Distributed School Leadership: Developing Tomorrow’s Leaders

Essex Primary Heads’ Association Conference
Thursday 19th March
The X factor

Why is it that some organisations can transform themselves and others cannot?
What type of leadership transforms learning?
Transforming Learning

Securing success for each student in each setting
Organisations that have the x factor

Response to failure is a large part of their success

Sophisticated and effective distributed leadership in operation

Data to inform decision making

Organisational re-design
Issues

Hiring and Firing

Degrees of accountability

Timescale for turnaround
The paradox of success

is that what got you where you are won’t keep you where you are.
What we know about Successful ‘Turnaround’

Is rarely accidental - usually orchestrated

Leadership plays a crucial role

Restructuring is not as important as re-culturing

There are distinctive phases of improvement

Rarely achieved without external support and impetus
Research indicates that the quality of leadership is a key determinant of all highly effective and improving organisations.

(Townsend, 2007)
Impact of Leadership on Learning
(Leithwood et al, 2007)

Leadership is second only to teaching and learning in its impact on student learning.

www.ioe.ac.uk
The effects of successful leadership are considerably greater in schools that are in more difficult circumstances.

So is the impact of teachers.
It is clear that Successful ‘turnaround’ always necessitates some change in leadership.
So Leadership Matters
But it's not enough to know that school leadership matters. We need to know what form(s) of school leadership transform organisational and student learning?
Individual Leadership?
Good to Great

- Level 1 Capable individual
- Level 2 Team manager
- Level 3 Competent manager
- Level 4 Effective Leader
- Level 5 Executive
Level 5 Leaders

Channel ego needs away from themselves
Focus on larger goals
Are ambitious for their institution and not themselves
Level 5 Leadership

- Leaders who developed other leaders, distributed leadership and shared power.
Pause for Thought

Do you agree with this notion of a level 5 leader?
How far are you a level 5 leader?
The World Is Flat
Technological Change

In five years, students will be using technologies which haven’t been invented yet
Leadership for Transformation (Senge, 2006)

In a world of global networks, we face issues for which top down leadership is inherently inadequate.
Central Argument

A shift from leadership as hierarchies and roles

To leadership as practice -interactions at all levels are the drivers of change and transformation.
Leadership for transformation is distributed and lateral
So may Labels for Leadership

Transformational

Instructional

Distributed

Strategic

System

Passionate
A definition of distributed leadership
(Harris 2008)

Leadership shared and extended within and between organisations:
Distributed Leadership
(Harris 2008)

Doesn’t mean everyone leads but that everyone has the potential to lead under the right conditions.
Two fundamental Principles
(Harris and Lambert, 2000)

Broad based involvement

Agency to influence and change
Key Question

Does distributed leadership make a positive difference does it make to learning and standards?
Distributed Leadership and School Improvement

Diagnosis → Distributed Leadership

Development

Data

Drive
Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership
(Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins, 2006)

School leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed.

Some patterns of leadership distribution are much more effective than others.
Effects of Different patterns of Leadership Distribution

Schools with the highest student achievement attributed it, in part, to distributed sources of leadership (i.e. school teams, parents and students).
But does DL make a difference to organisational/student learning outcomes?

(Harris 2008)

- Improved student outcomes
- Better teacher morale and self efficacy
- Improved organisational outcomes
Distributed Leadership and Student Learning

Analysis of data suggest that distributed leadership impacts positively upon student achievement.

(Hallinger and Heck, 2009)
Wrong Question

The question to ask is not
“Does distributed leadership make a difference to student learning?”

BUT

How and in what form can we maximise the impact of DL on learning?”
Why Distributed Leadership?
High Impact on Learning
What does DL look like in schools?

Structures

Roles

Teams

Learning

Ways of Working
New Structures
Schools are

Increasing or restructuring leadership team
Cross subject teams
Semi-permanent working groups
Informal partnerships
Mentoring, coaching and critical friendships
Distributed Leadership: 3 Levels (Harris, 2008)

- Superficial level – delegation
- Subterranean level-new teams, new roles and responsibilities
- Deep level- cultural- the way of working around here
How far is DL in your school

Superficial?

Subterranean?

Deep?
Distributed Leadership
(Harris, 2007)

Is fundamentally about organisational re-design to generate greater leadership capacity.
Different in Different Schools
Breadth

Visualizing the Structure of the World Wide Web in 3D Hyperbolic Space
So is there a Blueprint?
Distributed leadership
(Harris, 2007)

is fundamentally about connecting leadership practice more closely with teaching and learning practice.
Long haul: Two Vital Tests

Leadership that secures improved teaching and learning
Leadership that develops other leaders, at all levels
Wherever and Whenever we choose (Edmonds, 1979)

We can improve learning and life-chances of young people
Optimism