

## Steve Munby's speech to the NCSL annual Seizing Success Conference

7 June 2007

This is the third of these annual 'Seizing Success' conferences. Last year's was, in my view, excellent in many, many respects. But like all organisations – not least schools – you can't live for long on your reputation (or your last Ofsted) – you have to strive to improve and get better and better. I believe that this conference will be even better than last year overall. I think we have some of the best, thought-provoking and inspirational speakers in the world, we have many outstanding school leaders who will be talking about their schools and there will be lots of opportunities to share ideas about practice. We also have 1,400 people here – our largest attendance ever by some way!

At the National College for School Leadership we regard this conference as one of the most important and therefore high risk parts of our year – when our reputation can either be enhanced or put at risk. So there is therefore absolutely no pressure on me in giving my keynote speech to conference this morning!

We are pleased that although the overwhelming majority of people here are school leaders in England, there are also leaders here from local authorities, from national agencies and indeed school principals and leaders from countries all over the world.

As a National College, we are determined to be open and inclusive. This is not a club. We are here to serve all school leaders and all types of schools. We welcome challenge and we are pleased that there are a range of

speakers here who genuinely hold different views on some things. As a College, our approach is increasingly bottom up rather than top down, local solutions rather than a single national solution.

We know that there are many things that as a National College we need to improve upon and we also know that our work has to be increasingly rooted and grounded in real practice in schools. Less about jargon and more about what works.

Over the past 12 months I have had the privilege of visiting many, many schools – across all phases and in all regions of the country. The conversations I have had with school leaders, with staff and with young people, have prompted me to focus my speech around the leadership that I have seen during those school visits. Not all of what I have seen has been excellent – you would not expect that to be the case – but all of what I have seen has been compelling and real. I have attempted to group what I have observed in my visits under six themes:

## **Themes**

### **1. User-centred leadership**

I know this may seem a strange term to use and that learner-centred leadership might be more familiar to you. But by user-centred leadership I mean leaders that see it as their absolute core business to connect with the users of their school and to make sure that the school revolves around and serves them. I think the users of the school are three fold:

- i) first and foremost: children and young people
- ii) parents
- iii) the wider community in which the school is situated

Now in a real sense schools are the repository of all society's hopes and expectations. School is the only publicly-funded and dependable institution that almost all future citizens will come into contact with for any reasonable length of time.

And more is expected of schools than ever before. For example, schools are expected:

- i) to personalise the provision for children and young people
- ii) to ensure that every child makes progress
- iii) to engage in more meaningful relationships with parents
- iv) to ensure that the school joins up effectively with other services in the local area to meet the needs of the child

I know that these are tough challenges but the fact is that many, many schools are doing very well on this agenda. They are truly growing tomorrow's citizens and working collaboratively with parents and the community to do so.

When I went into a secondary school in Leeds I was witness to a remarkable approach to user-centred leadership. For some time the school had been hosting annual individual review meetings with the parents of each student, the student's tutor and the students themselves to discuss performance and set targets. What I witnessed on this day was a step forward from that – students conducting the review themselves in the presence of their parents and tutor – talking about their areas of strength and weaknesses and proposing targets. Instead of being the recipient of the discussion, they were leading the discussion. They were given the responsibility. And the parents were delighted – in some cases they had

heard their child speak more about school and their learning than they had ever done before. Putting students and parents first.

I went to a primary school in Manchester – where 62 per cent of children were on free school meals and where in just six years the same headteacher had moved it from special measures to outstanding according to Ofsted. I was immediately impressed by the unusually rich curriculum and by the number of parents and members of the community in the school. I asked the head what was the single most important thing that she had done to change the culture in the school. She said that it was engaging the community in the life of the school – particularly through the use of volunteers and support staff who then acted as champions not only in the school but outside in the community too.

At a primary school in Derbyshire I saw children as young as seven running a TV and radio studio and being in charge of a shop. I saw pupils running a museum in the same school and I saw a curriculum genuinely being co-developed and co-constructed between pupils and staff.

