Introduction

The essentials of school leadership

Brent Davies

Writing for, and editing, the second edition of this book has presented me with the opportunity to act on feedback from readers of the first edition. The intention of the first edition, and indeed this edition, was not to describe every facet of leadership nor to put a new adjective before leadership. The purpose is to engage readers with some of the major themes in the leadership literature to enable them to reflect on their own leadership skills and abilities. Many school leaders have told me that their senior teams have used the book as a leadership development vehicle. They have used the chapters in the book, usually one per term, as focused reading for the team to enable them to discuss key aspects of leadership. This has provided them with the opportunity to build common understanding and reflect on how they wish to develop leadership in the school. It is this perspective and approach that underpins the second edition. To continue the leadership discussions all chapters now have four key readings at the end to extend the debate should readers wish to do so.

The book seeks, therefore, to provide a contemporary introduction to, and development of, key dimensions of leadership. For each of the dimensions each chapter aims to:

- be an introduction to that particular perspective
- be an explanation of the key concepts and ideas about that particular dimension of leadership
- be a stimulus to engage the reader in a reflection of the significance and application of that type of leadership to their current practice.
- provide a set of key readings to further extend that particular leadership topic.

This second edition of the book has continued the remarkable oppor-

tunity for me to engage with key educators whose work I have admired and from which I have drawn insights and inspiration in my professional career. The book brings together a unique set of 'leadership voices' to explore the contemporary nature of school leadership. It aims to bridge the gap between the academic and professional world by providing, in an accessible form, a leadership understanding to assist those undertaking a leadership role or those working with leaders. To this end the book is aimed at leaders in schools and those aspiring to leadership, together with those in the academic community who are engaged in leadership development work in schools.

Defining leadership can draw on many sources and be seen from many perspectives. My daughter Rhiannon, a Doctor of Psychology from Edinburgh University who works as a clinical psychologist, would probably think leadership was only a mental construct. On the other hand, my daughter Cassandra, a graduate in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic from Cambridge University, informs me that there is an Anglo-Saxon noun 'lad' with a long 'a', which means a course, way or journey and a verb 'lædan' which is to lead or mark. So the etymology of leadership may be construed as one who shows others the way on a journey.

Leadership is often distinguished from management. Leadership is about direction-setting and inspiring others to make the journey to a new and improved state for the school. Management is concerned with efficiently operating in the current set of circumstances and planning in the shorter term for the school. Leadership is not the provenance of one individual but of a group of people who provide leadership in the school and, by doing so, provide support and inspiration to others to achieve the best for the children in their care. Leadership is not set in isolation but is set in the context of organizations and the wider society. Ken Leithwood in his report, 'What do we already know about successful school leadership?', argues that: 'Most contemporary theories of leadership suggest that leadership cannot be separated from the context in which leadership is exerted. Leadership is contingent on the setting, the nature of the social organization, the goals being perused, the individuals involved, resources and timeframes and many other factors' (Leithwood, 2003: 9).

Leadership can take many forms and this book seeks to explore some of them so that readers can build their own definition and model of leadership. In selecting a group of writers to contribute, it was necessary to draw together a set of themes that individually explored the nature of leadership but also provided a useful overall framework to rethink school leadership.

The second edition of the book is deliberately limited to ten

chapters as a means of focusing the leadership debate. This is not meant to be comprehensive but a sample of major issues and dimensions in leadership. These ten chapters can be seen as five sections which pick up major themes:

Section 1 (chapters 1 and 2) considers the forward-looking strategic dimension of leadership which is transformational in nature, with chapters from Brent and Barbara Davies on 'Strategic Leadership' and Ken Leithwood and Doris Jantzi on 'Transformational Leadership'.

Section 2 (chapters 3 and 4) considers the ethical underpinning of leadership with chapters from John Novak on the democratic underpinning of leadership with a consideration of 'Invitational Leadership' and Jerry Starrat on 'Ethical Leadership'.

Section 3 (chapters 5 and 6) considers the critical importance of the relationship between leadership and learning. There are two chapters in this section, 'Learning-Centred Leadership' by Geoff Southworth and 'Constructivist Leadership' by Linda Lambert.

