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Different Approaches to Sharing School Leadership

This report examines international examples of co-head partnerships and teacher leadership collectives (initiatives in which two or more people share, or replace the position of headteacher), drawing on concepts of distributed leadership to help explain their different aims and practices.

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Introduction

In these times of increasing demands on headteacher creativity, energy and accountability, fresh approaches to sharing school leadership are needed. This report examines some alternatives in which two or more people share or replace, on a full-time or part-time basis, the position of headteacher and distribute leadership more widely throughout their schools.

After outlining some background and concepts for understanding the appeal of shared leadership, the report is presented in three main sections:

- a review of shared leadership initiatives
- a case study of a successful primary school teaching co-principal collective
- implications and some suggestions for those considering introducing shared leadership into their schools, policy-makers, professional development providers and other researchers

Background

My own interest in this topic began when, as a young head of department, I tried to share the leadership of a secondary school English department. I wanted to involve my colleagues in team decision making about all aspect of our teaching and resource development. My enthusiasm did not wane when I hit difficulties such as being told, "You are paid to make the decisions, so get on with it!" It was refuelled in 1992 when, as a new academic, I studied three women primary teachers who had initiated sharing the senior teacher position in their intermediate school syndicate (students in Years 9 and 10) (Court, 1994). I was excited by the potential of this innovation for professional and school development. Between 1994 and 2000 I reviewed the (still sparse) international literature about co-principalships and teacher leadership collectives and researched three New Zealand primary school teaching co-principalships. Then in 2002, as part of my work with the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) as an International Research Associate, I investigated some new primary and secondary co-headships in England.

This report draws on all of these studies and my thinking about why and how different shared school leaderships have begun, issues that have emerged, advantages and disadvantages that have been found and factors that contribute to success or disestablishment.[1] I have been interested also in thinking about how different initiatives can contribute to the development of more inclusive and democratic school organisations, as well as to ameliorating the escalating workloads and stress that many headteachers are currently experiencing.

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[1] My New Zealand study also investigated theoretical questions around how the women were constructing themselves as co-principals in relation to professional, managerial and feminist discourses of educational leadership. This analysis can be found in Court (2001).

Internationally there are increasing difficulties in recruiting and retaining headteachers (Gronn, 2003). In 2001 in England and Wales, for example, a quarter of secondary schools and nearly a third of primary schools had to re-advertise for a headteacher because of the poor quality or lack of applicants. In 2002, headteacher shortages were reported as the worst in five years (Howson, 2001; 2002). Factors contributing to this situation include the number and speed of successive education reforms. The high workloads that have resulted have often involved more paperwork than leadership for learning (Earley et al, 2002). In New Zealand, an increased association of the principal's role with a top-down form of control through performance management systems has been counter-productive in attracting people into leadership roles. Principals have observed that the job leads to "inevitable loneliness and inevitable stress" (Glenny et al, 1996).

English politicians continue to call for "super heads" to "yank up" schooling standards (Curtis, 2002), but research has shown that teacher collegiality and collaboration are features of effective schools (Lee et al, 1993). Furthermore, improved schooling is unlikely to result from top down, technical-rational approaches which take insufficient account of "the professional and moral dimensions" of educative school leadership (Day et al, 2000). Therefore, some educators and policy-makers have promoted an inspirational form of headteacher leadership for the transformation of schools into learning cultures (Hopkins, 2001; Stewart and Prebble, 1993).

Debates continue, however, around how and for whom charismatic transformational leadership best works in practice (Angus, 1989; Gosetti and Rusch, 1995; Gronn, 1996).[2] It is also clear that a range of leadership styles is drawn on by a headteacher as he or she goes about daily practice (Harris and Chapman, 2002). Indeed, no one leadership and management model can be guaranteed to fit all schools, as so-called 'best practice' varies according to context and people specific dimensions (Dimmock and Walker, 2002).

It is partly as a consequence of these issues and research findings that there is a growing interest in shared leadership initiatives. These have much to offer people, such as the following:

Teachers who are –

- aspiring to a leadership position, but rejecting the singular, heroic leadership model
- needing a viable way to 'juggle' family, study and career commitments
- wanting a leadership internship, with ongoing mentoring and professional support

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[2] For example, factors such as soci-economic differences and differences constructed around race, ethnicity and gender impact on how educational professionals are expected and perceived to act as leaders.

Heads who are –

- reluctantly contemplating early retirement or time out because of burnout or competing commitments
- wanting new challenges and professional stimulation in their current position
- willing to share their knowledge and skills in a mentoring role

School boards wanting to –

- retain their experienced (but tiring) heads
- attract headteacher applicants for their schools
- achieve leadership continuity in a time of high staff turnover

Educational policy-makers, leadership theorists and 'trainers' looking for ways to –

- address leadership recruitment problems
- provide ongoing professional development that 'fits' current realities of practice
- encourage and enhance teacher leadership that is focused on learning
- support the development of more democratic school organisations

Before I go any further, it may be helpful to look at some of the conceptual work that is being done in this area.

Conceptualising shared leadership

Kagan's (1994) suggestion that leadership can be viewed on a continuum[3] provides a helpful way to begin thinking about different forms of shared leadership.

A Continuum of Leadership

Sole leadership   *Supported leadership*   *Dual leadership*   *Shared leadership*

(Kagan, 1994)

In sole leadership, one person, as the real and titular head, has the dominant voice and leadership is not shared. Supported leadership (characterised sometimes as the 'patron' approach or consultative leadership) exists where the recognised single leader draws on and acknowledges input and advice from a wide range of people. Dual leadership involves a partnership between two people, both recognised as the leaders. Shared leadership is diffuse, "becoming an holistic property shared to some degree by all persons and groups involved in the collaboration" (Kagan, 1994). Kagan suggested that in fully shared collaborations, some individuals or groups may rise to prominence temporarily leading in a particular situation, but this will not destroy the "distribution of leadership throughout the organisation" (my emphasis).