At a technology college in County Durham, I saw a school leadership team absolutely committed to the principle that, in a tough community context, no child was to be excluded. The school achieved 100 per cent A\*-G. Actually – so they told me – it was 101 per cent because an excluded kid from another school wandered in and did the exam too!

We know that the older children get the more the deprivation factor seems to kick in and have a negative impact on their learning. It is understandable, therefore, that some schools try to keep the students away from those external influences by building a community in the

school that is vibrant and valuing and engaging and which distances itself from the local community. You might call this a protectionist approach-seeking to protect the young people from the negative influences in the community. I can understand that approach.

Some schools, however, go further. They believe that only by bringing the community into the school can they hope to minimise the negative effect of the community and maximise the positive effect. That by working with the parents, they can help to improve the outcomes for the children.

What about the leaders in those second type of schools? They believe passionately not just in the children but in the parents and the community too. They identify with that community and engage with that community and respect that community. They positively welcome the views and engagement of children and young people, of parents and of the community. They help the community to develop ownership of the school and they believe that they are a better school as a result.

## **2. Growing tomorrow's leaders.**

In many, many schools that I have visited this year I have seen leaders who are doing fantastic work in growing future leaders. They regard it as one of their core responsibilities to develop others and they take a sense of pride in the number of people in their school who have been promoted internally to senior leadership or who have gone on to be leaders in other schools.

For all of the leaders whose schools I visited this year, the job is tough and sometimes relentless but it is also richly rewarding.

As the prize-winning author and broadcaster Studs Terkel says:

*“Work is about daily meaning as well as daily bread; for recognition as well as cash; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying... We have the right to ask of work that it include meaning, recognition, astonishment and life.” Studs Terkel ‘Working’*

There is sometimes drudgery in school leadership – to paraphrase Steve Coppell the manager of Reading Football Club, management is hours and days of drudgery and toil for about 90 minutes of exhilaration! But the complexity and the challenge of school leadership combined with the joy of working with children and with people provide it with deep meaning and life too. School leadership is not fundamentally boring.

As Shaw said:

*“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one.....I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle – to me it’s a splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment and I want it to burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations”*

Now how do leaders keep that torch burning and influence others? Well the fact is that as leaders we cast a shadow over our organisations, for good or ill. The longer we lead an organisation, the more it begins to mirror our own leadership style and behaviours. If we moan, then the staff in the organisation are more likely to moan, if we look too busy to listen then they will look too busy to listen, if we look in a panic they are more likely to look in a panic. If we inspire they will inspire, if we demonstrate emotional intelligence and kindness, they will develop that too, if we

challenge poor performance fairly but relentlessly then they will also. If we don't take ourselves too seriously then they will do the same. If they find working with us stimulating and challenging and they feel valued and they respect us then they are more likely to want to become leaders themselves and to have the skills to be good in the role.

We are all in leadership roles because someone believed in us and encouraged us to be leaders. That is certainly true of me. The best leaders grow future leaders. Whenever someone leaves a role in order to go into a different role, they are usually leaving something they are very good at in order to do something that they don't know if they are going to be good at. For that you need confidence. That is why the good leaders build confidence in others to enable them to step up, they believe in the potential of their staff and they grow future leaders.

In Wakefield, Essex, Bristol and Barking and Dagenham I have seen powerful examples of schools taking talent management seriously, being prepared to promote talented but less experienced individuals to leadership roles because they know will grow into the role to become outstanding, managing CPD across the school in a structured but personalised way and, most importantly of all, modelling good leadership by coaching, praising and empowering others.

At a secondary school in Islington there are 18 members of staff who want to become headteachers and who attend weekly leadership development sessions run by the school for them. The enthusiasm about leadership is palpable and is modelled by the enthusiasm and commitment of the headteacher who has introduced the programme into the school. If even a quarter of the schools in the country were doing something like that and

sharing it then there would be no need for NCSL to have a succession planning strategy.

