A research report prepared by the University of Manchester for the National College for School Leadership

Emerging patterns of school leadership

Current practice and future directions

Christopher Chapman, Mel Ainscow, Jo Bragg, Helen Gunter, John Hull, Denis Mongon, Daniel Muijs and **Mel West**

University of Manchester

SCHOOL LEADERS   Report

Contents

Executive summary

This report outlines the key findings from a study examining emerging forms of school leadership, conducted by the University of Manchester on behalf of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). The findings are drawn from a literature review and accounts of practice based on research conducted in 20 schools and collaborative arrangements identified as academies, trusts, secondary federations, managed structures and all-through schools which had developed interesting approaches to leadership, management and governance practices. This study set out to map and explore emerging practice and to highlight possible future directions in leadership, management and governance that may support the further development of the education system.

The key findings are as follows:

The research literature currently available provides only a partial account of developments on the ground: the literature is more comprehensive in some areas than in others, it tends to be descriptive rather than analytic and has many gaps. This is in part because the pace of development is so rapid that many of the available studies are being overtaken by events. As yet, there can be little, if any, substantive evidence of the impact of emerging models of leadership on student outcomes or students' experiences of schooling.

Changes in local arrangements are helping schools to cope with an increasingly complex education agenda: new arrangements can improve the quality of leaders' work performance and experience, and can support them in dealing with increasing challenge and complexity across the system.

The local context plays an important role in the adoption and development of new leadership patterns and structures: there appear to be three important stimuli for change: local dissatisfaction with current arrangements and/or opportunities for improvement; individual drive and vision at school level; and significant local acts of philanthropy.

Innovative and traditional approaches appear in combination: innovative frameworks for governance and leadership are often adopted in combination with traditional approaches to leadership and management. Successful leaders do not lose sight of the need to pay close attention to the quality of the core teaching and learning tasks even when they delegate the day-to-day management of that function to other leaders.

New leadership arrangements that are seen as liberating by some staff can be seen to increase constraints and pressures felt by others: new arrangements often emerge in contexts facing significant challenges with immediate pressures for improvement. How the changes are perceived depends on the context, as well as the style of leadership and culture of the school. It is clear that some feel the changes have clarified priorities, provided opportunities and eased frustration, but some middle managers and teachers report that the consequent pressures are often magnified by external interest in the new models themselves.

The picture is fluid and the pace of change rapid: in some cases schools are developing bespoke leadership approaches that modify those previously identified. These may involve features of the new statutory framework, but are essentially adaptations to local constraints and opportunities. Furthermore, there are as yet few indications of the impact or potential for sustainability of any of the models emerging.

The key findings from this study lead us to conclude the following:

There are signs of a movement towards a more co-ordinated and systematic approach to education provision: schools are collaborating with a range of partners to a greater degree than we have seen over the past two decades. This move towards increased collaboration can be seen as a positive shift, which, under the right conditions, will play a major role in strengthening the capacity of the education system and enhancing equity.

There are significant changes in leadership and management roles and the responsibilities of those working in schools: headteachers have been drawn into significant cross-boundary leadership activity, connecting at a strategic level with governors, other services, the wider community and local and national agencies. They have needed to develop skills as negotiators, facilitators and brokers within often diffuse relationships with minimal history and competing agendas. This has provided a range of opportunities and challenges for other senior and middle-level leaders in schools.

And to reflect:

The study underlines that there is a range of interesting developments taking place regarding the conceptualisation and implementation of leadership practices, and management and governance arrangements. Many of these seem to have the potential to increase the capacity of schools to innovate. Such developments are vital if the system is to find ways of continuing to improve overall standards while, at the same time, reducing the gap between high and low achieving groups of learners. But it is also clear that these examples are closely tied into the local contexts in which they have developed. Consequently, it is unlikely that there are 'solutions' here that will transfer easily across boundaries.

Although all of these developments have been driven by the desire to improve education outcomes, and in some there are early indications of progress, the production of knowledge related to the impact of such developments on student outcomes is very limited at this stage. Therefore, further research investigating the impact of new models of leadership on student outcomes (cognitive/non-cognitive) will be needed. Furthermore, this study has highlighted the need for deepening our understanding of the relationship between school leadership, school development phase and context. This is a second important area for further investigation. Such a study combining these two strands of inquiry would ideally combine a longitudinal, quantitative analysis of impact with a qualitative case study approach. It is clear that across the accounts of practice compiled there are noticeable patterns. Specifically, we see evidence that many headteachers are rethinking their priorities, looking much more outside the school, providing space for their colleagues to take on additional leadership and management functions. We also see that collaboration between schools, and between schools and other agencies, is increasingly a process that involves staff from a variety of levels in the school directly in discussions and decision making. Such patterns have major implications for the shaping of professional development programmes for leaders at all levels.

