

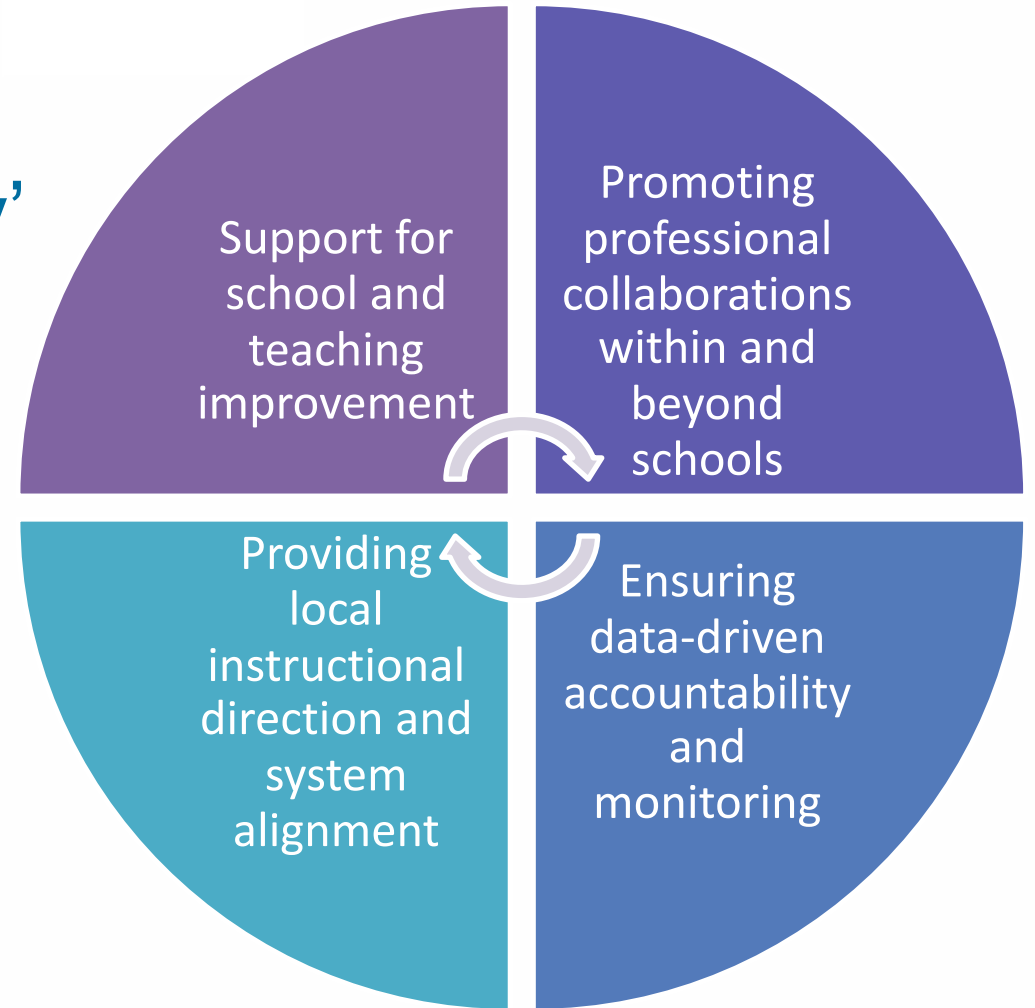
Change agents: The rise of instructional leaders at the middle tier

Charlotte Jones & Barbara Tournier
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Beyond the front(line) and centre:
Rethinking agents and agency in education reform

Neglected actors in the ‘machinery’ to deliver learning

“[There is] a call for more focus on the ‘architecture’ of education systems: the delivery structures, the key workforce roles and the leaders who will reform teacher instructional practices.” (Childress *et al.*, 2020)



Major functions of instructional leaders
at the middle tier

Our research

Can instructional leaders
at the middle tier act as
change agents to improve
teaching and learning? If
so, how?

- Focus on instructional leaders: those middle-tier expert practitioners working across schools and localities, whose main functions are geared towards teacher support and development
- Teacher mentors, coaches, network facilitators, etc.
- A focus on professional practices and HOW they lead to improved teaching and learning
- Empirical case studies of promising practice in:
 - Delhi, India
 - Jordan
 - Kenya
 - Rwanda
 - Shanghai, China
 - Wales



In Delhi, Mentor Teachers and Teacher Development Coordinators share and role model best pedagogical practices, observe teachers, and provide guidance and feedback.

In Rwanda, high performing head teachers are trained to become National and Local Leaders of Learning. They convene professional learning communities of head teachers, supporting them to solve local challenges.



Promising practices

Strong instructional leaders at the middle tier:

- Are policy translators and mediators
- Act as the voice of the profession
- Foster trust and collaboration to support the exchange of teaching practices
- Translate evidence and research into practical solutions