### 3. Various models of school leadership. Local solutions

It has been my privilege to visit many, many outstanding schools this year. I have been to a large secondary school in Hartlepool where the inspirational headteacher is hands-on and knows every single child's name. I have seen many schools where the traditional model of one headteacher per school is working very well indeed. I have also been to a family of schools in Sheffield where five primary schools and the secondary school in a local area have collaborated to make joint appointments – where the co-ordinator for Modern Foreign Languages across the family of schools is a primary school teacher, where they have a co-ordinator for sport and music too and a school business manager who works across the family of schools.

I have visited a college in Leicester which has been pretty much in special measures for seven years and is being turned round by a hugely talented Executive Headteacher and by a very able College Principal, neither of whom believes that they could have achieved what they are achieving if there had just been one of them. The most powerful thing I heard was from the young people themselves on the difference that the headteachers – plural – had made to their school. This and other examples, notably in Middlesbrough, does make me think by the way that in some of our **most** challenging schools no single headteacher no matter how good or experienced can make a lasting difference on their own.



What I am worried about generally is the expectations that society now has of public service leaders. And by that I mean people in local authorities and in public service organisations such as the national College, as well as schools.

As Deborah Ancona and colleagues have said we have come to expect huge things from our senior leaders in complex public service organisations:

- the intellectual capacity to make sense of hugely complex and often potentially conflicting issues
- the wisdom to be able to read the broader local, national and political environment
- the creativity to develop a compelling vision which will move the organisation forward and which will generate enthusiasm and commitment
- the operational understanding of strategies that will turn the vision into real action that will make a difference
- the financial expertise to ensure that resources and public money are used efficiently and effectively
- the managerial competence and flexibility to deal with the wide range of day-to-day challenging problems and external requirements that arise in the job
- the toughness to challenge poor performance and to take strong and decisive action where it is needed
- the counselling and negotiation skills to deal with difficult and challenging parents and members of the community and
- the interpersonal skills to motivate staff and take people with you.

In addition, the public service leader is highly accountable for everything in the organisation.

Frankly I think it is time that we accepted the fact that believing one person can and should be this type of leader is not realistic. It makes the job feel too hard and threatens work-life balance, it fails to attract people to want to become leaders and, most important of all, it ultimately does not serve the public best – in our case children and young people and their parents.

The job role and the expectations on schools and on the individual headteacher are increasingly unrealistic.

I support Local Management of Schools. We have better leadership in schools as a result. But the expectations on heads from government and from society have increased dramatically since the late 1980s. Inspection systems, performance tables, the Every Child Matters agenda, asbestos, water testing, the nutritional standards of school meals, safeguarding and child protection, equality and disability policies. The list is endless.

What I don't think we can expect under any government is the pace of change to slow down. In an increasingly globalised world that is just not realistic. As the recent PwC report on school leadership stated:

*“Longing for that mythical period of calm and stability is to misunderstand the nature of the world and of leadership.”*

We have to get better at managing that change and in doing so I think we have to challenge our fundamental concept of the headteacher as the person who is accountable for everything.

Our own **leadership literature and research** encourages participation and distributed leadership but our **culture** glorifies the charismatic leader who everyone admires. And many of those around the school - staff, parents, governors, local authorities, NCSL, DfES, still seem to insist on having dealings with the headteacher. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. No one person could possibly stay on top of everything but the fear of appearing incompetent makes many of us try to cling on to the model and exhaust ourselves in the process. The argument goes something like this – and it is an easy trap to fall into – I am accountable for everything in the organisation and if anything goes wrong it will be my responsibility. Therefore I cannot afford to let anything slip therefore I must attempt to make all the decisions. Moreover my staff already work too hard and have enough on their plates – it will be quicker if I take responsibility myself.