Section 4 (chapters 7 and 8) considers differing leadership skills and attributes that leaders deploy. Terry Deal, in his chapter, looks at 'Poetical and Political Leadership' as a means of understanding the diverse approaches used by leaders. Gib Hentschke looks at the increasing importance of 'Entrepreneurial Leadership' as a key behaviour and skill.

Section 5 (chapters 9 and 10) considers how we develop and sustain leadership. Peter Earley and Jeff Jones write on how we can develop effective leadership in schools in their chapter 'Developing Leadership'. Andy Hargreaves, in his chapter on 'Sustainable Leadership', takes on the challenge of how we sustain leadership once it has been developed.

Each of these individual chapters will now be discussed.

Section 1: strategic and transformational leadership

It is clear in almost all definitions of leadership that the concept of future direction and moving the organization forward predominates. Thus the first chapter considers strategic leadership. I have been fortunate to work with Barbara Davies, an outstanding educator and writer. She and I articulate key concepts within the field of strategy which we build on to examine the nature and dimensions of strategic leadership. In particular we move away from the rational and predictable concepts of strategic planning and see strategy as much as a process and a perspective as it is a set of detailed plans and outcomes. This is reinforced in Andy Hargreaves's chapter in this book. We see that the critical challenge for

schools is to move on from the short-term planning approach, associated with standards-driven short-term targets, to broader strategic educational processes and approaches to build sustainability into schools. This enables the establishment of the strategically focused school. We have drawn on our findings from a major research project commissioned by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in the UK called 'Success and Sustainability: developing the strategically focused school'. Key outcomes from our research have outlined the significance of strategic processes and, in particular, strategic conversations, in building capability for long-term sustainable success.

We have examined these strategic processes along with the strategic approaches that schools deploy. Utilizing and mobilizing these strategic processes and approaches is the role of strategic leadership. This chapter focuses on the critical area of strategic leadership. The chapter is structured to examine (1) what strategic leaders do and (2) the characteristics that strategic leaders display as a means of (3) developing a new model for strategic leadership. The model outlines that a strategic intelligence develops through 'people wisdom' and 'contextual wisdom' and utilizes 'procedural wisdom' to build strategic leadership capability. This model provides a framework to examine the strategic leadership development needs in the organization.

If leadership needs to be strategic to move a school from its current to a future state, then the future state should be an improved one which will provide enhanced educational opportunities for the children in that school. In summary, the leadership needs to transform the school from one point to another. The current dominant paradigm in education is that of transformational leadership and this is the focus of Chapter 2. The work of Ken Leithwood in this field has been as outstanding as it has been prolific. His work has been research-led and informed but has been written in such a way that it is accessible both to the reflective practitioner and to the academic in the field. His chapter, written with his colleague Doris Jantzi, is an exceptional summary and development of the transformational leadership perspective. They outline the development of transformational leadership in the non-educational world and chart its development in the education sector.

The studies by Leithwood and Jantzi (1990, 1999, 2000, 2006) undoubtedly provide the most fully developed model of transformational leadership in a school context. Their model has three broad categories of leadership practices. The first is 'setting directions' by articulating a vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals and creating high-performance cultures. This links strongly to the previous chapter on strategy. The second is 'developing people' which involves

high-quality interpersonal relationships, a factor linked to the subsequent chapter on invitational leadership. The final category is 'redesigning the organization'. The ability to reorganize is strongly linked to organizational learning and the building of professional learning communities, a point that is also part of the discussion in Chapter 10 regarding sustainable leadership practice. Chapter 2 provides a clear, concise and perceptive account of the dimensions of transformational leadership in schools.

Section 2: ethical and moral leadership

Leithwood's final point regarding developing the people leads into a consideration of interpersonal leadership approaches. As an antidote for the managerialist and target-setting culture that has developed in education, John Novak's contribution, in Chapter 3, puts education and values back at the heart of the education debate. Working closely with John Novak over the last decade, on courses and projects using an invitational leadership approach, has been a powerful learning experience for me. One of the key tenets of invitational leadership is that it is an approach which is based on leaders and their colleagues working on a 'doing-with' rather than a 'doing-to' relationship, probably thus avoiding the result of 'doing-in'!

