School leadership models: what do we know?

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The growth in the importance of school leadership has been accompanied by theory development, with new models emerging and established approaches being redefined and further developed. The purpose of this paper is to review current and recent writing on leadership models. The paper examines theoretical literature, to see how leadership is conceptualised, and empirical literature, to demonstrate whether and how the research evidence supports these concepts. The paper shows that leadership models are subject to fashion but often serve to reflect, and to inform, changes in school leadership practice.

Keywords: school leadership; leadership models; leadership theory

Introduction

The growth in the importance of school leadership over the past 20 years has been accompanied by theory development, with new models emerging and established approaches being redefined and further developed. The purpose of this article is to review current and recent writing on school leadership models. The article draws on a paper prepared for the English National College for Teaching and Leadership[1] (NCTL), formerly the National College for School Leadership (Bush and Glover 2013). The paper reviews theoretical literature, to see how leadership is conceptualised, and empirical literature, to demonstrate whether and how the research evidence supports these concepts of school leadership. The paper draws mainly on UK school leadership literature but also includes business, public sector and international sources, where appropriate. This is an updated version of a paper commissioned by the National College 10 years ago (Bush and Glover 2003).

The significance of school leadership

It is widely recognised that leadership is second only to classroom teaching in its impact on student learning. Leithwood et al.'s (2006, 4) widely cited report shows that 'leadership acts as a catalyst' for beneficial effects, including pupil learning. The report also distinguishes between the impact of head teacher leadership (typically 5–7%) and total leadership (27%). This finding provides much of the empirical underpinning for the current interest in distributed leadership (see below) and for the concept of leadership 'density'.

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Robinson's (2007) meta-analysis of published research shows that the nature of the leader's role has a significant impact on learning outcomes. Direct leader involvement in curriculum planning and professional development is associated with moderate or large leadership effects. 'This suggests that the closer leaders are to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to make a difference to students' (Robinson 2007, 21). This finding indicates that instructional leadership effects are much greater than those of other leadership models (see below).

Leithwood et al.'s (2006, 5) conclusion, that 'there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership', offers powerful support for the vital role of heads, senior and middle leaders in all types of school.

Definitions of school leadership

Gunter (2004) shows that the labels used to define this field have changed from 'educational administration' to 'educational management' and, more recently, to 'educational leadership'. Bush (2008) discusses whether such changes are purely semantic or reflect substantive changes in the nature of the field. In England, this shift is exemplified most strongly by the opening of the NCSL in 2000, described as a paradigm shift by Bolam (2004). Yukl (2002, 4) argues that 'the definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective', but the following 'working definition' includes its main features:

> Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision. (Bush and Glover 2003, 5)

Three dimensions of leadership arise from this working definition.

Leadership as influence

Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person [or group] over other people [or groups] to structure activities and relationships in a group or organisation (Yukl 2002, 3). Bush (2008, 277) refers to three key aspects of these definitions. First, the central concept is influence rather than authority. Both are dimensions of power but the latter tends to reside in formal positions, such as principal or head teacher, while the former could be exercised by anyone in the school or college. Leadership is independent of positional authority while management is linked directly to it. Second, the process is intentional. The person seeking to exercise influence is doing so in order to achieve certain purposes. Third, influence may be exercised by groups as well as individuals. This notion provides support for the concept of distributed leadership and for constructs such as senior leadership teams:

> This aspect of leadership portrays it as a fluid process, potentially emanating from any part of the school, independent of formal management positions and capable of residing with any member of the organization, including associate staff and students. (Bush 2008, 277)

Leadership and values

The notion of 'influence' is neutral in that it does not explain or recommend what goals or actions should be pursued. However, leadership is increasingly linked with values. Leaders are expected to ground their actions in clear personal and professional values. Day, Harris, and Hadfield's (2001) research in 12 'effective' schools in England and Wales concludes that, 'good leaders are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school' (Day, Harris, and Hadfield 2001, 53). This implies that values are 'chosen' but Bush (2008, 277) argues that the dominant values are those of government and adds that these may be 'imposed' on school leaders. Teachers and leaders are more likely to be enthusiastic about change when they 'own' it. Hargreaves (2004), drawing on research in Canadian schools, finds that teachers report largely positive emotional experiences of self-initiated change but predominantly negative ones concerning mandated change. There is a tension here between the obligation to implement the policies of democratically elected governments and the need for teacher professionals to feel positive about new initiatives if they are to act on them successfully.