Distributed leadership is rapidly becoming a buzz phrase in education, though Gronn's literature search did not find many examples of what it looks like in schools (Gronn, 2002). A study of 10 headteachers of English schools in challenging contexts gives some indications (Harris and Chapman, 2002). These heads "purposefully" distributed leadership in different ways at different stages of development in their schools. As they began, they were prepared to be firm and directive, "re-aligning" others to their "particular vision and values". Then as their schools improved, they employed "more democratic leadership styles". They "devolved" leadership by "working with and through teams" and by inviting others to lead. At this stage, they placed more emphasis on relationships than on systems and were described as "giving power to others rather than keeping it at the top". (Harris and Chapman, 2002)

Harris and Chapman distinguish devolved, dispersed and democratic leadership from delegated leadership, with an implied criticism of the latter: for example, one teacher is quoted as saying of his or her head, "It's not just a case of delegating headship tasks". The heads in this study did seem to remain ultimately in control of who did what in their schools, however, as it was reported that, "Teachers were given leadership responsibility, encouraged to work together in teams and had set targets to meet".

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[3] From her work on early childhood education, Kagan observed that traditional theories of leadership did not readily fit how leadership was being conceived and practised in that sector.

Some might say it is splitting hairs to argue that there is a difference between distributing and delegating leadership and "getting out of the way so that others can lead"[4]. However, the ways that traditional leadership discourses[5] can shape both our thinking and practices should not be overlooked in discussions about what distributive leadership is or is not. This is not to argue that research should focus on delineating fine conceptual distinctions between delegated leadership and distributed leadership as devolved, dispersed, democratic or organisationally "dense" as Southworth recently argued (Southworth, 2002). Rather, it is to warn that if we are to avoid developing another mantra or "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1980) for school leadership, our discussions need to be informed by more examples of the varying forms and effects of shared leadership.

Gronn (2002) has provided some helpful analytical tools for describing such examples. Defining distributed leadership as the dispersal or sharing of leadership among a number of leaders, rather than its monopoly by one person or attachment to one role or level of an organisation, he has identified two main variations. The first of these, multiple leadership behaviour, is the aggregated contributions of different individuals in an organisation. Gronn argues that this kind of distributed leadership is no more than the sum of its parts and "really a euphemism for collaboration or participation and spreading the burden of the overall school decision making" (Gronn, 2002). This could be characterised perhaps as delegated leadership or as a form of what Kagan calls supported leadership.

The second kind of distributed leadership, concertive leadership action, is group leadership that is more holistic, conjoint and cohesive, 'more than the sum of its parts'. Gronn suggests that this collective leadership can take three forms. It may emerge spontaneously as two or more people team up, drawing on their combined skills and knowledge resources to achieve a task or a project, before they disband. Or it may evolve as two or more people intuitively develop close working relations as they share a role space. Or it may occur as a deliberately planned change in an organisational structure or the regularising of informally shared leadership practices, such as in committees (Gronn, 2002).

Gronn draws on a study of three Australian Catholic secondary school co-principalships to analyse one of these as an example of a "concertive working unit" in which two people share a role space and exercise "joint managerial authority and accountability" (Gronn and Hamilton, 2002). This analysis focuses on the interpersonal dynamics of the shared leadership partnership. I aim to show in the next part of my report how different approaches to shared leaderships have been shaped not only by their participants' aspirations and interpersonal relationships, but also by their local school contexts and broader cultural and regulatory environments.

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[4] Howard Kennedy, director of the London Leadership Centre and former headteacher of Holy Family Catholic School, Slough, made this comment in an interview with me, referring to his own learning about what he needed to do to share leadership more fully with others in the school, including new teachers, support staff, parents and students.

[5] For example, discourse about leadership as related to a single, heroic and usually male leader or as linked to a somehow naturally "elite headteacher class" (Grace, 1997).

International examples of co-headships and teacher leadership collectives

The terms co-heads and co-principals imply simply that two people share their school's leadership. A range of approaches has been tried in different parts of the world however. These include:

- full-time, task-specialised co-principalships

- full-time, supported dual leaderships

- part-time, job-sharing partnerships

- integrative co-headships (where the co-heads collaborate more fully with other staff leaders), and

- teacher leadership collectives that completely replace the head's position

While some common characteristics can be identified within these approaches, particular initiatives have developed their own unique combinations of individual, supported, dual and shared leadership.

Task-specialised co-principalships

In the split task co-principalships established in seven North Carolina secondary schools in the United States during the late 1970s, administrative and leadership responsibility was divided between two principals. Individual leadership was being stressed here. One co-principal's job description was focused on administration tasks, including supervision of non-instructional staff, buildings and grounds, resource requisitions, student attendance records, managing the budget and making purchases. The other co-principal's work prioritised instructional leadership responsibilities, including assisting teachers in their planning, classroom practices, pupil discipline and professional development and overseeing communication with parents (Groover, 1989; West, 1978). Those looking for effective leadership for learning will be attracted by the claim that this model of split tasks and responsibilities improved instructional leadership, provided better staff development and resulted in fewer student discipline problems.

Since the 1990s in the Netherlands, it has been possible for two people to share primary school headship; in fact, 17 per cent of Dutch primary school principalships were shared in this way in 1996. A positive effect has been reported as the opportunity for mutual support. These were also mixed gender teams, a strategy that was seen as valuable in terms of equity issues (Vlug and Geerlings, 1990). The aim was for an equal sharing of the work. Indications have been found however that:

> Although both principals occupy the same position… informally differences in status and task differentiation occur. One principal (mostly the male principal) performs general management tasks including managing financial resources, and maintains external contact. The other principal (mostly the female principal) is primarily focused on student administration and care. (Imants, 1997).