One of the crucial things that needs to change – and it still hasn't happened sufficiently in every school is for leaders to delegate strategic responsibility and accountability as well as management and operational responsibility. Increasingly now, heads are choosing which bits they are going to lead and be accountable for and which bits others in the team are going to lead and be accountable for and, indeed, which bits others will report upon directly to governors.

Of course, this kind of approach to distributed leadership is particularly challenging in small schools where there is little capacity and delegation is hardest of all. In these cases I do believe that we need to look at

federations and collaborations in order to share the burden and to play to our leadership strengths. In independent schools the second most important person in the school is the School Business Manager who handles all the HR, Finance, Site management, health and safety and internal operational aspects of the organisation.

If schools can have that kind of support, either at individual school level or across a small group of schools, what a difference it would make to the capacity for school leaders to focus on their core role of ensuring effective teaching and learning and outcomes for children.

Incidentally, we also know that when schools appoint someone with a certificate or diploma of School Business Management - a qualification programme that is run by the National College - they tend to save funds and raise additional funding. Research from the University of Hull shows that on average, graduates of the programme who are business managers in secondary schools save £7.80 per year per pupil and raise £49.50 per year per pupil and that on average graduates who are school business managers in primary schools save £14.70 and raise £59.80 per pupil per year. *(Figures from Hull University BDP Impact Study)*

So, in federations and in collaborations, we are beginning to see joint appointments working very well, especially of people like school business managers. We are also beginning to see executive headteacher models that free up the school leader in each school to focus on the core business of ensuring effective teaching and learning in the school. I believe that many, many schools will increasingly look to collaborate or federate because they will see the genuine advantages to them in terms of capacity building.

Let me now use this opportunity to correct what you may have read in the press recently about NCSL's view on school leadership. We are not insisting that federations are the only way to go for school leadership. We do not believe in a particular model of school leadership as the only right way. We believe that the right models are the models that work in their context. Local solutions.

As far as particular leadership models are concerned, I believe that we should be strong on values and principles and moral purpose and passionate about outcomes for children and young people but open about the various different leadership models that might work in different circumstances and prepared to be innovative.

What I am clear about is that if we are to make the job more manageable and attractive in the future then we need to challenge our current expectations of the individual headteacher.

#### **4. Courageous leadership**

I know that I talked about courageous leadership in my speech to the annual conference last year but I do keep coming back to this one. In these past 12 months it has been my privilege to observe at first hand a number of outstanding courageous leaders who are relentless in their expectations and their belief in what can be achieved.

My wife and I bought a house four years ago and we immediately made a list of all the things that needed to be improved. We set about doing it all and in the first year we got about three quarters of the way down the list. After that we just stopped. Not because we ran out of money – though that

was relevant – but also because we stopped noticing that it needed to change. We just got used to things the way they were. The effective leaders maintain the high expectations even after the first six months or year or two years. They carry on challenging and carry on wanting the best. They understand the culture but they don't go native. Many of the school leaders I have visited this year have consistently for many years absolutely driven a culture of excellence, even in one case in Redbridge, when the head had been in the same school for 22 years!

The second law of thermodynamics says: “when you put a hot property next to a cold property they soon become a uniform heat”. The effective leader remains a “hot property” and carries on challenging.

As a rider to that, what I also want to say however, is that sometimes it is good to step back and enjoy how good the school is and appreciate it and take stock before driving on to the next stage. When walking at a fast pace up a mountain, sometimes it is helpful to stop, have a drink and a rest and look at the view.