The inviting approach is based on five assumptions: respect for individuals in the organization: trust between individuals; care in the process of leading people; optimism that better futures are possible; and, intentionality, where individuals take a proactive approach. John Novak categorizes four types of invitational leadership behaviour. Intentionally disinviting leaders set out to undermine and demean their staff. Unintentially disinviting behaviour is seen when, through insensitivity, individuals are 'damned by faint praise'. An example with children would be saying that 'they are doing well considering the background they come from'. Alternatively, unintentionally inviting leadership occurs when good-natured individuals provide generally supportive environments but provide no back-up or reflection on the process. Intentionally inviting leadership is demonstrated when leaders purposefully and intentionally display behaviour that invites colleagues to perform well and recognizes their unique contributions.

Significantly, John provides a lesson for leaders that they should first invite themselves both personally and professionally. By this he means that keeping a work–life balance and engaging in professional development are critical in developing individual leadership ability. It is then

that leaders can invite others in the school, both personally and professionally, to join in and support the educational journey that the school is making. This is a powerful chapter and a unique perspective.

I have long admired and respected the work of Robert (Jerry) Starratt and was honoured and delighted that he agreed to contribute to the book. Chapter 4 develops the theme that if leadership is to be strategic and transformational as well as being invitational in style, it must be founded on a sound ethical base. Jerry puts forward the position that there are five levels of ethical enactment that educational leaders undertake. The first is that of a human being and what it is ethical to do in relationships with others. The second is that of the citizen-public servant where one acts for the public good. The third is ethical enactment as an educator, where the responsibility is to understand the implications of knowledge and its impact on the community. The fourth that educational management and leadership processes are not ethically neutral and they either promote the core work of the school, that of teaching and learning, or they curtail it. School processes and structures work to the benefit of some students and to the disadvantage of others. The ethical dimension is to benefit all students and be aware of the dangers of 'one size fits all' policies. Jerry Starratt argues that much of the ethical activity in these first four levels involves a kind of transactional ethic. The fifth level of ethical enactment, that of educational leader, involves a transformational ethic. He considers that the transformational ethic involves the educational leader in calling students and teachers to reach beyond self-interest for some higher ideal. He concludes with a model of three foundational virtues of educational leaders, those of responsibility, authenticity and presence. This is a key chapter for the reader to review his or her own ethical perspectives as educational leaders.

Section 3: learning and leadership in relationships

Teaching and learning processes are clearly the prime function of a school. Any consideration of leadership in a school setting would see this dimension as essential. Traditionally referred to as instructional leadership, but increasingly being known as learning-centred leadership, this is the focus of Chapter 5. Geoff Southworth's core premise is that what distinguishes school leaders from leaders in other organizations is their desire and responsibility to enhance student learning. In his research over the last decade, Geoff has been pivotal in focusing the leadership debate onto the students and their learning as a core purpose of leadership. I have long admired his work and I am delighted to

have his contribution to the book. In a powerfully argued chapter, he adopts the position that leaders make a difference to what happens in classrooms and student learning, both directly and indirectly. They are able to do this through three processes, those of modelling, monitoring and dialogue. Modelling is about the power of example. He asks whether the leader is a reflective learner in his or her own practice or merely an advocate for other people undertaking it. He suggests that monitoring provides data which can be interpreted, enabling decisions to be based on up-to-date, relevant information about learning, which is a key characteristic of learning-centred leadership. Dialogue with others is critical in building a learning-centred focus in the school. This links with the notion of strategic conversations in Chapter 1.

Geoff draws out implications for school leaders in four key areas. First, is the significance of moving from teaching curriculum and information to developing active learning in students. This links powerfully to the following chapter on constructivist leadership. Second, he stresses the importance of the educational leader being involved in pupil learning, teacher learning, staff learning, organizational learning, leadership learning and learning networks. The third key area centres on the leadership skills and qualities that an individual brings to the educational leadership process. Fourth, is the importance of distributed leadership as a means of building broader capacity in schools.

