Leadership in a Society in Constant Change

Monica Gather Thurler

In most school systems, leadership is the responsibility of school administrators (policy makers, members of general management, heads of schools and directors of teacher training institutions), who are expected to exercise a form of leadership that is determining in the development of these systems. At the same time, the argument concerning their role and function is all too often limited to a few general principles relating to their position within a hierarchical structure and to their activities as prescribed in their job description (when available) rather than involving a detailed analysis of their actual work. From one country to the next – or even from one region to the next in federalist countries – there are differences, depending on the law and political orientations but also on the prevailing professional culture. In fact their roles as leaders will involve very different methods and forms of leadership. They may find themselves in different positions: sometimes as sole decision makers, sometimes as members of a management team and other times as first among equals within an educational team. In addition to these differences, there are a certain number of aspects the implications of which are not always taken into account: most school administrators have previously been teachers themselves, which implies a certain degree of complicity with those whom they are supposed to manage. They always take over from others and at some point make way for others to take over. Therefore, they are obliged to ensure a certain degree of continuity while demonstrating their ability to leave their imprint. Finally, they represent the authority which delegates power to them. Therefore they must present a clean slate and submit to an institutional culture, i.e. to the notion of the roles of departments, local or regional political authorities and institutions whose role and influence vary from one country to another and from one school system to another.

To launch the debate on the issue of leadership, the central theme of this SSRE conference, I shall link the function of school administrators to the smooth running of the education system or to its ongoing modernization. In addition, I shall try to show that because of the discrepancy – one that is becoming less and less acceptable – between the objectives set for schools and the results that are actually achieved, the “innovation” component seems to be of utmost importance here. In this respect, leadership in a society in constant change equates to managing ongoing changes brought on by constantly changing social demand, shifts in education policies, the renewal of knowledge, indeed the demands of modern-day students, both cultural and financial.

Concepts of Leadership

John MacBeath

It seems as if the world has awakened to the importance of leadership. Awareness has been heightened by a focus on world leaders, by a burgeoning literature in the corporate world and by emphasis on the training for future headteachers in leadership as distinct from management.

It is an area in which there is much ambiguity and confusion over terminology and meaning, over the nature and role of leadership in educational institutions as compared to business, and as to the individualistic or shared nature of leadership.
This session will first examine this ‘alphabet soup’ of definitions and then focus on:
- what we are learning through research internationally about the nature of leadership
- ways in which it is shaped by context and culture
- challenges for school leaders in an age of accountability

**The bright prospects and (unconscious) dark recesses of leadership**

Gian Piero Quaglino

The challenge facing leadership may be summed up as the art of leading people. The ambition and success of the challenge lie within this.

Its shadows instead lie in the "mis-leading" notion of leadership as the art of commanding, centred as it is on the crucial issue of the power represented by every leadership.

Commanding thus becomes the mental, yet not always conscious, means to best avoid confronting ourselves with the possible loss of power, or rather the giving up or "passing on" of power to others.

The art of leading is therefore the art of losing power to the benefit of others, which means exercising that power "with" rather than "over" others, being to a certain extent directed "towards" them and "inbetween" them.

On the other hand, the main risk to be found in the exercise of power without awareness -- i.e. leading by commanding -- is that we may let ourselves be taken over by the "negative" forces that govern our unconsciousness, in particular repression and projection. We thus end up nurturing relationships marked by hostility and a lack of trust.

Only if we consciously and willingly destine power to the advantage of others will it be possible to dissipate the shadows of distrust and hostility. Only then will it be possible for leadership to build on "mature" relationships harbouring a sense of belonging and purpose for all those involved.

**Leadership for change**

Micheal Schratz

Becoming a school head is one thing; leading a school successfully is quite another. In the course of a principal's career, new challenges continually appear. Thus, if schools are to develop, they require leadership. Good school heads pursue goals with long-lasting effects and inspire others to share in this same pursuit.

Leadership leads school heads to engage in improving the quality of the education system. It concentrates on the core concern of schools, namely that of providing excellence in education. As the ultimate goal is to have schools with a distinctive profile and a reputation for excellence, principals need to show the initiative and drive that will spur improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.
This talk highlights the leadership skills that school heads need to develop if their schools are to improve and if they are to be leading them into the future -- skills in defining and developing goals aiming for concrete results; skills in fostering participation, collegiality and shared decision-making; skills in systematically adapting points of view, in negotiating agreements and in communicating ideas and outcomes appealingly.

The Seven Principles of Sustainable Leadership

Andy Hargreaves

Sustainable leadership and improvement are more than matters of mere endurance, of making things last. We define sustainable leadership, in line with the environmental field, in the following way:

Sustainable leadership matters, spreads and lasts. It is a shared responsibility, that does not unduly deplete human or financial resources, and that cares for and avoids exerting negative damage on the surrounding educational and community environment. Sustainable leadership has an activist engagement with the forces that affect it, and builds an educational environment of organizational diversity that promotes cross-fertilization of good ideas and successful practices in communities of shared learning and development.