Leadership and vision

Vision has been regarded as an essential component of effective leadership for more than 20 years. Southworth (1993, 23–24) suggests that heads are motivated to work hard 'because their leadership is the pursuit of their individual visions' (Southworth 1993, 47). However, Fullan (1992, 83) says that, 'vision building is a highly sophisticated dynamic process which few organizations can sustain'. Thoonen et al. (2011, 520) refer to the 'adverse effects' of vision, which arise when principals do not involve teachers in the process of vision building.

The articulation of a clear vision has the potential to develop schools but the empirical evidence of its effectiveness remains mixed. A wider concern relates to whether school leaders, in England and elsewhere, are able to develop a specific vision for their schools, given government prescriptions of both curriculum aims and content. A few head teachers may be confident enough to challenge official policy in the way described by Bottery (1998, 24): 'from defy through subvert to ignore; on to ridicule then to wait and see to test; and in some (exceptional) cases finally to embrace'. However, most are more like Bottery's (2007, 164) 'Alison', who examines every issue in relation to the school's Ofsted report. Hoyle and Wallace (2005, 139) add that visions have to conform to centralised expectations and to satisfy Ofsted inspectors.

A typology for leadership

There are many alternative, and competing, models of school leadership. In this section, we review nine of these theories, drawing on Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) and Bush (2011).

Instructional leadership

The increasing focus on managing teaching and learning as the core activities of educational institutions has led to 'instructional leadership', or 'learning-centred' leadership, being emphasised:

> Instructional leadership … typically assumes that the critical focus for attention by leaders is the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students. (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach 1999, 8)

The term 'instructional leadership' derives from North America and it has been superseded in England and elsewhere by the notion of 'learning-centred leadership'. Rhodes and Brundrett (2010) argue that the latter concept is broader and has greater potential to impact on school and student outcomes. They explore the transition from instructional leadership, concerned with ensuring teaching quality, to leadership for learning, which incorporates a wider spectrum of leadership action to support learning and learning outcomes.

Instructional leadership is the longest established concept linking leadership and learning. However, several other terms may be used to describe this relationship, including pedagogic leadership, curriculum leadership and leadership for learning. Despite its prominence and longevity, instructional leadership has been criticised on two grounds. First, it is perceived to be primarily concerned with teaching rather than learning (Bush 2013). The second criticism is that it 'focused too much on the principal as the centre of expertise, power and authority' (Hallinger 2003, 330). As a consequence, it tends to ignore or underplay the role of other leaders such as deputy principals, middle managers, leadership teams and classroom teachers. Lambert (2002, 37) claims that:

> The days of the lone instructional leader are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for the entire school without the substantial participation of other educators.

Hallinger and Heck (2010) note that, in the twenty-first century, instructional leadership has been 'reincarnated' as 'leadership for learning'. MacBeath and Dempster (2009) outline five main principles which underpin leadership for learning, two of which directly address the weaknesses of instructional leadership. The first is a stress on shared or distributed leadership, counteracting the principal-centric approach of the instructional model. The second is a focus on learning, in contrast to the teaching-centred dimension of instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership, and leadership for learning, focus primarily on the direction and purpose of leaders' influence; targeted at student learning via teachers. There is much less emphasis on the influence process itself. However, most other leadership models focus strongly on leadership processes. The following discussion focuses on models which address 'how' to lead, not the purpose of leadership.

Managerial leadership

Managerial leadership assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks and behaviours and that, if these functions are carried out competently, the work of others in the organisation will be facilitated. Most approaches to managerial leadership also assume that the behaviour of organisational members is largely rational. Influence accrues largely because of the formal authority of leaders and Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) argue that influence is allocated in proportion to the status of those positions in the organisational hierarchy. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999, 15) add that, 'there is evidence of considerable support in the literature and among practicing leaders for

managerial approaches to leadership'. They add that 'positional power, in combination with formal policies and procedures, is the source of influence exercised by managerial leadership' (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach 1999, 17). Hoyle and Wallace (2005, 68) note the relationship between managerial leadership and leadership for learning: 'Management functions to support learning and teaching, the core of the educational enterprise'.

Managerialism

The shift in the language of school organisation to favour 'leadership' at the expense of 'management' is partly semantic, as noted above, but also reflects anxiety about the dangers of value-free management, focusing on efficiency for its own sake, what Hoyle and Wallace (2005, 68) describe as 'management to excess':

> Effective leadership and management 'take the strain' by creating structures and processes which allow teachers to engage as fully as possible in their key task. Managerialism, on the other hand, is leadership and management to excess. It transcends the support role of leadership and, in its extreme manifestation, becomes an end in itself.