This focus on learning-centred leadership leads naturally into Chapter 6 where Linda Lambert articulates a perceptive review of constructivist leadership. Linda understands leadership as a form of learning. She defines constructivist leadership as comprising four dimensions. These are: reciprocal, being invested in and responsible for the learning of others while expecting others to assume similar responsibilities for your own learning; purpose, sharing a vision and a set of beliefs about schooling and student learning; learning, constructing meaning and knowledge together through dialogue, reflection, inquiry and action; and community, a group of people who share common goals, aspirations for the future and care about one another.

In considering how to translate constructivist leadership into action, Linda considers that learning, teaching and leading are interwoven so that to understand learning is to understand the essence of teaching and, by teaching, educationalists understand the essence of leading. From this she proposes three stages of constructivist leadership. The first is 'directive', which is used in a period where an organization is focusing on establishing or initiating collaborative structures and processes that did not previously exist. This is not an autocratic style but that of initial central leadership. Second is the 'transitional' approach, where central

authority releases control as teachers gain the skill and the experience to emerge into leadership roles. In this stage, continuing support and coaching are needed. The final stage is 'high capacity', where teachers play out more dominant roles and the principal of the school leads from the side, emphasizing facilitation and co-participation. Therefore, constructivist leadership can be seen to be embedded in the pattern of relationships and patterns of learning in schools.

Section 4: leadership skills and abilities

Terry Deal has a wonderful ability to reframe and reconceptualize how we look at leadership. I have had two profound experiences of learning from Terry: one in a car stuck on the Los Angeles freeway and one working with him on a principals' leadership development programme in Philadelphia. Both involved diverse and intriguing conversations focusing on leadership stories explaining cultural values and beliefs. In Chapter 7, Terry takes two 'frames' of reference to look at the essential qualities of school leadership. He uses the personal lenses of leaders as politicians and leaders as poets. He argues persuasively that political processes are part of organizational life and we ignore them at our peril. In articulating that political leadership requires familiarity with the strategies and tactics of power and conflict, he puts forward nine principles that can be identified to enable leaders to operate in the political domain. He concludes the first section with a sad reflection that 'the shortfall of skilled political leadership in today's organizations leaves a legacy of festering grudges and too many things left undone'.

In considering the frame of poetic leadership, Terry Deal develops his ideas on symbolic leadership as a means of strengthening and developing organizational culture. He sees that there are key activities that leaders can engage in as ways of developing the poetic and cultural dimension of leadership: revisiting and renewing historical roots; conveying cultural values and beliefs; recognizing heroes and heroines; convening and encouraging rituals and celebrating key events. To make sense of organizations and their complexity, the rational technical aspects of leadership and management only provide part of the answer. Terry suggests that we need to develop both an understanding of the political as well as the cultural nature of organizations. The metaphor of the leader as poet and politician is not one normally promoted on leadership development courses. However, it may be the important dimension missing in developing creative and effective leaders. As always, Terry Deal provides an insightful reframing of our understanding of leadership.

I have been fortunate to collaborate on several projects with Gib Hentschke around the emerging public–private interface in education. His outstanding knowledge of this area is always an inspiration to me, so he was the natural choice to lead on Chapter 8 which reviews the emerging knowledge field of entrepreneurial leadership in education. The leadership approach needed to operate in a more entrepreneurial environment is a much neglected area. The field of entrepreneurial leadership is one that is becoming of increasing importance. The development of self-managing schools in the UK and Australia, and to a degree in the USA, has focused the attention on the abilities of leaders to be entrepreneurial. It could be argued that the schools in the independent or private sector have always needed entrepreneurial skills from their leaders. What has given this entrepreneurial dimension added emphasis has been the developments in the 21st century, for example, in the UK the Academy Movement and Specialist and Foundation schools have increased the entrepreneurial dimension of school leadership. This has also been a result of increased private sector involvement in the provision of Local Authority education services in the UK. In the USA the development of the Charter School movement has significantly focused attention on the entrepreneurial skills of leaders. The breaking up of traditional patterns of schools and school leadership has made this a very important chapter which reflects the increasing change in the roles of leaders.

