Section I

Leadership principles and practice
Introduction: from management to leadership

The labels used to define the field within which this book is located have changed from ‘educational administration’ to ‘educational management’ and, more recently, to ‘educational leadership’ (Gunter, 2004). In England, this shift away from administration and management is illustrated most strongly by the opening of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 2000, described as a paradigm shift by Bolam (2004). However there are many different conceptualizations of leadership, leading Southworth (1993) to term leadership a contested concept and Yukl (2002: 4–5) to argue that ‘the definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective’. He adds that ‘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 the activities and relationships in a group or organisation (Yukl, 2002).

Bush (2008) agrees that the central concept is influence rather than authority noting that influence and authority are dimensions of power but pointing out that the former could be exercised by anyone in the school or college while the latter tends to reside in formal positions, such as principal or headteacher. Leadership is independent of positional authority while management is linked directly to it. The process of leadership is also intentional, in that the person seeking to exercise influence is doing so in order to achieve certain purposes. 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. Greenfield and Ribbins (1993) claim that leadership begins with the ‘character’ of leaders, expressed in terms of personal values, self-awareness, and emotional and moral capability. These values underpin leadership actions and contribute to determining leaders’ sense of purpose.

Leadership is often associated with ‘vision’, which provides the essential sense of direction for leaders and their organisations. Southworth (1993) argues that heads are motivated to work hard because their leadership is the pursuit of their individual visions. However, an over-emphasis on vision may be problematic. Fullan (1992: 83) notes that ‘vision building is a highly sophisticated dynamic process which few organizations can sustain’. Hoyle and Wallace (2005: 11) are particularly critical of the contemporary emphasis on vision in England: ‘Visionary rhetoric is a form of management speak that has increased very noticeably in schools since the advent of educational reforms’. They contrast the ‘visionary rhetoric’ with ‘the prosaic reality’ experienced by staff, students and parents. They add that visions have to conform to centralised expectations and to satisfy Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspectors; ‘any vision you like, as long as it’s central government’s’ (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005: 139).

Distinguishing educational leadership and management

As the terminology used to describe the organisation of educational bodies, and the activities of their principals and senior staff, has evolved from ‘administration’, which is still widely used in North America and Australia, for example, through ‘management’, to ‘leadership’, the question arises as to whether these are just semantic shifts or whether they represent a more fundamental change in the conceptualization of headship Bush (2008)? Hoyle and Wallace (2005: viii) note that ‘leadership’ has only recently overtaken ‘management’ as the main descriptor for what is entailed in running and improving public service organisations. However, Bell and Stevenson (2006) argue that this change in nomenclature is neither a product of semantics nor of changes in fashion. It reflects deep-rooted and significant developments in educational policy over five decades. As a consequence of these developments, the roles of headteachers and other school leaders have undergone a series of fundamental changes in the extent of their autonomy, the levels and patterns of their
accountability, and the very nature of their responsibilities (Bell, 2007). Nevertheless, there remains an important differentiation between management and leadership.

Cuban (1988) provides one of the clearest distinctions, linking leadership with change and management with ‘maintenance’. He also stresses the importance of both dimensions of organisational activity:

By leadership, I mean influencing others’ actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals ... Leadership ... takes ... much ingenuity, energy and skill ... Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organizational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance rather than change. I prize both managing and leading and attach no special value to either since different settings and times call for varied responses. (Cuban, 1988: xx)

Bush (1998) links leadership to values or purpose while management relates to implementation or technical issues. Leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools and colleges are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives. While a clear vision may be essential to establish the nature and direction of change, it is equally important to ensure that innovations are implemented efficiently and that the school’s residual functions are carried out effectively while certain elements are undergoing change.

Leading and managing are distinct, but both are important ... The challenge of modern organizations requires the objective perspective of the manager as well as the flashes of vision and commitment wise leadership provides. (Bolman and Deal, 1997: xiii–xiv)

The dichotomy in Britain and elsewhere is that, while leadership is normatively preferred, notably through the establishment and activities of the NCSL, governments are encouraging a technical–rational approach to school management through their stress on performance management and public accountability (Glatter, 1999; Gunter, 2004). In practice, schools and colleges require both visionary leadership, to the extent that this is possible with a centralised curriculum, and effective management. That is why we have retained ‘management’ in the title of this volume. However, it is important to stress the need for managing towards clear educational purposes,
rather than regarding management as an end in itself. The latter may lead to ‘managerialism’, managing to excess.

