

Preface

The concept of 'leadership' has overtaken previous linguistic formulations such as 'administration' or 'management' as the dominant description for all those functions that are involved in guiding and developing organizations towards the achievement of their organizational goals. This is not merely part of some general linguistic drift; it is a recognition that organizations and institutions, including schools, need to be constantly reinvigorated, monitored (in the broadest and best sense) and moved forward if they are to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world. The sheer pace of innovation in learning theory, in the use of ICT and above all in national policy on education has been so dramatic that it has, at times quite literally, taken the breath away from those engaged in learning and teaching in schools.

It is partly because of the amplitude of this wave of multiple and multi-layered innovations that some have argued for a new conception of leadership that moves away from traditional hierarchical models where power and responsibility are vested in one or two key people – namely, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher or, in larger schools, a slightly wider 'senior management team'. The central thesis of those who offer this new conception is that there is simply so much leadership and so many things to lead that all staff need to be involved as leaders. These new ideas come in various guises but one of the most popular and influential ways of expressing this trend is through the notion of 'distributed leadership', where leadership functions are spread widely throughout the school. In many ways this is to be applauded as an approach since it has the advantages of not only involving staff in decision-making but also of offering a degree of democratization (or something akin to it) in the leadership and management of schools.

There are, however, a number of challenges and dangers subsumed within these new ideas and these have especial impact on primary schools. These issues can be outlined in a series of questions:

- How will staff find time to take on new leadership responsibilities when it is almost inevitable in many primary schools that all teaching staff, possibly even including the headteacher, will have a full-time teaching commitment and a responsibility to a class of children?
- How can teachers who have received no specific training to be leaders take on complex and challenging roles in middle leadership which involve motivating and managing colleagues?
- Where will such aspirant middle leaders gain experience of key skills and competencies associated with developing and enacting strategic initiatives?

To some extent the answer to all these questions will be the same as it has always been: teachers will learn from one another and draw on their own, apparently infinite, resources of intelligence and creativity in order to make their schools meet the needs of children. These methods of experiential learning are not to be derided or underestimated as a strategy but they are not the only methods, nor necessarily the best methods, of learning how to be a leader in schools. For this reason this text sets out, quite self-consciously, to address these issues by attempting to provide some of the theoretical and practical underpinnings of this new conception of leadership.

The structure of the text is conceived in four sections that take the reader through the following areas: an overview of the issues associated with middle leadership; a detailed discussion of leadership and the emergent notion of the role of the middle leader in managing and accounting for change in schools; the resource issues that a middle leader may justifiably be expected to address; and, finally, the ways in which staff can be led by middle leaders. The final section concludes with a chapter on school-based research and evaluation for evidence-based practice.

Section A provides an overview of the components of middle leadership in primary schools. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the text and its title – ‘In search of subject leadership’ – reveals the fact that we still seek to define the role of middle leaders in Key Stages 1 and 2. Chapter 2 reflects on the effective classroom practitioner and Chapter 3 attempts to show how the skills built up in the classroom can be extrapolated and developed as teachers take on such middle leadership roles and move from subject to curriculum leadership. Section B guides the middle leader in establishing the direction of his or her subject area or department and commences with Chapter 4, which offers a more expansive and detailed analysis of what is actually meant by the terms leadership and management and then goes on to explore the role of the middle leader within the distributed leadership structure of a primary school. Chapter 5 provides a theoretical overview on

middle leaders managing change and some detailed guidance relating to contemporary notions of strategic planning and target-setting. Chapter 6 offers guidance on monitoring and evaluating progress, and Chapter 7 discusses issues of accountability and the middle leader, especially as they relate to the Ofsted model of external inspection. Section C is devoted to resource issues, within which Chapter 8 concentrates on identifying and organizing learning resources and Chapter 9 adumbrates the problems and possibilities associated with a topic that is often new and challenging to middle leaders – that of budgeting for the cost of learning resources. The final element of the text, Section D, focuses on what the writers consider to be a key issue in enhancing schools, that of leading and motivating colleagues and pupils. Chapter 10 outlines the way in which colleagues need to be lead and managed to improve performance. Chapter 11 focuses on the various models of curriculum leadership and suggests that a co-constructed model of teaching and learning should be adopted which can both motivate pupils to learn and mirror the overall methods of relating to adults within the school. Chapter 12, the final chapter of both the section and the text as a whole, addresses classroom and school-based research for evidence-based decision-making.