The Alphabet Soup of Leadership

Leadership. It is a term full of ambiguity and a range of interpretations. It is a humpty dumpty word that can mean 'just what we want it to mean' (Humpty Dumpty, quoted in Alice in Wonderland). This paper describes some of the different varieties in current use in order to help clear some conceptual ground – for students, for teachers, and perhaps for some school leaders too who may recognise themselves in one or more of these descriptors. In this plethora of "word magic of the worst kind" (Hodgkinson, 1993, p.21) you may choose for yourself what are useful and what may be redundant concepts, or words that unintentionally, or intentionally, mislead.

Heroic leadership

While the term is not likely to be used by policy makers it underpins much thinking about how organisations can be 'turned round'.

> The importance of the headteacher's leadership is one of the clearest of the messages from school effectiveness research.
>
> (Gray, 1990: 206)

Industry boasts many examples of companies being famously rescued and reborn, by Iacocca at Chrysler, Holmes at Marks and Spencer and a host of other corporate saviours. This style of leadership is described by Collins (1998) as Level 5 Leadership, as relevant at times of crisis when great individuals (a Churchill, a Roosevelt) arise to steer people, companies or nations to safety. The downside is that when the crisis is past, the qualities of heroism are no longer needed and indeed may be dysfunctional. It is perhaps not coincidental that the 'great leaders' literature often refers to men since as feminist critics have argued (eg. Blackmore, 1999), the notion itself seems to imply 'strong' male qualities.

Charismatic leadership

This is a close associate of heroic leadership. It rests on the singular qualities of larger than life individuals whose personal authority and influence is so magnetic that it attracts people to them and creates followers. These people have a 'presence' so that when they walk into a room they are noticed, their presence is 'felt'. There are legendary school leaders, Arnold of Rugby, Sanderson of Oundle, Neill of Summerhill who have been celebrated in the literature, whose schools were largely reflections of their personalities and personal commitment. There may be some contemporary examples of headteacher Government 'luvvies' who *are* their schools. The lessons of history warn of the seductive dangers of charismatic leaders, creating a dependency, a suspension of individual and collective judgement, allowing people to be led to where they would not otherwise, more consciously, have gone. The emphasis on 'strong leaders' in much of the effectiveness literature risks reinforcing this dependency relationship.

> Their vision can blind and their strong personality cast a shadow over the need for shared leadership.
>
> (Brighouse and Woods, 1999: 78)

Authoritarian leadership

Heroic and charismatic leadership need not be authoritarian although they may at times go hand in hand with those who wish to be obeyed. Authoritarian leadership is characterised by intolerance of difference and challenge. It requires, above all, obedience and conformity. In Judi Bevan's study of *The Rise and Fall of Marks and Spencer* (2002) its demise in the late 1990s was put down in large part to a leadership incapable of listening to divergent views and a sycophantic followership too timid to confront authority. Studies by Milgram (1965) and Adorno (1950) in the United States on the authoritarian personality showed, through alarming experiments, not only how authoritarian leaders behave but how easily people will give way to the authority. Adorno's invention of the F scale (or fascist scale) was developed after the Second World War to discover how it was that Hitler was able to wield such power and influence.

> At its heart the traditional view of leadership is based on assumptions of people's powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forces of change, deficits which can only be remedied by a few great leaders.
>
> (Senge, 1990: 340)

Moral leadership

Moral leadership may also be associated with the individual qualities of charismatic and heroic individuals, conducting a moral crusade, imbuing organisations with a mission. A less evangelical version is to see moral leadership as resting on a commitment to values within an organisation, such as trust, reciprocity, or honesty. It implies a tenacity in holding on to what is right in the face of political expediency and ambition-led compromise; this may be increasingly difficult in a climate in which education is politicised and there is strong pressure on headteachers to be 'on message'. Tom Sergiovanni is most closely associated with the moral leadership concept, arguing that it is not simply about authority based on individual moral commitment but "the authority of felt obligations and duties derived from widely shared professional and community values, ideas and ideals." (1992, p.40). This has special significance in a school context since education is intrinsically about the moral education of children and young people.