Introduction

According to Ofsted[1], in recent years both schools and school leadership have seen year-on-year improvements. Furthermore, building on previous school effectiveness research[2], a number of claims have been made about the potency of school leadership, arguing that it is second only to classroom practice as an influence on student learning outcomes[3]. It is also apparent that in the recent policy context, schools and their leaders have faced unparalleled challenges, in terms of the need to develop organisations with the flexibility to cope with increasingly wide-ranging demands[4]. These range from the traditional in-school activities, such as demonstrating excellence in teaching and learning, to those which have emerged from more recent policy developments, such as the *Every Child Matters* (ECM) agenda[5], where networking and building effective links with a range of partners from different sectors has become increasingly important[6] as schools become the focus for the provision of children's services within the community[7]. Running through this complex policy context is the expectation that schools will respond to the challenges set in ways that achieve both excellence and equity in terms of outcomes[8].

It is unlikely that traditional patterns of leadership will prove adequate in the face of these new challenges. Accordingly, new structures and practices of leadership are necessary, in order to develop the school as an organisation that will deliver both excellence and equity.

There are increasing signs that leadership practices within schools are responding to these challenges. So, for example, recent research has noted the increased emphasis on collaborative approaches associated with new structural arrangements between schools, particularly in urban and challenging settings[9, 10, 11]. Research has also highlighted changing accountability and authority patterns within schools[12]. This has led to various attempts to characterise these changes – as, for example, 'new models of headship'[13], 'new models of leadership'[14] and 'next practice system leadership'[15]. This report summarises the findings of a study that set out to contribute further understanding about the nature of changes in leadership, management and governance within the new structural arrangements emerging in England.

The research

The study was undertaken by a team from the University of Manchester on behalf of NCSL, between November 2007 and April 2008. It set out to explore leadership practices not well charted by previous research[13] by seeking to analyse recent and current developments within five categories identified in the PwC study[14] where NCSL considered there to be least evidence. Therefore, this research focuses on four examples of each of the following: academies, trusts, secondary federations, and managed structures and all-through schools, rather than the complete set of categories identified in the PwC report. In carrying out this work the research team was guided by a set of questions designed to interrogate newly emerging leadership, management and governance practices across a group of schools embracing a variety of these new structural arrangements. In doing this we aimed to compile accurate descriptions of developing practice, filling gaps in the existing knowledge base and building on the few studies that have attempted to explore and conceptualise this terrain.

The scope and size of this study means that despite our best efforts, we draw on a limited number of cases. We do not claim these are typical; we simply do not know. However, presented as instructive examples that are worthy of consideration, and by reflecting on them – especially where they are challenging – they serve to deepen our understanding of this complex and dynamic terrain.

The research design consisted of two overlapping phases: the first was a literature review to ascertain 'what is known' about leadership within the five structural arrangements under investigation, while the second involved a case study[16] approach, collecting data from 20 sites to explore the range and variety of practice developing within these 'new' structural arrangements, viz: academies, trusts, secondary federations, and managed structures and all-through schools.

Maximum variation sampling[17] was used to identify four sites from each category that between them displayed a range of characteristics in terms of their setting and populations. Data collection began through an engagement with available statistics and school documentation, including Ofsted reports. Between 6 and 10 interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders at each site, to gather perspectives on any emerging structures and processes and to gain insights into the forms of leadership, management and governance practices being developed. Recordings of the interviews were made, from which partial transcriptions together with contemporaneous field notes allowed researchers to develop accounts of practice that were returned to the schools for validation purposes.

Data analysis involved three levels. The production of the accounts of practice provided the first level. The second level involved comparing and contrasting the sites within each category to identify key themes, patterns and trends. The final, third level involved a cross-case analysis of all cases.

This structured, graduated approach led the team to conclude that there was no evidence to support the categorisation of academies, trusts, secondary federations, and managed structures and all-through schools as a basis for describing discrete 'models of leadership'. Rather, it became apparent that in a rapidly changing context the patterns of practice emerging cut across these categories. Consequently, rather than using the original school groupings to structure this report, the analysis is presented in relationship to six key findings and a matrix exemplifying emerging patterns of practice within schools, across schools (school-to-school) and beyond schools (between schools and other stakeholders including the broader community and other agencies) (see Figure 1). The concluding sections of this report reflect on the implications of these emerging patterns of practice to offer a theoretical framework that may help leaders to locate their own leadership, management and governance practices, and the challenges they face.

Figure 1: A framework for mapping emerging patterns of practice

	Within schools	Between schools	Beyond schools
Management	Management practices emerging within schools	Management practices emerging between schools	Management practices emerging beyond schools
Leadership	Leadership practices emerging within schools	Leadership practices emerging between schools	Leadership practices emerging beyond schools
Governance	Governance practices emerging within schools	Governance practices emerging between schools	Governance practices emerging beyond schools

Key findings

The research literature currently available provides only a partial account of developments on the ground

The literature is more comprehensive in some areas than in others, it tends to be descriptive rather than analytic and has many gaps. This is in part because the pace of development is so rapid that many of the available studies are being overtaken by events. As yet, there can be little, if any, substantive evidence of the impact of emerging models of leadership on student outcomes or students' experiences of schooling.

