School of Education Leadership Conference

#wlvleadershipconf

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

Leadership through collaborative professionalism

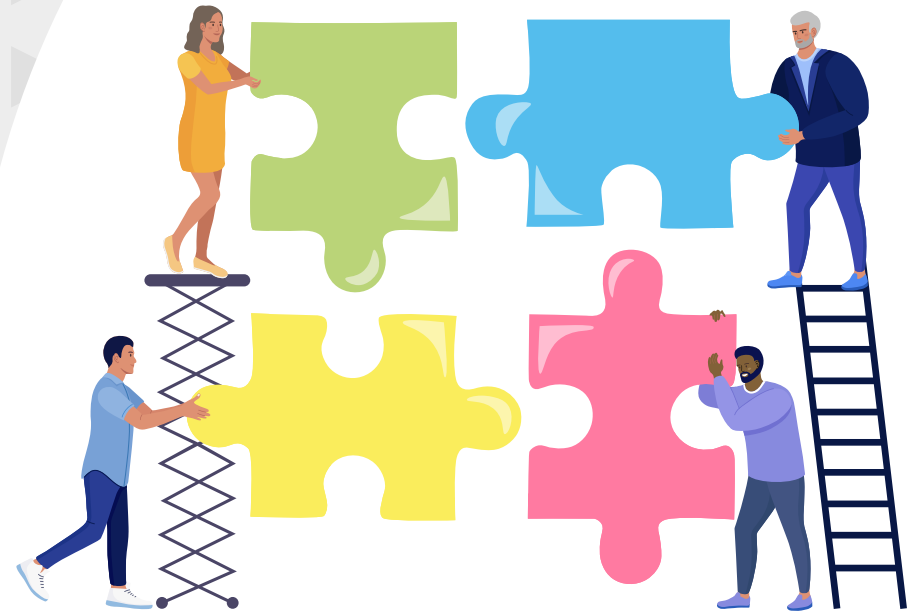## Conference Programme

eventbrite

Register for free:
https://bit.ly/3G2Urio

8th-11th July 2025
Online
4:30-6:30pm

Welcome

We are delighted to invite you to join us for this year's conference, set over four sessions and welcoming a range of speakers on a variety of poignant leadership topics.

We look forward to welcoming you to the event.

The conference will take place via Zoom. There is one link (shown above) that will allow you to access all sessions, either in your web browser or through the desktop or mobile app.

We ask you to follow a few guidelines to help our event run smoothly:

- Please make sure that you mute your microphone unless you are a presenter or contributing to Q&A dicussion.
- You may have your camera on or off. Leaving the camera off may help with any bandwidth challenges.
- Please add your questions into the chat box to enable the presenter to pick up on these during the Q&A session.
- Please use the 'raise your hand' function to contribute during the Q&A session.

"We would like to welcome you to the University of Wolverhampton's annual Leadership Conference. Our theme this year reflects the challenges all leaders in education faced post -lockdown. We aim to explore how these challenges led to greater opportunities to promote learning and provide others with life-chances. Great challenges often present us with great opportunities to do things differently, and to lead change during challenging times. It can be a very creative process. We hope that the event will inspire you and provide you with hope, and new ideas to lead change with creativity and enthusiasm."

Diana Bannister MBE is the Director of the School of Education and Psychology. She joined the university in 2001 to lead development and research in the use and application of learning technologies across the education sector. Diana is a Principal Fellow of the HEA and maintains a strong commitment to the UK Professional Standards Framework. Her work includes development and research on the use of interactive technologies, 1:1 learning, 1:1 devices, learning communities; school development and the effective use of learning spaces.
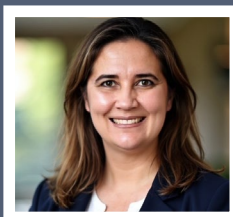
Lizana Oberholzer is an Executive and Leadership Coach and Programme Director of the Masters in Education, and National Professional Qualifications for School Leadership. Lizana specialises in Teacher Education and in particular in professional learning, teaching and learning, assessment, special education needs, curriculum design, school improvement, English, Media Studies, Leadership Development, and Coaching Psychology at the University of Wolverhampton's Postgraduate provision. In her role Lizana leads on the coaching of Senior Leaders, Headteachers and Executive Leaders in Education, drawing on principles of coaching psychology. Lizana works closely with executive leaders across disciplines to strategically lead and support their teams to unlock their potential. She is passionate about professional learning, coaching psychology, leadership development, inclusion, governance and teacher development. Lizana supports the BELMAS Research Interest Group for Governing and Governance as a Convenor. She is also BELMAS Vice Chair and Trustee as well as a BAMEed Trustee. Lizana works with WomenEd as a regional lead in the West Midlands. She is currently the IPDA England Chair, as well as Chair of the IPDA International Committee. She chairs UCET's CPD forum and is a member of the UCET Executive Committee. Lizana is a member of the APPG for the Teaching Profession, and Chairs the APPG SIG for Teacher Development. She is a proud trustee of a Multi Academy Trust, and is a committed educator, striving to provide learners with learning opportunities and life-chances. Lizana is actively involved in the British Psychological Society's Division of Coaching, and she is the Chair for the division. Lizana is a Founding Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching, an IPDA Fellow as well as a CMI Fellow. Her research interests centre around professional learning, mentoring, coaching, coaching psychology and leadership development within education, and other disciplines.