Managerial leadership is the model which provides the greatest risk of a managerialist approach to school organisation. By focusing on functions, tasks and behaviours, there is the possibility that the aims of education will be subordinated to the managerial aim of greater efficiency. The significance of a values-based approach to leadership was stressed earlier, but Simkins (2005, 13–14) claims that managerialist values, such as rigid planning and target-setting regimes, are being set against traditional professional values.

Evidence of a managerialist approach to education may be found in English schools (Hoyle and Wallace 2007; Rutherford 2006). Managerial leadership is an essential component of successful schools but it should complement, not supplant, values-based approaches. Effective management is essential but value-free managerialism is inappropriate and damaging (Bush 2011).

Transformational leadership

This form of leadership assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organisational members. Higher levels of personal commitment to organisational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach 1999, 9).

Transformational leadership is often contrasted with transactional approaches (e.g. Miller and Miller 2001). The latter relates to relationships between leaders and teachers being based on exchange of valued resources. In its simplest form, teachers provide educational services (teaching, pupil welfare, extra-curricular activities) in exchange for salaries and other rewards. This is a basic approach and does not lead to the level of commitment associated with the transformational model.

Leithwood's (1994, 506) research suggests that there is some empirical support for the essentially normative transformational leadership model. He reports on seven quantitative studies and concludes that:

> Transformational leadership practices, considered as a composite construct, had significant direct and indirect effects on progress with school-restructuring initiatives and teacher-perceived student outcomes.

Kirkbride (2006, 30) adds that there is a correlation between the transformational approach and leadership effectiveness.

The transformational model is comprehensive in that it provides a normative approach to school leadership which focuses primarily on the process by which leaders seek to influence school outcomes rather than on the nature or direction of those outcomes. However, it may also be criticised as being a vehicle for control over teachers, through requiring adherence to the leader's values, and more likely to be accepted by the leader than the led (Chirichello 1999).

The contemporary policy climate within which schools have to operate also raises questions about the validity of the transformational model, despite its popularity in the literature. Transformational language is used by governments to encourage, or require, practitioners to adopt and implement centrally determined policies. In South Africa, for example, the language of transformation is used to underpin a non-racist post-Apartheid education system. The policy is rich in symbolism but weak in practice because many school principals lack the capacity and the authority to implement change effectively (Bush et al. 2009).

The English system may be seen to require school leaders to adhere to government policies, which affect aims, curriculum content and pedagogy, as well as values. In this respect, transformation may be a unilateral process of implementation, not a context-specific assessment of the needs of individual schools and their communities. There is 'a more centralized, more directed, and more controlled educational system [that] has dramatically reduced the possibility of realising a genuinely transformational education and leadership' (Bottery 2001, 215). Bottery (2004, 17) adds that 'there is much to question' in assessing transformational leadership, arguing that it transforms reality and may be more a heroic than a shared leadership model.

When transformational leadership works well, it has the potential to engage all stakeholders in the achievement of educational objectives. The aims of leaders and followers coalesce to such an extent that it may be realistic to assume a harmonious relationship and a genuine convergence leading to agreed decisions. When 'transformation' is a cloak for imposing the leader's values, or for implementing the prescriptions of the government, then the process is political rather than genuinely transformational (Bush 2011, 86):

> The strongest advocacy of a transformational approach to reform has come from those whose policies ensure that the opportunity for transformation is in fact denied to people working in schools. (Hoyle and Wallace 2005, 128)

The transformational model stresses the importance of values but, as shown above, the debate about its validity relates to the central question of 'whose values?' Critics of this approach argue that the decisive values are often those of government or of the school principal, who may be acting on behalf of government. Educational values, as held and practised by teachers, are likely to be subjugated to externally imposed values.

Moral and authentic leadership

As the discussion above suggests, transformational leadership may be directed at achieving worthy or less worthy aims. We can all think of charismatic or transformational leaders whose purposes were inappropriate or immoral (e.g. Hitler).

The moral leadership model differs from the transformational approach through its emphasis on integrity. It assumes that the critical focus of leadership ought to be on the values, beliefs and ethics of leaders themselves. Authority and influence are to be derived from defensible conceptions of what is right or good (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach 1999, 10). Several other terms have also been used to describe values-based leadership. These include ethical leadership (Stefkovich and Begley 2007; Starratt 2007), authentic leadership (Begley 2007) and spiritual leadership (G. Woods 2007).