An analysis of the available literature indicates that the evidence base for new leadership models is somewhat limited in scope, with only a few large-scale projects. Most of the evidence is drawn from small, descriptive case studies and vignettes, often based on self-reported developments. Of the 70 sources scrutinised, 52 research reports were funded by central government or its agencies (NCSL, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust [SSAT] etc). Only 18 sources were independently funded.

The literature describes the current scene as one where there is a lot of activity taking place, much of it planned locally, and one where governors, headteachers and schools are seeking to collaborate in a range of ways which are producing a variety of organisational arrangements to deliver both improved education standards and enhanced ECM outcomes for the students and wider communities they serve. However, this situation is shifting very quickly, with gains, losses and developments happening rapidly and in ways that may not be immediately or fully understood. The literature suggests that collaborative activity can be highly political, contextually determined and often underpinned by long-term personal relationships between key people involved. Incentives to collaborate tend to be focused around responses to education failure, the securing of increased resources or concerns about maintaining strategic advantage in the local education marketplace. It is interesting to note that there are few studies that have examined failed collaboration attempts in any detail.

Changes in local arrangements are helping schools to cope with an increasingly complex education agenda

New arrangements can improve the quality of leaders' work performance and experience, and can support them in dealing with increasing challenge and complexity across the system.

School leaders have recognised that they face increased challenge and complexity within the system. Many argued that new arrangements were enabling them to think more strategically about the school organisation in relation to these demands. For example, one federation principal commented on how, as a leader, he had invested in internal capacity building as a strategy for succession planning. A teacher in this federation described the head's whole-school vision as "directional and bringing it all together", moving middle managers on to the senior leadership team (SLT) and "allowing them to grow together". The principal argued that he had moved from a "delegated form of leadership to a distributed model", and a member of the SLT described this shift as an increase in autonomy and trust combined with lower levels of monitoring: "He now wants you to 'just go and sort it out' rather than having a long conversation about 'what, why and how and I prefer this'". The leadership of a trust school exhibited characteristics associated with 'invitational leadership'. The leadership team invited new members of staff to spend an initial period getting to know the school and deciding how best they thought they could contribute. This approach contrasts with the more traditional approach where a newcomer is expected to fit into the 'jigsaw' in a way that usually reflects the roles and responsibilities of their predecessor. This experience provides opportunities for professional growth and experience and also provides the SLT with an additional perspective on the workings of the school.

If real authority was becoming increasingly common in middle management roles, many stakeholders recognised a parallel shift in the headteacher's role. It was very noticeable that many were increasingly liaising and working beyond the school, collaborating with other schools and agencies to an unprecedented

degree. Often this was driven by the need to provide strategic direction for both the Standards and ECM agendas within their own school, but in a number of settings this was part of a more ambitious attempt to provide a coherent integrated service across phases, communities and localities. For example, the senior team in one federation has expanded to incorporate collaborative work with the primary feeder schools. Eleven assistant headteachers each hold a specific leadership role for an issue or theme across all schools in the federation. Furthermore, while it has not been uncommon for headteachers to be connected into local authority policy-making procedures, many of them now appear to be developing greater expertise in strategic analysis, engaging in horizon scanning and, as a result, exhibiting some of those characteristics that have been associated with system leadership roles. Thus, for example, as previously mentioned, some had worked with NCSL and SSAT as consultants or trainers, while others had direct contacts with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), and served on steering or policy groups. In another example, a trust school sought sponsorship from a university and further education (FE) college. The principal and other senior leaders have negotiated the university and trust's involvement to support the vision of establishing lifelong learning in an area of severe socioeconomic deprivation. All of these activities suggest that school leaders are increasingly finding themselves operating outside of traditional school hierarchies and therefore need to draw on a wide range of sophisticated social skills, including those of negotiation, brokerage, facilitation and disturbance handling, often within highly politicised environments where agendas and the balance of power and influence are unclear.

The local context plays an important role in the adoption and development of new leadership patterns and structures

There appear to be three important stimuli for change: local dissatisfaction with current arrangements and/or opportunities for improvement; individual drive and vision at school level; and significant local acts of philanthropy.