This kind of work division may seem to some to be unproblematic, but research has shown how such differentiations are part of a gendered hierarchy in many schools where men predominate in the leadership positions. This traditionally accepted situation has been legitimated by social constructions of rational authority as being 'naturally' masculine, in contrast to a so-called 'feminine nature' that has been perceived as suiting women for nurturing and supportive roles (Apple, 1986; Connell, 1987). Such factors have contributed to the difficulties many women have experienced in gaining educational leadership positions (Blackmore, 1999). As such, proposers of split task, mixed gender co-principalships need to give some careful thought to 'who does what' in the school (Court, 1997).

A further difficulty has become evident in the split task approach to co-principalship. While a few areas of overlapping responsibility (such as whole school planning) have been noted, it has been assumed that most tasks, responsibilities and accountabilities can be easily divided between the co-principal partners (Korba, 1982; Shockley and Smith, 1981; Thurman, 1969). This assumption overlooks the interlocking nature of administrative management and instructional leadership, such as has been found in Spillane et al's (2001) research. The further assumption that everyone will keep to their job descriptions and the specific tasks allotted to them is also flawed. In her evaluation of the North Carolina co-principalships, Groover found that only one-third of those 24 co-principals did that. Another one-third used their job descriptions as guidelines only and the remaining one-third either "traded off and negotiated roles based on each other's strengths and interests… or utilised a combination" (Groover, 1989). The latter practices are common in other co-principalships, indicating that a division of administrative management from instructional leadership tasks and accountabilities in education is not as simple as might seem. Nor is it necessarily appropriate or effective. The primary school co-principals I studied in New Zealand (and discuss later) engaged in practices that involved broader and deeper forms of mutual accountability. They saw this as a necessary part of their close teamwork for developing better teaching and learning (Court, 2001).

Supported dual leaderships

Emphasising a split task approach as a way to make school leadership more effective and accountable also underplays the time co-principals are likely to spend in collegial professional dialogue. The benefits of this have been highlighted by Julia Flynn and Martin Fletcher, the recently appointed co-heads of Hastingsbury Upper and Community School in Bedfordshire, England[6]. They value their co-headship because it means they can talk to each other as equals and they see this equality distinguishing a co-head partnership from a head/deputy head relationship. They maintain that it enables an ongoing collaborative testing out of ideas with each other, which results in them providing a better quality of service for their school than they could as a head and deputy (Garner, 2002). There is a suggestion here that not only are "two heads are better than one" (ibid), but a co-head partnership of professional equals adds up to more than the sum of its parts (Gronn, 2002).

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[6] In 2002, Hastingsbury had around 900 students and up to 2000 adults per week in the community courses.

Julia and Martin's close working relations evolved earlier when they were sharing the deputy head role at Hastingsbury. It was the success they experienced then that inspired them to challenge and change the head/deputy head structure in their school. They now share some headteacher responsibilities while dividing between them some other responsibilities, making these choices according to their different strengths and interests. They also split between them the deputy and headteacher salary. In these ways, the Hastingsbury co-heads have modified the co-principal split-task approach into a supported/dual leadership. We could say that here leadership is becoming more conjoint (Gronn, 2002).

Julia and Martin are the first UK co-heads of a single school. Others aspiring to a similar approach will be encouraged to learn that the DfES has stated that there are no obstacles to job-sharers taking the post of headteacher (Garner, 2002). Certainly the co-directors who have led Stantonbury Campus in Milton Keynes, England since 1974 and the co-principals in office since 1990 at El Molino High in San Sonoma County, California, United States have proved that two people can share effectively the leadership of large co-educational high schools.

At El Molino High (which serves over 1,100 students), Frank Anderson and Dori Trombetta, like Martin and Julia, had previously worked together as vice principals. Similarly also, they recognised that they could build a strong shared principalship based on their "compatible strengths, common style, shared vision and philosophy" (Graves, 1998). After their appointment, they also agreed on dividing between them some "clearly delineated duties", choosing these according to what each liked to do best. They have continued to work closely, however, with the vice-principal and three counsellors who make up the administrative team. Like many other collaborative school leaders, they insist that listening to those who will be most affected is essential before making decisions. Thus, while their partnership involves some individual, task-specialised leadership, it also exhibits the characteristics of a supported dual leadership. Furthermore, Frank and Dori distribute (delegate?) some leadership opportunities to other staff at the senior management levels.

The co-directors at Stantonbury Campus (which has around 2,600 students, 160 teachers, 150 associate staff, 36 leisure centre staff and around 90 staff involved with adult education) have had a similar approach in their supported dual leadership. These co-directors have worked side by side in a shared office, which has facilitated the "constant dialogue" that John Wilkins said contributed (along with his and Lesley King's complementary skills) to their successful joint directorship (Northen, 2001). Some of their whole school leadership and management responsibilities were shared with the senior management team (of three deputy headteachers), an extended leadership group and others in the school. This widened participation in leadership responsibilities was co-ordinated through committee structures that crossed intersecting layers of the senior management team, heads of hall and team co-ordinators, faculty heads and curriculum leaders, as well as administrative managers in areas such as caretaking, finance, resources and personnel.

Job-sharing co-heads

It was partly in response to the difficulties they experienced in advancing their careers while also giving time to their families, communities and study, that some women teachers have initiated job-sharing the principal's position. At Normandy School in Colorado, United States, each woman worked for two months, then took two months off (Gordon and Meadows, 1986). At Henry Hudson Elementary School in Vancouver, Canada, a new co-principal was appointed to work half of his time as principal and the rest of the week teaching, while the woman co-principal carried out the leadership responsibilities in the school (White, 1991). (A teacher thought that the school had a feeling of having a vice-principal when both principals were there.) At San Pedro Elementary School in California, United States, one co-principal worked Monday through Wednesday, the other Wednesday through Friday (Cole, 1999). And in the first wife and husband job-sharing co-headship in the UK, at Mayflower Primary School in Leicester, Sarah Blamey and Patrick Fielding split their work over two weeks, alternating three days on, two off the first week and vice versa the second (Bushby, 2001).