Programme Overview

Day 1: 8th July 2025

16:30	**Welcome** *Dr Lizana Oberholzer*
16:35	**Welcome Address** *Prof Diana Bannister*
16:50	**Women, gender and feminism in educational leadership** *Prof Kay Fuller*
17:45	**The Challenges Faced by Senior Leaders Within Their Leadership Roles in a Multi-Academy Trust When Aiming to Create Conditions for School Improvement** *Dr Siobhan Sanders*
18:30	**Plenary** *Lizana Oberholzer*

Day 2: 9th July 2025

16:30	**Welcome and introduction** *Dr Lizana Oberholzer*
16:45	**TBA** *Prof Rene Koglbauer*
17:30	**What are the main influencing factors that can strengthen Initial Teacher Training (ITT) mentoring capacity within a distributed leadership model operating within a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)?** *Derek Boyle*
18:20	**Plenary** *Lizana Oberholzer*

Day 3: 10th July 2025

16:30	**Welcome and introduction** *Dr Lizana Oberholzer*
16:45	**Post new governance: towards developing empowered governance frameworks in the community school** *Dr Andy Allen*
17:30	**Why, Why, Why!** *Ian Goodwin*
18:20	**Plenary** *Lizana Oberholzer*

Day 4: 11th July 2025

16:30	**Welcome and introduction** *Dr Lizana Oberholzer*
16:45	**'I wouldn't start from here!' – Education, Learning and the Rise of GAI** *Dr Phil Wood*
17:30	**Exploring effective teaching practices** *Layla Rajah*
18:20	**Plenary** *Lizana Oberholzer*

Women, gender and feminism in educational leadership

Professor Kay Fuller

Abstract
Feminist theories have long contributed to critical studies of educational leadership. Scholars focus on women's representation in leadership. Fourth wave feminism is focused on intersectionality and single-issue campaigns motivated by anger and hope, facilitated by social media. It is time to focus on how leaders frame their work as a gender and social justice project, a feminist project.

I will draw on recent research to explain how I used feminist perspectives to explain women's experience of educational leadership in the 21st century; and how leaders underpin their leadership with feminist values, theories and politics.

Not everyone identifies as feminist. So, it is important to think carefully about how we work towards improving gender and other forms of social justice.

Biography
Kay Fuller, Professor of Gender and Educational Leadership, University of Nottingham, is convener for the Centre for Research in Educational Leadership and Management at the University of Nottingham, UK. Her recent Leverhulme Research Fellowship project, Re-imagining feminist leadership praxis in Higher Education, builds on the book Feminist perspectives on contemporary educational leadership (Routledge, 2022) that explores educational leadership though multiple feminist lenses. Her most recent writing addresses gender-based violence higher education (book chapter) and temporal perspectives on women in knowledge production (lead author). She is co-founder of the BELMAS Gender and Leadership Research Interest Group and member of Women Leading Education across Continents since 2011.

The Challenges Faced by Senior Leaders Within Their Leadership Roles in a Multi-Academy Trust When Aiming to Create Conditions for School Improvement

Dr Siobhan Sanders

Abstract
This presentation explores how senior leaders within Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) work to create the conditions for school improvement in complex and often constrained organisational environments. It considers how leadership practice shifts in response to MAT structures, agendas, and accountability pressures. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, interviews with MAT leaders and extensive documentary analysis were conducted. The emergent theory of *'Crossing the school improvement bridge'* reveals how leaders navigate initial social processes, MAT-imposed disruptions, relational dynamics, and the enactment of trust-wide agendas.

The study argues that school improvement leadership within MATs requires significant adaptation and negotiation, with implications for leadership development. It calls for more contextually grounded support structures that prepare senior leaders to lead ethically and effectively in settings.

Biography
Dr Sanders is a serving Headteacher of a primary school in Birmingham, working in a community with high levels of special educational needs and significant socio-economic deprivation. Committed to inclusive, values-led education, Dr Sanders believes in the transformative power of schools to uplift communities and provide all children with the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their background or starting point.

Over the past decade, Dr Sanders has held a range of senior leadership positions across several Multi-Academy Trusts, including Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Head of School, and Headteacher. This breadth of experience has shaped a strong, evidence-informed approach to school improvement, particularly in challenging contexts. A substantial part of Dr Sanders' current work is dedicated to supporting new and aspiring leaders, helping them to develop the skills, confidence, and moral purpose needed to lead schools that make a real difference to the lives of the most disadvantaged pupils.