The findings point to the fact that where new leadership practices do emerge they have to be understood in relation to their particular contexts. The study also suggests that national policy drivers – especially those focusing on *re-defining local provision* (through multi-agency working, the ECM agenda, the Primary Capital Programme and Building Schools for the Future [BSF]), *issues relating to workforce reform* (including improving work-life balance, succession planning and developing new leadership roles) and *securing high-quality leadership across schools* (involving supporting schools causing concern and City Challenges) – can play an important role in moving towards new organisational arrangements, and these developments tend to provide a stimulus for leaders to think in new ways about their contexts and the possibilities they offer. However, these drivers are insufficient ingredients in themselves. Here, our findings support other research[18], suggesting a significant local stimulus is needed before local leaders and stakeholders gather the impetus to move towards new ways of working. More specifically, the research found that local stimuli took one or more of three forms, as follows:

Local dissatisfaction with current arrangements and/or a sense of opportunity for improvement. For example, this occurred in one context where radical change was deemed necessary to tackle a prolonged history of failure. In this case the director of education approached the headteacher of a very successful school and asked whether the school would consider building on the links created via the Leadership Incentive Grant to form a hard federation with a school having a prolonged history of difficulties and failures. After a period of consultation and negotiation, the federation was launched in September 2006. Early signs are encouraging, and the ethos and branding of the successful school seems to have permeated into the struggling school. Staff resources are shared, subject leaders are responsible for subjects across the two sites and the appearance, atmosphere, teaching and leadership in the two schools has come to mirror one another. However, to date, examination performance reflects the mixed experiences students have had in the

particular school, so gains have been modest. A second example of local dissatisfaction/sense of opportunity can be found in a soft federation, created to improve Key Stage 2–3 transition across the core subjects and boost attainment in these areas. This example illustrates the potential of federations to build on current arrangements to improve the situation rather than being seen essentially as a radical alternative to tackle failure.

Individual drive and vision. Increased choice and diversity within the system has presented school leaders with an unprecedented range of opportunities. School leaders in our sample had identified these changes as possibilities to extend their vision, values and sense of moral purpose beyond their school and immediate community. This tended to involve broadening their sphere of influence by taking on new challenges and pursuing alternative career pathways beyond the traditional routes of moving on to lead a larger school or working in a local authority. Many viewed themselves as system leaders and were developing a portfolio of activity working as school improvement partners (SIPs) or consultants with government and private agencies. One headteacher who retires at the end of this academic year has been commissioned by the governing body to provide a promoted deputy head from within the school with 20 days of support. In addition, he will also be working as a consultant head and SIP. A second example of individual vision was found where a headteacher strove to bring a number of schools together to form an all-through school. Here the flexibility within the system allowed the individual to pursue their sense of moral purpose and belief in the concept of all-through schooling as a mechanism to preserve education within a challenging community. This has been a challenging task compounded by a small secondary phase and the 14–19 agenda. As a result, in an attempt to sustain progress the leadership is now looking to form wider collaborations with 14–19 providers outside the locality.

An act of philanthropy. This third stimulus for change is exemplified by the case of a housing trust becoming involved in the creation of a new academy within the locality. Under the slogan 'improving the life chances of our tenants', the housing trust is seeking to extend the positive impact it has had within the community into two of its schools – amalgamating two of the most difficult and lowest performing in the authority. The trust is under no illusions regarding how difficult this challenge will be, but is willing to invest considerable time and resources, as it feels that its business is not simply the supply of housing, but contributing to the well-being of the community.

These catalysts for change can act independently or in combination in different proportions in different localities; they are context-specific. There is, therefore, no 'one size fits all' solution or response that is guaranteed to be successful.

The case of two small, rural primary schools provides an example where two such catalysts were seen to be acting together. One of the schools had been unable to attract a headteacher and was drifting into decline, while the other, serving a neighbouring although not a competing catchment, was at risk of losing their experienced headteacher to an advisory or consultancy role. The establishment of a federation provided the experienced headteacher with the opportunity to take on a new challenge and also resolved the difficulties faced by the school with a vacant headship. As one learning support assistant reflected, "sharing a head is better than none … or closure". However, if the contextual conditions had not been what they were, such an approach may not have succeeded. Therefore, we must resist the temptation to replicate successful strategies from one context to another without accurate diagnosis and deep understanding of the contexts, structures and processes involved.

Innovative and traditional approaches appear in combination

Innovative frameworks for governance and leadership are often adopted in combination with traditional approaches to leadership and management. Successful leaders do not lose sight of the need to pay close attention to the quality of the core teaching and learning tasks even when they delegate the day-to-day management of that function to other leaders.

It was evident that many of the schools in the study had adopted or are developing innovative

structural arrangements, some of which might be described as being at the leading edge of policy development. On the other hand, the findings suggest innovative approaches to leadership do not necessarily emerge in these settings. That is not to say, however, that the form of leadership seen in these settings is less effective because it remains traditional in nature rather than being innovative; rather it would appear to be shaped by the leader's personality traits and particularly challenging school contexts.