In these initiatives, each co-principal has, as an individual, carried out all the tasks and functions of the headship while 'on the job'. They could appear then, in Kagan's terms, to be alternating sole leaders (Kagan, 1994). Each of these job-sharing partnerships has involved, however, the practice of individual leadership within a conjoint approach to dual leadership. Conjoint leadership has shaped these initiatives as the co-heads have worked together at the beginning of their partnerships, planning their working relationships and negotiating some 'specialist' tasks. It has been maintained and reaffirmed during the co-heads' regular meetings, phone discussions and 'crossover' times, when they have updated each other, problem-solved and planned further action.

Conjoint leadership is also evident in the fact that success in these initiatives depends on the co-heads' willingness to take mutual responsibility for maintaining continuity, consistency and communication, both within their partnerships and between themselves and staff, students and parents. While different strategies have been used, each set of partners has reported that constant communication is absolutely critical. In Sarah and Patrick's wife and husband co-headship, maintaining communication has not been difficult, however. They update each other for about an hour at home each weekday evening – after the first priority of cooking and eating together with their two young children.

Winning the support of the local community has been another significant factor in job-shared co-leaderships. In each case, but particularly for Sarah and Patrick, determination and persistence was needed to persuade the education authority and local school community to support the proposal. Sarah and Patrick found that people were distrustful of married partners – an underlying worry seemed to be "what if their relationship split up?" They finally convinced Mayflower School that each could be "a capable head in their own right". They won their position on their individual merit and the proof that they had already successfully shared a deputy headship at their previous school (Bushby, 2001).

The Mayflower co-heads (like those at Hastingsbury) feel sure that together they do a better job than they could individually, saying that, "Together we have developed a more

balanced approach" (ibid). They have integrated their different talents and personal styles in sharing the leadership between them and others in the school. Their recent OFSTED report endorses their effective development, with other staff and parents in the school, of a "very strong shared commitment to succeed", which has contributed to improved teaching and pupil achievement (OFSTED, 2002). These characteristics indicate that at Mayflower a conjoint kind of distributed leadership is evolving, and because of this I would place Sarah and Patrick's co-headship closer to the more fully shared end of Kagan's continuum of leadership than the other examples of part-time job-sharing I have discussed.

Integrative co-headships

I used the word integrated in my description of Sarah and Patrick's blended leadership style and their extending of leadership to others. I was drawing here on Dass's (1995) use of the term 'integrative' to describe the approach of a co-principalship she studied at Western High School in Oregon, United States. This co-principalship was highly collaborative; had no pre-determined roles for each co-principal; was open, flexible and adaptive in terms of leadership styles and thus able to build on individual strengths; was based on shared values and goals; designed on mutual trust and fellowship; incorporated equal responsibility and accountability for decision consequences and opened up team strategies of administration (Dass, 1995). These characteristics were evident also in the co-principalship established in 1990 at Selwyn College, Auckland, New Zealand (Glenny et al, 1996). These two co-principalships (and three others I look at in this section) are interesting for the wider changes that were being attempted and for the difficulties that were encountered.

Both the Western High School and Selwyn College partnerships were mixed gender teams that were appointed to provide "an educationally sound structure that could challenge gendered stereotypes of leadership" (Glenny et al, 1996). It was argued that such partnerships could provide "good role models for both young men and young women" (ibid) by showing that "it is okay for a woman to take charge and okay for a male to be gentle and assertive… and that women and men can be more effective when they work together as a team (Dass, 1995).

They both aimed also to break down traditional leadership hierarchies that have placed the headteacher/principal at the top of a chain of 'command and control'. The Western High co-principals opened up the school's central committees to more staff and encouraged "ad hoc committees" to enable periodic leadership opportunities for staff. It is not clear whether these committees arose spontaneously or were set up by the co-principals as a delegation of leadership responsibilities. Although the committees could only make recommendations to the Site Council, Dass pointed out that the latter included elected teachers, as well as parents. Further, all council members had "equal and legitimate rights" to veto any decisions they did not agree with or wanted to investigate further. Dass thus maintained that parent members were given the opportunity to participate with staff as equals. Unfortunately she did not elaborate on how this worked in practice.

Other merits of the Western High co-principals' shared leadership strategies were identified as an improved school climate with better up and down communication; more

principal availability and accessibility; more collaborative decision making and more teacher and parent involvement in school projects (Dass, 1995). In Dass's comment that there was better "up down communication", there is an indication however that a structural hierarchy was persisting in this school.

The co-principalship established in 1990 at Selwyn College (a large secondary co-educational school in Auckland, New Zealand) is also interesting for the way it challenged some of the tenets of the new right 'revolution' in public management in New Zealand. New public management was shaped within a discourse that sees society and organisations as made up of self-interested individuals who cannot be trusted to work well in the absence of management checks and controls (Boston et al, 1996). The 1988 educational administration reforms thus promoted a task-differentiated and single line accountability management model in schools. The Selwyn College co-principals resisted this approach, however. Instead, Carol White and John Kenny developed teamwork strategies that aimed to give all staff and students, "direct experience of participating in a social group and of influencing it" (Glenny et al, 1996).

Like Western High School, Selwyn College remained structured in traditional tiers of teachers, middle management group (heads of department) and senior management. A majority of the staff who were surveyed and interviewed in an evaluation study of the co-principalship reported, however, that there was an increased unity and co-operation between middle and senior management and leadership. They said that participation in decision making was spread throughout the school through strategies such as the following.