Now we can often come across as victims or martyrs in today's culture. If only we could have more money, if only there were fewer initiatives, if only there weren't so many constraints, etc. Although we have to work within the system that we have got, we don't have to be bullied by the system or be slaves to it. The criteria by which we judge our own schools don't have to be identical to the criteria that Ofsted use. When Tim Brighouse went to Birmingham as the new CEO he developed bottom up targets for attainment but he also developed entitlements for all children to have a residential experience. The accountability framework that he developed was focused but it was also rich and colourful. The good school

leaders absolutely believe in raising standards and in focusing to make sure that each child becomes literate and numerate because without that they will struggle in our world. But they also have other success criteria for children and for the school. Criteria that they declare and talk about and, indeed, report progress on. Just because it is not easily measured doesn't mean to say that it can't be reported on and given high status. A happy school. A school where the curriculum is so good that every single child has at least one electrifying moment of learning and experience each year that they will remember for the rest of their life.

I used to work in Knowsley and this is what Ofsted said about one primary school there. It encapsulates everything I am trying to say:

*'Children delight in school because learning is 'fun'. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are exemplary. Attendance is high. The care, guidance and support of children are exceptional and emphasise children's emotional health. Teachers squeeze every last drop of creativity from children. The rich curriculum is packed with experiences that fully engage learners. Children with learning difficulties and or disabilities and those who speak a language other than English receive support of the highest quality and achieve equally well. Staff create a magical place to learn where academic rigour and emotional well-being happily co-exist. The .....leadership of the headteacher drives the whole school team to 'Reach for the Stars'!'*

We need courageous leaders, like this head, who can take some risks and are prepared to help others to take some risks too. Who consider carefully their context then seize the agenda and make it work well in their school.

Good leadership – courageous leadership - opens horizons and extends the vision of what is possible and then knows how to take steps to turn the vision into a reality.

At a college in Leicester the leadership has helped to improve the teaching and learning dramatically but they did it in short steps, first introducing lesson planning, then the sharing of objectives with the students, then a range of ways to handle a plenary, then peer observation and coaching.

Leaders often have to take small steps to achieve their goals as Peter Brabeck, the CEO of Nestle has said, when he wanted to improve the pace and fitness of the organisation.

*“At first, it was as though we were all walking round in slippers. We needed to move from slippers to tennis shoes, from tennis shoes to training shoes and from training shoes to running shoes. At the moment, he said, we are still in tennis shoes. We are starting to walk faster but we need to be prepared to run.” Peter Brabeck, Nestle*

You don't get what the academics call “flow” – when the organisation is really performing at its very best and everyone knows it and is enthused by it – overnight – you need to take steps to get there.

Most of the leaders I have met in their schools this year have had to do very hard things. They have had to hold very difficult conversations with staff. Incidentally, one of the worrying things I read recently is that 88 per cent of heads said that NPQH did not prepare them properly on how to hold that type of difficult conversation. That is one of the reasons why NPQH has to change and will change next year. It also means, by the way,



that headteachers are not giving their senior staff enough exposure to handling those difficult conversations for themselves - which is how they will learn most effectively.

Good leaders, like the head of a primary school I visited in North Tyneside and a secondary school in Wakefield show kindness and sensitivity but they will confront the tough issues head on if they need to. They avoid “slow nos” – if they mean no, they say no and they make it clear that it is unacceptable.

I had a discussion recently with a former colleague about song titles to describe school leadership . I thought of Jackson Browne’s song ‘Running on Empty’ and he thought of The Who ‘Won’t Get Fooled Again’ but the one we both agreed was the best one is:

‘Tubthumping’ by Chumbawamba

“I get knocked down,

But I get up again,

You're never going to keep me down”

Good leadership is not about never having a bad day – we are human – it is about when you have a bad day, getting up and starting all over again. Because that’s what leaders do!

Martin Luther King:

*“The greatest glory in living lies not in never failing, but in rising every time we fail.”*

That is courageous leadership.

## 5. Authentic and imperfect leadership

I now want to speak in praise of the authentic, imperfect and incomplete leader.

The best leaders are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and don't try to be perfect at everything – they understand what they are good at and what they are not good at. They look for people who will compensate for their weaknesses so that they can play to their strengths, they look to create a perfect and complete **team** rather than to be the perfect and complete individual leader. They admit their weaknesses and are honest about who they are.

