

LEADING FOR EXPERTISE AS WELL AS EFFICIENCY

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ABSTRACT

While leadership is usually a dispersed activity within schools, it is associated traditionally with headship. The role of headship has changed from a relatively benign first among equals to being the focus of accountability some way down the leadership pyramid in the English school system. This paper explores the challenges for head teachers at present and the styles of leadership that have evolved. It also proposes a way in which leadership of schooling can be rooted once more in the development and improvement of teaching and learning.

The reference background for the paper comes from academic research, some of which provided the basis for 'About Our Schools: Improving on Previous Best'¹, as well as pragmatic research due to a regular presence in classrooms and schools.

The article is intended to dovetail with the parallel piece in this journal by Tim Brighouse.

INTRODUCTION

The leadership pyramid for schools in England, indeed the leadership pyramid for the whole school system used to be low and broad based. Now it is isosceles in shape and high, of almost Shard-like proportions. It would be easy to imagine that the head teacher sat at the top but the reality is very different. The image of head teachers as the powerful force controlling schools but, in England, the locus of leadership of schools has shifted over 50 years with control now exerted by central government through the DFE, and increasingly Downing Street. Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) and Local Authorities (LA) interpret, moderate or strengthen demands upon schools with Ofsted inspection applying a lever which ensures that head teachers are answerable for the performance of their unit.

The process of centralisation is in many cases pushing the head teacher role towards that of branch manager with the consequence of teachers being treated as operatives and technicians rather than professionals.

¹ Brighouse, T. and Waters, M (2021) *About our Schools: Improving on personal best*. Crown House Publishing Ltd.

LEADING FOR EXPERTISE AS WELL AS EFFICIENCY

Some head teachers sit outside this situation. They are the ones that belong within collaborative MATs or those who have not so far taken the step towards academisation. With many LAs starved of funding meaning they struggle to exert anything but the most statutory of demands upon them, those head teachers working in maintained schools probably comprise the group most autonomous in the leadership of their schools.

While political lip service is paid to the importance of leadership within schools as only second to that of teachers², the actions of secretaries of state deny this importance as the school system centralises and takes more decision, control and autonomy from those within schools.

Headship has shifted rapidly in the last 10 years and the consequences are profound. Other nations and jurisdictions are different. Headship can still be the power within the system but careful thinking about the professional role is urgent as centralisation gathers pace.

A VERY SHORT SUMMARY OF THE CHANGE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS

In the period immediately after World War 2, the role of head teacher continued much as it had before and during the conflict. The head teacher was seen as a community figurehead in a society which had become used to doing as it was told. The head teacher was the contact person for the Local Education Authority in each school and responsible for resourcing and organising within the stipulated requirements.

The head teacher worked with a team of people whose contracts described them as ‘assistant teachers’ (abandoned only in 1988), implying that the head teacher was the first among equals in a very flat organisational structure. Teachers were appointed by the LEA and the head teacher informed them of any changed requirement as they went about their daily work relatively unhindered, occasionally sending a child to be disciplined by the head teacher.

This position remained even as the structures of the school system changed following the 1944 Education Act with the expansion of grammar schools and the Raising of the School Leaving Age (ROSLA) to 15 in 1947. There was a gradual change in the phasing of schooling with previous ‘all through’ village schools becoming primaries as pupils over 11 years of age began attending newly built secondary modern schools. This proliferation of new and big schools led to

² Gomendio, M. (2017) Empowering and Enabling Teachers to Improve Equity and Outcomes for All: International Summit on the Teaching Profession. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273238-en>

head teachers needing more support within school and so the role of deputy head teacher grew in status. The status of deputy head teacher appeared in primary schools for the first time in 1961.

As the school leaving age was raised again to 16 in 1971 many secondary schools increased in size by 20% overnight and at that time secondary schools began to ask senior teachers to leave their teaching roles for a part of each week to support the head teacher and manage aspects of school organisation such as timetable or pastoral matters, again within the LEAs requirements. Other teachers in the school had agreed responsibilities: head of subject department or, in primary schools: head of infants or head of juniors (one of whom was usually deputy head teacher).

It was in the late 1970s that headship began to change noticeably. There had been a growing awareness of variability in schooling. The niggling concern about whether our schools and other public services were having the effect that we anticipated culminated in prime minister Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College³ in 1976 and set in train a period of 'doubt and disillusion'⁴ (Brighouse and Waters, 2021, pg. 5) in which governments and the profession began to address the notion of effectiveness.

An early step was to insist that each school had a governing body comprising membership of parents, local business, staff and local council⁵. Seen by many as the 'busybody's charter' this had the effect of turning the head teacher towards their responsibility outside the school, even though many LEAs helped their head teachers to work out how to 'manage' their governing body and reduce their impact. A couple of years later, the government began to insist on first head teacher and then teacher appraisal as a way of normalising expectations but to with limited impact.

