contributors to school-level collaboration into the wider Education Empowerment reforms.’</p>	<p>Context.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Mechanisms.</p>	<p>Characteristics of collaborative approaches.</p> <p>Structure.</p> <p>People.</p>	<p>The complexity of collaboration as a phenomenon itself has made it difficult to study. This is because of the range of influences on its emergence and the variation in forms it can take, making categorisation challenging (Hanford, Houck, Iler &amp; Morgan, 1997).</p>	<p>Forms and purposes of collaboration.</p>

<b>Policy Text</b>	Scottish Government. (2017b). <b>Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: governance review</b> . Edinburgh: Scottish Government.			
<b>Keyword Usage</b> (Initially identified from theoretical framework (Figure 2), with root word and the addition of related suffixes).	<b>Collaboration:</b> 40 Collaborate: 10 Collaborating: 3	<b>Network:</b> 0 Networks: 5 Networking: 0	<b>Governance:</b> 33 Govern: 1 Governing: 4	<b>Culture:</b> 11 Cultures: 3
	<b>Partnership:</b> Partnership: 20 Partnerships: 12	<b>Leadership:</b> 67 Lead: 15 Leader: 4 Leading: 7	<b>Structure:</b> 4 Structures: 1	<b>Improvement:</b> 159 Improve: 29 Improving: 24
<b>Quotation</b> (Direct from the text).	<b>Stage of Framework for Analysis (Figure 5)</b>	<b>Connection to Theoretical Framework (Figure 2)</b>	<b>Connection to the Literature</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Pg. 2 ‘It is a <b>collaborative effort</b> , which <b>starts with leadership</b> in our schools and should be complemented by our local authorities and supported by new <b>Regional Improvement Collaboratives</b> which are relevant to, designed by, and close to the communities they serve.’	Actors.  Mechanisms.  Middle tier and local levels.	Leadership.  Structure.  People.	Leaders have to ensure that they and teaching teams keep knowledge fresh, enable the development of skills in collaborating, including making the relationships between adults a discussable element of practice (Barth, 2006), engage with research, and keep a continual focus on the building and sustenance of trust (Sharratt & Planche, 2016).	Leadership that fosters collaboration.  Systems and structures.  Contextual dependence.
Pg. 7 ‘There will be a new duty on <b>local authorities to collaborate</b> to support improvement on a	Middle tier and local levels.  Actors.	Governance.  Leadership.	This contrasts the more formal forms of collaboration which come to require external governance and agreements on	Leadership that fosters collaboration.  Systems and structures.

regional basis. They will also be responsible for improvement through their provision of education support services, their regional collaboration, and in securing leadership in their schools.'	Mechanisms.  Consequences.	Structure.  Improvement Agenda(s).	ways of working, more often including hierarchical structures for their facilitation and sustainability (Sullivan & Skeltcher, 2002).	Tied to improvement.
Pg. 8 'We will establish the Regional Improvement Collaboratives, taking account of the collaboration that is already underway, and we will realign national agencies to support the Regional Improvement Collaboratives and strengthen inspection.'	National, middle tier, and local levels.  Policy drivers.  Mechanisms.  Consequences.	Leadership.  Governance.  Structure.	Ultimately, when structuring collaboration, those involved in the genesis and maintenance of such collaboration have to consider how they design approaches that enable genuine working together, sharing of knowledge, contribution of ideas, and the formulation of plans and actions for achieving the development goals articulated by the organisation or organisations involved, or the collaborative group themselves (Leonard & Leonard, 2001).	Tied to improvement.  Accountability and quality indicator(s).
Pg. 11 'The organising system of education must be focussed on providing the most effective framework for teachers to work within. We also recognise that any framework must be supported by a culture of leadership and collaboration, building capacity for improvement in the system, data	Policy drivers.  Actors.  Context.  Consequences.	Leadership.  Governance.  Structure.  Culture.  People.  Improvement agenda(s).	Consideration has to be given to the leadership, governance, and structure of collaboration. These three elements will influence the genesis, impact, both in relation to the stated aims of the collaborative activity and the professional development that results for those involved, and the sustainability of such	Tied to improvement.  Accountability and quality indicator(s).  Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.  Systems and structures.

on children's progress, and clear accountability structures.'			collaboration (Leonard & Leonard, 2001).	Leadership that fosters collaboration.  Capital.
<p>Pg. 16            'Culture and capacity within the system. There is considerable variation in the level and quality of support provided to teachers, headteachers and parents. There is no clear and consistent framework of support for teachers to be able to build their professional skills or to support collaboration.'</p> <p>'Collaboration between local authorities and schools. We know that the level of performance and capacity varies across local authorities and across schools and that system-wide collaboration could help to address this variation. There are some emerging examples of collaboration but this is not consistent. Responses to the Governance Review consultation highlight the need to promote greater use of joined-up approaches at a national, local, schools and practitioner level.'</p>	<p>National, middle tier, and local levels.</p> <p>Context.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Mechanisms.</p>	<p>Governance.</p> <p>Structure.</p> <p>People.</p>	<p>Culture is the habits and beliefs that inform action and practice (Hargreaves &amp; Shirley, 2012). Despite collaboration being assumed as having value and importance for school improvement and professional learning (Head, 2003), establishing collaborative cultures can prove challenging. Across contexts, not all share an appreciation of the value of collaborative activity, particularly when it is or perceived to be externally imposed (Leonard &amp; Leonard, 2001).</p>	<p>Capital.</p> <p>Systems and structures.</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p> <p>Forms and purposes of collaboration.</p> <p>New Public Management (NPM).</p>

<p>Pg. 20 ‘We have referred previously to the variability in practice and outcomes across authorities and schools, and the potential for collaboration to address some of that variability. The Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee noted<sup>58</sup> that the “variation in performance of education authorities is concerning. Education authorities should collaborate more effectively to share best practice.”’</p> <p>‘However, a number of models of regional collaboration are beginning to emerge, but these models do not yet have sufficient depth, pace or impact as they are currently constituted. The International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) told us in March that in Scotland “collaboration was uneven and was not sufficiently ingrained throughout the education system”.’</p>	<p>National, middle tier, and local levels.</p> <p>Context.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Mechanisms.</p>	<p>Governance.</p> <p>Structure.</p> <p>People.</p>	<p>Where individuals or organisations share common needs, collaborative activity can emerge to collectively address common challenges. Where innovation or creativity emerges, individuals and organisations make come together to extend, scale up, or innovate together based on shared interests (Atkinson et al., 2007).</p>	<p>Systems and structures.</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p> <p>Forms and purposes of collaboration.</p> <p>New Public Management (NPM).</p>
<p>Pg. 21 ‘However, there is no national vision or framework to support collaboration and we are not using the clear evidence about</p>	<p>Policy drivers.</p> <p>Context.</p> <p>Actors.</p>	<p>Leadership.</p> <p>Governance.</p> <p>People.</p>	<p>Collaborations can emerge naturally as a result of the problems of practice or circumstances that individuals share in common. However,</p>	<p>Formal and informal.</p> <p>Emerging and initiated.</p>

<p>what works. In short, and to conclude, collaboration often depends on the enthusiasm of an individual and too often it happens in spite of, rather than because of, the current system and structures.'</p>			<p>frequently, due to the influence of systemic and organisational norms and structure, much collaboration can 'appear contrived, inauthentic, grafted on, perched precariously (and often temporarily) on the margins of real work' (Little, 1990:510) hence the varied perception and beliefs as to the benefits of collaborative activity.</p>	<p>Forms and purposes of collaboration.</p> <p>Leadership that fosters collaboration.</p> <p>Systems and structures.</p>
<p>Pg. 30          'Local authorities have identified the benefit of working across boundaries to support improvement. However, these initiatives vary in their nature, scope and maturity and schools in different parts of the country may not yet have felt the benefit of this collaboration.'</p> <p>'We have looked closely at the Welsh model for regional collaboration and have noted the importance of clarity of purpose, leadership and clear accountability. We will establish Regional Improvement Collaboratives in Scotland to embed collaboration for improvement across all of our schools. The collaboratives will provide an enhanced educational improvement service to support</p>	<p>Policy drivers.</p> <p>Context.</p> <p>Mechanisms.</p> <p>Consequences.</p> <p>National, middle tier, and local levels.</p>	<p>Leadership.</p> <p>Governance.</p> <p>Structure.</p> <p>Improvement agenda(s).</p>	<p>Drawing upon the work of key theorists and research in the field of collaboration such as Inger (1993), Crow (1998), Austin (2000), Fitzgibbons (2000), and Friend &amp; Cook (2000), Montiel-Overall (2005) highlights that this range of forms and definitions, or synonymous terms, of collaboration can include: reciprocity, congeniality, partnerships, interaction between coequal parties, cooperation, information sharing, shared vision, joint negotiation of common ground, shared power, dialogue, and the joint construction of knowledge.</p>	<p>Systems and structures.</p> <p>Contextual dependence.</p> <p>International comparison to support legitimisation/ rationalising.</p> <p>Forms and purposes of collaboration.</p> <p>Leadership that fosters collaboration.</p> <p>Place and role of power (Between = equal partners; Engaging = inviting in an unequal partner?).</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p>