- The co-principals worked as a sub-group of two in a senior management team of six people. This had three permanent members and three rotating members, the latter appointed for three years from the staff. Responsibilities for 'principal functions' (such as resources, community relations, professional development) were negotiated and rotated within the team.

- The budget was negotiated with middle and senior management staff to ensure that money was distributed fairly between departments.

- A project team approach was introduced: interested staff could form a small committee, investigate a project and develop a proposal for action. When this was presented to the whole staff, if a significant majority did not agree, the committee would be reconvened (encompassing if possible the dissidents) to find a variation that would win majority approval.

- Students were included on many committees, invited to staff professional development meetings and had their own council that also had a 'shared presidency' (Glenny et al, 1996)

The Selwyn College co-principals thus also gave away much of their decision veto powers to staff project teams and committees that also included students. Teachers valued this and other participatory systems that they said produced a changed school culture characterised by power sharing, collegiality and honesty. Students identified "accessibility and teamwork" as features of a school in which "equity and representation are important" (Glenny et al, 1996). This co-principalship was seen as successfully

building and integrating more democratic and inclusive leadership practices into many aspects of the work of their school.

In summary, both of these co-principal initiatives were distributing leadership well beyond their original partnerships. They changed their schools' committee structures and practices in ways that effectively gave away some of the principals' final decision-making power. This enabled in each school opportunities for more people to share leadership as a form of conjoint, purposive action (Gronn, 2002). Despite the fact that both schools remained structured within traditional teacher/middle management/senior management layers, these co-principalships could thus be placed towards the more fully shared end of Kagan's continuum.

At Chafford Hundred Campus in Thurrock, England, a different, but very ambitious attempt at integrative conjoint leadership began in September, 2000, when Alison Banks (secondary) and Catherine Finn (primary) were appointed as headteachers of this new school. It was planned as a 'fused' secondary and primary/nursery school, to be located on one site and in one building. Alison and Catherine worked together for a year before the new building was opened, planning and overseeing the development of its shared staffroom, administrative block, community library and cyber cafe. They were joined by two assistant headteachers (curriculum/primary and resources/secondary) and a business manager, whom they appointed to begin just after Easter in 2001. These five together completed the final planning and preparation for the school's opening in September.

At the beginning, Alison and Catherine were determined to share everything, "to slim down the hierarchy and to put as much resource as possible into teaching time" (Banks and Finn et al, 2002). These co-heads wanted to smooth out some of the many boundaries that have been structured into different areas and phases of children's learning experiences. To assist the integration of the primary and secondary parts of their school, they each became deputy head in the other's area. A flat staffing structure, which combined pastoral and academic and removed house and departmental structures, was established and the co-heads worked at building a management alliance with their senior management team and other people in their school, such as the community librarians, local youth service and adult education service. In these ways, the Chafford Hundred co-headship was planned to enact the kind of conjoint and holistic distributed leadership described by Gronn as "more than the sum of its parts".

Legally, however, Chafford Hundred has remained two schools, accountable to two different regulatory authorities. This significant contextual constraint resulted in a "bureaucratic nightmare" during the first year of the school's operation (Northern, 2001). For example, the co-heads tried to develop a common budget "to smooth the inequalities of primary and secondary funding", but then had to split the annual report back out into primary and secondary to meet the different education sectors regulatory requirements. The Chafford Hundred senior management team encountered many other difficulties, which they describe in the final report of their participant action research study on their initiative (Banks and Finn et al, 2002). The report makes salutary reading for those who have high ideals about and enthusiasm for shared leadership: it asks whether two leaders can head up a team.

As I have been showing, however, co-leadership is not only possible, it can be a very successful strategy if the processes for sharing leadership are well planned, supported and recognised as needing regular review and modification if weaknesses are identified. I will discuss in more detail later factors that can contribute to success, but at this point in my report I want to tease out some more of the factors that can result in the disestablishment of a co-head shared leadership. I will do this by discussing the Chafford Hundred difficulties in some more detail and then by drawing on my own study of New Zealand primary school co-principalships (Court, 2001).

Difficulties and constraints that can 'bedevil' a co-head shared leadership

Chafford Hundred Campus

It is my view that unintentionally the Chafford Hundred leadership team was set up to fail. I say this for the following reasons. The co-heads did not know each other prior to their appointment, nor did they have any input into the choice of their prospective partner. Other studies have warned against this (see for example White, 1991). The senior management team also came together in phases. While this is not necessarily a difficulty in itself, it would have been easier if all five could have worked together from the beginning.

More significantly perhaps, the co-heads began their work in "a context of limited support and even hostility in some quarters" (Banks and Finn et all, 2002). (Banks commented later that the lack of support from the local education authority when they needed help to challenge and change a range of regulatory constraints was the most significant difficulty for herself and partner Catherine Finn.)

The co-heads were both strong professionals, however, and this stood them in good stead most of the time. Sometimes there were problems though, because they each had their own ideas about how things should be done and agreements were not always reached. Within the wider team, the assistant heads were also strong teaching professionals. However, they were relatively inexperienced in senior management and consequently each needed management mentoring and support. This could not always be given by the experienced heads because they had too much to do.

Stress from all of these difficulties was added to by constant deadline pressures and learning to manage a huge 11 million pound budget while being constantly in the spotlight as an innovative school.

And on top of all this were the day-to-day problems of trying to fully understand the issues in each of the nursery/primary/secondary sectors, with virtually no time for the talk and debate needed to build shared understandings and aims. The difficulties of negotiating different expectations about pedagogy, student behaviour management and codes were compounded by long established inequalities between primary and secondary staff salaries and working hours.

It should not really surprise us that Catherine Finn left the school in August 2002 to return to a nursery/primary school headship. Alison Banks remained as secondary head and Karen Lee (previously the assistant head primary) was appointed as acting primary

head (she is currently undertaking NCSL training for headship). This compromise is enabling the school to take up what Alison describes as a "holding pattern, with some 'clear water' between the two schools", until anticipated regulation changes in two years' time may enable Chafford Hundred to become one integrated school. At that time, Alison hopes to return the school to a flatter management team structure.