The chapter establishes new frameworks to examine entrepreneurial leadership. Initially it considers why entrepreneurial leadership is not fully embraced within school leadership. The chapter moves on to identify the features that distinguish entrepreneurs from other leaders. Significantly, it identifies the tolerance for risk and the desire for personal control as key characteristics, along with ambition, perseverance and decisiveness as leadership features of entrepreneurial leaders. The chapter then considers three forces which promote a focus on entrepreneurial leadership: social forces that act on schooling; the new forms of schooling that have emerged; and the new educational organizations that have been created by entrepreneurial companies moving into the education market. The chapter suggests that the interplay between entrepreneurs in private firms and entrepreneurs within schools will result in the public sector growing more entrepreneurial over time. In the final section, the chapter looks at the increase in the development of entrepreneurial leadership as part of leadership development. It would seem, in conclusion, that the entrepreneurial leader is becoming part of the educational leadership mainstream!

Section 5: developing and sustaining leaders

In Chapter 9 Peter Earley and Jeff Jones address the issue of leadership development in schools. They utilize UK and US experience as well as insights from the business and education sectors. Initially looking at definitions of leadership development and making a distinction between 'leader development' and 'leadership development', they move on to consider the content of leadership development programmes. In their Figure 9.2 they draw on the work of Bolden (2007) to provide a perceptive analysis of how leadership development has and is changing. This is supported by a consideration of the work of Darling-Hammond et al (2007) which articulates current development in the USA. The chapter moves on to consider how leaders learn and develop and most significantly the authors tackle the urgent challenge of how schools grow their own leaders. This section provides a rich source of ideas and insights for school leaders to find ways to nurture and develop their own leadership talent. This is supported in the chapter by a consideration of how to ensure the development of a 'leadership for learning' culture. With the demographic challenge of many school leaders retiring over the next five to ten years this chapter is timely in that it not only provides ideas and solutions for improving schools' existing leadership resources but also provides a system perspective on how a broader leadership development framework can be developed. In meeting the challenge of leadership development, this chapter provides an excellent conceptualization of the key aspects of leadership development which will be invaluable for the school leader, developing leadership in themselves and their organization. How we sustain that leadership, once it has been developed, is the key issue in the final chapter.

In Chapter 10, Andy Hargreaves links back to Chapter 1 and develops the concept of sustainable leadership. Andy views sustainability as building on the present in order to achieve an improved position for learning in the school; Barbara Davies and I adopt a similar perspective. His contribution is insightful and a major contribution to the debate on how we develop sustainable improvement.

Andy puts forward ten significant statements on sustainable leadership: (1) it creates and preserves sustaining learning; (2) it secures enduring success over time; (3) it sustains the leadership of others; (4) it is socially just; (5) it develops rather than depletes human and material resources; (6) it develops environmental diversity and capacity; (7) it is activist; (8) it is vigilant and avoids decline; (9) it builds on the past for a better future, and (10) it is patient in seeking long-term results. He

points to the significance of leaders developing sustainability through their approach and commitment to deep learning in their schools and by the way in which they sustain themselves and others around them to promote and support that deep learning. These leaders also persist in achieving their vision without burning out. They can ensure that the school continues to be successful even after they have left, a significant issue for many schools today. He argues that sustainable leadership needs to be a commitment of all schools and all school systems. If change is to be beneficial it needs to be coherent, purposeful and make a difference in the long-term, and leadership that delivers that must be sustainable in the long-term also.

Conclusion

I organized this book as a writers' co-operative with each chapter author taking an equal share. We had several discussions with the publisher regarding the title. Eventually we settled on *The Essentials of School Leadership*. We did not want this to sound exclusive as if other perspectives should be ignored. Rather, leaders in schools and in the wider education system should see these as critical and important perspectives to review, and will hopefully use them as a framework for discussion to develop their own and their colleagues' leadership understanding and practice. This has been the case with the first edition and we hope it will continue with the second edition. It has been a privilege and a wonderful learning experience for me to work with such an outstanding group of colleagues. I thank them all.

It has often been said that children are the messages that we send to the future. I believe that school leaders are the guides to those children as they embark on that journey. I hope this book will enable the reader to reflect on leadership so we have inspired guides and successful journeys.

Brent Davies 2008

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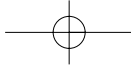
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