<p>teachers, practitioners and headteachers to deliver excellence and equity in education. These collaboratives will respond to the recommendations, including from the OECD, ICEA and IPPR Scotland, to drive and focus collaboration across our system. This regional approach will involve decentralising some Education Scotland resources to support improvement closer to schools. It will also involve local authorities sharing resource at a regional level to ensure an enhanced improvement capability.'</p>				
<p>Pg. 31          'Collaboration at a school level is already a strong feature of Scottish education, particularly where schools work in clusters. Many schools and establishments are working collaboratively as are many teachers and practitioners, however, this is not universal. The model of collaborative working differs and the governance structures often make collaboration harder. Where it does take place effectively, it has a demonstrable and positive</p>	<p>Middle tier and local levels.  Consequences.</p>	<p>Governance.  Culture.  Improvement agenda(s).</p>	<p>Kalisz (2018) highlights the importance of collaboration for growth, however cautions that collaboration itself will not bring results if consideration is not given to who is collaborating, what they are bringing to the group, and the expected outcomes of this might be.</p>	<p>Contextual dependence.  Systems and structures.  Tied to improvement.</p>

impact on children and young people.’				
<p>Pg. 32  ‘These factors, which will inform our approach to collaboration, are: • a clear focus on outcomes; • partnerships must be founded on a clearly articulated shared moral purpose; • transparency, trust and honesty are crucial; • commitment to and capacity for peer review; • peer review needs to be carried out within a long term relationship and a commitment to continuously improving practice and systems; • partnerships must have a plan to move from collaboration to co-responsibility to a position of shared professional accountability; • partnerships should go beyond school leaders and engage with students, families, teachers and communities; and • partnerships welcome scrutiny and support from other partnerships as their contribution to a connected local, regional and national system.’</p>	<p>Consequences.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Middle tier and local levels.</p>	<p>Structure.</p> <p>Culture.</p> <p>People.</p> <p>Improvement agenda(s).</p>	<p>Montiel-Overall (2005) highlights the added complication of how synonymous terms, particularly related to collaboration, can begin to deviate into not just different concepts entirely, but a range of forms and definitions.</p> <p>Ensuring support from those involved, a commitment to sharing, allocation of time and resources to be together are essential elements to the effective structuring of collaboration (Harfitt &amp; Tavares, 2004; Liu &amp; Tsai, 2017).</p> <p>Given the varying organisational contexts of the individuals coming together, consideration has to be given to the extent to which the forms of collaboration reflect prior experiences, a sharing of values, and shared goals (Little, 2002; Doppenberg, Bakx, &amp; den Brok, 2012).</p>	<p>New Public Management (NPM).</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p> <p>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</p>

<p>Pg. 42</p> <p>‘We have set out a clear vision for education, one which is led by teachers and schools, where collaboration is key to driving improvement, and where all children and young people are able to reach their potential.’</p>	<p>Policy drivers.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Consequences.</p>	<p>Structure.</p> <p>Culture.</p> <p>Improvement agenda(s).</p>	<p>The capacity to come together in a trusting environment, valuing knowledge-sharing, and doing this beyond the confines of a singular school community is seen as necessary to sustained improvement in the varied forms that it may take (Hargreaves, 2003).</p>	<p>Place and role of power (Between = equal partners; Engaging = inviting in an unequal partner?).</p> <p>New Public Management (NPM).</p> <p>Empowerment.</p>
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<b>Policy Text</b>	Education Scotland. (2019). <b>Scottish Attainment Challenge Self-Evaluation Resource (DRAFT)</b> . Retrieved from: <a href="https://education.gov.scot/media/qwpkexmm/sacselfevaluationresourcedraft.pdf">https://education.gov.scot/media/qwpkexmm/sacselfevaluationresourcedraft.pdf</a>			
<b>Keyword Usage</b> (Initially identified from theoretical framework (Figure 2), with root word and the addition of related suffixes).	<b>Collaboration:</b> 3 Collaborate: 0 Collaborating: 4	<b>Network:</b> 1 Networks: 0 Networking: 0	<b>Governance:</b> 5 Govern: 0 Governing: 0	<b>Culture:</b> 2 Cultures: 0
	<b>Partnership:</b> Partnership: 3 Partnerships: 2	<b>Leadership:</b> 8 Lead: 0 Leader: 0 Leading: 18	<b>Structure:</b> 0 Structures: 4	<b>Improvement:</b> Improvement: 30 Improvements: 18 Improve: 15 Improving: 19
<b>Quotation</b> (Direct from the text).	<b>Stage of Framework for Analysis</b> (Figure 5)	<b>Connection to Theoretical Framework</b> (Figure 2)	<b>Connection to the Literature</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Pg. 9 'a) Governance and management... <b>Building the leadership capacity of staff through professional learning and collaboration.</b> '	Mechanisms.  Actors.  Consequences.	Structure.  People.	The majority of a teacher's work is done in isolation from their peers, and while collaborative approaches to professional learning, and school improvement have gained increasing dominance around the world, collaborative activity that teachers do engage in is frequently designed and organised on their behalf in order to fulfil a particular purpose that they may not have had any input into (Hargreaves, 2003; Bangs & Frost, 2016).	Forms and purposes of collaboration.  Capital.
Pg. 10 'b) Data and closing the gap... How effectively do we use <b>data across the local authority and region to encourage collaboration to achieve equity?</b> '	Mechanisms.  Actors.  Consequences.	Structure.  People.		Forms and purposes of collaboration.  Capital.  Tied to improvement.

<p>Pg. 11  ‘Robust self-evaluation process are well-embedded at all levels and are supported by strong and effective governance arrangements.’</p>	<p>Mechanisms.</p> <p>Actors.</p> <p>Consequences.</p>	<p>Governance.</p> <p>Structure.</p> <p>People.</p>	<p>The support and development of mutual accountability for collaborative process require consideration not just of the leadership of collaborative activity, but the governance that supports, enables, or oversees collaborative activity. There are many systemic structural factors that affect collaboration. This can include the size of the organisations involved in the collaborative processes, the time that is afforded to it, and the skills, experiences, and perceptions of those involved (Louis, Marks, &amp; Kruse, 1996).</p>	<p>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</p> <p>Systems and structures.</p>
<p>Pg. 14  ‘f) Professional learning and sharing practice. Features of highly effective practice...  □ High levels of staff engagement at all levels within a culture of collaboration, and with partners.’</p>	<p>Actors.</p> <p>Local level.</p>	<p>People.</p> <p>Culture.</p>	<p>To sustain engagement and engender a sense of belonging within a collaborative community, Wenger (1998) argues that some work must be done together, reflecting on practice, and aligning and coordinating actions towards a shared goal. While these elements share an element of interdependence, (Wenger, 1998: 228) highlights how collaborative learning communities depend on a ‘dynamic combination of engagement, imagination and alignment’.</p>	<p>Contextual dependence.</p> <p>Capital.</p>