Two of the three primary school co-principalships that I studied in New Zealand were also reverted to a sole principalship. Both set out to work within an integrative approach to shared leadership, but each encountered some different difficulties.

Telford School co-principalship: attempting a coalition across differences[7]

Kate and Ann developed an ambitious proposal for a co-principalship at their unique small primary school (of five teachers and 106 students) in a large city in New Zealand. They wanted to achieve a shared leadership that would enable all three educational strands in their school (the original state strand of two classes, two Montessori classes and the full immersion Māori language class) to be fully involved in whole school decision making. Their proposal stressed the importance of ensuring that "the school's emphasis is on values reflected in the three strands", through incorporating a "clear understanding of all the implications of a non-hierarchical structure that does not put any strand above another".

As part of these overriding goals, they proposed "to involve all staff in regular review of decisions affecting pupil welfare, property, spending in curriculum and staff development" and "to ensure that appraisal and professional development is shared among peers". They suggested also that there should be "active participation by the board" in the "shared administrative tasks of the co-principals". In wanting to "increase the responsibility and accountability of all those involved", they acknowledged that "open honest discussions" would be needed. (The quotes are taken from the co-principal proposal they presented to the board.)

They began by opening up the staff meeting agenda so that all staff could contribute items for discussion, and they rotated the chairing of these meetings so that all experienced this leadership. Kate made an arrangement so that everyone could be released from teaching on a Friday afternoon (except one person, who ran sports for the whole school) so that the teachers could pair up with a colleague in their own strand to develop specific policies or to carry out shared planning.

Their goals and beginning strategies indicate that Kate and Ann were attempting to develop a conjoint, holistic kind of shared leadership. Unfortunately, they had difficulty achieving the necessary level of open communication within their partnership. For example, Kate thought that Ann needed to take a more dominant leadership role, particularly in board meetings. She was concerned that if Ann didn't do this, the board may see it as unbalanced and "I want them to have respect and faith in her ability to do the job" (interview with Kate). She was reluctant to bring up this topic with Ann, because she did not want Ann to think that she had not been doing the job properly. Ann, on the

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[7] To protect participant confidentiality, all names in this and the other two New Zealand primary co-principal case studies are pseudonyms.

other hand was happy to let Kate talk at board meetings as she saw Kate as more experienced than herself. She also saw it as a good thing that she and Kate had never had to sit down and "nut something out so that we go with a united view to board meetings for example – we obviously agree on things" (interview with Ann). Communication breakdowns such as these contributed to Kate and Ann being unable to establish mutual understandings and agreements about practical strategies for collaborative management and Kate ended up doing most of the administrative and leadership work.

Another problem contributed to the latter situation. The appointing board had not initially ensured that Ann had sufficient experience and skills for leadership responsibilities. She needed some management training, which did not occur.

Early in the co-principalship, Kate also found that she was pregnant. In the second half of the first year of the co-principalship, she went on maternity leave for a term and a half, leaving Ann to 'hold the fort' as sole principal. This was a very stressful time for Ann. Demands from some of her Montessori parents ate into her time for administrative and leadership work throughout this time and many tasks were left for Kate when she returned.

The need to negotiate and resolve struggles and disagreements between the three strands over funding, resources and staffing issues further exacerbated Kate's workload. The board chairperson became increasingly concerned about this and therefore carried out appropriate appraisal and review procedures that resulted in Kate's and Ann's partnership being disestablished at the end of its second year. This happened by mutual agreement between them and their board.

The Telford initiative provides a useful example of how a 'failing' co-principalship can be returned to a sole leadership without damaging staff relationships or parental confidence in the school. Staff in the school remained committed to the principle of shared decision making and later on two of them successfully shared the position of deputy principal.

St Mary's School co-principalship: a flattened senior management team

Difficulties of a different kind, which centred around governance and management issues, were encountered in this New Zealand co-principal initiative.

In 1994, Brigid and Carrie proposed a dual co-principalship in their Catholic integrated primary school, which had six staff serving 124 children. Brigid was committed to shared collaborative approaches, but her main motivation for inviting Carrie to join her as co-principal was to ease the high workload and associated stress of the teaching principalship. Carrie accepted, as she wanted ultimately to be a sole principal and this was a good career opportunity.

Their proposal listed their professional teaching, management and school development skills and argued that they offered "a management team with broad vision, dual accountability and wide-ranging expertise". They wanted to use an integrative approach of the kind Dass described, in which each co-principal shared and had equal authority in all areas of instruction and administration.

Although their senior management team co-principal proposal did seem to embody some of the usual hierarchical splits between principal and teacher, management and teaching, once Brigid and Carrie started working together, they extended their collaboration to include all the staff in a wide range of leadership activities. They shared the setting of meeting agendas as well as school-wide planning, decision making and problem solving. Budget decisions were devolved to the teachers who held particular curriculum responsibilities, and a collaborative approach was used for staff appraisals. Brigid and Carrie also challenged common assumptions that part of the principal's role should be to inspire others. They sat down with the whole staff and asked them, "What is your vision for the school?" They work shopped together everybody's ideas until a consensus for their educational purposes and plans was reached. As a consequence, the staff reported that they felt "a part of it all – it was so shared".

This co-principalship was very successful for two years, achieving a positive Education Review Office report and a glowing external appraisal of the co-principals' work. However, after Brigid had taken leave for a year's study, the board decided to revert to a sole principal.