It was Kenneth Baker's Education Reform Act, 1988⁶ that really changed the face of the head teachers' role. The introduction of the national curriculum from 1988 with GCSEs and SATs had the effect of creating a centralised education system where success and failure were apparent. Further, the creation of league

³ J. Callaghan, A Rational Debate Based on the Facts. Speech delivered at Ruskin College, Oxford (18 October 1976). Available at: <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/speeches/1976ruskin.html>.

⁴ Brighouse and Waters (2021) *About Our Schools: Improving on Personal Best*. Crown House Publishing Ltd.

⁵ T. Taylor, A New Partnership for Our Schools [Taylor Report] (London: HMSO, 1977). Available at: <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/taylor/taylor1977.html>.

⁶ Education Reform Act, 1988. See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/section/1/enacted>.

LEADING FOR EXPERTISE AS WELL AS EFFICIENCY

tables of results along with parental preference for school admissions would now create a market for schooling with the intention of driving up standards. The truth of markets, however, is that they rely on there being a level of failure to sustain competitiveness.

For head teachers, their concern was now to be with quality and they assumed responsibility for the effectiveness of teachers within their school. At the same time, Baker brought in Local Management of Schools and made head teachers and governing bodies (who had in most cases by now been neutered) responsible for the effective management of their site, employees and finances. The headship role had changed dramatically.

It was to change yet more dramatically in 1992 with the creation of Ofsted and the inspection of every school on a regular basis. The emergence of accessible computers through the 1980s made the manipulation of growing data sets more prevalent and the variability between schools was becoming more apparent, along with the awareness that the head teacher was instrumental in the success or otherwise in the outcomes of the school.

It was Gillian Shephard who, as secretary of state, saw the need to support the growing needs of leadership in schools. In 1998 she introduced the NPQH along with HeadLAMP⁷ for serving head teachers, the latter with a view to helping those who had seen their role change dramatically with LMS to cope with new demands. Oddly, this programme struggled to recruit sufficiently and was dropped after the pilot phase.

Blair's labour government picked up the notion of the head teacher being the school leader with the responsibility for the performance of staff with an emphasis on professionalism. Estelle Morris, as secretary of state, introduced threshold arrangements and the role of Assistant Head Teacher within schools along with performance management and performance related pay. The increasing pay for head teachers recognised the higher demand of the role and, with the establishment of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 2000, she sought to raise the status of leadership against predictions of a recruitment crisis at a time of demographic change.

Morris also established the notions of partnership encouraging schools to develop specialism through the SSAT (now The Schools Network)⁸ in the secondary sector and through the establishment of formal and informal federations of schools.

As head teachers were now accepting their changing role as responsible for

⁷ See <https://www.teacherfoundation.org/headlamp-heads-leadership-and-management-programme/>

⁸ See <https://www.ssatuk.co.uk/>

outcomes, so the outcomes changed again with the creation of the Every Child Matters agenda following the Climbié⁹ enquiry into one of a series of tragic deaths of children. The welcomed insistence on child protection and safeguarding saw yet another facet of the role of head teacher emerge.

For many in headship, this was to change again with the coalition government in 2010. Michael Gove's¹⁰ academisation and free school agenda offered schools freedom from what he saw as the dead hand of Local Authority control¹¹, with a release from bureaucracy, based on the principle that 'heads know best'.¹² Gove had latched onto labour's establishment of academies in previously failing secondary schools and provided inducements to all schools to take part in his scheme. However, like many of Gove's plans, it was ill thought through and the school system now is fragmented in structure, which the Education White paper 2022¹³ is trying to address.

Multi Academy Trusts developed, accepting an individual contract arrangement with the secretary of state, and building communities of schools locally or nationally.

The Trust are themselves called to account for performance by DfE, through a Regional School Commissioner, and head teachers become answerable to the secretary of state through a series of steps. At the same time, LAs are challenged by DfE on school performance for their maintenance while having few powers to do more than issue warning notices and offer support. In both LAs and MATs the head teacher becomes answerable for school performance with result and inspection potentially career defining moments.

Over time, therefore, the role of head teacher had shifted from figurehead and oversight of internal systems to driving for quality to responding to external systems, all with a growing level of responsibility. Head teachers now find themselves not simply responsible for their school, nor accountable, but answerable

⁹ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-victoria-climbié-inquiry-report-of-an-inquiry-by-lord-laming>

¹⁰ Academies Act 2010. See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/32/contents/enacted>

¹¹ Local Authorities had lost their 'E' for education with the creation of Children's Services in 2006

¹² Department for Education and The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP to The National College for Teaching and Leadership (2013) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/michael-gove-speech-to-teachers-and-headteachers-at-the-national-college-for-teaching-and-leadership>

¹³ Department for Education Policy Paper (2022) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-for-all-strong-schools-with-great-teachers-for-your-child>

LEADING FOR EXPERTISE AS WELL AS EFFICIENCY

for the success of their school. However, at the same time, they remain a figurehead for their community as the pandemic showed clearly in so many cases. They also remain responsible for site, finance, employment, health and safety and the like. In short, over these 50 years, headship has accumulated roles rather than exchanged them.