<p>Pg. 16          'How effective is the          collaboration between education          and social work to ensure that the          Care-Experienced Children and          People's Funding is improving          life chances?'</p>	<p>Actors.</p> <p>Mechanisms.</p> <p>Consequences.</p>	<p>Structure.</p> <p>People.</p> <p>Improvement agenda(s).</p>	<p>They argue that forms of          collaboration and their associated          rule of governance can range          from loose, informal          relationships, to more formalised          agreements which can include          joint activity, the relinquishing of          power from some parties to          enable others, or even the coming          together of previously sperate          groups for a new collaborative          working relationship with a          shared remit (Sullivan &amp;          Skeltcher, 2002).</p>	<p>Accountability and quality          indicator(s).</p> <p>Tied to improvement.</p>
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<b>Policy Text</b>	Scottish Government. (2020b). <b>Pupil Equity Funding: national operational guidance 2020</b> . Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-equity-funding-national-operational-guidance-2020/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-equity-funding-national-operational-guidance-2020/</a>			
<b>Keyword Usage</b> (Initially identified from theoretical framework (Figure 2), with root word and the addition of related suffixes).	<b>Collaboration:</b> 2 Collaborate: 0 Collaborating: 0	<b>Network:</b> 0 Networks: 0 Networking: 0	<b>Governance:</b> 1 Govern: 0 Governing: 0	<b>Culture:</b> 0 Cultures: 0
	<b>Partnership:</b> Partnership: 3 Partnerships: 3	<b>Leadership:</b> 1 Lead: 1 Leader: 0 Leading: 0	<b>Structure:</b> 1 Structures: 0	<b>Improvement:</b> 9 Improve: 5 Improving: 4
<b>Quotation</b> (Direct from the text).	<b>Stage of Framework for Analysis</b> (Figure 5)	<b>Connection to Theoretical Framework</b> (Figure 2)	<b>Connection to the Literature</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Pg. 4 ‘Partnerships, parents, and the local community are a valuable source of support and partnership. In many contexts, particularly in rural areas, schools may be able to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people by working with a range of bodies such as parent groups; parent councils; other local authority and public sector services; third sector organisations (including youth work, family learning organisations); other educational sectors; and/or centres of	Middle tier and local levels.  Actors.  Mechanisms.	Structure.  Culture.  People.	To sustain engagement and engender a sense of belonging within a collaborative community, Wenger (1998) argues that some work must be done together, reflecting on practice, and aligning and coordinating actions towards a shared goal. While these elements share an element of interdependence, (Wenger, 1998: 228) highlights how collaborative learning communities depend on a ‘dynamic combination of engagement, imagination and alignment’.	Place and role of power (Between = equal partners; Engaging = inviting in an unequal partner?).  New Public Management (NPM).  Forms and purposes of collaboration.

expertise. Understanding the needs of children and young people should help to identify appropriate areas for collaboration.'				
Pg. 6 'Access to collaboration and communication tools on Glow including the Scottish Attainment Challenge community, Teams, Yammer, Sharepoint, and Blogs. These tools all ensure educators can have online discussions, ask questions, post responses, exchange ideas, access additional resource materials and share examples of practice across the Scottish Attainment Challenge, with the ability to host regular discussions and securely control visibility where required.'	Mechanisms.	Structure.  People.  Characteristics of collaborative approaches.	During the time of writing of this dissertation with the on-going global COVID-19 pandemic, what has emerged is the reliance on virtual learning communities in order to maintain day to day work of educational organisations, but also to continue development and improvement processes. Noted has been how many teachers have utilised technology to continue engagement with professional learning networks, as well as supporting learning (Schleicher, 2020).	Formal and informal.  Systems and structures.  Forms and purposes of collaboration.  Place and role of power (Between = equal partners; Engaging = inviting in an unequal partner?).

## APPENDIX 5

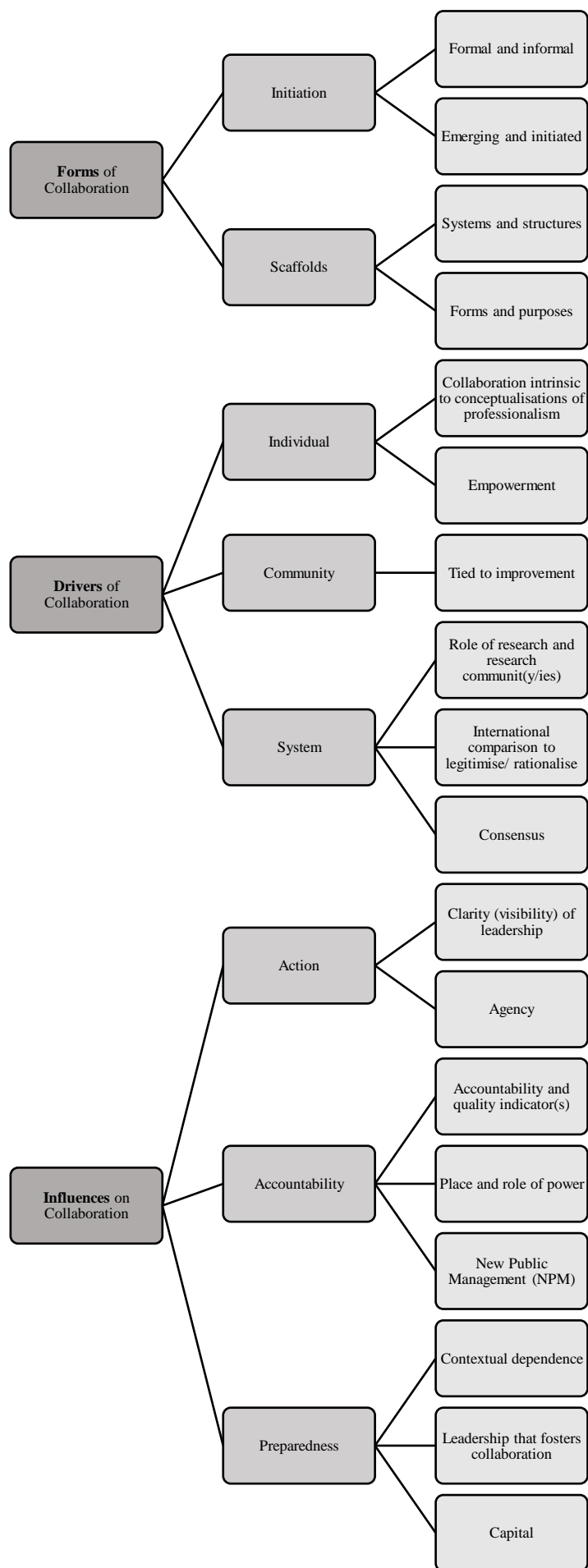
### Keyword Usage and Themes Emerging from Policy Text Analysis

#### Keyword Usage (all key policy texts)

<b>Collaboration:</b> 122 Collaborate: 18 Collaborating: 9	<b>Network:</b> 30 Networks: 58 Networking: 9	<b>Governance:</b> 107 Govern: 2 Governing: 4	<b>Culture:</b> 46 Cultures: 13
<b>Partnership:</b> Partnership: 110 Partnerships: 50	<b>Leadership:</b> 370 Lead: 40 Leader: 16 Leading: 83	<b>Structure:</b> 56 Structures: 17	<b>Improvement:</b> 664 Improve: 148 Improving: 298

#### Themes Emerging

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Forms of Collaboration</i>	<i>Drivers of Collaboration</i>	<i>Influences on Collaboration</i>
<b>Themes Codes</b>	<p><b>Initiation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal and informal.</li> <li>Emerging and initiated.</li> </ul> <p><b>Scaffolds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systems and structures.</li> <li>Forms and purposes of collaboration.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Individual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration intrinsic to conceptualisations of professionalism.</li> <li>Empowerment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tied to improvement.</li> </ul> <p><b>System</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International comparison to support legitimisation/rationalising.</li> <li>Role of research and research communit(y/ies).</li> <li>Consensus.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarity (visibility) of leadership.</li> <li>Agency.</li> </ul> <p><b>Accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place and role of power (Between = equal partners; Engaging = inviting in an unequal partner?).</li> <li>New Public Management (NPM).</li> <li>Accountability and quality indicator(s).</li> </ul> <p><b>Preparedness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contextual dependence.</li> <li>Leadership that fosters collaboration.</li> <li>Capital.</li> </ul>