A significant factor here was the nature of the board/co-principal relationship. Wylie's (1997) research into New Zealand's school boards of trustees has identified different types of board. While most are supportive, some boards only operate reactively (looking to the principal for guidance on both large and small matters) and a few are mistrustful. Some of the St Mary's board members fell into the last category. This caused them often to question the co-principals' actions or decisions. Some board members also confused governance and management roles, misunderstanding the nature of their responsibility for professional accountability. For example, in response to her worry about an area of teaching, one board member tried to overly influence the co-principals' management of a teacher.

Unsurprisingly, some board/principal conflict resulted. A breakdown in communication between the board and the co-principals and within the co-principal partnership occurred. Combined with Carrie's career aspiration to be a sole principal, these factors resulted in the dissolving of this school's co-principal partnership.

Each of the last three cases provide some salutary warnings to those who think that a co-headship can be introduced easily into a school. The lessons from them are incorporated into my concluding discussions in the final section of this report.

At this point, though, I want to describe the other approach to shared school leadership that I found documented in the international literature.

Teacher leadership teams and collectives

Teacher leadership teams flatten leadership hierarchies by completely replacing the headteacher/principal position, sharing between them all the school-wide administration, policy-making and planning responsibilities. The first two initiatives I discuss could be characterised as utilising a formalised committee approach to conjoint leadership (Gronn, 2002) while the Norwegian and the New Zealand teaching co-principal collectives arguably come closest to Kagan's view of leadership as "an holistic property

shared to some degree by all persons and groups involved in the collaboration" (Kagan, 1994).

At Independent School District 2 (a year K-12 school in Minnesota, US with 319 students and 28 staff), six teachers were appointed as a leadership team, or committee. A guiding principle for this initiative was the belief that decisions are best made by the people closest to the situation. It was considered that as the teachers were already used to being consulted on a range of issues, "the necessary practical and philosophical framework was already in place" (Gursky, 1990). Each of the six teacher leaders was paid a $4,400 annual stipend for sharing the traditional principal functions and tasks, including curriculum changes, budgetary decisions, student discipline and teacher evaluations (ibid). After one year, the team was working together on most things, including the budget and student discipline. Unsurprisingly, they found that "communication is the glue that holds the system together" (Gursky, 1990,). Benefits reported included improved staff morale; better communication; a more comfortable atmosphere; and greater teacher control over the issues that affect them (Gursky, 1990).

Another teacher leadership team operated successfully between 1994 and 2002 at Anzar High School in California, US. The founding teachers and Board of Education knew that the average principal stayed only 4–5 years and that when a new principal came in there could be a radical shift in philosophy. It was hoped that by having the teachers lead this newly established school, the teaching and learning programme would take precedence, rather than a principal driven philosophy (interview with school administrator, 1999).

As the school grew, adding a grade per year until it reached its current roll of around 360 students, Anzar kept its three teacher 'lead team', though it appointed an administrator to help with the increasing workload. Each teacher leader was selected by the staff and each worked for a three year term, with a new person rotating in to replace the departing one. At each rotation they also renegotiated and divided responsibilities between them, keeping 60 per cent of their time for teaching and 40 per cent for administration.

In this leadership team, the commonly-faced problem of more time being needed for consensus decision making was addressed by the development of clear meeting guidelines and the delegation of some decision areas to subcommittees. Some initial failures in communication, which caused difficulties of some "harmful proportions", resulted in the staff committing themselves to developing the Anzar Communication Guidelines (Barnett et all, 1998). These recorded that, "We are all part of the same team; we collectively own the problems and we collectively solve them. We will allow conflict/differing ideas to exist. Tension is normal. I will be accountable for speaking my ideas. We will help and support others. I will be honest".

This initiative illustrates a blending of both split-task and more integrative leadership strategies. That is, both individual and conjoint leadership activity was expected of each member and the tensions between autonomy and interdependence were surfaced for useful discussion, with the result that disagreement and conflict were recognised as having productive potential. The participants were enthusiastic about their approach and "the staff felt success and a sense of sustainability" (Davidson, 2002).

Unfortunately, after several years, "personnel changes caused the leadership team to erode" (ibid). As there were not three teachers willing to participate in the lead team, the school moved in 2002 to having one director, Charlene McKowen, who had been one of the initial founding teachers. This suggests that the increasing demands impacting negatively on (sole) headteacher recruitment, are impacting also on shared leadership teams.

Charlene found that some simple decisions, such as one about parking spaces, were easier to make than previously, when everyone had to agree. As Davidson (2002) pointed out, some decisions can, of course, be made more quickly by one person. As she also maintained, though, in democratic schools it is "crucial that for substantive issues of teaching and learning, those who know the students best – teachers, students and parents – work together".

Building democratic understandings and practices was the motivating aim for the appointment of all eight teachers as a leadership collective when His School was opened in 1974 in southern Norway (Bergerson and Tjeldvoll, 1982; Hagen and Court, 1998). It was argued by the county director, Arne Bergersen, that co-operative attitudes, skills and practices and democratic ways of thinking among the teachers could influence students and other people in the school community, acting as a form of education for a participatory democracy (Bergersen and Tjeldvoll, 1982).

This collective (with some changes in personnel) is still functioning well. Working together as a 'steering committee', the teachers undertake whole school planning and decision making. Some specific administrative responsibilities are negotiated and rotated among them, enabling development of individual skills and expertise. Each teacher also has a responsibility to initiate and to make sure that things get done. The centrally negotiated administrative allowance normally paid to a headteacher has paid for clerical assistance and an extra teacher to release each of them from teaching for two hours per week administrative work. Thus the project costs no more than if the school had a single principal[8].