West-Burnham (1997, 239) discusses two approaches to leadership which may be categorised as 'moral'. The first he describes as 'spiritual' and relates to, 'the recognition that many leaders possess what might be called "higher order" perspectives', perhaps represented by a particular religious affiliation. Such leaders have a set of principles which provide the basis of self-awareness. G. Woods's (2007, 148) survey of head teachers in England found that 52% 'were inspired or supported in their leadership by some kind of spiritual power'. West-Burnham's (1997, 241) second category is 'moral confidence', the capacity to act in a way that is consistent with an ethical system and is consistent over time.

Sergiovanni (1991, 329) argues for both moral and managerial leadership:

> In the principalship, the challenge of leadership is to make peace with two competing imperatives, the managerial and the moral. The two imperatives are unavoidable and the neglect of either creates problems. Schools must be run effectively if they are to survive … But for the school to transform itself into an institution, a learning community must emerge … [This] is the moral imperative that principals face.

The concept of authentic leadership has grown in significance but essentially covers similar ground to that of moral leadership. Begley (2007, 163) defines it as, 'a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound and consciously reflective practices'. P. Woods (2007, 295) adds that it is 'essentially about the conduct and character of the individual leader'. He identifies three dimensions of 'holistic authenticity': personal, ideal and social.

Moral and authentic leadership are underpinned strongly by leaders' values. The models assume that leaders act with integrity, drawing on firmly held personal and professional values. These serve to inform the school's vision and mission and to underpin decision-making.

Distributed leadership

The models discussed above are essentially about individual (usually principal) leadership. However, there have been several approaches which seek to widen the debate to include shared approaches to leadership. Crawford (2012) notes the shift from solo to shared leadership. She attributes this, in part, to well-documented failures of high-profile 'superheads' in England, leading to scepticism about individual, or 'heroic', leadership.

Collegial and participative leadership were popular shared approaches in the last decade of the twentieth century but distributed leadership has become the normatively

preferred leadership model in the twenty-first century. Gronn (2010, 70) states that, 'there has been an accelerating amount of scholarly and practitioner attention accorded [to] the phenomenon of distributed leadership'. Harris (2010, 55) adds that it, 'represents one of the most influential ideas to emerge in the field of educational leadership in the past decade'.

An important starting point for understanding distributed leadership is to uncouple it from positional authority. As Harris (2004, 13) indicates, 'distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organization rather than seeking this only through formal position or role'. Gronn (2010, 70) refers to a normative switch 'from heroics to distribution' but also cautions against a view that distributed leadership necessarily means any reduction in the scope of the principal's role. Indeed, Hartley (2010, 27) argues that 'its popularity may be pragmatic: to ease the burden of overworked headteachers'. Lumby (2009, 320) adds that distributed leadership 'does not imply that school staff are necessarily enacting leadership any differently' to the time 'when heroic, individual leadership was the focus of attention'.

Bennett et al. (2003, 3) claim that distributed leadership is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise. Harris (2004, 19), referring to an English study of 10 English schools facing challenging circumstances (Harris and Chapman 2002), says that there should be 'redistribution of power', not simply a process of 'delegated headship'. However, Hopkins and Jackson (2002) argue that formal leaders need to orchestrate and nurture the space for distributed leadership to occur, suggesting that it would be difficult to achieve without the active support of school principals. Given that leadership is widely regarded as an influence process, a central issue is 'who can exert influence over colleagues and in what domains?' (Harris 2005, 165). Heads and principals retain much of the formal authority in schools, leading Hartley (2010, 82) to conclude that 'distributed leadership resides uneasily within the formal bureaucracy of schools'. However, the emphasis on 'informal sources of influence' (Harris 2010, 56) suggests that distributed leadership may also thrive if there is a void in the formal leadership of the organisation.

Harris (2004, 16) argues that 'successful heads recognise the limitations of a singular leadership approach' and adopt a form of leadership 'distributed through collaborative and joint working'. However, Gronn's (2010, 74) overview of four research projects leads him to conclude that principals retain considerable power: 'Certain individuals, while they by no means monopolized the totality of the leadership, nonetheless exercised disproportionate influence compared to their individual peers'. Bottery (2004, 21) asks how distribution is to be achieved, 'if those in formal positions do not wish to have their power redistributed in this way?' Harris (2005, 167) argues that 'distributed and hierarchical forms of leadership are not incompatible' but it is evident that distribution can work successfully only if formal leaders allow it to take root.

