



National College for
School Leadership

Inspiring leaders;
improving children's lives

A branch with several green leaves, some showing signs of aging or damage, positioned in the upper left corner of the slide.

Future leadership, future leaders

Seizing Success

Annual Leadership Conference

The true meaning of system leadership

Professor David Hargreaves
(Wolfson College, Cambridge)

NCSL, June 7, 2007
3.15 - 4.15

Many meanings to SL

....but one is far more important than others

Others first...

e.g. Ken Leithwood on ‘domains of system leadership’

- Setting direction [for your school]
- Developing people [in your school]
- Developing the organisation [of your school]

e.g. David Hopkins on ‘system leader roles’

- Partnering another school (facing difficulties)
- Leading a school in challenging circumstances
- Acting as a civic leader brokering networks/partnerships
- Working as a change agent e.g. consultant leader

Michael Fullan - **moral purpose**

This entails:

- raising the bar and closing the gap of learning
- treating people with respect
- altering the environment for the better

David Hopkins: system leaders express moral purpose. They:

- 💡 measure success by raising the bar & narrowing the gap
- 💡 are committed to improving teaching & learning
- 💡 develop schools as learning communities
- 💡 strive for equity and improvement
- 💡 realise that classroom, school and system impact on one another and seek to engage with it in a meaningful way.

A common-sense definition of it is simply,
‘the action involved in leading the system’.

Moral purpose is then about the moral purpose of the system and system leaders’ views about the system’s moral purpose and the action entailed.

System leadership is not leading just one or more schools, not even many schools, but **leading the education system as a whole and doing so with an explicit moral purpose in mind, with the implications for action.**

Four essential fundamental questions

Who does in fact lead the system?

How well are they leading the system?

Are they the right system leaders?

Should there be other or additional leaders, leading the system in a different way, and towards a different goal?

Question: who does in fact lead the system?

- ministers
- their officials
- NDPBs
- LAs
- ?*School leaders?*

Question: how well are they leading the system?

What are the criteria by which we should judge?

The extent to which it is imbued with appropriate moral purpose that is expressed in its outcomes

The kinds of person an education creates for a particular kind of society in which persons flourish

Moral purpose at the governmental rhetorical level
e.g. 'excellence and equity'

Moral purpose as the experiential level of schools
e.g. 'the standards agenda' (tests, targets, tables)

Government determines ends and means and the task
of lower level leaders is to 'deliver' through incentives,

~~*The kinds of persons an education creates for a
particular kind of society in which persons
flourish*~~

Back to Michael Fullan

‘It is time to make [moral purpose] a system quality....[to create] widely shared moral purpose.

Meeting the goals of moral purpose produces commitment throughout the system. We need to elect governments who are serious about moral purpose, who constantly espouse it in the day-to-day reality of working with school systems, and who draw it out and reward it until a critical mass of leaders is working together to create even more of it.’

What are the implications of this for England now?

Is this how our education system is operating?

If not, what should be done about it?

David Hopkins on ‘system leader roles’

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Ken Leithwood on ‘domains of system leadership’

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By these definitions of system leadership, school leaders do not have to engage, collectively and consistently, with one another and with government, to determine the nature of moral purpose: education for what kind of people in what kind of 21C society - and world

Are they the right system leaders?

No. Education is far too important to be left to politicians and their officials alone.

Should there be other leaders, possibly seeking to lead the system in a different way, and towards different goals?

Yes. School leaders have an essential role in determining the nature of the education system.

So the true meaning of system leadership?

System leadership arises when political leaders and school leaders openly debate and agree on the moral purpose of education, that is, the kind of people that education creates for what kind of society; and then work in partnership to agree and to implement both the means by which such purposes can be realised in practice and the criteria by which success in such an endeavour is to be judged.

But will ministers and officials will grant school leaders such a role?

Current approaches to system leadership take us away from this task because the main focus is on the crisis about the lack of headteachers

And that is a problem largely created by the government and its education policies which

- led many heads to retire early
- made the post of headteacher less attractive to the next generation

...and then system leadership becomes a favoured way of solving the problem...

...but without removing the causes!

7 steps to achieving true system leadership

1. Get the debate back to purposes and outcomes

Find the proper place for the three Ts

- Targets
- Tests
- Tables

What is ‘the standards agenda’?

7 steps to achieving true system leadership

1. Get the debate back to purposes and outcomes
2. Devise new outcome measures

The ‘soft’ skills?

The ‘five Rs’?

The ‘five minds’?

Government rejection of Gilbert recommendation

7 steps to achieving true system leadership

1. Get the debate back to purposes and outcomes
2. Devise new outcome measures
3. Take the lead on innovation

The SSAT's D&R networks

The work of the Innovation Unit

Government rejection of Gilbert recommendation

7 steps to achieving true system leadership

1. Get the debate back to purposes and outcomes
2. Devise new outcome measures
3. Take the lead on innovation
4. Increase self-organisation in key areas e.g.CPD

A market system?

7 steps to achieving true system leadership

1. Get the debate back to purposes and outcomes
2. Devise new outcome measures
3. Take the lead on innovation, D&R
4. Increase self-organisation in key areas e.g.CPD
5. Build the network system

The NCSL's network learning communities

The SSAT's D&R networks

Clusters, collegiates, federations, trusts

7 steps to achieving true system leadership

1. Get the debate back to purposes and outcomes
2. Devise new outcome measures
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4. Increase self-organisation in key areas e.g.CPD
5. Build the network system
6. Scale down DfES, NDPBs and LAs

The three Ds, not Ts

Decentralisation Delegation Devolution

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5. Build the network system
6. Scale down DfES, NDPBs and LAs
7. Change the model - co-evolution & co-construction

Dynamic governments remain porous. Renewal rarely comes from within. One of the optical illusions of government is that those inside of it think of themselves as the drivers of change... Yet most far-reaching ideas and changes come from outside... Governments are more often vehicles than initiators. They play a role in embedding these changes but typically they get involved only at a late stage...

The smarter governments around the world realise that they need to build innovation into their everyday working: through experimental zones and pilots, competitive funds and rewards for promising ideas. And new ideas need time to evolve - preferably away from the spotlight... Most radical change has to start outside government, usually from the bottom rather than the top.

Geoff Mulgan, May 2005

7 steps to achieving true system leadership

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Late 20th century:

the self-managing school

LFM, LMS and GM followed by

networks, federations, trusts etc

and simultaneously

command-and-control centralisation

...and the the new goal?

Early 21st century:

a co-evolving and co-constructed

self-managing school system

System leadership arises when political leaders and school leaders openly debate and agree on the moral purpose of education, that is, the kind of people that education creates for what kind of society, and then work in partnership to agree and to implement both the means by which such purposes can be realised in practice and the criteria by which success in such an endeavour is to be judged.

What's the alternative?

‘A society of sheep begets a government of wolves’