**Figure 7: Dimensions, Themes and Codes from Key Policy Texts**

## APPENDIX 6

### Dimensions, Themes and Codes from Interviews and Illustrative Examples

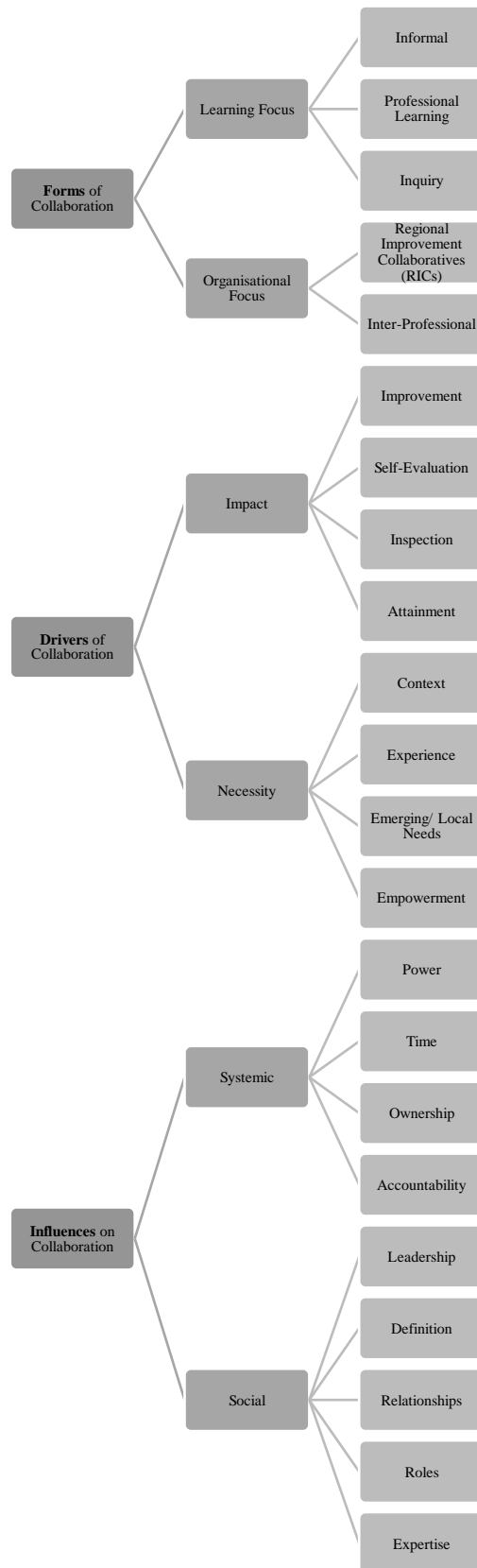


Figure 9: Dimensions, Themes and Codes from Interviews

## Illustrative Examples

**P1 – Participant 1; P2 – Participant 2; P3 – Participant 3; P4 – Participant 4;  
P5 – Participant 5**

Quotation	Code(s)	Theme(s)	Dimension (s)	Connection (s) to Theoretical Framework
<b>P1</b>				
Collaboration is something that's bandied about all the time.	Panacea	Systemic	Influences	Collaboration (Discourse)
Let's collaborate or let's just have a model of I'll tell you what to do, and we'll collaborate on that, and you'll just do it.	Power	Systemic	Influences	Leadership Governance
So, collaboration is a process and people need to have a firm understanding of what that means for them.	Definition	Social	Influences	Collaboration (Discourse)
...lots of examples about participation in education but you didn't get to the crux of engagement.	Participation vs Engagement	Necessity	Drivers	Structure Culture People
I don't always have the right vehicle, Paul. So, I've got an idea of how we might get there. I've got an end product and people need to take ownership for the process.  I'm trying to create sustainable models.	Ownership Power Process  Sustainability	Systemic	Influences	Structure Culture
I would take something and use it as a starting point for unpicking and development – And it's to generate thinking.	Thinking	Impact	Drivers	Leadership Improvement Agenda(s)
So, the turnover is that quite often things have been started and not embedded.	Staffing	Systemic	Influences	People
every time we have a CAT session it's time limited.	Time			

	Working Time Agreements (WTAs)			
So, what I would say is that in terms of collaboration in my daily life, all the time.  ... listening and observation. ... They're really critical components of being a leader.	Frequency  Listening Observing Leadership	Necessity	Drivers	Culture
You need a lot of social capital and people who've got social capital, you get a lot of their professional capital. If people who've got professional capital and no social capital, well, they're a one-man band.	Social Capital  Professional Capital	Social	Influences	People
But it is around giving people ownership and people potentially in life, in the daily life of schools, the word collaboration probably wouldn't come up because it's the name of a process.	Ownership  Naming  Process	Systemic	Influences	Structure  Culture
So, in terms of the process of collaboration, under 2.3 when we have been looking at our basic provision of teaching and learning across the schools, this is the basic level of teaching that I would expect to see in a classroom and for children to experience.	Coherence  Self-Evaluation  Inspection	Impact	Drivers	Governance  Improve-ment Agenda(s)
I would love to get away from the we've got 195 hours a year and actually let's pick something that we're really actively engaged in and get small teams to develop and deliver.	Working Time Agreements (WTAs)	Systemic	Influences	Structure  Governance
Whereas we've been looking at practising our	Inquiry	Social	Influences	People

inquiry and we're not near – You need to have gone through a long process before you get to partition inquiry roles.	Roles			
In my experience as a teacher, and as a leader, the operation always takes over to strategic and we can't allow that to continue to happen.	Operational vs. Strategic	Necessity	Drivers	Leadership  Governance
It can prevent collaboration if the improvement agenda is not made collaboratively.	Improve- ment  Empower- ment	Impact  Necessity	Drivers	Leadership  Structure  Improve- ment Agenda(s)
But also, there is that ownership of other people to develop their skills so you're coaching and you're – And sharing knowledge with others.	Ownership  Coaching  Sharing	Learning Focus	Forms	Culture  People
Teachers having the autonomy to share skills and share practice. I think that's really important. And that needs to feed into your improvement agenda.  And through the PRD processes happen once a year but PRD should happen all the time because you should always be listening and asking questions.	Autonomy  Improve- ment   Professional Review and Develop- ment (PRD)	Learning Focus  Impact	Forms  Drivers	People  Leadership
People's motivation can hinder collaboration, people's understanding of collaboration can hinder collaboration. And people's confidence can hinder collaboration.	Motivation  Understand- ing  Confidence	Social	Influences	People  Culture
It's about the people having responsibility, and taking	Responsib- ility	Social	Influences	People

responsibility for their actions.				
As a leader, I need to believe that collaboration works, and I need to understand the process, and I need to understand my part in it, and that my part can change.	Belief  Understanding  Role	Impact  Learning Focus	Drivers  Forms	Leadership  Structure
I don't always need to start it because actually I would quite like now to think that my two principal teachers could start the process and build an action plan.	Initiation  Action Plan	Systemic	Influences	Culture  People
Unless you have a clear picture, and a clear agenda, then we're not going to get any product at the end.	Action Plan	Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)
We need to really show impact or develop systems that will eventually show impact.	Impact	Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)
We're part of that process where people are feeling more empowered to give ideas and know that they'll be listened to.	Power  Listening	Necessity	Drivers	Culture  Leadership
That definition of empowerment and that can mean many things...  ... I think that there's that empowerment of accountability that you can give to people.  You need to be open to new ideas; you need to really believe in a bottom-up model. You also have to have confidence in your own abilities. You have to feel secure at having challenging conversations but also believing in team,	Empowerment	Necessity        Learning Focus	Drivers       Forms	Culture       Characteristics of Collaborative Approaches

and that I'm only one cog in the wheel.				
Some people's personalities are such that they find it difficult to be part of a social group but if you understand that person, there will always be some part of that process that they can undertake at a level that's comfortable to them and is meaningful, and will bring meaning to the group.	People  Social Capital	Social	Influences	People
Relationships are absolutely everything.  Ultimately, this is a caring profession.	Care  Relation- ships  Professional Values	Social	Influences	People
It's all very good and well, me having all this knowledge that I've accumulated over a number of years, whether it be reading or working with people, or observing, whatever that may be, but you need to give other people the opportunity to also develop that.	Professional Capital	Learning Focus	Forms	Leadership
...how they actively engaged with 2.3 and the challenge questions, and how they collaborated with each other, and how they disseminated that across the school with other people.	Account- ability  Self- Evaluation  Inspection	Impact	Drivers	Governance
...depending on the context, depending on what the needs of the school were, depending on me being very clear on the attainment data, being very clear where the gaps are for children, and making sure that the	Context  Needs  Priorities  Data  Attainment	Impact	Drivers	Governance  Improve- ment Agendas