The impact of leadership

Global interest in educational leadership and management has grown during the past few years and there is widespread recognition that leadership is second only to classroom practice in terms of impact on school and student outcomes. For many years, it was assumed that the scope of leadership was modest, perhaps explaining no more than 5–7 per cent of variation in learning outcomes. More recently, Leithwood et al. (2006) and Robinson (2007) have demonstrated that this impact can be much greater, particularly where leaders engage directly with teachers to enhance classroom practices. In Chapter 2, Ken Leithwood, Stephen, Anderson, Blair Mascall and Tiiu Strauss examine the evidence for the impact of leadership on student outcomes and propose four ‘pathways’ of influence. Significantly, one of these is the ‘family’ path, providing the potential for leaders to impact on the external variables which often strongly influence learner outcomes. This broad interpretation of leadership contrasts with the narrow scope of the role in some countries, for example in South Africa, where principals may be largely office-bound and be concerned more with meeting the demands of the external bureaucracy than with addressing the needs of learners (Bush et al., 2009).

Paul Begley, in Chapter 3, addresses the ethical and moral foundations of educational leadership. He argues that leadership must not only be implemented with a clear sense of educational purpose, but also be based on a strong ethical and moral stance. The basic premise of this chapter is that effective as well as moral school leaders need to keep the fundamental purposes of education at the forefront of their administrative practices. Whether articulated as leadership for moral literacy, ethical leadership practices or leadership with moral purpose, the common foundation is purpose-driven educational leadership.

We noted earlier that the influence process is independent of formal authority. This means that notions of leadership can be loosened from headship or other senior formal roles. It may be exercised by anyone in the organisation, regardless of position, although principals retain considerable power. This links to the contemporary emphasis on ‘distributed leadership’. As Alma Harris notes in Chapter 4, few ideas have provoked as much attention, debate and controversy as this concept. In essence, distribution
relates to multiple sources of influence and is based on expertise rather than formal authority. However, she also comments that distributed leadership requires the support of principals. This leads Peter Gronn, in Chapter 5, to argue for a ‘hybrid’ model of leadership, which aligns individual and distributed leadership. While he is persuaded of the merits of distributed leadership, he also asserts that individual action accords with the reality of practice in many educational settings. New leadership configurations are required to align distributed and individual leadership.

Developing teachers and leaders

School leaders are invariably drawn from the wider teaching profession. Given the centrality of leadership for learning, noted earlier, it is essential for school principals and other leaders to have substantial professional experience. In practice, of course, the journey from teacher to leader is an incremental process, which generally involves the gradual substitution of leadership and management activities for classroom teaching. Middle leaders may have an 80 per cent teaching commitment, while senior leaders may teach for 50 per cent of their time and principals often have no regular teaching load. An important factor, therefore, in enabling leaders to develop and inculcate a sense of purpose in their schools, and to facilitate school improvement, is the recognition of the need for ongoing development of teachers and leaders. The nature and pace of change make it inevitable that initial teacher education will need to be supplemented by additional professional development to enhance subject knowledge and pedagogy. This is the central focus of Chapter 6, by Les Bell and the late Ray Bolam. These authors stress the impact of reforms on the nature of teacher professionalism and note the challenges involved in maintaining professional discretion while interpreting and implementing externally mandated change. They also note the centrality of continuing professional development (CPD) if teachers are to improve their skills and knowledge. They conclude that CPD should enhance teacher professionalism and not simply relate to ‘mechanistic’ implementation of national policies.

In many countries, however, there is no specific preparation or development for school leaders. There is an implicit assumption that professionally qualified teachers would be able to ‘assume’ leadership roles with no specific training. This stance fails to recognise the very different role of school leaders, as Tony Bush stresses in Chapter 7. As the scope and impact of leadership are increasingly acknowledged,
the need for specialized preparation, for principals if not often for other leaders, is being recognised. Development programmes are available in countries as diverse as England, Singapore, South Africa and the USA and, increasingly, principals cannot be appointed without such qualifications. While professional development is essential to school improvement, David Middlewood shows, in Chapter 8, that this does not diminish the clamour for improved educational performance. Most performance management systems have been relatively unsuccessful in having much impact on ‘under-performing’ teachers and it is possible that more straightforward measures will be required in some cases, such as the teachers’ licence being considered in 2009 by the British Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Middlewood stresses that high-quality teaching begins with the recruitment and selection process and continues through support, guidance and development. He also emphasises the need to provide feedback to teachers if they are to improve.

**Leadership for learning**

The need for leadership and management to be underpinned by a clear sense of educational purpose has been recognised earlier in this chapter. While schools and colleges also have responsibility for many aspects of child and student well-being, their primary and unique purpose is to promote learning. In the twenty-first century, this has been conceptualised as ‘leadership for learning’, replacing the previous emphasis on ‘managing the curriculum’ or ‘instructional leadership’. In Chapter 9, Christopher Rhodes and Mark Brundrett explore the origins of this notion and explain its relevance, starting with the view that learning is the reason why schools exist. Leaders need to influence classroom practice if they are to make a real difference to student learning. One of the weaknesses of much current practice in South Africa, for example, is that leaders rarely engage with the learning process. The separation between leadership and learning is damaging to student outcomes, which remain stubbornly low (Bush et al., 2009). Significantly, Rhodes and Brundrett also show that there is a clear positive relationship between leadership distribution and learning outcomes.