Those leaders adopting more traditional approaches tended to be recognised as "strong", "committed" and "direct" by their colleagues, and often had a reputation in the local community or media for having led a school(s) through particularly turbulent times. Many of the leaders in the study demonstrated a particularly high capacity for managing change. Often working with levels of commitment beyond the norm[19], they held high expectations[20], and were perceived to "get things done". These leaders seemed to be very active networkers and entrepreneurs[21]. Sometimes, these traits were coupled with rather conservative leadership and management practices, relying on traditional hierarchies and involving high levels of monitoring aimed at promoting high levels of consistency across all areas of school life, from student (and sometimes staff) dress codes, to strict requirements for lesson planning and pedagogical approaches. Leadership of this type has been associated with schools in challenging circumstances during early phases of their development[9]. We found evidence to support a magnification of this approach in a number of the academies, federations and schools with managed structures we visited at early stages of development in particularly challenging contexts. For example, one academy headteacher reflected that their model had taken the "best from education and the best from business" and this had resulted in "much stronger structures and a more business-like approach with sharper accountability mechanisms in place throughout the organisation". However, this is not to say such approaches are fixed and will not evolve or change as schools build capacity and progress.

New leadership arrangements that are seen as liberating by some staff can be seen to increase constraints and pressures felt by others

New arrangements often emerge in contexts facing significant challenges with immediate pressures for improvement. How the changes are perceived depends on the context, as well as the style of leadership and culture of the school. It is clear that some feel the changes have clarified priorities, provided opportunities and eased frustration, but some middle managers and teachers report that the consequent pressures are often magnified by external interest in the new models themselves.

The restructuring of schools is altering external accountability patterns, with some relocation of decision making 'upwards' to newly created bodies (for example, federation managers, academy governors and trusts). For example, one federation had established a strategic governance committee to discuss common issues and make policy decisions. The committee included the headteacher, a governor and another representative from each partner school. Each school within the federation retained its own governance and leadership but the strategic committee provided an additional layer of decision making. This can provide interesting career opportunities, particularly for those headteachers who have an appetite for leading collaboratives of schools and other agencies, and engaging with a wider range of agencies at local and national levels than they have previously experienced. However, there have also been cases where headteachers have felt disempowered and even demoralised by the development of new structural arrangements. Some have reported that federating has reduced the power, autonomy and status previously enjoyed as a headteacher, without reducing the pressures – indeed the pressure to succeed may seem even greater.

At the same time, restructuring often provides internal opportunities for senior and some middle-level leaders[22]. In some cases heads felt that their own priorities and relationships were much clearer as a result of restructuring, which, in turn, made decision making easier. In other cases this was experienced as a positive 're-

distribution' of leadership, providing meaningful development opportunities for senior and middle-level leaders, at earlier stages of their careers than would have been possible in the past. This was perceived by some middle-level leaders and more junior teachers to be a significant shift in culture and attitude within the education system, arguing that you no longer have to serve your time to achieve leadership positions and if you are good enough you get presented with worthwhile leadership opportunities.

The increased external demands on headteachers has created a shift in the leadership and management roles of deputy heads, who often tended to be focused more on lower-level, day-to-day concerns in the past. Deputy heads were taking on more strategic roles and felt comfortable with being the most senior person on site for days and on occasions weeks at a time. This, in turn, has a knock-on effect on the role of assistant heads, many of whom are now engaged in significant managerial tasks, including timetabling, curriculum arrangements or the management of substantial subject staff groups, activities which were previously the preserve of deputy heads. Of course, it has frequently been observed that deputy headship, as it was, was not a very satisfactory preparation for headship. At the same time, it is clear that some patterns of leadership distribution appear more effective than others[3]. Some patterns of distributed leadership were providing teachers and middle-level leaders with opportunities for personal and professional growth that were simply not possible in the past; a common example was middle-level leaders being given whole-school responsibility for a substantive piece of developmental work and to be seconded onto the senior management teams. In other examples which occasionally came to our attention in this study, the least effective arrangements constituted little more than systems for holding people responsible for activities over which they seemed to exercise very little control or decision-making power or freedom to take risks. The skills needed for senior leadership roles are unlikely to be developed in such structures.

In a number of instances it was evident that new structures brought with them high expectations from a wide range of stakeholders of improved education standards within the locality. These expectations permeated through the school, since staff were aware of the implications of not delivering improved examination performance. Here, the danger is that short-term actions could create barriers to more sustainable change programmes. One example of how such actions can play out on the ground was provided in an academy where some of the staff talked about being placed under enormous pressure to improve test and examination scores. Echoing the comments of a number of her colleagues, one young teacher said that, in this school "everything is for the children". The implication, she added, was that little or no time was given to supporting staff. Another teacher explained that if you called for help over a disciplinary matter from members of the senior team, they were likely to ask to see your lesson plan. Clearly, some increase in attention and expectations is inevitable in times of substantial, even radical, change to the organisation of schools. However, it is important that at senior levels leaders are aware of the impact such expectations may have on classroom teachers, and have positive strategies to ensure that these do not turn into unreasonable pressures – not least because they have a responsibility to ensure that the changes taking place are not adversely effecting the work–life balance of more junior colleagues.