The interest in, and support for, distributed leadership is predicated on the assumption that it will bring about beneficial effects that would not occur with singular leadership. Leithwood et al.'s (2006, 12) important English study shows that multiple leadership is much more effective than solo approaches:

> Total leadership accounted for a quite significant 27 per cent variation in student achievement across schools. This is a much higher proportion of explained variation (two to three times higher) than is typically reported in studies of individual headteacher effects.

Leithwood et al. (2006, 13) add that schools with the highest levels of student achievement attributed this to relatively high levels of influence from all sources of leadership. Distributed leadership features in two of their widely cited 'seven strong claims' about successful school leadership. Hallinger and Heck (2010) also found that distributed leadership was significantly related to change in academic capacity and, thus, to growth in student learning. These are important findings but more such research is required before a causal relationship can be established with confidence.

As suggested earlier, the existing authority structure in schools and colleges provides a potential barrier to the successful introduction and implementation of distributed leadership. 'There are inherent threats to status and the status quo in all that distributed leadership implies' (Harris 2004, 20). Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008) refer to the residual significance of authority and hierarchy, and note the 'dark side' of distributed leadership, managerialism in a new guise. It can also be argued that distributed leadership leads to the power relationship between followers and leaders becoming blurred (Law, Galton, and Wan 2010). Lumby (2013) also links distributed leadership to power, claiming that little attention is given to the implications of the former for power relations in education.

These reservations suggest that an appropriate climate is an essential pre-condition to meaningful distributed leadership. Harris (2005, 169) argues that 'the creation of collegial norms' is essential and adds that teachers need time to meet if collective leadership is to become a reality. She adds that cordial relationships are required with school managers, who may 'feel threatened' (Harris 2005) by teachers taking on leadership roles. Despite these reservations, however, the research does show that distributed leadership has the potential to expand the scope of leadership, leading to enhanced student outcomes while developing the formal leaders of the future. Gronn's (2010, 77) 'hybrid' model of leadership may offer the potential to harness the best of both individual and distributed approaches.

Distributed leadership and theory development

Distributed leadership provides the most significant contemporary example of the nature of theory in educational leadership. To what extent is theory a representation of practice (description), and to what extent does it constitute advocacy; a normative perspective? Gunter, Hall, and Bragg (2013), for example, analyse several positions taken by writers on distributed leadership in education. These include description, defined as 'everyday practice in schools' (560) and normative, 'an imperative for practitioners' (563).

Lumby (2013, 582) comments that discussion of distributed leadership as a heuristic tool gave way to an evangelical approach, for example in NCSL publications. This may explain, in part, the frequent references to distributed leadership by participants in a study of senior leadership teams at schools rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted (Bush and Glover 2012). Unprompted, these leaders attributed their perceived success to adopting distributed approaches. Distributed leadership is popular, in part, because it accords with the notion that values should be shared by teacher professionals and other adults in the schools. Difficulties arise when the assumption of shared values is contradicted by the reality of conflicting values.

Distributed leadership is the most recent model to be subject to a strongly normative approach; 'the theory of choice for many' (Lumby 2013, 581). As we shall see later, the idea that particular types of leadership may be advocated enthusiastically by academics,

practitioners and/or policy-makers is not new. Bureaucracy, collegiality and transformational leadership are among the ideas previously treated in this way.

Teacher leadership

There are clear links between teacher leadership and distributed leadership. Frost (2008, 337) characterises the former as involving shared leadership, teachers' leadership of development work, teachers' knowledge building, and teachers' voice.

Muijs and Harris's (2007, 961) research in three UK schools showed that:

> Teacher leadership was characterised by a variety of formal and informal groupings, often facilitated by involvement in external programmes. Teacher leadership was seen to empower teachers, and contributed to school improvement through this empowerment and the spreading of good practice and initiatives generated by teachers.

Timperley (2005, 418) cautions that developing teacher leadership in ways that promote student achievement presents difficulties. Teacher leaders with high acceptability among their colleagues are not necessarily those with appropriate expertise. Conversely, the micro-politics within a school can reduce the acceptability of those who have the expertise. Stevenson (2012) argues that the interpretation of teacher leadership is managerialist in nature and inherently conservative. Helterbran (2010, 363) notes that teacher leadership, 'remains largely an academic topic and, even though inroads have been made, teacher leadership remains more a concept than an actuality'. Muijs and Harris (2007, 126) conclude that:

> teacher leadership requires active steps to be taken to constitute leadership teams and provide teachers with leadership roles. A culture of trust and collaboration is essential, as is a shared vision of where the school needs to go, clear line management structures and strong leadership development programmes.