resources that have come out.				
What are other people doing? And, so if we're thinking about school improvement, looking inwards first, looking outwards to what other people are doing and how that could fit, but it would be need to be a fit for my school.	Critical Stance Improvement Looking Inwards Looking Outwards	Learning Focus Organisational Focus	Forms	Characteristics of Collaborative Approaches Structure
...we're going to collaborate but there's a lot of talking and not a lot of collaboration.	RICs Dialogue Definition	Organisational Focus	Forms	Characteristics of Collaborative Approaches Structure
But also, we need to make sure people are, and we're all buying into collaboration, or opportunities for collaboration.	Motivation (buy-in)	Systemic	Influences	People Improvement Agendas
How do you pay for cover in tight budgets? Who's going to cover the class?	Time Budget	Systemic	Influences	Structure
...everything that's in the national improvement agenda should trickle into the local plan, which then should trickle into the school plan.	Improvement Priorities	Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agendas Governance
There may be some school leaders who don't know that that's what should really be happening, that we should be – We are working to the national picture.	Leadership Professional Capital			
Climate created within the school that people felt empowered or they'd have the autonomy to lead – It was this peer led nature, and	Climate Autonomy	Learning Focus	Forms	Culture Structure

it was informal, and it had an impact on professional learning.				
The word is impactful professional learning experiences. So, is it impactful, is it? Because actually you've not translated anything into the classroom yet. It's only going to have an impact if it's going to have an impact on your learners or your, families, or community. What is it impacting on?	Impact	Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agendas
I need to be very clear on what my moral purpose is in education. I need to be able to articulate that, and I need to be able to put procedures and processes into action, and then in practice, to enable that that happens in my school, and that this happens in my school, and that this happens in my school.	Professional Values Purpose	Social	Influences	People
And if people feel appreciated for their efforts, and understanding that not everyone can give everything all of the time, but in a team if we all give a bit, and some of us are in a position to give more at some times than others, but actually if we're going to the same endgame then that doesn't matter because we carry each other.	Appreciated Roles	Social	Influences	People

Quotation	Code(s)	Theme(s)	Dimension (s)	Connection (s) to Theoretical Framework
<b>P2</b>				
...if we're using that interpretation of the word collaborative. I don't buy into any form of hierarchy; I'd say everyone is equal in our work staff group...	Definition Hierarchy	Social	Influences	Structure Governance
...shared decision making, a lot of consultation...	Communication			
... find ways to encourage collaboration because I suppose we work with some people who are just quite happy to be passengers...	Encourage Happy not collaborating	Social	Influences	People Leadership
But trying to build ownership, and I've put distributed leadership as well, and get people to take on board the future direction we're going in.	Ownership Distributed	Systemic Social	Influences	Leadership
...can't be bothered, but some people lack confidence or some people believe that others have more experience...	Interest Confidence Experience	Social	Influences	People
... brings its owns difficulties in terms of collaboration for teachers if they've not got stage partners.	Difficulties Access to People	Organisation-al Focus Social	Forms Influences	People
new to teaching. So, it's really helpful for them to share ideas with a more experienced member of staff but it's also very good for more experienced members of staff to examine, for want of a better word, their practice and is it the best they can do? Or is it that that's what they've done for so many years?	Sharing Ideas Prompting Reflection Prompting Change	Learning Focus Social	Forms Influences	People Culture Improvement Agenda(s)

...that's what's collaboration's good for, isn't it? It gives you that kind of space to look at the status quo and is that the best way of approaching...	Space Challenge	Learning Focus	Forms	Improvement Agenda(s)  Culture
... don't tell them how we do it because they'll copy us.  Kept everything a wee bit guarded...  Whereas now, people are just putting their resources freely online, or mostly freely online, and we try this and it works really, really well. I think there's more of an openness and more of a goodwill around sharing...	Secretive  Guarded  Resources Sharing Freely Openness Goodwill	Social  Learning Focus	Influence  Forms	Culture
Maybe it's to do with that as well, that we're all trying to build our professional relationships, and build the honesty, and the trust, and the helping each other really.	Relation- ships Honesty Trust Help	Social	Influences	People Culture
It has happened with the Regional Improvement Collaboratives, and I think that's maybe given people a bit more permission to share...	RICs Permission	Organisation -al Focus  Systemic	Forms  Influences	Governance  Structure
...reduce the teacher workload and to create what is now a very positive and nurturing ethos. But our EIS rep is very union minded, so I would say blocks more attempts to collaborate where our staff would like to do that...  "Well, I'm not telling anybody to do that but	Working Time Agreements (WTAs)  Barrier  Workload  Ethos	Organisation -al Focus  Systemic	Forms  Influences	Governance  Structure

there's this opportunity should anyone wish to"	Not Mandated Opt-In			
<p>I don't know if it's just what you're used to. So, that's how it always was, you just went into your classroom, you shut the door.</p> <p>And I think it's feeling safe and confident to share your practice.</p> <p>But it's those teachers that keep everything to themselves because I think then they feel they're being personally judged rather than we're all coming in to see how we can work together to make things better for our children.</p>	<p>Norms</p> <p>Safe Confidence</p> <p>Judgement Intention</p>	<p>Social</p> <p>Systemic</p>	Influences	<p>People</p> <p>Culture</p>
<p>We've got very high expectations but there are still children who come from really chaotic backgrounds, who come in and it's how best we support them.</p> <p>If I mean collaborate but work together around how best to support those children in school. And that's not just amongst teachers, I'd say it's around our support staff as well. But in terms of teachers' practice and development, I'd say it has a really positive impact. And on mine as well.</p>	<p>Support Context</p> <p>Needs</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Impact</p> <p>Practice</p>	<p>Necessity</p> <p>Impact</p>	Drivers	<p>Leadership</p> <p>People</p>
...now that I've started thinking, do I mean is collaboration always just working together? Or is it something more? I don't know if collaboration to me is working towards, I think I said at the start, towards	<p>Definition</p> <p>Goals</p> <p>Vision</p>	Social	Influences	<p>Characteristics of Collaborative Approaches</p> <p>Collaboration</p>

<p>achieving some kind of shared goal or working towards a shared vision. Whereas an example I just gave, I don't know if I feel that is collaboration because it's just working together and if, to me, is that the same thing?</p> <p>And I think that's when something becomes a buzzword, for want of a better phrase, then I think the meaning does get a bit skewed with – I found that with nurture as well.</p> <p>Again, I'm now getting a bit wishy washy with, is it collaboration or is it just working together?</p>	<p>Overuse</p> <p>Lost Meaning</p>			
<p>I think it has a really positive impact in that I think collaboration encourages reflection and self-evaluation. If you're sharing your ideas, you're reflecting on what you've actually done. And then you can't help but go, "Is that the best way to do it?" Or if you're doing, for example, working towards a shared goal, you're not just doing it one way, you're taking into account different points of view, and I suppose valuing as you plan towards that goal.</p>	<p>Reflection Self-Evaluation</p> <p>Shared goal Points of view</p>	Impact	Drivers	Improve- ment Agenda(s)
<p>I don't think it was at that stage collaboration because it was just everyone coming together, and here's what we do, here's what we do, here's what we do, great. (RIC)</p> <p><b>INT: Right. So, how do you think it will get</b></p>	Sharing not Collabora- ting	Organisation -al Focus	Forms	Governance  Leadership

<p><b>to a point where it is genuinely collaborative?</b></p> <p>RES: I don't know if it will.</p>				
<p>I think everyone still thinks what they do is the best and it would take a big shift to say that's actually a better way of doing it. And I think there's such policy and protocol, and processes in place, kind of at a systems level, it's hard to enact change.</p> <p>I don't see what the shared goal is for everyone to be working together on. It's more just sharing, and sharing ideas, and I'm all for that, and I think that's fantastic, and it is breaking down barriers from within local authorities, but I don't see that it's true collaboration.</p>	<p>Openness</p> <p>Structures and Mechanisms Systems</p> <p>RICs Definition</p>	<p>Learning Focus</p> <p>Organisational Focus</p> <p>Systemic</p> <p>Social</p>	<p>Forms</p> <p>Influences</p>	<p>Structure</p> <p>Culture</p> <p>People</p>
<p>Building professional trust that there's a goal we need to achieve and we need to work together but I'm going to give you the autonomy to do it in your own way really.</p>	<p>Openness</p> <p>Trust</p> <p>Power</p> <p>Autonomy</p> <p>Reflection</p> <p>Self-Evaluation</p>	<p>Social</p> <p>Systemic</p>	<p>Influences</p>	<p>Culture</p> <p>Leadership</p>
<p>To be true collaboration it needs to be a bit more structured, and there needs to be what do we hope to achieve, and how are we going to achieve this?</p>	<p>Structure</p> <p>What and How</p>	<p>Organisation-al Focus</p>	<p>Forms</p>	<p>Structure</p>
<p>I think there's always a time when you need to say, well, no, we're not actually doing that because our children aren't ready for that or we</p>	<p>Priorities</p> <p>Context</p>	<p>Necessity</p>	<p>Drivers</p>	<p>Leadership</p>

can't give the time to do that properly.				
<p>But I think that's a real hindrance to collaboration because it could be that we have something – The election's just been. So, it could be that, oh, that'd be a real good chance for a whole school focus. Right, let's get together and plan that. But, no, it doesn't come into that box, it doesn't come into that box. So, no, we can't.</p> <p>Yes, I do feel you're right with kind of the structures and the governance almost prevents collaboration.</p>	<p>Barrier</p> <p>Hindrance</p> <p>Time</p> <p>Working</p> <p>Time</p> <p>Agreement</p>	<p>Systemic</p> <p>Necessity</p>	<p>Influences</p> <p>Drivers</p>	<p>Structure</p> <p>Governance</p>