The freeing-up of the Key Stage 3 curriculum and the need to work collaboratively to deliver the 14–19 agenda are both having an impact in some schools. This has implications for leadership structures and, especially, for those in 'middle leadership'. Middle-level leaders are acquiring more authority and some, greater autonomy. However, accountability is also being strengthened at this level, especially in the core subjects where this is likely to continue to be the case as league tables become more focused on English, maths and science.

The picture is fluid and the pace of change rapid

In some cases schools are developing bespoke leadership approaches that modify those previously identified. These may involve features of the new statutory framework, but are essentially adaptations to local constraints and opportunities. Furthermore, there are as yet few indications of the impact or potential for sustainability of any of the models emerging.

The evidence is that school leaders are increasingly experimenting with the range of statutory frameworks and, where appropriate, combining elements from different frameworks to fit their needs at a given time. With such an approach, many school leaders appeared responsive to the dynamics of their specific contexts and were not 'wedded' to a particular definition of the role. Some had taken an evolutionary approach, gradually shifting from one set of arrangements to another. For example, a number of federations within the sample were now exploring the possibility of moving towards trust status as a next step, and one had also joined an education improvement partnership (EIP). In some cases, extreme circumstances had led to revolutionary changes. These might be manifested in the closure of a 'failing' school, leading to a wholesale reorganisation and rebranding exercise, to launch a new school with new expectations, new staff and, most often, new leadership. Schools in less extreme situations tended to prefer combining models, drawing on elements of various new leadership and governance arrangements that were considered to meet their needs. Accordingly, we did not find many pure examples of the leadership typology suggested by the PwC study[14]. While we recognise the study did not claim the categories to be mutually exclusive, our findings indicate much greater overlap between the models than PwC suggest. It may be that their report was based on a snapshot that has been overtaken by the pace of development. However, it seems more likely that in attempting to impose order on what is an extremely complicated series of developments, the PwC report rather simplifies reality, and fails to recognise the extent of proliferation of mixed or hybrid leadership models that integrate elements from a range of structural arrangements. For example, one federation visited was also an all-through school, while a number of the schools in our sample exhibited many features of the managed structures model, while also being an academy or seeking trust status. One academy was federated, had a managed structure and was also seeking trust status. In such a rapidly changing landscape, it is not surprising that sometimes developments in practice appeared uneven and unpredictable. If we are to develop our understanding of emerging patterns of leadership, considering models of leadership to be closely aligned to structural arrangements is unhelpful, since no single pattern was apparent in the arrangements we scrutinised. However, school context was found to be an overriding factor, which determined to a great extent the arrangements that were put in place. Inevitably, although extremely interesting to catalogue, the impact and sustainability of many of these developments remain unclear at this early stage in their development, and a longitudinal study tracking the progress and impact of selected examples would prove instructive.

Understanding patterns of practice

The findings of this study suggest that leaders are increasingly recognising the limitations of existing arrangements. This is leading them to explore how new structural arrangements provide opportunities to develop more appropriate leadership, management and governance practices. Thus, there is a high level of naturally occurring experimentation within the system that is shaped by the context from which it emerges. Much of this experimentation involves collaboration between schools and with a range of other stakeholders at unprecedented levels.

The developments identified through the study provide encouraging signs of a movement towards a more co-ordinated and systematic approach to education provision. Schools are collaborating with a range of partners to a greater degree than we have seen over the past two decades. This move towards increased collaboration can be seen as a positive shift, which, under the right conditions, will play a major role in strengthening the capacity of the education system and enhancing equity[18]. Increased collaboration, new structural arrangements and the emerging patterns of practice have had a significant impact on the work of school leaders. Figure 2 (below) provides a framework for exploring the impact of these changes on school leadership, management and governance.

Figure 2 highlights what seems to be a significant change in headteacher roles and responsibilities. It illustrates how headteachers have been drawn into significant cross-boundary leadership activity, connecting at a strategic level with governors, other services, the wider community and local and national agencies (represented by arrow 1). Unlike in the past – where the majority of the headteacher's life was spent 'in school' leading and managing within clearly defined structures and relationships – these emerging activities operate outside of traditional line management hierarchies. They involve relationships that are quite different and require a complex set of skills where those involved need to be expert in analysing the wider contexts in which their schools operate. They also have to develop skills as negotiators, facilitators and brokers within often diffuse relationships with minimal history and competing agendas.