TBA

Prof Rene Koglbauer

Biography

René Koglbauer is Professor of Professional Learning and Leadership, whose scholarly work focuses national and international education policy, with a specific focus on language policy, leadership and professional learning. With the vision of developing coherent education and skills pathways, René has been leading on developing strategic skills partnerships with regional FE colleges and has brought together key stakeholders to bid for external skills funding, including the Institute of Electrification and Advanced Sustainable Manufacturing. He represents the university on a number of regional and national lifelong learning committees, including the Lifelong Education Commission and the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning.

Alongside his deanship, René continues to act as director of the Educational Leadership Centre (formerly North Leadership Centre). A centre that has been actively involved in shaping and delivering educational leadership courses since the first iteration of National Professional Qualifications twenty-five years ago and has developed a key-contributing unit to the CPD metrics of the Knowledge Exchange Framework. As director, René oversees the strategic direction of the centre and is the Newcastle University representative on several partnership (governance) boards, including NETSP, School-led Network, UCL Early Career Framework, etc. René was Co-Investigator on an Erasmus project: Entrepreneurial Competences for School Leadership Teams (www.ec4slt.com) and has since been involved as an advisor or consultant in a number of other Erasmus projects. René also held a Visiting Professorship in Educational Leadership at the Taraz State Pedagogical University.

Externally, René is currently UK's first representative to the Internationale Deutschlehrerinnen und Deutschlehrer Verband (IDV), a member of the British Academy Language Advisory Group, trustee and chair of the management board of the Association for Language Learning, of which he was president from 2014-2016). Furthermore, René is Vice-Chair of the Governing Board at Castle View Enterprise Academy.

What are the main influencing factors that can strengthen Initial Teacher Training (ITT) mentoring capacity within a distributed leadership model operating within a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)?

Derek Boyle

Abstract

This presentation centres on the Doctoral research being undertaken to explore how capacity to offer placements for trainee teachers can be enhanced and then sustained within schools. It will explore how distributed leadership models operate within SCITTs and the role of Continuing Professional Learning and Development (CPLD) in retaining placement mentors. Suggestions will be proposed about how additional capacity can be developed within schools to sustain communities of mentoring practice.

Biography

Derek Boyle has been the SCITT Director at Bromley Schools' Collegiate since 2013. He holds an MA in Leadership in Education and is currently studying for a PhD with the University of Wolverhampton researching building mentoring and coaching capacity within schools that support Initial Teacher Training placements.

Derek holds a Senior Fellowship of CollectivEd, Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy and is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching.

He is an active member of the IPDA as a member of the International Committee and also the conference committee.

Research interests centre on mentoring and coaching within schools specifically for Initial Teacher Training.

Post new governance: towards developing empowered governance frameworks in the community school

Dr Andy Allen

Abstract
This presentation illustrates how the ideology of new public management and the policy of academization has enabled top-down governance frameworks to emerge – frameworks that shift the power and control of a coherent national educational service from the citizenry to unelected and unrepresentative elites. It is argued that this is unethical in a democratic society. Furthermore, the loss of the tempering influences of the community leads to governance failures and 'flawed and broken' governance frameworks are presented for analysis and discussion.

In what Dr Allen terms 'post-new governance' he argues that alternative, democratic innovations are required to restore the powerbase inherent within academized governance frameworks, thus creating forms of empowered, participatory governance. Within these reinvigorated models, powerful localized 'micro governance networks' are introduced restoring a 'bottom-up' governance legitimacy within the community school.

Biography
Dr Andy Allen is an Associate at the Department of Public Policy and Administration, University of Birmingham and an Honorary Fellow at Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University.

Andy is a community educationalist who believes in the power of co-operation and democratic participation. He has broad experience in education across youth and community provision, teaching and leadership in schools and colleges. Andy was Assistant Warden at one of Henry Morris' radical and celebrated community schools in Cambridgeshire, an experience that shaped his vision of education.

Andy has held numerous governance roles and worked with school governors over the course of his career. His research focusses on educational governance, and he is a co-convenor of the Governance research interest group of BELMAS.

Why, Why, Why!

Ian Goodwin

Abstract
Ian will present some of the findings from his doctoral research. The research focuses on the reasons provided by primary school leaders for decisions about the curricular provision for cultural diversity in eight primary schools. Through the research he facilitates a view of the incidence and definition of similarity and difference in different dimensions of the reasoning process associated with the decision-making. In the presentation Ian will explore how the findings can be applied to the creation and maintenance of collaborative partnerships in education. In particular, he will suggest why an awareness of the reasoning underpinning decisions can be an important factor in the evaluation and the realisation of a more complete understanding of the nature of practice.