Let me be even more blunt and honest:

My name is Steve Munby and I am an imperfect and incomplete leader.

Frankly, it is unlikely that we will be able to inspire, excite or motivate people unless we show them who we are, what we stand for and what we can and cannot do.

Many of the heads and school leaders I have met this year have been quick to acknowledge their weaknesses, keen to tell me it was the team not so much them that has made the difference. They have told me how others joining them with different skills and expertise were turning points for the school. They have talked about their own learning journey and how they are often embarrassed by some of the mistakes that they made in the first year or two of headship. They have shown a complete absence of paranoia or self-pity.

They have also spoken passionately to me about the importance of understanding the context in which they found themselves and how rather than going in with all guns blazing, they have thought carefully about the context before assuming that what worked elsewhere would work here. A good leader tunes into the context.

*‘.. we have been witness to countless uncomfortable examples of executives who feel that the art of leadership is to give unfettered expression to their true selves in bold, take it or leave it fashion. They typically find that others choose to leave it.*

*‘Leadership is not achieved by riding into town – cowboy fashion - and shooting it up. Skilful leaders, to continue the analogy, need to get a sense of the town and to conform enough so that they are seen to be acting in the best interests of the townspeople, so they can lead change without being shot early in the proceedings.’*

*‘Why should anyone be led by you’ by Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones.*

So let’s acknowledge our imperfections. Let’s be honest about the fact that we have never liked that part of the role or have never been particularly good at it. Our staff will know anyway.

At the heart of authentic and imperfect leadership is moral purpose. An absolute commitment to ensure that we improve the learning and the lives of the children and young people whom we serve. Frankly, it is at the core of what drives us at NCSL and I suspect that it is what drives all of you in your own leadership.

Leadership for moral purpose is not an easy option. It requires soul.  
Professor Jonathon Jansen, the first black Education Dean at Pretoria says:

*‘What are the broader purposes of education – to create a deeper sense of what is worth learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a deeper sense of humanity? In pursuing this endeavour you need soul, suffering and above all, hope.’*

*‘Leading Against the Grain’*

When we set up the National Leaders of Education/National Support Schools initiative we asked Peter Mathews, former HMI, to visit most of the schools to quality assure the applications and to especially check that there was leadership capacity throughout the school not just with the headteacher. Peter has recently written up his findings on what he saw when he visited these outstanding primary, special and secondary schools. He concludes by saying that several compelling and largely common characteristics emerge. I have listed most of them here.

- a) They show strong and principled moral purpose in reaching out to help other schools, sharing what they have learned, from highly credible foundations (*I will come back to this one*).
- b) They are motivated by the challenge of providing the best possible educational experience for young people.
- c) They are thoughtful and systematic in the way that they work, diagnosing the challenges and finding workable solutions (*remember the small steps I talked about earlier*).
- d) They earn the trust they receive through consulting, valuing, and developing the people with whom they work and believing in them (*remember that as leaders for good or ill we influence others through our own behaviours*).

- e) They build confidence, capability and self-esteem in the people with whom they work as well as institutional capacity through growing tomorrow's leaders (*remember the school in Islington with 18 people wanting to become a headteacher*).
- f) They have inordinately high expectations, great optimism and believe in success. Nothing less than excellence is good enough for them (*I was interviewing some middle leaders in one school after they had just come out of special measures and one of the members of staff turned round as she was leaving and said to me "we are going to become outstanding you know". That's great leadership – to instil that sense of confidence and optimism amongst the staff*).
- g) They are decisive and prepared to take unpalatable decisions if this is the way to provide what children and the community deserve from their school (*remember the importance of user-centred leadership – absolutely passionate about the children and the community that they serve and being prepared to have the difficult conversation*).
- h) They will find innovative and often unorthodox solutions to both systemic and more localised problems and they will not always follow expected patterns or rules (*remember, strong on principles and passionate on outcomes for children but open about the ways to achieve that and prepared to take some risks*).