This definition suggests seven principles of sustainable leadership:

1. Sustainable leadership creates and preserves sustaining learning.
2. Sustainable leadership secures success over time.
3. Sustainable leadership sustains the leadership of others.
4. Sustainable leadership addresses issues of social justice.
5. Sustainable leadership develops rather than depletes human and material resources.
6. Sustainable leadership develops environmental diversity and capacity.
7. Sustainable leadership undertakes activist engagement with the environment.

A Short Primer on System Leadership

David Hopkins

If the goal of educational reform in developed countries is both ‘high equity and excellence’ then policy and practice has to focus on system improvement. This means that a school leader or head has to be almost as concerned about the success of other schools as he or she is about his or her own school. Sustained improvement of schools is not possible unless the whole system is moving forward.

Despite the evident success of England’s educational reform programme since 1997, standards are not rising fast enough, the achievement gap is still too wide, some schools continue to fail their students, and under performance is a stubborn feature of the system. The centrally driven reform programme
was an important and necessary first stage in a large scale long term national reform effort. But it does have its downside. Teachers perceive the changes as imposed from outside and worry about the degree to which they can tailor and adapt the government’s materials to their own purposes. There is also a concern that the changes because of their external impetus are not fully embedded or ‘owned’. Looked at in a broader public service reform perspective, in a fast-moving, large, complex system confidence, innovation and creativity at the frontline – where the service meets the customer – is of vital importance. Centrally driven policies, however good, cannot by definition deliver these vital characteristics.

This presentation will focus on the strategies currently perused by the English educational system in order to produce sufficient school leaders who are pivotal to system change. Based on this analysis it will also propose the changes in leadership style necessary for transforming the system as a whole – that is, to generating and sustaining a commitment to the highest levels of learning and achievement for all students across all schools.

Management and education: lessons learnt from the USI Masters programme in educational management

Edo Poglia

Effectiveness, efficiency, leadership, quality assurance and other concepts and practices with a management perspective have long been considered alien to schools, the world of schooling being perceived ideally as value-centred – in the cultural, humanistic, social and personal development senses. However, the financial restraints that have impacted on public education establishments in the last decade, together with a change in attitude by political stakeholders, have induced schools to at least partially take on a management outlook.

If this were entirely the case, then one might agree with those who see the situation simply as that of schools having been won over by extraneous principles and ways of operating There is, however, another side to the coin, which for years now researchers and practitioners have come to know on the basis of research, thinking and proposals related to school effectiveness and school planning, i.e. that good teaching practice depends also on the context in which it operates, namely the school in the first place. This context, thus, needs to be managed in the most pedagogically-effective manner possible.

The crucial question then lies in whether management methods now common to a great number of businesses and to an increasing number of public and private organizations may be adopted – and, if need be, adapted – to the reality and objectives of schools. The experience of the Masters Programme in Educational Management for school leaders at USI provides interesting ideas to answer this question.
School leaders as activators of educational leadership

Ivana Summa

Even in today's self-managing schools it is possible to find many skilful bureaucrats as improbable school managers. There are, however, too few educational leaders. There is a dire need, instead, for school heads skilled in the means and ways of activating leadership to help congeal the energy and the human resources that may be found in our schools, but which are inadequately deployed in the varying dimensions and spheres of the educational process.

In order for schools to become truly effective, the school head, as a leader, must know how to place securely at centre stage not only his/her own competencies, but also the roles and abilities of the students, their families and the teaching staff. The direction to take is thus signposted by the democratic values themselves which support a participatory and shared extension of leadership.

Being both service-providers and institutions, communities and bureaucracies, places of “life” and places of “work”, the very nature of schools as organizations requires the type of leadership outlined in the above lines. This type of leadership emerges only if the school leader capitalizes on his/her own power by extending it, meaning sharing it with others.

Is school-based management on the road to success? An analysis of the success and risk factors of educational leadership in individual schools

Katharina Maag Merki

From an international perspective, the implementation of school-based management in schools can be seen as a major trend in current school development (Burkard & Eikenbusch, 2002). School principals play a key role in this area. Although various studies testify to their effectiveness in relation to the development of important aspects of school practice, the PISA results of 2003 (Zahner Rossier et al., 2004) show that there are no significant links in Switzerland between increased autonomy and performance in Mathematics. The question arises as to the reasons. This paper supports the thesis that because of the high level of heterogeneity in the implementation of school-based management in schools in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, there is no more such a thing as the school-autonomy model than there is the concept of school management. Consequently, the important factors affecting the development of pupils’ performance are not so much structural characteristics such as greater autonomy as the quality and degree of implementation of autonomy in the individual schools. The key factors are therefore to be found at process level in the individual schools, whereas structural factors are necessary but are not the sole requirements for productive implementation in the individual schools. A systematic analysis of the effectiveness of different implementation models is therefore required along with a discussion of the specific success and risk factors. This paper presents the empirical findings of such analyses, focusing on the role of the school principal in particular.