Quotation	Code(s)	Theme(s)	Dimension(s)	Connection(s) to Theoretical Framework
<b>P3</b>				
One is where there's a problem to be solved, you know and where there's a child that needs your support. So I am thinking about how we work together, the team that we would bring to support a child and their family at a time in need. I think that's one of the things that constantly we are looking at. So as a headteacher I work really hard to bring professionals together to support a child and their family and really aware that when you're supporting the child, you're also supporting a family.	Problem Local Needs Emerging Needs Team (of individuals) Constant	Necessity	Drivers	Structure  People
Particularly in any sort of set of challenging circumstances. I think therefore what you've brought together with professionals impacts on the success of the professional network that you have.	Relationships Impact Success Network	Necessity	Drivers	Structure  People
I suppose there's the yearly and the kind of termly planning, but there's the day-to-day collaboration to have success in learning and teaching.	Planning Learning and Teaching Sharing	Learning Focus	Forms	Culture  People

... where staff are sharing their expertise, their interests, those kinds of things. I think that has a huge impact on the things that children remember of school life...	Expertise Interests Impact	Social	Influences	Culture  People
I think the bit that impacts on attainment and achievement and that side of it is staff who are able to together plan for children's learning.	Impact Attainment Achievement	Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)
when you're then talking that through and then collectively agreeing where a child is at and what they've achieved and then what their next steps are and any interventions or any enhancements that are needed. I think that is where you would see the true sense of collaboration for attainment.  ...moderation maybe then with a clusters and then authority colleagues. It's something that we continue to build on to get that bit, to get it right, to get it better actually.	Impact Attainment Achievement      School Cluster Local Authority	Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)
...planned opportunities to get together to network and know each other and by professionals	Inter-professional  Inter-organisational	Organisational Focus	Forms	Structure  Leadership  Governance

I mean headteachers, speech therapists, local, our health visitors and educational psychologists, our third sector colleagues so the charities who are working in our area.	Planned			
There's one it is what you learn from other people and the other is what you realise you've also learned yourself.	Openness Learning Sharing	Learning Focus	Forms	People  Culture
I think we can become you know, we go into classrooms, there are times where that's quite lovely and I think it is really important that you have someone else to be talking through your day with, to be talking through your children's needs to be planning for them. And the other side of that is that the kind of good sharing of your practice and kind of what two minds, three minds can bring to a process.	Informal  Formal   Multiple  Perspectives	Learning Focus  Necessity	Forms   Drivers	Culture  People
So, they've tried to continue that really strong team-teaching approach, much more than they, and it always worked well together.	Team Teaching	Social	Influences	Culture
Knowing each other, knowing somebody's face and pick up a	Knowing	Necessity	Drivers	People  Culture

phone and have a conversation and say I've got a family, not quite sure where to send them, have a conversation with somebody.	Consequential Action Consequential Possibilities	Social	Influences	
The way we've done it this year is that there's been quite a group, I think about eight of us and myself included and instead, we haven't taken one project but we've shared, we've all had our own research questions that we've been developing. We've met with each other to keep us all kind of on track but also that important bit of sharing your practice.	Inquiry	Learning Focus	Forms	Improvement Agenda(s)  Leadership
We really enjoyed that level of trust again between each other to bring the things that are working well but the things that are not working well and talk that through.	Trust  Dialogue	Social	Influences	Culture  People
I think commitment to collaboration, not just turning up, you know that commitment to doing it. We've always had here a really strong ethos.	Commitment  Ethos	Systemic  Social	Influences	Culture
... if you are going to collaborate you need to have good relationships with people that you're working with. So,	Relationships  Trust  Admiration	Social	Influences	Culture  People

therefore, I think a level of trust. So, if you are collaborating and you are agreeing on something you've got to trust and admire the thoughts and opinions and the experience that other colleagues bring to the table if you like.				
I am saying that where there's a strong strategic lead my experience is more around that happening at authority level rather than maybe nationally.	RICs Strategic Leadership	Organisational Focus  Systemic	Forms  Influences	Leadership  Governance
And I think there is a bit where we are the senior leaders, we are responsible for the national expectation in terms of learning and development. So, if you're given a lead from the authority or from any national body that it should be given the time and reflection that it deserves.	Responsibility	Systemic  Necessity	Influences  Drivers	Governance  Improvement Agenda(s)
I suppose it's that bit of if people get really bogged down in your own practice, it becomes a greeting meeting sometimes doesn't it. You only want to talk about you know what you know and what's happening in your situation. I think for real collaboration to take place there needs to be a joint	Overload Relevance Joint Focus Individual	Social  Learning Focus	Influences  Forms	Structure  Culture

piece of practice, a joint piece of work because I think that then gets you over the individual bit.				
I think looking in on this if there's no successful collaboration, it's because there's not been an outcome that everybody has been committed to wanting to achieve together.	Shared Commitment	Necessity Social	Drivers Influences	People
...find something that people would be happy to share practice about or to work together on in whatever way. It is possibly something as well that perhaps the ideas of what's to be talked about have come from people organising the events rather than from the people sitting round the table sharing practice.	Objective vs Need Origin Agenda	Systemic	Influences	Leadership
...actually, we should all be working to the four national improvement priorities? I have had lots of discussion actually around that, particularly in terms of development of curriculum because I am not sure it actually sits within the National Improvement Framework in that way. Because it is, I mean rightly focused on those key features	National Priorities  NIF Agenda Power Context Relevance	Necessity  Systemic	Drivers  Influences	Improvement Agenda(s)

but if you want to develop social studies for example, it feels quite random and yet if you've had the same social studies approach or you want to develop your STEM and look at your science skills and something, you tend to feel like you are pushing it into one of the national improvement ... I mean I know it is about raising attainment but sometimes it is actually just about developing or enhancing your practice and therefore the children's experiences that lead to achievement.				
I think if you make it in your own school in that way sometimes you take away why it is special and people are doing that in their own time and therefore they are committing to it, and it suddenly becomes something you have to do.	Informal Formal Contrived Emerging	Learning Focus  Social	Forms  Influences	Culture  People
I think sometimes you bring people together but it is about what's the theme, what brings us all into the same room together? I think that's the most difficult bit. I think if you can get that right then you're going to have really good	Theme Reason Purpose Challenging Share Together	Systemic  Necessity	Drivers  Influences	Leadership

collaboration because people are here to share and achieve something together.				
... being really honest and taking that as being a really supportive conversation just to look to see why there maybe is such a difference between those three, the region, and the local authority. You know that would be quite interesting to see that.	Supportive Honesty Differences	Organisation- al Focus	Forms	Governance Structure