The relationship between leadership and learning is extended in Chapter 10 by Allan Walker’s treatment of learning cultures. He distinguishes between ‘big picture’ national or societal culture and organisational culture. Even within the latter, subcultures may exist, focused around subject departments or interest groups. He stresses
the significance of learning-oriented cultures illustrated through such constructs as ‘communities of practice’ and ‘professional learning communities’. He also argues that a learning culture requires conditions that promote and encourage learning as a way of professional life; in other words, it becomes ingrained in the norms and behaviours of the school. This links to the earlier discussion of values but Walker emphasises the need to align purpose and practice if leadership is to be effective in building and sustaining learning cultures.

From the late 1980s, many developed countries began to devolve greater powers to schools, often through governing bodies or boards. An important dimension of this process was provision for self-management, which usually involved responsibility for aspects of finance. Much of the early discussion about funding involved essentially technical issues such as how to construct budgets, and the need to appoint bursars so that school principals could avoid some of the more detailed operational aspects of financial management, although they retained a strategic overview. More recently, there has been a closer alignment between resources and learning, recognising, as Rosalind Levacic stresses in Chapter 11, that the purpose of resource management is to maximise student learning within given funding constraints. She emphasises the importance of the ‘resource mix’, the ability of site-based leaders to determine the ways in which resources are combined to support learning. Devolved budgeting is based on the assumption that site-based leaders are more likely to be able to determine the most appropriate ‘mix’ than officials based in national, provincial or local departments and is underpinned by professional judgements about what is best to support student learning.

Leadership for diversity

A recurrent theme of this chapter has been the centrality of educational purpose when conceptualising or enacting leadership. An increasingly important aspect of this theme is the need to manage diversity. In Chapter 12, Jacky Lumby defines diversity as ‘the range of human characteristics which result in socially constructed advantage and disadvantage’. This may arise from gender, ethnicity, disability or a combination of these or other features. In many countries, women are under-represented in leadership positions even though they are usually for a majority of the teaching profession (Coleman, 2002). Similarly, black and ethnic minority teachers and leaders are often under-represented when compared to the demographic composition of the community served by the school or college (Bush et al., 2006).
Lumby argues that the responsibility for diversity should be located at a high level in organisations and not be seen as a ‘bolt on’ to the main activities of the school or college. The argument for embracing and celebrating diversity is partly ethical, because discrimination is unacceptable, and partly pragmatic, because under-representation leads to a potential waste of human talent. As Lumby stresses, there is a ‘gulf’ between recognition of inequality and enacting effective change to address such problems.

Ann Briggs, in Chapter 13, extends this broad idea of diversity to include notions of partnership between and across schools and colleges. In England, these linkages include federations of schools, school improvement partnerships and 14–19 collaborations, all of which require some form of collective decision-making. Similarly, Andrew Townsend’s treatment of networks in Chapter 14 illustrates the fluid nature of leadership within and beyond individual schools. He argues that, because leadership is dependent on interactions between people, it is inevitably concerned with networks, although not always explicitly. In Chapter 15, Tracey Allen discusses the growing importance of community-oriented schooling in enhancing the resonance and relevance of the curriculum by bridging community and school cultures more effectively. She goes on to explore key conceptual issues that underpin community leadership and orientation. This group of chapters, taken collectively, demonstrates that our understanding of the concept of leadership has moved a long way from the study of headship to a wider appreciation of the potential for leadership to infuse every aspect of schools and colleges.

**Conclusion**

Interest in educational leadership has never been greater. The emerging evidence that the impact of leadership on learning outcomes is greater than previously thought has led to enhanced recognition of the importance of leadership and leadership development. Leadership may be independent of formal positions and relies on an influence process. It may also reside in groups and teams as well as in individuals. This knowledge has led to a weakening of ‘great man’ theories, which assumed the vital importance of singular leadership, usually located in the role of principal or headteacher. Instead, distributed leadership is in vogue, linked to recognition that there can be greater ‘purchase’ if leadership involves the many rather than the few.

Another major development in the twenty-first century is the enhanced focus on leadership for learning. Predominant among
the plethora of demands placed on schools and their leaders is their pre-eminent responsibility to promote learning. Other leadership and management responsibilities, such as managing budgets and staff, should be seen as contributing to this overarching objective. In many countries, schools and colleges serve diverse populations and leaders need to ensure that their programmes, and their staff, fully reflect their local communities.

As the scope of leadership has increased, through devolution to site level in many countries and the increasing recognition of their power to enhance learning, the need to provide specialised preparation for leaders has been acknowledged and, in some countries, translated into customised development opportunities for aspiring and practicing principals. Ongoing learning for teachers and leaders provides the best prospect of school improvement.

References