As some of those roles have been accumulated, those who previously held them did not let go and instead assumed the role of checker. Even as MATs began with a chance to start with a clean slate, the executive and central team's role often seems to be that of ensuring that head teachers are carrying out the functions they have established rather than lifting the burden. Indeed, many head teachers complain that as the executive team at the MAT grows, their own burden increases with the need to comply with 'house styles'. '[Some schools] have far less autonomy than they would have had in the most interfering LEA of old. Some are told exactly what to do and have no governing body to support or challenge them. It is bizarre, and I often wonder if this is really what Michael Gove intended'.¹⁴

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

So many head teachers feel constrained by systems set elsewhere. While most are keen to develop their school as leaders of learning on the basis of improving on previous best. Even here the processes, approaches and practices are defined in detail elsewhere to be implemented locally. Through a range of mechanisms, DfE is exerting pressure on schools to adopt certain practices purporting to be evidence based, particularly around pedagogy. The establishment and expansion of the OAK Academy's remit, the development of Teaching School Hubs and a centralised programme of National Professional Qualifications in a 'golden thread' of professional development for leaders at all levels might well be overdue and break through the profession's long-term inability to develop strength and depth of leadership at scale. Centralisation has moved us to a position where the government now sends a 110-page document on the teaching of reading¹⁵ to every primary school in the country and endorses providers of early reading products with the expectation of compliance from schools.

Some MATs impose corporate policies on all teachers in all their schools for detailed aspects of classroom work, everything from the shape and structure of a

¹⁴ David Bell in Brighouse, T. and Waters, M. (2021) *About our Schools: Improving on personal best*. Crown House Publishing Ltd. p23

¹⁵ Department for Education and The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP, *The Reading Framework: Teaching the Foundations of Literacy (July 2021)*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-reading-framework-teaching-the-foundations-of-literacy>

lesson to feedback and marking and behaviour. For too many, the head teacher's role in leading practice, shaping discourse, nurturing talent or encouraging innovation is hugely reduced as the policies, no doubt intended to be helpful, become a model of compliance that assumes all 'operatives' are equal and the performance can be standardised.

The locus of leadership, for many head teachers, lies increasingly beyond the school. First, goals set for school leaders are often linked to national agendas in such a way that the leader has little autonomy over their own targets and, where such targets do exist, they are always in the context of pupil outcomes being a limiting judgement on everything else the leader has been working on; that is, if pupil outcomes are not sufficiently strong, nothing else matters sufficiently to override that. Second, there is often a large element of moral purpose driving head teachers: leaders in education do not report that they were enticed by financial reward or status (Teacher Tapp, 2018)¹⁶, they most often report entering leadership for reasons such as a desire to improve life chances for young people, or to improve a shortcoming in community or society.

Many head teachers have been caught in a pincer movement. There are those looking down and fearing what might drop from above. Others look up and worry about what is going on below them on the leadership pyramid.

LEADERSHIP STYLES AS A CONSEQUENCE: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Given the complexity of educational leadership and the focus of attention upon it over the past 50 years, it is reasonable to expect the style and approach of school leaders to have developed and be differentiated by context, setting and situation.

Leadership models now abound. With the recognition of the concept of leadership came interest in effectiveness and the identification of styles of models of leadership. The leader in education today can select from a whole panoply of styles to justify the theoretical base for their approach. It is as though leadership searches for the terms to describe itself. The titles or contents page on most books about educational leadership contain adjectives that give a clue to the ways in which leaders need to work.

In education, leadership models constantly develop. Sometimes one emerges from another, showing a subtle difference of emphasis. Occasionally, a model exists that flows in a different direction from the current orthodoxy. The extent

¹⁶ Teacher Tapp is a web accessed enquiry zone about schooling in UK. It is established via charitable funding from the Gatsby Foundation and Nesta and up to 9,000 teachers are invited to take part in daily surveys.

LEADING FOR EXPERTISE AS WELL AS EFFICIENCY

to which they fully exist in reality or frame the way a leader operates is largely unexamined. Whether the practice of leadership is wholly as described or a part of the repertoire of a leader largely doing the same things as most others is debatable.

Gumus *et al.* (2018)¹⁷ examined nearly a 1000 papers written about 14 different school leadership models between 1980 and 2014.

Models	Total	4 Year Period						
		1980-1984	1985-1989	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014
Distributed/ Collaborative Leadership	205	2	2	4	3	15	61	118
Instructional Leadership	181	11	9	18	8	15	35	85
Teacher Leadership	151	1	5	9	13	13	47	63
Transformational Leadership	147	-	4	13	7	16	32	75
Curriculum Leadership	49	-	2	2	1	8	16	20
Technology Leadership	46	-	-	2	1	5	13	25
Transactional Leadership	40	-	-	5	-	-	8	27
Ethical/ Moral Leadership	38	1	-	1	5	8	8	15
Charismatic Leadership	27	-	1	4	-	5	6	11
Administrative/ Managerial Leadership	21	1	1	2	7	2	3	5
Strategic Leadership	20	-	-	-	-	2	6	12
Authentic Leadership	18	-	-	-	1	-	8	9
Visionary Leadership	18	-	-	-	4	1	6	7
Servant Leadership	16	-	-	-	1	1	7	7

Note. Some papers focus on more than one leadership model, so they were included in two or more categories.