Quotation	Code(s)	Theme(s)	Dimension(s)	Connection(s) to Theoretical Framework
<b>P4</b>				
...we recognise that we need to have collaboration, meaningful collaboration with as many people as possible to make sure that we can meet the needs, to support families, children, support staff, and move forward proactively.	Student Learning Local Needs Parents/ Families	Necessity  Impact	Drivers	People  Improvement Agenda(s)
I want to be seen as somebody you can engage with and to talk with, and actually work with during the time that your child is here in school. And I think it's about being accessible, it's about the communication that we put out, the tone that we have.	Perception Trust Relationships Accessibility Communication	Social	Influences	Leadership  Culture
There'll be people that are existing here already, about collaborations that I haven't really thought about, and that moves forward as well, so I think we're constantly looking to see what can we do, managing it actually as well so it's not just a scatter gun approach, it's got to have value. And I think, being honest, we had a recent Education Scotland inspection recently and they felt there was quite a lot of interventions and partnerships, and maybe we should cut back a	New Partnerships Established Partnerships Added Value  Inspection Impact Self-Evaluation Relationships	Social  Impact	Influences  Drivers	Governance  Improvement Agenda(s)

little bit and evaluate the impact of them more.				
We are supported through out Quality Improvement Team about developing partnerships and that's a message that's driven right from the top as well.	Leadership Governance Support Challenge Priorities Context Improvement	Systemic  Necessity	Influences  Drivers	Governance  Leadership
So they've come in and done training specifically in our school. And that's up-levelled our own staff about them following individual programmes of work, so when they withdraw, staff are supported and have the skills that they can take forward these programmes, which is quite positive.	Up-level  Professional Learning	Learning Focus  Organisa- tional Focus	Forms	Improvement Agenda(s)
Well ultimately we're looking at meeting children's needs and we're overcoming barriers to learning, and I think we want to enrich the curriculum.  So it's looking outward all the time and developing awareness of what kind of collaboration is there that's going to benefit.	Local Needs  Student Learning Curriculum  Added Value  Benefit	Learning Focus  Necessity	Forms  Drivers	Leadership  Improvement Agenda(s)
Teachers are very good at this because they have their own connections and their own networks, so they bring this to discussions and say, "Well actually I've got this connection that I've made" or "I follow this Facebook page" or "I've	Connections Networks  Formal Informal Social Media Reading	Learning Focus  Social	Forms  Influences	Culture  People

come across this article, would we be interested in that?"				
We've got a collective of all the different schools in our cluster where there's a nurture group that runs in all these schools, and it's all about building on that capacity of nurture staff, so they all meet every six weeks and share good practice, paperwork, information that they've done. And actually, do you know what? It's about empowering them. It's about developing what they're doing, and making sure their practice is as strong as possible.	Cluster Sharing  Empowerment Priorities Improvement	Learning Focus  Necessity  Social	Forms  Drivers  Influences	Culture  People
Ultimately, you know, we're trying to raise attainment with everything we do; we're trying to close the attainment gap. So, we're understanding what our gap is and what that looks like, and recognising that the interventions and collaborations that we have are aimed at reducing that.	Attainment Priorities	Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)
...because everybody has a part to play. And ultimately, it is about experience for children, but also developing ourselves as educators as well.	Roles Student Learning Professional Learning	Learning Focus	Forms	People
I think you've got to be quite motivated, and I think sometimes you	Motivation  Openness	Social	Influences	People  Culture

will want to have a collaboration and it doesn't always work out. I think you have to be quite open minded about who you work with, and who's in the community that could be involved.				
I think you need to look at, what are you wanting to achieve through this collaboration? And what the impact it actually is going to be? And I think Education Scotland came in and looked at the number of interventions and collaborations taking place and felt that we needed to be more evaluative in what's going on. So actually, it's sitting down and being reflective, evaluating, what do we get from it? What do they get from it? And how do we take it forward? So, it's not just having it there for, it's something that's historical and you've inherited, it's got to add value, and it's got to add value for staff, for children, and ultimately for them too.	Reflection Self-Evaluation Impact Added Value  Established Emerging	Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)
I think it takes hard work sometimes, and I think it's overcoming adversity. Sometimes you will not always get the result that you were looking for. It's reflecting on why that was.	Hard Work Overcoming Adversity Reflection People Time	Social	Influences	People
... we're constantly challenging ourselves,	Challenge	Learning Focus	Forms	People

gathering these connections, these networks, and developing ourselves personally and professionally.	Personal Development Professional Learning	Social	Influences	Culture
As a school we did – we had a school self-evaluation where our QIO Team came into schools and did an inspection recently, and that was a precursor to a full Education Scotland inspection. So, from that visit we had priorities identified by the authority staff who came in, who did a mini-inspection. And then six months later Education Scotland came to the door and gave us a whole new set of targets.  So we need to look at, what is the priority?	Context Self-Evaluation  Priorities  Targets (Quantity and ownership)  Prioritising	Necessity  Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)  Governance
I think I would be looking at trying to identify staff that would be able to lead this.  So the headteachers have had this input, what training is then needed for the people who are going to be leading and taking this task forward?	Devolution PRD Roles   Enabling	Systemic  Necessity	Drivers  Influences	Leadership  Culture
So we'd need to have some kind of way of measuring the impact of what's gone on, so actually we are trying to show progress.	Progress	Impact	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)
And Edinburgh's got these extra two ones with a view to trying to develop more	RICs Explicit Focus	Organisational Focus	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)  Leadership

<p>collaboration. And the collaborative, which is what we're part of here, that there's a timetable of things that are running across the city that schools and people can take part in. I think staff though are quite stretched and I think they're recognising that we are on this improvement journey, we were inspected in June, we know what we need to be doing here and sometimes, whilst it's good to look outward, sometimes we have to be a little bit selfish and look inward a little bit more.</p>	<p>Stretched Looking Outwards Looking Inwards</p>	<p>Necessity</p>		
<p>Because, whilst it's good to pull together collaboration from other authorities, and hearing from other experts, and things that are taking place there, sometimes there comes a line when actually we just need to be a little bit selfish.</p>	<p>Priorities Future Focus Prioritising</p>	<p>Necessity</p>	<p>Drivers</p>	<p>Leadership  Improvement Agenda(s)</p>
<p>But I think there are issues around proper collaboration like that, and I think sometimes as well, sharing information. I don't think Teachers traditionally, in some forums, are good at sharing resources and I think we get a little bit selfish and we hang on to it and we're a bit scared of sharing it, in case it's not that good, or in case it's got shot down and it's, like, I've made this really good</p>	<p>Proper Collaboration  Selfish Secretive Guarded Confidence</p>	<p>Social  Systemic</p>	<p>Influences</p>	<p>Culture  People</p>

resource working great in our school but actually can I pass it out to a national forum? I don't think so.				
But actually there are other ways of collaborating and I think – I'm part of a Scottish headteachers Facebook page, and actually that's quite an innocent forum. I used to part of something called Heads Together, which was an electronic platform where information was shared all the time, and then it was taken into Glow and that seemed to diminish that, because Glow was supposed to be this platform of everyone coming together under different guises and sharing, and I feel that some people were very happy using that, other people were less so, it doesn't really glow for me it more glimmers, it doesn't really do what it's supposed to do, and actually we lost this really rich network of support where actually people were sharing things all the time.	Formal Informal Social Media  Formalising diminishing impact	Learning Focus  Organis- ational Focus  Social	Forms  Influences	Culture  People
So actually it needs to be looking at innovative ways of engaging and presenting information to staff that actually switches them on, makes them feel empowered, and actually makes them think, do you know what this is something I quite enjoy doing. Pushes	Engaging Innovative Empowered Thinking Challenge	Social  Systemic	Influences	Leadership  Culture

them outside their comfort zones.				
I think it just takes time and energy, and experience, and I think you need to understand your learning community is the bottom line. And I think you need to look at where the strengths within your school staff are. What barriers they have to meaningful collaboration, and ultimately ability to embrace change and move forward.	Time Energy Experience Understanding of community	Social Learning Focus	Forms Influences	Characteristics of Collaborative Approaches  Leadership  Culture

Quotation	Code(s)	Theme(s)	Dimension(s)	Connection(s) to Theoretical Framework
<b>P5</b>				
I've seen it had the biggest impact on experiences and achievements of students, have been when it's been a focused collaboration, so a planned collaboration, not the incidental collaborations that you get which I also do love because of the energy and life that they have.	Planned Emerging Formal Informal	Organis- ational Focus  Social	Forms  Influences	Structure  People
We did a staff Collaborative Professional Enquiry and we started that off with (two academics) who we employed to run this with maybe eight schools. So, they set us up with a model of collaborative professional enquiry and that was at the point when it was really hard to get access to research and to literature. So they gave us access to (a) University library which made a huge difference for us. They facilitated the collaboration and the first year we did it with them we had, I pulled together a group and it was quite strategic because we were, it was quite early on in my headship and we were at quite a low point where people had left, new people had come, and what was the direction we were going to take? I wanted professional	Professional Inquiry  Models Research Facilitation Strategic  People	Learning Focus	Forms	Structure  Leadership

learning to be really key in leading the way ahead.				
That was the best one that we had I think because people went off and investigated different aspects of reading difficulties that they were interested in and we brought it together and from that we eventually pulled together our P1 approach to reading. So that completely changed the practice in school and I think had a really good impact on learners.	Emerging Needs  Impact	Impact  Necessity	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)
You wouldn't do that on your own, you couldn't do that on your own as a school.	Possibilities	Necessity	Drivers	Structure  People
I think the purpose is always to give better life and learning experiences to children. That is always the purpose. I guess another purpose though, that's probably the first purpose for me. Another purpose is that I think that's how your school improves. That whole drive to have teachers engaged in collaborative professional learning was about lifting the way that teachers think so they are not just technicians.	Purpose Learners Learning Improvement Professional Learning Thinking Transformation	Learning Focus	Forms	Improvement Agenda(s)
So, I don't think it really happens in (Local Authority) at all because people are frightened, you know. People get roused. (Laughter)	Fear	Systemic  Social	Influences	Culture