> The key to successful leadership is getting the values right and having the right values in order to manage the tensions and dilemmas with which leaders must live.
>
> (Day *et al.*, 2000: preface)

Visionary leadership

Like morality, vision may be viewed as an individual commitment or as something belonging to a group, a team or an organisation. Businesses and schools do at times need a visionary individual to show the way, to inspire people especially in the wake of a despotic, or complacent leader, or when a school feels it has lost its way. Schools may need the inspiration and confidence building of a new leader, but for visions to be real and to prosper they need to be shared, owned and not simply passed down. As Sergiovanni has argued, leaders have to bear in mind that everyone has a vision, however implicit. Building teams and organisations means articulating and building from the visions which people hold for themselves, for their pupils, for their schools. Burt Nanus, one of the gurus of leadership offers a four step approach to 'auditing' and developing a collective vision in his book *Visionary Leadership* (1992).

Principle-centred leadership

This term stems from the work of Stephen Covey (1990), one of the most influential, as well as commercially successful, of authors on leadership. Covey's work is characterised throughout by a strong moral, sometimes quasi-religious ethic, reverting always in matters of judgement to 'natural' principles of justice, honesty and human values. The principles on which leadership rests are *trustworthiness* at the individual level, *trust* at the interpersonal level and *alignment* at the organisational level. Alignment is where an organisation, such as a school for example, exhibits a congruence, a lack of dissonance, among those personal values, communal values and behaviours through which they exemplify themselves. The challenge to this view of the successfully aligned organisation arises in the interface with the immediate society and political imperatives which may not espouse 'natural' principles of justice and equality, for example. In a competitive school context, principles such as 'equality' may be traded off against a counter set of more pragmatic principles and 'smarter' targets.

Professional leadership

It is difficult to conceive of school leadership which is not professional, but it has been invested with a distinctive meaning by Sergiovanni and others. Sergiovanni argues that authority may be derived from different sources but one of the most compelling of these is the authority which comes from transparent professional knowledge and expertise.

> He or she must espouse professional values and possess appropriate professional knowledge and judgement.
>
> (Fidler, 2000: 30)

What constitutes professional knowledge is, of course, a matter for debate. What leaders ought to know is currently being reframed, by management and leadership 'training' which rests on a body of organisational, administrative and managerial theory. Professional leadership in a school context is more difficult to define than in some other institutional contexts because school leaders are responsible not only for adults but for children, as well as for relationships with parents and community. They are required to meet a variety (and often a conflicting variety) of expectations about their behaviour, their relationships, their modelling for others, extending beyond their work context to their private life and personal affiliations. The lack of definition, consensus and

boundaries around what constitutes "professional" leadership can be a source of acute dilemma for school leaders (Dempster and Mahony, 1998; Moos, 1999).

Strategic leadership

This involves taking a systemic view of planning, a firm hold on the present and a view of the future. It is at the root of thinking about school development planning, now often referred to as improvement planning. It may be seen as stemming from the vision of the individual leaders or may be seen much more as a collaborative process. One of the sternest critics of the process is Henry Mintzberg whose book *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* in 1994 became something of a cult classic. His argument is that planning can too easily become formalised, rigid, mechanistic, and unable to deal with spontaneity, and rapid change. Mintzberg attributes the downfall of many businesses to a too doctrinaire adherence to strategic planning. While it is difficult to conceive of leadership that is not strategic, the secret is for it to be seen as a servant rather than a master. In their revisiting of strategic leadership Davies and Ellison (1999) argue for a prelude to planning which they describe as 'futures thinking'. Following from that strategic analysis allows the school to gain an understanding of where it sits strategically in the scheme of things, in the present, and what this implies for thinking about, and planning for, the future.