Figure 1. Number of papers on leadership models by 4-year period: Gumus et al. (2018)

That these have been the most studied models does not mean they are the most effective; further it should be clear that other models, which might be just as prevalent, did not gain sufficient traction to be studied. The 14 models above do not include those more recent or fleeting models which gain traction for a while only to fade again. So, the list could have included sustainable leadership, compassionate leadership, coherent leadership, resilient leadership, courageous leadership, symbiotic leadership, wholesome leadership, resonant leadership, or autocratic leadership and probably several more. There is no mention of

¹⁷ Gumus, S., Bellibas, M., Esen, M. and Gumus, E., (2018) A Systematic Review of Studies on Leadership Models in Educational Research from 1980 to 2014. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 46 (1) pp. 25–48.

accountable leadership though head teachers cite accountability as the driver for much of what they do. Most of these leadership models can be appreciated from their descriptor and few leaders would say that they conform to or adopt any one style. Most accept that in certain contexts they behave in appropriate ways, linked to the descriptors of leadership. Each iteration of leadership approach emerges from a dissatisfaction with the models that have so far been identified to fully describe their approach (Daniels *et al.*, 2019).¹⁸

The adjectives that describe models of leadership are those which appear in academic papers or strike a chord when promoted by respected authorities. Educational leadership is particularly prone to identifying new models of leadership, often through a slight adjustment to one already in existence. Sometimes the variant or hybrid is the result of leadership response to an external influence or a particular internal situation: positive pragmatism. At other times a new model emerges because of the inability to maintain the espoused approach: rationalisation.

Though there is much literature on leadership models and styles, it almost exclusively relates to the team and individual circles of Adair's action centred leadership model¹⁹ first developed in the 1970s. There is little that relates these two circles with his third: task. An exception is the work of Hill *et al.* (2016)²⁰ which analysed the effect of five leadership typologies on the outcomes of improved secondary schools in London. The research compared the five typologies of leadership with a focus on good improvement measured against time and costs across 163 settings. The typologies suggested the style and approach: *surgeons* cut things out in order to heal, *soldiers* improved efficiency by attacking weakness and *accountants* remodelled budgets in order to grow. These three types of leadership secured a dramatic improvement relatively quickly, but the impact often subsided after the first wave and, in many cases, declined. Conversely, *architects*, carefully charted an agreed course and built for the long term, and *philosophers*, actively engaged teams in considering many dimensions of development and improvement, both saw slower but greater and more sustained improvement.

The impact of the external influence becomes evident through features of leadership activity beyond the school and pupil outcomes. In terms of recognition,

¹⁸ Daniels, E., Hondeghem, A. & Dochy, F. (2019) A review on leadership and leadership development in educational settings. *Educational Research Review*, Volume 27, pp. 110–125.

¹⁹ Adair, John E. (1973) *Action-centred leadership*. London: McGraw-Hill.

²⁰ Hill, A., Mellon, L., Laker, B., and Goddard, J. (2016) The One Type of Leader Who Can Turn Around a Failing School, *Harvard Business Review* (20 October 2016). Available at: <https://hbr.org/2016/10/the-one-type-of-leader-who-can-turn-around-a-failing-school>

the surgeons were by far the highest paid – on average twice as much as the lowest typology in terms of pay, the architects. In the study, all of the knighthoods and damehoods were bestowed on the surgeons, although none of these accepted the role of national leader of education (NLE), whereas the philosophers accounted for 80% of the 59 NLEs among the sample where the principle of NLE status was the willingness to collaborate and support less successful schools. The premise was that soldiers, surgeons and accountants were focused upon their own setting in isolation for and competition with others.

The typologies were not directly compared with leadership styles or models already in the educational discourse but surgeons and soldiers would be closely associated with transformational leadership, architects and accountants with the instructional leadership and philosophers and artists with distributed leadership.

MOVING ON FROM A FASCINATION WITH LEADERSHIP STYLE

There is a growing body of opinion that simply describing leadership styles, with the suspicion that such styles are little more than an adjectival rationalisation for emerging and prevalent approaches, is unsuited to the leadership climate in which many head teachers find themselves. This is leading to a growing focus on those in leadership having opportunity to work alongside behavioural psychologists who are employed to enable the change of practice leaders need to make to effect change within and around their school. In his article in this journal, Tim Brighouse explores some of the behaviours that school leaders employ successfully to secure improvement.