Disciplined. You know it is ... it's not really, it's really not a healthy place to be.				
It was interesting, because (Name) was trying to be really collaborative and in the end, everybody said, this idea, it sucks, and we don't want to do it. The parents didn't want it, the parent councils didn't want it, the headteachers didn't want it, nobody wanted it, and (Name) had to say okay, you know, can't go ahead with this idea.	Collaborative Agreement Need	Social Necessity	Influences Drivers	People Governance
She was going to be autocratic at the beginning. That is her style, she's very, she's like HMIE, lock a stock a rock right through her. It is just her approach. So, it's quite disheartening really.	Autocratic Preventative	Social	Influences	People Culture
Oh, listening, listening to others perspectives. Education is, nobody listens. (Laughs) nobody listens. Teachers are the worst for listening.	Listening	Social	Influences	People
Other perspectives can teach us. You've got to be flexible and you've got to be able to be willing to adapt your approach, and some give it up.	Flexibility Adaptive Spheres	Learning Focus Social	Forms Influences	People Culture
So that is where it's always been really important to me that teachers have access to research. Teachers understand how to	Research Evaluate Critique Expertise	Learning Focus Impact	Forms Drivers	Structure Culture

access research and how to evaluate and critique research. That it is not just it is research so that's what we'll do. So, access to external and to external experts, listening to experts in the fields.				
I think it undermines the professionalism of the teachers. I think it leaves absolutely no room for teacher agency at all. It takes no account of local context, local strengths, local needs.	Professionalism Undermine Agency Local Context Needs Strengths Beliefs	Necessity	Drivers	Governance  Structure
Curriculum for Excellence was not meant to be about that. It was meant to be about I saw it as kind of building teacher expertise, unleashing their experience and their expertise and being really relevant to your local context.	Expertise Experience Local Context	Necessity	Drivers	Governance  Structure
Like it was underground sharing of maths resources on the black market.	Secretive	Social  Systemic	Influences	Culture
So teachers love to anecdotally share their practice and it is very interesting because that kind of is what's happening. At the beginning people went and said oh it's really good to hear what's happening in our schools, but yes, it is not moving on from there. In fact, I think it is people are rearing away from them now. So, I think it is not the best leadership because it's not being	Agreement Planned Focus Anecdotal Informal Structure Purpose Expectation	Organis- ational Focus  Learning Focus	Forms	Structure  Governance



there's not enough leaders to go round. So it is, you know that thing about side effects. You know that's kind of ... a big side effect with Pupil Equity Fund was it took 600 teachers out of the system to work in PEF initiatives across Scotland so exacerbated the teacher shortage. That was one, so you can see the same sort of thing. There's not enough capital in the system to support the collaborative is the way that I am seeing it.	PEF Teacher Shortage Capital			Improvement Agenda(s)
So it would be, that would be somewhere where I think collaborating with other equity leads, if politics don't get in the way of it which is quite unlikely that could be quite fruitful.	Interests  Politics	Social	Influences	Culture  People
So, as a headteacher, my focus is what matters to my school, what's important, which is more likely to be our improvement priorities than external improvement priorities. But you know you will have things like, you know a Scottish improvement focus will be raising attainment and they'll want it done in this way and so you kind of do a bit of adjusting, you do what you want to do but you can spin it so it sounds like you're doing what they want you to do.	Context Improvement Prioritise National Improvement	Impact  Necessity	Drivers	Improvement Agenda(s)

I was actually just in the end working each of them to appeal to what would, they would get out of it in their individual settings. So they weren't really coming at this as a collaboration. I was really contriving this collaboration to bring this into being and it worked and I got them to agree...	Partnership Community Contrived 'Working Others' Convincing	Social	Influences	People
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## Defining Collaboration (Interview Question 1a and 1b)

Quotation	Code(s)	Theme(s)	Dimension(s)	Connection(s) to Theoretical Framework
<p><b>P1</b> Everyone working collectively to develop a common vision, so that they can bring their own personal strength and skills to the table to meet that aim or vision. And also, to develop others in the process.</p> <p>Reading, experiencing, and I suppose my tacit knowledge of being in schools.</p>	<p>Initiated Vision Aims Skill set</p> <p>Reading Experience Tacit</p>	<p>Impact</p> <p>Social</p>	<p>Drivers</p> <p>Influences</p>	<p>People</p> <p>Culture</p>
<p><b>P2</b> Working together on a shared goal or to achieve a shared vision but with everyone – All members being equal.</p> <p>But I did my SQH a number of years ago where I feel collaborations are relatively new – Do I mean terminology? But it certainly wasn't a big focus when I had done my SGH, and that was about five, six years ago. It was probably badged under something different. But I feel with the introduction of the Regional Improvement Collaboratives, and</p>	<p>Vision Aims Hierarchy Power</p> <p>Personal Reading Professional Qualification (s)</p> <p>(Re)New(ed) Focus</p>	<p>Impact</p> <p>Systemic</p> <p>Organisation- al Focus</p>	<p>Drivers</p> <p>Influences</p> <p>Forms</p>	<p>Structure</p> <p>Governance</p>

what we're trying to happen with the kind of headteacher charter, etc, we've moved down the road a lot, and looking at how we can develop our own support mechanisms, and how we can work together more.				
<b>P3</b> So collaboration is working together to achieve something, with an agreed reason. You know to share thoughts, ideas, experiences, enthusiasm.	Together Agreement	Social	Influences	Structure  People
<b>P4</b> Collaboration to me involves working with partners, and I think everybody we work with brings something of value to our school, be it parents, carers, pupils, partner services.  So it's all about us working alongside and having meaningful partnerships with a variety of services and stakeholders, is what I would define it as.  I think part of it comes through the stakeholders that you work with, and I think you arrive at a school and it has these partnerships and collaboration	Partners Added Value  Context Needs Meaning Hierarchy  Collectively Defined	Necessity  Systemic  Social	Drivers  Influences	People  Structure

activities that are there already.				
<p><b>P5</b></p> <p>So collaboration means basically working together with other people, presumably for me to produce a positive outcome for children and young people. Collaboration for me in my practice has often been working across different agencies.</p> <p>Collaborating across sectors and across different professions it gives different strengths to the work.</p> <p>But I started, I mean it was really interesting reading this (SCEL Fellowship Study) because the date on it is 28th February 2017 so that's before all the hard reads and full and collaboratively professionalism hit us in Scotland.</p>	<p>People Together Positive Outcome Learners/ Learning Inter- Professional Levels (local/ middle tier/ national)</p> <p>Strengths Perspectives Challenging Refines</p> <p>Collaborative Professionalism System</p>	<p>Learning Focus</p> <p>Organisa- tional Focus</p> <p>Social</p>	<p>Form</p> <p>Influences</p>	<p>Improvement Agenda(s)</p> <p>People</p>

## **Emerging Defining Characteristics (Based on Interview Question 1a and 1b)**

### **Vision and goals**

- (P1) Develop a common vision.
- (P2) Working together on a shared goal or to achieve a shared vision.
- (P5) Produce a positive outcome for children and young people.

### **Equal membership**

- (P2) Everyone – all members being equal.

### **Working together**

- (P1) Working collectively, develop others in the process.
- (P3) Working together to achieve something.
- (P4) Working with partners, working alongside and having meaningful partnerships with a variety of services and stakeholders.
- (P5) Working together with other people, working across different agencies.

### **Utilising what individuals bring**

- (P1) Bring their own personal strength and skills.
- (P3) Share thoughts, ideas, experiences, enthusiasm.
- (P4) Everybody we work with brings something of value to our school, be it parents, carers, pupils, partner services.
- (P5) Collaborating across sectors and across different professions it gives different strengths to the work.