Transactional leadership

Transactions among people imply measured give and take. Services are rendered and rewarded when they meet approval. The concept is attributed to McGregor Burns (1978). He sees the transactional leader as setting the goals for the organisation and letting people know what needs to be done to achieve those goals. Faith is placed in systems, structures and data which will assist in reaching those goals. This is akin to exchange theory, a quasi market model of everything being weighed in terms of individual profit and loss in an 'economy' where there is stability of value and currency. People know where they are, what they owe and what they are due. Leaders and followers are in fixed and recognisable complementary roles. It is a steady state founded on stability and efficiency in meeting short term goals. Transactional leadership does not appear to have any positive advocates but rather seems to be proposed as a foil to transformational leadership. Nonetheless, Leithwood (1992) warns against dichotomising the two concepts and argues that transactional leadership may be a stage on the way to transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership

While transactional leadership implies a steady state 'transformational leadership' (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990) is a more dynamic concept. The three key components of the concept are 1) the stimulation and development of a collaborative culture, 2) contribution to the continuous professional development of teachers, and 3) expansion of the problem-solving capacity of the school. Transformational leadership provides the vision and inspiration that is intended to energise all members of the school community. It is about 'transforming' organisations and creating new cultures in which collaboration is valued, systematic enquiry is assumed to be the proper basis of professional judgement and in which there are high levels of reflection and discussion of professional practice. It sets expectations high and assumes a strong sense of shared responsibility for attaining educational goals. Dimmock and Walker set this in a multi-cultural context:

> Changing the school culture to reflect the values of multiculturalism is a key responsibility of leadership. Culture is partly built and influenced through leaders – modeling and demonstrating their own values in interacting with others, making appropriate public pronouncements, establishing supportive reward and discipline systems, and treating and valuing students from all races and ethnicities.
>
> (Dimmock and Walker, forthcoming)

Situational leadership

Much of leadership research has been premised on a belief in a template of leadership competences, what Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993) describe as 'the universal product'. Increasingly, though, international studies have illustrated the importance of context. A study in 1998 (MacBeath) found not only salient differences among countries but within countries. As a headteacher moved from one school to another he or she found themselves adopting a different style, in a sense becoming a different person. Leadership requires different approaches, different skills and rests on different values in different cultures, whether at country, community or individual school level. Situations change and leadership demands change with them. Recognising the style of leadership that is appropriate to a given time and place is at the heart of what Hersey and Blanchard (1988) describe as now occupying the 'mainstream of leadership thought'.

Dispersed leadership

This term, which has appeared in the literature of the National College of School Leadership marks a

distinct shift in paradigm from heroic or charismatic leadership. 'Dispersion' suggests leadership as something that takes place at different points within an organisation. In a school it rests not only within a senior management team, not only within departments or stage co-ordinators but with classroom teachers. In Sergiovanni's (2001) terminology 'density' of leadership is seen as a measure of how far leadership extends within a school; Mitchell and Sackney (2000) refer to a similar concept describing 'leader-rich' cultures while David Green (2001) speaks of 'leaderful communities'. A leaderful community is one in which people believe they have a contribution to make, can exercise their initiative and can, when relevant to the task in hand, have followers.

Distributed and distributive leadership

There is not much conceptual daylight between notions of 'dispersed' and 'distributed' leadership but there has been some debate around the implicit assumptions that may lie behind these notions. Distributed leadership, it is argued, may imply that this is something in the gift of a headteacher, allocating leadership roles magnanimously while holding on to power. Hence the term 'distributive' which implies a holding, or taking initiative as a right rather than it being bestowed as a gift. In other words, it is a value or ethic, residing in the organisational culture.