This consideration of the territory beyond the school is being properly explored as instrumental in securing educational success within school. The work of Rock²¹, for example, is gaining traction along with the emphasis on helping leaders to envisage an infolding improvement agenda and achieve improvement against previous best of success in a longer-term plan and a capacity to plan on a range of fronts, adapting behaviours exploit opportunity and overcome barriers with multiple partners and agencies. Kotter et al. (2021) exposes ‘agile principles’: seeing leadership as ‘fast and nimble’ and working in several dimensions beyond the ‘reliable and efficient’ hierarchically structured management processes, which are less prone to adaption when things take an unexpected turn²². Kotter refers to

²¹ Rock, D. and Grant, H. (2016) *Why Organisational Growth Mindset Matters* available: <https://neuroleadership.com/org-growth-mindset/>

²² J. P. Kotter, V. Akhtar and G. Gupta, *Change: How Organizations Achieve Hard to Imagine Results in Uncertain and Volatile Times* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2021), p. 149.

moulding the culture to be 'less of an anchor holding back change and more of a force that fosters speed and adaptability'²³, by activating 'want to' rather than relying on the 'have to' outlook of a 'management centric' approach²⁴.

What most studies of leadership styles and organisational psychology suggest is that the leader's domain relates to the notion of achieving the best results with sub-ordinates, formally or informally. The present reality for many head teachers explained earlier that their leadership is being increasingly defined for them and at the same time accountability measures are focused upon them as nominal leaders, and is focusing upon how to support learning within a network of competing relationships.

The challenge of leading 'upwards' or 'outwards' is now as great and sometimes greater for head teachers than the task of leading 'downwards'. Indeed, for many head teachers this has now become a significant part of the task: managing the complex web of inter-relationships beyond the school: the expectations and demands of the Trust, LA, Ofsted, Public Health, governors and parents as overseers of effectiveness all with different but often repeated demands.

For many of those head teachers who elected to find shelter within a MAT their experience is of a supportive collaborative community which seeks to support each other with the executive team helping to mediate the demands and expectations. A significant proportion report that the demand of their own executive is excessive as the MAT seeks to protect itself and, in the head teachers' eyes, leave them exposed while protecting themselves. The perceived pressure of accountability rises as head teachers can experience exaggerated competition within their own MAT.

WHAT OF OTHER NATIONS' OUTLOOK ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP?

The OECD now sees England as an outlier in terms of much educational practice. As England has edged leadership towards a compliance culture, OECD is noting that 'In high performing systems, school leaders are really investing themselves in pedagogical leadership, as opposed to just administrative leadership. I do think school leaders play a very important role in framing that organisation in the school. You get school leaders who are great at enhancing collaboration, school leaders who are great in developing careers of their staff – giving people aspirations'.²⁵

²³ Kotter et al., *Change*, p. 101.

²⁴ Kotter et al., *Change*, p. 58.

²⁵ Andreas Schleicher in Brighouse, T. and Waters, M (2021) *About our Schools: Improving on personal best*. Crown House Publishing Ltd. P.330

LEADING FOR EXPERTISE AS WELL AS EFFICIENCY

Nearer to home, Wales is implementing a major education reform programme.²⁶ In 2015 the devolved government accepted the 64 recommendations of Successful Futures,²⁷ a major review of the school system. At the heart of the reform agenda is ‘subsidiarity’, the notion that decisions are made at the point nearest to which they will be enacted.

There is a commitment from the Welsh government to making sure responsibility is exercised and resources provided. The key plank has been a co-ordinated agenda of reconsideration bringing about a new Curriculum for Wales,²⁸ designed and developed by teachers supported by Government. For that curriculum to be effective the government is driving a long-term programme of support for schools which includes the provision of a new National Academy for Educational Leadership with head teachers driving strategically and practically. The national approach to professional learning (NAPL)²⁹ which guarantees teachers an entitlement to an MA course and qualification. Inspection is being reformed, league tables and public categorisation of schools have ended and advice is commissioned by schools in consultation with the school improvement consortia.

Head teachers are central to the development of the national agenda, not simply through consultation but through involvement and commitment to specific developments. It is not a few chosen head teachers but a growing proportion working with and influencing a ‘middle tier’ which is open to listening and adaptation. There is a spirit of collaboration and shared ambition.

The situation in Scotland is, arguably, more complex. Having embarked on a major programme of reform through the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence,³⁰ alongside reform of teachers’ pay and conditions,³¹ a review of teachers training and development,³² a focus on enhanced networking and more, Scotland is now in a period of reflection and re-evaluation. There have been two

²⁶ Welsh Government (2020) Education in Wales: Our national mission Available <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-10/education-in-Wales-our-national-mission-update-october-2020.pdf>

²⁷ Donaldson G. (2015) Successful Futures. Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales. Crown Copyright.