These trends have major implications for other senior staff within schools (represented by arrow 2). Increasingly, they are taking on tasks previously carried out by headteachers. This provides new opportunities for such colleagues to take on responsibility and, in so doing, have greater possibilities to develop their leadership and management skills, particularly within their own school. All of this can be seen as an overall change in the ways in which schools position themselves in their local communities, represented by the 'direction of system travel' arrow. Such a re-positioning is demanded by the ECM policy agenda. It also makes sense in terms of international research, which indicates school improvement, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged contexts, will only be sustainable if it is connected to effective programmes of community regeneration[23].

In terms of developing capacity for innovation within the system, such arrangements can be seen as a means of resolving what some writers

Figure 2: A framework for exploring emerging forms of school leadership

	Within schools	Between schools	Beyond schools
Management			
Leadership			
Governance			

Direction of system travel
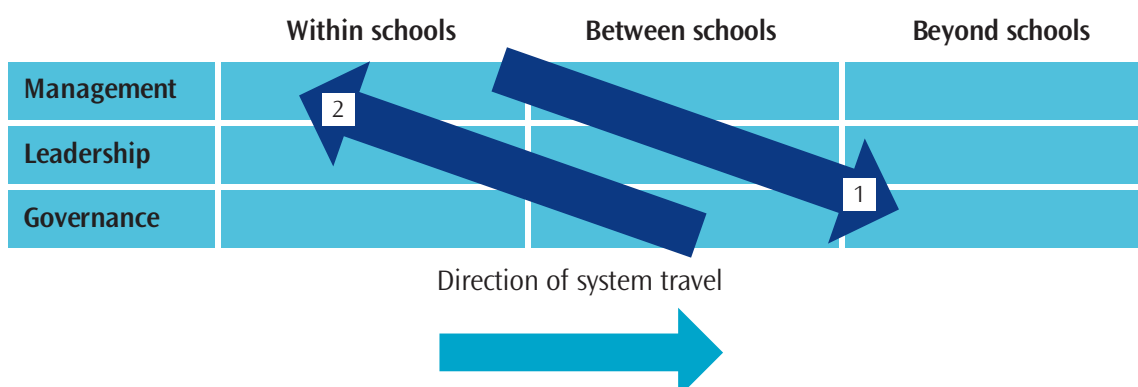
have described as the maintenance-development dilemma[24]. This arises from the tensions that occur when established organisations are faced with the need to change. Put simply, they have to continue carrying out existing requirements (maintenance) while at the same time inventing responses to new requirements (development). This is experienced as a dilemma in that however an organisation responds, there are associated risks: too much emphasis on maintenance means that it gets left behind, while an over-emphasis on development may damage the quality of what is already in place.

The separation of roles of the sort seen in some of the schools seems, on the surface at least, a promising way of dealing with all of this. For example, the head of a successful hard federation concentrates mostly on further innovations, leaving his two deputies to each manage one of the two sites. Governors continue to take responsibility for all day-to-day policy issues, leaving the trustees to focus on next steps. In this case the head is the only person attending meetings of both groups, so confirming his overall strategic role.

While such arrangements are interesting, they are not without tensions. So, for example, in another trust that has developed a remarkable capacity for development, some staff complain the head has taken their eye off routine matters. As a result, they argue, some aspects of the school's work have deteriorated.

Looking to the future, it will be important that the next generation of heads learn about what is involved in this wider role, not least that this may not have been part of their previous work experience. Clearly, there are implications here for programmes of continuing professional development and how current heads relate to their senior leaders, inducting them into their extended professional networks.

Reflections

In conclusion, we draw on the findings of this study to offer what we consider to be three important reflections. Our analysis has led us to consider these as being important if we are to develop further our understanding of emerging forms of leadership, management and governance, and how they impact on schools and their communities:

1. The study underlines that there are a range of interesting developments taking place regarding the conceptualisation and implementation of leadership practices, and management and governance arrangements. Many of these seem to have the potential to increase the capacity of schools to innovate. Such developments are vital if the system is to find ways of continuing to improve overall standards while, at the same time, reducing the gap between high and low achieving groups of learners. But it is also clear that these examples are closely tied into the local contexts in which they have developed. Consequently, it is unlikely that there are 'solutions' here that will transfer easily across boundaries. Rather, engagement with these cases helps to generate understandings about particular approaches that can enable a more informed development of ways forward in other contexts. In this sense, they represent starting points for the design of specific structures that will meet specific, local needs, not models to be replicated.

2. Although all of these developments have been driven by the desire to improve education outcomes, and in some there are early indications of progress, the production of knowledge related to the impact of such developments on student outcomes is very limited at this stage. Therefore, further research investigating the impact of new models of leadership on student outcomes (cognitive/non-cognitive) will be needed. Furthermore, this study has highlighted the need for deepening our understanding of the relationship between leadership and school development phase and context. This is a second important area for further investigation. Such a study, combining these two strands of inquiry, would ideally combine a longitudinal, quantitative analysis of impact with a qualitative case study approach.