It is difficult to imagine distributed leadership becoming embedded in schools without teacher leaders. This suggests that teacher leadership should be conceptualised as a shared, rather than a solo, model. Both models are underpinned by the notion of shared values. As noted above, difficulties arise when this assumption is not realised in practice.

System leadership

Concepts of leadership mostly portray schools as independent units or as prime institutions within a hierarchical structure. This has begun to change in some countries. Barber, Whelan, and Clarke's (2010, 1) survey of 1850 educationalists and teachers in 4 countries showed that leaders 'were increasing the opportunities for heads to learn from one another', through visits, networks or clusters. This sometimes included seconding high-performing heads to struggling schools for a sustained period.

Hargreaves (2010) discusses the concept of a 'self-improving system of schools'. The 'architecture' of such a system rests on four main building blocks:

- Clusters of schools.
- Adopting a local solutions approach.

- Stimulating co-construction between schools.
- Expanding the concept of system leadership.

System leadership involves leaders extending their remit beyond their own school. One major example of this strategy is the role of National Leaders of Education (NLEs). Hill and Matthews (2010) define NLEs as, 'outstanding school leaders who, together with the staff in their schools, use their knowledge and experience to provide additional leadership capacity to schools in difficulty'. Successful NLE activity requires attention to the four Cs:

- *Commissioning*: linking the NLE with the partner school.
- *Capacity*: the ability of NLEs and their schools to take on a significant outreach commitment.
- *Capability*: how well equipped are the NLEs and their schools to provide solutions for the underperforming school.
- *Commitment*: the attributes required by NLEs, including courage, tenacity, resilience and vision.

Hill and Matthews (2010, 88) conclude that NLEs are 'helping to increase improvements in attainment and close the gap with other schools'. Hill (2010, 45) adds that:

> The model [of executive leadership] … enjoys a number of advantages. It brings clear and dedicated leadership capacity to a group of schools. This ensures the schools have the capability to think and plan for the medium term as well as manage school affairs on a day-to-day basis. It strengthens the operation of leadership teams, providing a broader base for organising development and support.

Chapman et al.'s (2010) survey of federated schools demonstrates the growth of a wide range of governance, leadership and management structures emerging within federations. These structures tend to be fluid in nature and can reconfigure very quickly, especially if key personnel cannot be appointed or they leave the federation. School improvement processes in these federations appear strongest when the change is locally owned and resides with teachers. Ang (2012) says that early years' leadership is generally located within a multi-agency environment, which encourages collaborative working.

Coleman (2011, 312) links system leadership to collaborative leadership. He says that the latter is a 'blended phenomenon' which is both principled and pragmatic, guided by vision and values but sensitive to the needs of others and the broader context. He also notes the connections between collaborative and other models, including distributed leadership. It fits with system leadership in its emphasis on partnerships. 'The move towards collaborative working represents the single most significant change for schools in the 21st century' (Coleman 2011, 310).

Hadfield, Kubiak, and O'Leary (2005, 3) note that system or networked groups of schools offer benefits but they add that co-leadership is a moral activity, based upon challenging many existing notions of leadership and the relationship between schools. They also comment that networks provide a favourable development ground for different forms of distributed leadership. This model is underpinned by the notion that values can be shared across groups of schools. This assumption needs to be tested by further research.

Theorising system leadership is at an early stage but normative elements can be detected in some of the comments reported in this section, for example in Hill's (2010) enthusiastic endorsement of this model. Advocacy is prominent while evidence remains sparse.

Contingent leadership

The models of leadership examined above are all partial. They provide valid and helpful insights into one particular aspect of leadership. None of these models provide a complete picture of school leadership. As Lambert (1995, 2) notes, there is 'no single best type'. The contingent model provides an alternative approach, recognising the diverse nature of school contexts, and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation, rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' stance:

> This approach assumes that what is important is how leaders respond to the unique organizational circumstances or problems … there are wide variations in the contexts for leadership and that, to be effective, these contexts require different leadership responses. (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach 1999, 15)

Yukl (2002, 234) adds that, 'the managerial job is too complex and unpredictable to rely on a set of standardised responses to events. Effective leaders are continuously reading the situation and evaluating how to adapt their behaviour to it'. As Vanderhaar, Muñoz, and Rodosky (2007) suggest, leadership is contingent on the setting.

Leadership requires effective diagnosis of problems, followed by adopting the most appropriate response to the issue or situation (Morgan 1997). This reflexive approach is particularly important in periods of turbulence when leaders need to be able to assess the situation carefully and react as appropriate rather than relying on a standard leadership model.