²⁸ See <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

²⁹ See <https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/national-approach-to-professional-learning>

³⁰ See <https://scotlandscurriculum.scot/>

³¹ See <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/teachers/#payandconditions>

³² See <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/teachers/#profdevelopment>

major reviews by the OECD³³ and, most recently, the Muir Review³⁴ which has led to the launch of a renewed national discussion.

The complexity is increased by the continuing role of local authorities who employ head teachers and have the basic responsibility for the management of schools. There are schemes of devolved management which appear to be under continual review and a commitment to ‘empowerment’ at Scottish Government level. Some head teachers will argue that both the reviews and the commitment need to go further than they do and that subsidiarity, as a principle, is far from fully implemented. Others, notably the Association of Head Teachers and Deputes Scotland, the main organisation for school leaders in primary, will argue that the issue is less about autonomy accrued than support available.

There is a Scottish College of Educational Leadership (SCEL) which was freestanding initially and later drawn into the government’s Education Scotland agency. That raised a concern that it might be less innovative and dynamic, but most school leaders agree that it has continued to be successful.³⁵ Regardless of the view taken, there is considerable consultation with head teachers, regular interaction between government ministers, local authority officials and head teachers, consistent representation of head teachers on national planning and review groups and a reasonable flow between the roles of school leadership, HMI and senior roles in local authorities and in national organisations.

While the engagement of head teachers may be less formalised than in Wales, it is still significant and head teachers in Scotland have significant power to shape the narrative of their schools.

The question of whether such approaches are right remains unresolved but Scotland and Wales both have clear purposes for the school system enshrined in legislation. England does not and the measures of effectiveness and accountability are determined by fleeting secretaries of state with the effect that a rather narrower agenda of ambition prevails both for the system and for leadership with the effect that many feel compromised as their effectiveness is measured on aspects of work that do not accord with their beliefs.

³³ OECD (2015) *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective*. Available: <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/improving-schools-in-scotland.htm>

³⁴ Muir, K (2022) *Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education*. Available: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/putting-learners-centre-towards-future-vision-scottish-education/>

³⁵ Evidenced by online reviews from head teachers

THE IMPACT OF CHANGING LEADERSHIP APPROACHES IN ENGLAND

What is the impact on changes in headship expectations in the 2020s? There are, of course, those who thrive in leading their schools but increasingly there are questions about the viability of the system in the longer term. Unions and professional associations bridle against unsustainable demand, blaming government for a system that puts accountability in the driving seat without providing the fuel for the journey in terms of teacher supply or resource.

While the pandemic has distorted data over the last two years, the overall picture of schooling in England is one of improvement and government is quick to point to success. A passing secretary of state might get time to announce a success but rarely enough to examine the possible emerging side effects of an accountability driven system in a centralised and market driven system. Ofsted pronounces that 76% of secondary schools are good or better (2020)³⁶ with 24% not good enough and the response is an expression of determination to make sure the gap closes, rather than to wonder whether one extreme might cause the other. The enormous number of permanent exclusions and pupil suspensions from school are seen as improved behaviour policies rather than wondering whether the children affected are the collateral damage of a system too often out of kilter with childhood and youth.

The reported half a million children failing to attend school³⁷ is seen as a loss of impetus following the pandemic rather than a disillusion on the part of families with the role of school. The rising numbers of home educated children or those retreating to the independent sector is not seen as rejection.

There are also more subtle and less researched repercussions.

The relationship with parents has always been a key part of headship. The more welcoming and involving attitudes towards parents and the recognition that they are the first educators that occurred gradually until the 1980s, turned to a client relationship with the arrival of parental preference for admissions. The need to market the school and uphold good relationships is vital against a backcloth of intense scrutiny where often vitriolic social media can destabilise communities.

³⁶ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/state-funded-schools-inspections-and-outcomes-as-at-31-august-2020/state-funded-schools-inspections-and-outcomes-as-at-31-august-2020>

³⁷ Gov.uk (2022) *Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic* Available: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

In this context the challenge for some schools is that of meeting the needs of children in circumstances which are far from ideal and in many cases desperate. With food and warmth banks now appearing in many schools and the gap between rich and poor increasingly more evident, the role of the head teacher in leading a compassionate response is basic to the survival of communities.

The pandemic showed us, fleetingly, what we assume to be the basic role of the school, one that has persisted since their inception: to support the very basic needs of children and families and, where possible help children to learn. The goodwill towards schools was short lived as political meddlers successfully turned the spotlight on schools for the exam results fiascos. Now the gap between rich and poor in society shows itself vividly in schools with nearly every school working with some families in crisis and some schools seeing virtually none who are not. Yet the cloud of accountability gathers above and leaves many schools which thought they would be sheltered under their MAT umbrella exposed, with their leadership believing they will be hung out to dry.

Head teachers came into their career as teachers. Most only learn of the administrative demands just prior to their post and, where LAs used to carry the burden, there is no doubt in any briefing session where the buck now stops. It is little wonder that the new and unfamiliar binary tasks assume significance beyond the natural urge in most head teachers to search for continuous improvement in learning. The legal culpability means that delegation of responsibility for many aspects of leadership is worrying and it is logical to delegate issues of teaching and learning.