3. It is clear that across the accounts of practice compiled there are noticeable patterns. Specifically, we see evidence that many headteachers are rethinking their priorities, looking much more outside the school, leaving their senior colleagues to manage day-to-day arrangements. We also see that collaboration between schools, and between schools and other agencies, is increasingly a process that involves staff from a variety of levels in the school directly in discussions and decision making. Such patterns have major implications for the shaping of professional development programmes for leaders at all levels.

It would seem the emerging patterns of leadership, management and governance practices identified in this study have an important part to play in shaping the future roles and responsibilities of school leaders. There is potential to develop and possibly redefine the type of work leaders with different experiences from different backgrounds undertake. In addition, it would seem that there is an opportunity for the emerging practices to influence the direction of system travel, to have a profound impact on the nature of future organisational forms and perhaps, most importantly, the quality of student and community experiences of education.

Sources

1   Ofsted, 2007, *Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report*, London, Ofsted

2   Sammons, P, Hillman, J & Mortimore, P, 1995, *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools: A review of school effectiveness research*, London, Ofsted

3   Leithwood, K, Day, C, Sammons, P, Harris, A & Hopkins, D, 2006, *Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership*, Nottingham, NCSL

4   Hargreaves, A, 2003, *Teaching in the Knowledge Society: Education in the age of insecurity*, Buckingham, Open University Press

5   DfES (Department for Education and Skills), 2004, *Every Child Matters: Next steps*, London, The Stationery Office

6   NCSL (National College for School Leadership), 2006, *Spreading Innovation Across Local Authorities: Networking and collaboration*, Nottingham, NCSL

7   DfES, 2005, *Education Improvement Partnerships: Local collaboration for school improvement and better service delivery*, London, The Stationery Office

8   University of Manchester, 2008, *Centre for Educational Equity Annual Report*, Manchester, University of Manchester

9   Chapman, C, 2005, *School Improvement Through External Intervention?*, London, Continuum

10 Ainscow, M & West, M, 2006, *Improving Urban Schools: Leadership and collaboration*, Buckingham, Open University Press

11 Hill, R, 2008, *Achieving More Together: Adding value through partnership*, London, ASCL

12 Spillane, J, 2006, *Distributed Leadership*, San Francisco, CA, Jossey Bass

13 Glatter, R & Harvey, J, 2006, *Varieties of Shared Headship: A preliminary exploration*, Nottingham, NCSL

14 PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007, *An Independent Study into School Leadership*, London, DfES

15 IU (Innovation Unit)/NCSL (National College for School Leadership)/Demos, 2007, *System Leadership and Governance: Leadership beyond institutional boundaries*, London, IU

16 Yin, R, 1994, *Case Study Research: Design and methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications

17 Maykut, P & Morehouse, R, 1978, *Beginning Qualitative Research: A philosophical and practical guide*, London, Falmer

18 University of Manchester, 2007, *Centre for Educational Equity Annual Report*, Manchester, University of Manchester

19 Mortimore, P & Witty, G, 1997, *Can School Improvement Overcome the Effects of Social Disadvantage?*, London, Institute of Education

20 Maden, M, 2001, *Success Against The Odds: Five years on*, London, Routledge

21 Harris, A & Chapman, C, 2002, *Effective Leadership in Challenging Circumstances*, Nottingham, NCSL

22 Lindsay, G, Harris, A, Muijs, D, Chapman, C, Arwerk, E, Goodall, J & Cullen, M, 2007, *Evaluation of The Federations Policy: Final Report*, London, DfES

23 Muijs, D, Harris, A, Chapman, C, Stoll, L & Russ, J, 2004, 'Improving schools in socially disadvantaged areas: a review of research evidence', *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, **15** (2), 149–75, London, Routledge

24 Hargreaves, D.H & Hopkins, D, 1991, The *Empowered School: The management and practice of development planning*, London, Cassell

Publications and resources also available from NCSL:

NCSL programmes for school leaders at all levels.
www.ncsl.org.uk/programmes

Publications and resources available to download and order.
www.ncsl.org.uk/publications

The Leadership Network brings together the experience and ideas of school leaders across the country to create a powerful focus for change and development in school leadership.
www.ncsl.org.uk/leadershipnetwork

The Leadership Library is a free unique resource bringing together some of the best leadership and management thinking from around the world.
www.ncsl.org.uk/leadershiplibrary

The Learning Gateway is a single access point to all NCSL's online learning tools and resources. It provides access to talk2learn, a vibrant online community of over 120,000 members.
www.ncsl.org.uk/learninggateway

The Tomorrow's leaders today campaign is about finding, developing and keeping great headteachers.
www.ncsl.org.uk/tomorrows leaderstoday

ECM Leadership Direct is an online Resource exploring the implications for Every Child Matters for schools and school leaders.
www.ncsl.org.uk/ecmleadershipdirect

To download this publication or to order a copy free of charge, please visit www.ncsl.org/publications.

PB330