A contingent approach also helps to counter the normative features of many leadership models and responds to the tendency to advocate one 'right' approach to school leadership. By recognising that a range of approaches can be valid, it provides a more complete picture of leadership practice. The contingent model is pragmatic and is not underpinned by a clear set of values.

The following discussion compares the models and traces the history of 'fads and fashions' in school leadership theory.

Conclusion: where are we now in understanding and applying leadership theory?

The concept of management has been joined, or superseded, by the language of leadership but the activities undertaken by principals and senior staff resist such labels. Successful leaders are increasingly focused on learning, the central and unique purpose of educational organisations. They also face unprecedented accountability pressures in many countries in what is clearly an increasingly 'results driven' business. As these environmental pressures intensify, leaders and managers require greater understanding, skill and resilience to sustain their institutions. Heads, principals and senior staff need an appreciation of the theory, as well as the practice, of educational management.

Theory is one of the four essential building blocks of school leadership. Alongside policy, research and practice, it provides helpful insights into how schools are led and

managed. The theory of leadership is important for two main reasons. First, it provides a way of understanding and interpreting the actions of leaders. The models outlined in this paper, and the many other models discussed elsewhere (e.g. Davies 2005), provide lenses to view and comprehend the ways in which leadership is enacted in schools. Second, understanding theory provides a guide to leadership practice for principals and other leaders. It widens horizons and avoids drawing only on the inevitably limited individual or collective experience of any school's leaders.

Each of the leadership models discussed in this paper is partial. They provide distinct but uni-dimensional perspectives on school leadership. They are also artificial distinctions, or 'ideal types', in that most successful leaders are likely to embody most or all of these approaches in their work. For example, heads may aspire to develop distributed instructional leadership.

We noted earlier that leadership theory is subject to fashion and that models increase and decrease in perceived importance over time. The reasons for such changes are not always apparent. Hallinger (1992) provides a helpful perspective on the shifting expectations of American principals, which can be explained as changing conceptions of school leadership. He discusses three of the models reviewed in this paper and shows how these expectations changed:

(1) *Managerial*. During the 1960s and 1970s, principals were viewed as change agents for government initiatives. The principal's role was limited to managing the implementation of externally devised initiatives.
(2) *Instructional*. By the mid-1980s, the emphasis had changed to the 'new orthodoxy' of instructional leadership. The instructional leader was viewed as the primary source of knowledge for developing the school's educational programme. Hallinger (1992, 38) noted, however, that many principals did not have 'the instructional leadership capacities needed for meaningful school improvement'.
(3) *Transformational*. During the 1990s, conceptions of leadership changed to view schools as the units responsible for initiating change, not simply implementing externally generated change. This led to notions of transformational leadership, as principals sought to enlist support from teachers and other stakeholders to address school priorities.

The Hallinger (1992) review illustrates that leadership models are subject to fashion. Different patterns may be observed in other contexts and these are reflected in the overview of leadership models below.

Managerial leadership has been discredited and dismissed as limited and technicist, but it is an essential component of successful leadership, ensuring the implementation of the school's vision and strategy. Management without vision is rightly criticised as 'managerialist' but vision without effective implementation is bound to lead to frustration. In centralised contexts, it is the most appropriate way of conceptualising leadership because the principal's role often remains that of implementing external imperatives with little scope for local initiative. This is evident in many African countries, including Rwanda (Kambanda 2013) and in much of Eastern and Southern Europe, including Greece (Kaparou 2013). Even in decentralised systems, however, effective implementation of initiatives, whether externally or internally generated, remains

important. Managerial leadership is a vital part of the armoury of any successful principal.

Instructional leadership is different to the other models in focusing on the direction rather than the process of leadership. It says little about the process by which instructional leadership is to be developed. It focuses on the 'what', rather than the 'how', of educational leadership. In this respect, it is limited and partial, and has to be considered alongside other models. As noted earlier, there are two other weaknesses which have contributed to the model being modified and rebadged as 'leadership for learning'. First, there is recognition that the model focused too strongly on teaching, with limited attention to learning. Second, the concept was revised to acknowledge that the principal is not the only instructional leader, as argued by Hallinger (1992), and that other professionals share this role. This contributed to the emerging notion of distributed instructional leadership.