There would be few Ofsted inspectors who could manage to recall the expectations on a head teacher in terms of GDPR, child protection, safeguarding, financial probity, employment legislation and health and safety, including the protocols for legionnaires disease, asbestos removal and menopause.

The move to delegation provided much need scope for school improvement but also demanded more knowledge and awareness of technicalities of management. The availability of support has reduced in line with LAs being cut to the bone and there are suspicions on the part of many schools that the available advice lacks rigorous technical quality. While that can be procured from elsewhere the personal pressures on head teachers are often keenly felt.

The pressure on head teachers grows when the issue of workload is raised. Inspectors now determine whether the school is considering workload on teachers sufficiently. The term 'workload' has taken over from 'work-life balance' and before that 'stress' which was previously 'pressure'. It is now something that can be measured in terms of the hours expected in meetings or the level of planning required. Yet there are schools where staff work long hours and are exhilarated by their work while, in others, teachers are worn out by all the talk of workload.

LEADING FOR EXPERTISE AS WELL AS EFFICIENCY

Many schools seek to economise on work by encouraging teachers to share the task of planning by producing lessons for each other. Does this reduce work? The planner has to provide detail sufficient for the recipient to act upon the plan and the recipient has to make sense of the plan, often at short notice. Many Trusts now issue planned lessons to be taught by teachers across their community of schools, planned by teachers trusted to deliver quality. In some cases, the teachers feel supported but in others their instinct as a teacher is being subsumed into the role of an operative and the joy of teaching can diminish. Is workload reduced or does burden grow when faced with job where the satisfaction of solving problems reduces?

Is it the spirit of work that counts: the culture in the school or the Trust? The likes of Kotter and Rock emphasise change as a result of cooperation and collaboration using influencing techniques rather than any particular style of leadership. This includes the relationship between the head teacher and their colleagues and superiors. While many that leadership is subtle, learnt through experience but the respect with which the NCSL was held until jettisoned by Michael Gove was testament to the extent to which school leaders saw the benefit to themselves of its programmes. Munby (2019)³⁸ describes effective leaders as adept, emotionally resilient and dexterous leaders and made over time, acting with honesty and integrity. Cranston (2011)³⁹ emphasised the importance of building and maintaining the trust within the team that is necessary to achieve the organisational goals and Fullan (2019)⁴⁰ talks of authenticity and nuance. Can such qualities be taught? Munby (2022)⁴¹ says it can be, citing the features of effective leadership development that were employed at NCSL. In a parallel article in this journal Tim Brighouse is exploring issues of culture and the creation of energy within learning communities.

At the same time ‘managerialism’ grows. One common way that the artful head teacher keeps the ‘outwards and upwards’ at bay is to pre-occupy them with reports. Governing Bodies, who themselves are part of leadership as defined by inspection, become part of the managerial cycle, generating, receiving and approving reports more than engaging in genuine discourse about helping the learning to develop. The average governing body meeting sees a head teacher’s

³⁸ Munby, S. (2019) *Imperfect Leadership: A Book for Leaders who Know They Don’t Know it All*. Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.

³⁹ Cranston, J. (2011) *Relational Trust: The Glue that Binds a Professional Learning Community*. *Alberta Journal of Education*, 57(1), pp. 59–72.

⁴⁰ Fullan, M. (2019) *Nuance, why some leaders succeed and others fail*. London: Corwin.

⁴¹ Munby, S. and Bretherton, M. (2022) *Imperfect Leadership in Action. A practical book for school leaders who know they don’t know it all*. Crown House Publishing.

report that is rarely discussed beyond a few minutes yet has taken hours to prepare. The measure of a successful meeting is the quantity of paper produced to support it, with multiple appendices if possible. Trust Board meetings follow a similar pattern as CEOs and head teachers build a bank of evidence to show inspectors or DfE that matters have been addressed by them so if practice is not effective them and the fault lies elsewhere. Little wonder that teachers behave in the same way for head teachers in this managerial world... or that they, in turn, spend their time ensuring that children produce 'evidence' to stick in books in case a school inspector looks.

Those pupils with most additional needs, whether special needs defined by a plan or social and emotional, who need to most nuanced of support receive dedicated help but usually from those on the staff least qualified to help. The qualified and experienced staff find themselves fulfilling leadership obligations: co-ordinating, recording, reporting but rarely sharing their expertise in a way which develops pedagogic practice.

These sorts of unresearched repercussions are often dismissed as the moans of a profession resistant to change. We are though reaching a point very similar to that of 1988 where the period of doubt and disillusion was replaced by the entry to the period of centralisation, markets and managerialism. As we realise that the successes we have achieved have been tainted with toxins in the system, so we should move to a new age: one of hope, ambition and collaborative partnerships. Tim Brighouse addresses this more fully in his article in this journal and explains how school leadership can grasp the opportunity. One example here of the unresearched repercussions of the practices resulting from our current leadership pyramid will suffice to conclude.