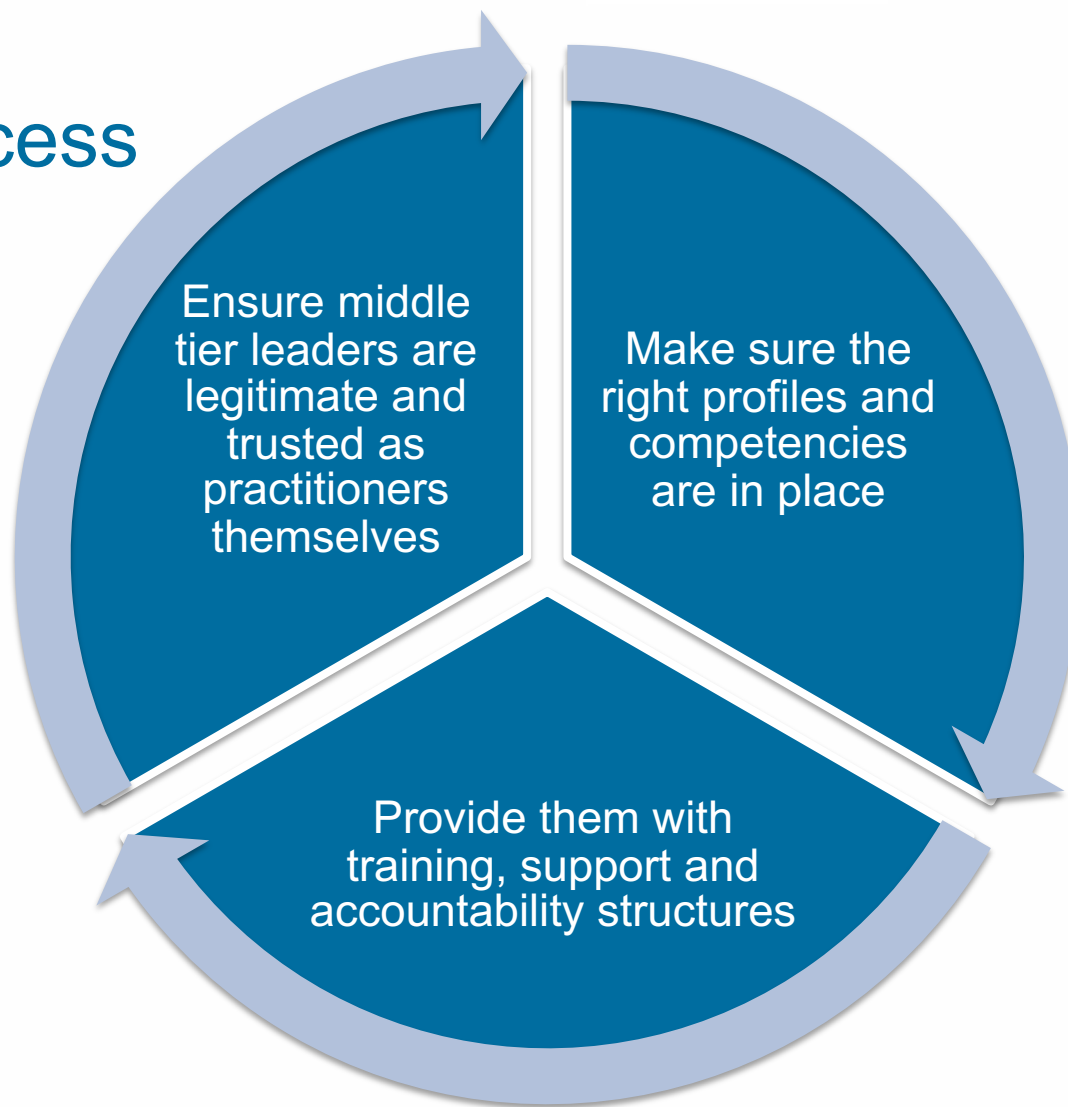
“The influence on that policy comes from within the sector. They are the voice of the profession on behalf of the professionals.”

Official, Wales

“Before I used to work alone, I was not that collaborative but now I value to collaborate with others”

Local Leader of Learning,
Rwanda

Conditions for success



What have we learnt about agents and agency?

Agents

- Pedagogical coaches
- Supervisors
- School system leaders / cluster leaders
- Mentor Teachers

Agency

- Agency and expertise is distributed
- Strengthening agency at the middle does not mean that teachers are passive agents
- Building a sense of collective agency and responsibility is a key feature of the middle tier's work
- Leadership /agency as solution building rather than command and control

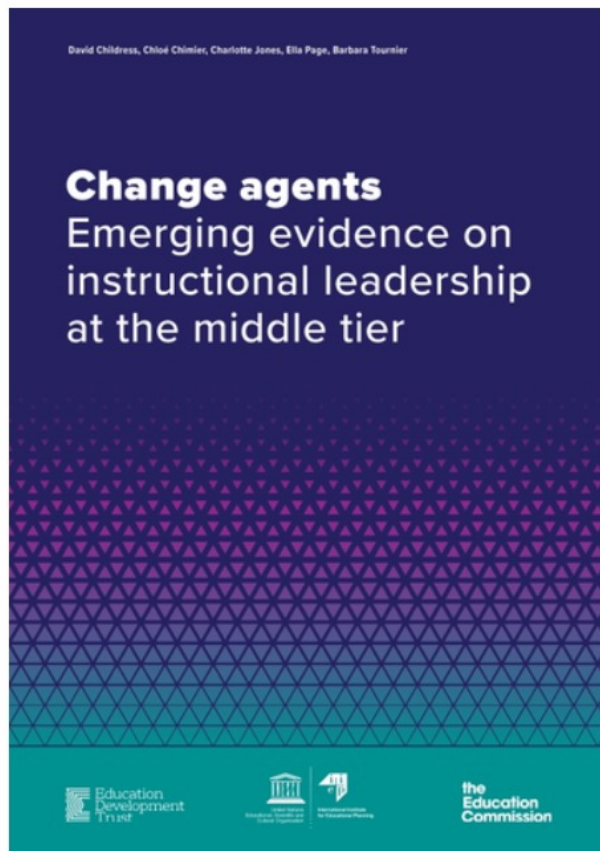
“We are solution builders, not decision-makers.”

System leader, Wales

“Before, we were just grumbling over the things saying this is not happening, that is not happening, [there is] this problem and that problem. Now we are putting our heads together to see how we can solve it. TDC

Teacher Development
Co-ordinator, Delhi

Our publications



Stay tuned!

Research report due
for publication in fall
2021

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