Biography
Ian worked for 37 years in a variety of schools encompassing a range of needs and contexts. He served as headteacher for twenty-one years in four different primary schools, during which time the development of practice to maximise inclusion and the equality of opportunity for all children was a key feature. As a school leader, he worked to extend curricular opportunities for children and to develop strategies to support learning and teaching with staff members.

Since retiring in 2021, Ian has embarked on doctoral research at the University of Wolverhampton. The research focuses on the reasons for decisions about the provision for cultural diversity in the curriculum. The thesis aims to provide a multi-dimensional view of the nature of the reasoning underpinning the conception of curricular decisions in participating schools and its significance. In addition, the thesis will contribute an appraisal of how the reasoning process informs variability between the schools. Previous post graduate research focused on curriculum studies. The final dissertation was an investigation into children's/staff members' perceptions of group work.

Ian is also a school governor. Away from the education front, he plays the organ/piano for church services and follows Notts C.C.C.

'I wouldn't start from here!' – Education, Learning and the Rise of GAI

Dr Phil Wood

Abstract A video of a UCLA student at graduation showing the AI he had used to write assignments for him has recently gone viral and has caused a great deal of debate about the future of education. Some argue that AI should be banned from learning, others that examinations should be the only medium for assessment. Yet others have argued that formal education as we know it is doomed as GAI can do all that education claims to do.

I will argue that the true problem with the current system is the nature of the education we have created. Neoliberal approaches to education rely on data, competition, and 'efficiency' models of learning. As such, we have created a view of education which is focused almost wholly on assessment, both as a way of 'sorting' children and of ensuring the productivity of teachers and lecturers. A consequence of this system is the adoption of a view of learning based on 'efficient' transfer of information from teacher to student and the subsequent ability of students to feed that back to those assessing them. Given the synonymous nature of assessment and education which has arisen for students, is it any surprise that they see anything which will aid them in gaining desired assessment outcomes a useful tool, the most recent and potent being GAI? Hence, GAI is seen as a serious problem to be solved. However, if we focus on developing a different approach to education, then the issue presented by GAI will be limited as it is the neoliberal policy approach which is the root cause of the problem.

I outline an alternative approach based on human development and bildung which create the need for a more holistic approach, where personal and social development are prized as the outcomes of education. A system where there is a core place for knowledge and understanding but only in their role in allowing us to meet and overcome the polycrises created by humans and where creativity, criticality, originality and collaborative ability are all seen as core to a high-quality education.

Biography I am Professor of Education at the Nottingham Institute of Education, NTU. I am fascinated by processes of change and explore these using a combination of process philosophy and complexity theory. This has led to my interest in organisations, well-being and work, and how we might develop more sustainable systems in the future. I lead strands on our MA Education programme focusing on educational futures and organisation and leadership, and work with a number of extremely enthusiastic and thoughtful doctoral students.

Exploring effective teaching practices

Layla Rajah

Abstract
This talk aims to explore effective teaching practices through the lens of a case study conducted in a combined school in Abu Dhabi. Layla Rajah will discuss her findings on the varied perceptions of effective teaching among international educators and senior leadership teams. Key areas include the definition and importance of effective teaching, the role and impact of tailored professional development, and strategies to bridge gaps resulting from diverse educational backgrounds. The presentation highlights the necessity of establishing a shared understanding of teaching effectiveness to ensure uniform academic standards and improved student outcomes. Finally, the talk will align these insights with the UAE's strategic educational visions, illustrating how schools can successfully transition towards unified, equitable, and effective teaching practices.

Biography
Layla Rajah is a Vice Principal in an American school in Abu Dhabi, with nearly three decades of teaching expertise. Specialising in Social Sciences with a major in Psychology, Layla earned her BA (Hons) in Psychology from Liverpool University and subsequently obtained her PGCE from Huddersfield University. Committed to lifelong learning, she holds dual Master's degrees in Education and Leadership & Management, along with a Law degree from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Layla relocated to Abu Dhabi, UAE, in 2019, just prior to the onset of COVID-19. The pandemic significantly altered educational landscapes worldwide, notably in Abu Dhabi, highlighting urgent needs in digital literacy among teachers, students, and parents. Motivated by these challenges, Layla pursued research into effective teaching practices within international schools, particularly focusing on a combined school rated as 'Acceptable' by ADEK yet requiring improvement in teaching quality.

Her qualitative case study critically explored perceptions of effective teaching among teachers from diverse international backgrounds, alongside senior leadership. Layla's work identifies professional development as pivotal for creating consistent teaching standards, tailored to diverse regional training backgrounds. Her goal is to foster inclusive, supportive learning environments that enable equitable educational outcomes, in alignment with the UAE's Vision 2021 and Vision 2030 objectives of building a world-class, knowledge-based education system.