Shared leadership

What is different about 'sharing' as against dispersion and distribution? At one level it may be argued that it is perhaps only distinctive in the connotations of the language. Sharing is a softer and fuzzier notion with implications of openness and trust. If dispersed leadership implies something about structure, sharing says more about culture. Leadership may pass from one person, or group, to another by mutual consent. So a leader in one context may be a follower in another. Being able, and big enough, to follow the lead of others may prove to be one of the hallmarks of a truly effective leader.

> Those who admit they don't know
> Become wise.
> Those who conceal their ignorance
> Never learn.
> Those who admit mistakes
> Develop strength of character.
> Those who pretend to be strong
> Become weak.
>
> (Tao Te Ching in Fu-Feng
> and English, 1972)

A more radical notion of shared leadership, however, does not locate leadership in individuals and by reference to their qualities or competencies, but sees leadership as lying between people, within groups, in collective action, which defies attempts to single out 'a' leader.

Invitational leadership

Shared leadership rests on an invitation – the invitation is to join in a common enterprise. It means sharing power and authority, inviting others in to develop the vision. Stoll and Fink (1996) describe its four key features 1) optimism – the belief in people's untapped potential for growth and development, 2) respect – the recognition that everyone is a unique individual, 3) trust – the need to trust others and, as leaders, to behave with integrity, 4) intention – to be actively supportive and encouraging to others to act with you.

> Invitational leaders dare to give of themselves to release the energy and creativity of others.
>
> (Stoll, et al., 2002: 115)

Collaborative leadership

A rose by any other name? While there may be less than a shade of difference in meaning, the context of collaborative leadership may be distinctive. It often refers to an inter-agency context, for example, schools and community agencies working together, parents and teacher groups collaborating on a project, joint initiatives between universities and local authorities, or international networking to find common meaning and engage in joint ventures. This is a form of social capital creation. The concept of 'social capital' (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman 1990; Putnam, 2000) appears in a variety of guises but may be conceptualised as a reservoir of goodwill, shared norms, trust and expertise that lies beyond any single organisation, resting in the interstices of informal community groups and families as well as within formal organisations. A criticism of school effectiveness studies is that they have concentrated too exclusively on the 'black box' model of the school, without sufficient attention to the knowledge creation that lies outside the school and to the 'added value' that is less a product of school and classroom but of community and culture which lie beyond the school gates.

> The teacher who sees her/himself as the hero innovator, planning to implement a favoured practice through "getting colleagues on board" may well see collaboration as a euphemism for strategic manipulation. In contrast, the collaborative approach could be seen as essential to the building of trust and therefore the social capital that an organisation needs not only to nourish its members but also to produce results.
>
> (Frost and Durrant, 2002: 153)

Instructional leadership

This is a term with a distinctively American resonance and seems to be synonymous with *curriculum leadership*. Its origins lie in a national context where concern with learning and teaching as a quality of school principalship was being rediscovered. This is seen in Krug's 1992 definition of the five key components of instructional leadership – *defining mission, managing curriculum and instruction, supervising teaching, monitoring student progress* and *promoting instructional climate*. It was a radical notion in a climate of managerialism in which principals had been cast as administrators and managers, with matters of day-to-day learning being left to teachers. The concept implies overseeing, monitoring and evaluation of teaching by senior managers and contains the seeds of appraisal and performance management. In some studies (for example, Glasman 1982) instructional leadership was equated with the use of student performance data to encourage more effective instruction from teachers. In other contexts, it has been interpreted as headteachers having teaching roles and gaining some of their credibility by being seen by staff as effective teachers.

Teacher leadership

Enhancing teachers' agency may be seen as the primary task of a good school, local authority or national leadership so that 'transformational leadership' is not seen to be driven by headteachers but by teachers working individually and in concert to improve their schools (Frost, 2000). Frost *et al.,* (2000) draw our attention to CPD and training as implicitly about things being provided for, or done to, teachers rather than teachers as the prime movers. Real change, they argue, occurs when teachers are fully engaged as active agents in the process of research and development and when it observes the three cardinal principles of responsibility, mutual accountability and collaboration.