Now before I am accused of lauding the hero headteacher again. Let me emphasise – as these National Leaders of Education do – that they are part of a team and that the keys to their success are teamwork and distributed leadership. This initiative is about National Support Schools – not just the heads of those schools.

I am also clear that there are thousands of school leaders out there demonstrating in their own leadership the characteristics in this list.

I want to finish by emphasising the first of the aspects on Peter's list:

'they show strong and principled moral purpose in reaching out to help other schools, sharing what they have learned, from highly credible foundations'.

## **6. Partnership working**

In my visits to schools this year, this has been one of the key characteristics that I have seen in almost every school. A willingness to share, to give something back, to learn from others. Nearly every school I visited was actively involved in a network or collaborative or was working closely with one or two specific schools on common issues. Learning from others and supporting others.

The interesting thing is that by working with others we learn ourselves and by supporting others, the evidence is that our own schools improve. When NCSL, as part of the London Leadership Strategy, paired 55 secondary schools in London who were in very challenging circumstances and in need of support, with a number of leaders of outstanding schools to provide consultancy and advice and support. Not only did the schools receiving the support improve by more than the London average over a three year period but the schools who provided the support improved by more than the London average too. A win-win for system leadership and collaborative working.

When we developed advice on succession planning to the Secretary of State last year, we said we didn't think that a national strategy was what was needed. What was needed, instead, was local solutions. School leaders with partner agencies working together to address the issues in their local area or in their network.

We are already beginning to see exciting collaborative developments on succession planning as part of the pilot work. In Blackburn with Darwen it was a natural move for the collaboratives to work together on identifying and growing tomorrow's leaders. The programme included work shadowing opportunities and coaching sessions, led and carried out by headteachers. Interestingly this has proved to be a win-win strategy. At first the actions of the heads were altruistic in that they were helping to nurture new talent. However, it has now proved to be a really powerful retention tool – experienced heads are discovering that their skills and talents are needed by colleagues and it is revitalising their view of their last few years of headship.

The power of collaboration is overwhelming if we get it right – and this is the approach we will be taking as a National College – and always will for as long as I am Chief Executive. In fact everything that I have been saying this morning about effective leadership is equally relevant to the leadership of NCSL. As a National College we have to be continually focused on our users- namely schools leaders – so that it can truly be 'your college'. We need to address succession planning and talent management in our own organisation as well as supporting schools on this important issue. Our overall approach needs to be about varied models of school leadership and local solutions rather than over-simplistic national solutions. Our leadership development provision has to become more

personalised and bespoke. We also in our own leadership and in my leadership - need to demonstrate courage and authenticity, imbued with moral purpose.

When the range of leaders in South Africa got together to discuss what might happen to the country in the 1990s, they developed various scenarios and gave them names. One negative scenario, for instance, was dubbed 'Ostrich':

A non-representative white government sticks its head in the sand, trying to avoid a negotiated settlement with the black majority. Another negative scenario was labelled 'Icarus':

A democratic government comes to power with noble intentions but embarks on a huge, unsustainable public-spending spree that overreaches itself and crashes the economy.

The group's one positive scenario involved the government adopting a set of sustainable policies that would put the country on a path of inclusive growth to successfully rebuild the economy and establish real democracy.

This option was called 'Flamingo', invoking the image of a flock of beautiful birds all taking flight together.

This is an exciting time – there has never been a more important time to be a school leader. We should not be resisting the changes that are going to be coming at us in the hope that they will all go away in an ostrich scenario. Nor should we overstretch ourselves and develop ways of doing



things that are unrealistic, like the Icarus approach. We need to be long-sighted and optimistic but down to earth and pragmatic. Most of all, we need to work together as schools and as leaders. Let's go for the flamingo scenario.

I am asking you to keep the torch burning and to continue to inspire your staff and your colleagues. It's a torch worth bearing .