Transformational leadership remains popular as it accords closely with the emphasis on vision as the central dimension of leadership. Successful leaders are expected to engage with staff and other stakeholders to produce higher levels of commitment to achieving the goals of the organisation which, in turn, are linked to the vision. There is evidence to suggest that transformational leadership is effective in improving student outcomes (Leithwood 1994) but this model also has two major limitations. First, it may be used as a vehicle for the manipulation or control of teachers who are required to support the 'vision' and aims of the leader. Second, the language of transformation may be used to secure the implementation of centrally determined policies, not the identification of school-level vision and goals.

Distributed leadership has become the normatively preferred leadership model in the twenty-first century. Harris (2010) argues that it is one of the most influential ideas to emerge in the field of educational leadership. It can be differentiated from several other models by its focus on collective, rather than singular, leadership. Leithwood et al.'s (2006) important study of the impact of school leadership led to an evidence-based claim that leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed. This finding supports the common-sense view that enhancing leadership capacity in this way is likely to be more effective than relying only on singular leadership. Gronn's (2010) 'hybrid' model of leadership may offer the potential to harness the best of both individual and distributed approaches.

Teacher leadership is often linked to distributed leadership. A key distinction can be made between teachers' classroom leadership, which may involve other adults, and their wider school role. Promoting teacher leadership provides greater leadership capacity and capability, and also offers the prospect of a 'ready-made' cohort when middle and senior leadership positions become available. Teacher leadership is more likely to succeed where it is fostered and nurtured by heads and senior leaders.

Moral leadership and authentic leadership are values-based models. Leaders are expected to behave with integrity, and to develop and support goals underpinned by explicit values. Such leadership may be found in faith schools, where the values are essentially spiritual, or may be a product of the leader's own background and experience. The main difficulty arises when staff or stakeholders do not support the values of leaders. This is likely to be uncomfortable for the people concerned and may lead to dissonance within the school.

System leadership is of increasing significance because of the emergence of new forms of school organisation, including federations, networks and executive headships. It

raises issues about accountability but has the advantage of bringing a wider range of leadership experience and expertise to help in addressing educational challenges and problems. The evidence of their effectiveness is mixed and more research is required before confident judgements can be made about their value as a mode of structuring relationships between schools.

Contingent leadership acknowledges the diverse nature of school contexts, and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation, rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' stance. The educational context is too complex and unpredictable for a single leadership approach to be adopted for all events and issues. Leaders need to be able to read the situation and adopt the most appropriate response. Contingent leadership, then, is not a single model but represents a mode of responsiveness which requires effective diagnosis followed by careful selection of the most appropriate leadership style. It is pragmatic, rather than principled, and can be criticised for having no overt sense of the 'big picture'.

Implications for school leaders

Recent evidence in England (Leithwood et al. 2006), and internationally (Robinson 2007), provides powerful empirical support for the widely accepted view that the quality of leadership is a critical variable in securing positive school and learner outcomes. Leadership is second only to classroom teaching in its potential to generate school improvement. However, much less is known about how leaders impact on outcomes. While 'quick fix' solutions to school underperformance, often involving strong managerial leadership, can produce short-term improvement, sustainable progress is much harder to achieve.

The leadership typology discussed in this paper provides many clues for heads, senior and middle leaders and senior leadership teams. Managerial leadership, operating through the hierarchy, can mandate clearly targeted change, such as a stronger focus on examination and test scores. However, this often depends on a single leader and may not lead to sustainable change. Transformational leadership approaches aim to widen commitment to school-wide objectives, through the development of shared vision, but the 'vision' is often that of the head or principal with acquiescence, rather than genuine commitment, from teachers and other staff.

The limitations of the hierarchy have led to a plethora of alternative models; participative, distributed and teacher leadership, which are all designed to broaden leadership and to stress lateral as well as vertical relationships. These are often manifested in team-based structures. Bush and Glover's (2012) study of high-performing senior leadership teams showed their value in providing coherence and leadership 'density'. Departmental and key-stage teams have the same potential to widen leadership participation but there is little evidence about the most effective way to develop and sustain such teams. Cross-school teams (or networks) also have the potential to influence outcomes but the benefits of such structures are usually indirect.

While there are different approaches to leadership and management, a focus on leadership for learning, or 'instructional leadership', is an essential element for successful schooling. It is likely to be more effective if it is a widely shared function: 'distributed instructional leadership'. The nine successful schools featured in Bush and Glover's (2012) research on English senior leadership teams all had a shared focus on high-quality teaching and learning, underpinned by a 'no excuses' culture. Contingent leadership

suggests that a flexible approach is required but attention to leadership for learning is a key element of successful schooling.

Note

1. The ideas discussed in this paper are those of the authors, not the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

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