> A word about professional autonomy. Our version is one steeped in professional learning communities in which lateral accountability (as teachers focus collectively on student learning and what it will take to get there) among teachers is enormously powerful. No loss in accountability there!
>
> (Fullan *et al.*, 2001: 23)

Student leadership

In leaderful communities, in learning organisations, in schools which believe in dispersed leadership, the role and place of students (or pupils) is highly relevant. Much less has been written about student leadership than other more hierarchical forms, but the importance given to active teamwork, life skills and lifelong learning does carry implicit messages about leadership. Although in modern clothing, the notion of student leadership is rooted deep in the ethos of public schools which prepared young people for leadership roles in industry, finance, the clergy, the military, and education. Student leadership roles in school councils, drama and music productions, school newspapers, website design and production, extra-curricular activities, community initiatives, study support, team sports are all opportunities which lie outside mainstream school business. However, many schools are now seeing opportunities within classroom management, teaching and learning strategies, assessment and self-evaluation for students to play a more leading role (SooHoo, 1993; Rudduck *et al.*, 1996; MacBeath *et al.,* 2001).

> Somehow educators have forgotten the important connection between teachers and students. We listen to outside experts to inform us and, consequently overlook the treasure in our very own backyard, the students.
>
> (SooHoo, 1993: 389)

Learning-centred leadership

Leadership with a concern, or even a passion, for learning, is a more vital concept than instructional leadership which seems to imply a transmission of knowledge rather than the construction or creation of knowledge. Leadership for learning is interested in the process of learning, with and without instruction, and identifies the learners not simply in terms of the pupils but as organisation-wide. The now widely used term of headteachers as 'lead learners' implies a learning organisation which is modelled from the top. Monitoring of teachers by senior staff and performance management are less relevant in a climate where learning is centre stage, where there is a communal desire to research and find out how learning works in different contexts, and in Judith Little's words, to pursue the connections between teaching and learning with "aggressive curiosity and healthy scepticism" (Little, 1990). This may require of leaders an ability to confront performativity agendas with conviction and confidence and to play an educationally subversive role with parents, and perhaps even a wider public.

> The head who is able to talk with confidence to parents about the limitations of the market, managerial, performative, prescriptive reforms in education and is able to convincingly illustrate how the school is trying to take a more clearly educational stance should be able to gather considerable support even in aspirant, middle-class communities.
>
> (Thrupp, 2002:21)

Management and leadership

There has been a trend in the last few years to move away from notions of 'management' to rebrand movements, projects and organisations under the leadership banner. Management training becomes leadership development and senior management teams are being reincarnated as leadership teams. This is to create a distance between leadership and 'management', the latter seen as a more limited concept and too closely associated with managerialism, a somewhat discredited approach based on rational, 'scientific' principles. Critics, such as Gerald Grace, for example, argue that much of this is smoke and mirrors, not so much a substantive change as a change of rhetoric. Others have made theoretical distinctions between the concepts, between focus on systems (management) and focus on people (leadership), between administration and innovation, short term planning and long term vision, accepting or challenging the status quo. Bennis and Nanus' (1985) distinctions between doing things right (management) and doing the right thing (leadership) has assumed an almost folkloric status. These categorical separations are, however, contentious. Some take the view that management is necessarily subsumed as an aspect of leadership while others argue that in practice, as well as in theory, there are people who lead and others who manage, and that many successful teams are combined of people who bring complementary roles and skills to their collaborative work.

Ultimately, discussion of what is management and what is leadership is of less importance than what both are for. What is being led and managed? What lies at the heart of leadership? As a Leadership for Learning Network our position speaks for itself. Leadership in a school context, we contend, must first and foremost be concerned with the how, why and what of learning. The who refers, naturally, to children but is conditional on a milieu in which those who teach, those who lead, and those who manage are themselves exemplary learners.

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