For the new entrant to teaching, that group upon whom the system will depend in the long term, the image of leadership is complex. Even within their own school an Early Career Teacher has to work out the relationships and hierarchies: head teacher, deputies, assistant head teachers, senior leadership team, heads of department phase, and TLRs. All of these face two ways, working down towards you, the early career teacher, and up towards the rank above them. Of course, the novice to the profession only faces one way and the image of feeding the machine of demand can dominate. A big part of the image of leadership 'above' them is of time 'released' from teaching as though this must be one of the recognitions of success within the profession. Is this what we want? The idea that being recognised as a successful teacher means not having to do it and instead checking that others are.

The recent development in National Professional Qualifications has an attractiveness in that it offers much needed training to those with responsibility at several levels within the system. The rhetoric is strong: a 'golden thread' of leadership development based on evidence, designed to develop the individual

and support the system. The broader question though is whether participants are being encouraged to lead or follow a prescribed model. Government would argue that the NPQ programme is ‘being led for teachers by teachers’ but examination reveals that the 87 Teaching School Hubs are required to commission programmes from just nine accredited providers. The system seems to be moving from ‘head teachers know best’ to the ‘those head teachers of whom we approve know best’. So how might we extend expertise within a system that encourages truly professional behaviour?

LEADING FOR EXPERTISE THROUGH HOPE, AMBITION AND COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

In our book ‘About Our Schools: Improving on Previous Best’, Tim Brighouse and I put forward the suggestion that the teaching profession needs to create a new role of Expert Consultant Teacher. The establishment, recognition and influence of expert consultant teachers would change the locus of leadership in schooling.

The expert consultant teacher is the equivalent to the consultant in a hospital trust who works on the most challenging agendas, pushing the boundaries of practice and with whom other colleagues are desperate to work and grow professionally. An expert consultant teacher will develop a specialism in a specific aspect of pedagogy, assessment or curriculum, build teams of expertise, work closely with colleagues nationally and beyond, and influence the ways that schools are organised through their innovative ideas.

By specialism we mean more than turning out good lessons. We mean the extended and deepening study and practice of a specific aspect of pedagogy or assessment. The responsibility framework that has grown in schools over time is generalised and broad: geography, mathematics, business studies or SEND. In terms of SEND, we have learned so much since the Warnock report of 1978, yet practice in schools has not kept pace with so many issues delegated to a SENDCo whose job it is to coordinate provision generally and to manage the administrative matters and support staff as well as time allows. We need to be at the point where there is a consultant for ADHD, or visual impairment or autism, where specialism might deal specifically with expertise in repetitive and restrictive behaviour or Asperger syndrome or over-sensitivity to sound. At present our notion of specialism equates to the general practitioner role when we need specialists who operate in a theatre where others come to watch and learn. Expert Consultant Teachers would build teams to extend the teaching of meteorology or erosion and deposition, while others would extend pedagogy in geophysical geography. They might focus on algebra or geometry while others delved into the teaching of arithmetic or

trigonometry. They would work within the specialism of the discipline rather than remain at the level of the generic discipline of mathematics or geography.

A developing role for the Chartered College of Teaching and the EEF, working together with the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors, would see them create expert consultant teachers, who would gain their status after five or seven years by obtaining a part-time master's degree awarded by a university. It would recognise the makings of the outstanding teacher who remains close to learners within schools, acts as the 'go to' consultant for matters such as support ECF, offers guidance to lead assessors and advises on professional learning issues or the learning needs of particular groups of pupils.

Such a development would build over a generation. Schools and Trusts would become 'known' for housing the specialist centre for aspects of learning and individual consultants would attract teachers in their own and other schools to work with them. They would publish papers, lead seminars, push thinking, be called into demanding problem areas and develop and disseminate genuinely innovative approaches built on substantial evidence.

For Higher Education this presents an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity is to bring deep research into the heart of schooling by positioning expertise within the body of schooling rather than attract individuals to study with them in the abstract. This would modify the trend of recent years of placing responsibility for increasing expertise through 'school based' approaches, first SCITTs and later Teaching School Hubs, which have as their models the apprentice and cascade approaches to support the development of successful classroom operatives but often lack the developmental perspective to see innovation coursing through the system. Universities need to rise to the challenge of them being tangential to the work of classroom, the province of those attracted to academic study as a personal interest and in search of higher degrees as a means of advancement. For head teachers the strengthening links between schools and universities would help to galvanise their leadership of expertise in teaching.

CONCLUSION

Leadership of pedagogy is on the cusp of moving beyond schools and fundamentally changing the role of the head teacher. As Tim Brighouse explains, the characteristics of the best head teachers, well developed, can help our school system to improve on previous best. Leadership behaviour and the fostering of professionalism rely on the capacity of the system to embrace an outlook of hope, ambition and collaborative partnership.

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