In this Norwegian example, shared leadership can be seen in different ways to be becoming more than just a sum of its parts (Gronn, 2002). For example, a range of educational outcomes for teachers and students has been identified. In an early report on their work together, the Norwegian teachers said that they had "grown as individuals and a group" (Løddesøl, 1976). They learned to respect each other's opinions and to work their way through differences to develop more collaborative and democratic working practices. They found that collaborative teaching plans were easier to develop than they expected and team teaching gave students a wider exposure to different teachers' skills and strengths. The teachers believed that children learn best from experience, so they tried to involve the students in tasks that would enable them to develop responsibility for each other and for their school. They noticed that students began working more in common with each other and that they developed more

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[8] A rather unexpected gain was made in terms of accountability for management of resources: teachers became more aware of the importance of responsible buying and maintenance of school materials.

generous, helpful attitudes towards others. The aim of educating for responsible citizenship through democratic organisational practices was in their view being achieved.[9]

Each of the teacher leadership initiatives I have discussed thus far illustrate types of conjoint distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000). They have involved committees or teams and/or deliberately planned structural changes that have enabled the dispersal of leadership among a group of equals, each of whom has been expected to carry out both individual and shared leadership. As the third New Zealand teaching co-principalship I studied at Hillcrest Avenue School is a particularly successful example of these characteristics, I have dedicated the second major section of my report to a more detailed account of its aims and development.

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[9] Several other Alternative Leadership Models schools have been established in Norway. The majority have been in primary schools, with one small special needs' school and one lower secondary school. Some schools had a small steering committee compared to the overall number of teachers, whilst others had a flat management structure (Hagen and Court, 1998).

Case study of the Hillcrest Avenue School co-principalship: A team of equals sharing leadership

Hillcrest Avenue School co-principal proposal[10]

When the principal and one senior teacher position became vacant in this small three-teacher inner city school, Liz and Jane proposed that they share them, establishing a teaching co-principalship that would work towards including Karen, the third teacher in the school. Their aim was to accomplish a "structural change" that would remove the principal/teacher hierarchy and "transform power from a single to a collective base" (co-principal proposal, 1992). What factors had led them to this way of thinking?

In arguing that such a structural change was needed to "validate a collaborative school culture", Liz and Jane were mounting a strong challenge to the New Zealand requirements for the principal to be an executive manager in control of teachers (Department of Education, 1988). As I noted earlier, a consequence of the New Public Management restructuring of educational administration in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was that principals were required to focus on rationalising the management of staffing, finances, plant and curriculum to make their schools more efficient and competitive in an educational market. Both Liz and Jane disagreed with this 'new right' managerial focus. As a result of their previous work in collaborative schools and their own reading about research into the links between teacher collegiality and effective schooling, they argued that principals' work needed to be more focused on learning and teaching. Their proposal stated that sharing leadership between all the teachers in the school would enable this.

They were also disenchanted with some of the academic literature about collaborative leadership, especially some presentations of the principal as a transformational leader. This point could do with some elaboration. Within the persisting bureaucratic organisation of schools, principals remain positioned at the head of a chain of influence and control, holding final veto power over all school wide decisions. The transformational approach to collaborative leadership seems to 'soften' these power and control elements through its arguments about the effective principal working through a form of 'servant' leadership (Sergiovanni, 1991). The 'transformative leader' is still often presented, however, as the person with the responsibility to "shape and share a vision which gives point to the work of others" (Handy, 1992). Arguably, this endorses an elitist view of the principalship. For example, New Zealand writers have described the principal as a charismatic individual, who "personifies" and "heads up" the school, "like the decorated prow of a ship… showing the way, leading by example" (Stewart and Prebble, 1993). Liz and Jane rejected this view: they wanted to establish a shared leadership that would be "less (focused) on trends or the personality of the leader and more on teaching and learning". As Liz explained, "I used to think that good principals were charismatic visionaries, but I don't think that any more. Vision is important, but no one individual is more important than anyone else".

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[10] All names of people and places are pseudonyms.

A further factor had influenced their thinking about shared leadership. Partly as a consequence of long-established career hierarchies in schools, collegiality between educational professionals has been driven by micro-political struggles over power (Ball, 1987). Liz and Jane knew about the ways these dynamics can constrain more democratic practices in which "power and authority would be regarded as reciprocal, relational concepts" (Angus, 1989).[11] They wanted to try to develop democratic practices of shared power and authority within a three-way partnership of equals. They argued that this could more effectively build "a shared vision that would enhance commitment to and ownership of collaborative planning, shared decision making and collegial work" (Co-principal Proposal, 1992). They recognised also that this would require a commitment to "shared responsibility and mutual accountability" (ibid).

This, then, was their plan. I have explained elsewhere what happened during the co-principal selection and appointment processes and the year-long negotiations of a collective contract with the State Services Commission (SSC) (the teachers' employing agency in New Zealand at this time) (Court, 1998). (Briefly, the latter insisted that the Education Act 1989 required an individual to be named as principal to be accountable for all management decisions in the school.) It was finally agreed (following the Selwyn College co-principalship precedent) that each year, one of the women would be named as principal.[12] The Hillcrest Avenue teachers and their board insisted, however, that this information would not be made public. They knew that if this happened it would alter their school community's perception of the co-principalship as an equal partnership and the planned shift to a fully flat structure of equal authority and leadership responsibility could be jeopardised.

At Liz and Jane's appointment, it was agreed between them, the board and Karen, that Karen would stay on at the school with the option of joining in a three-way co-principalship.

Beginning work together

Clearing the air

At their first meeting, the three women did some necessary 'clearing of the air' about the 'messy' appointment processes they had been through. Many of the parents had been upset that the board did not appoint Karen as principal: they respected her and were afraid she would leave. They had lobbied Karen and the board and some very fraught political 'battles' were waged, until at a public meeting, Liz and Jane's presentation persuaded them that a co-principalship was an exciting way forward for the school and,

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[11] For example, Weldon (1993) found that "out of respect for the principal's authority", staff members can be hesitant about proceeding too far with a group project without the principal's sanction.

[12] The SSC understood this as managing the school "in a way where you share responsibilities, but in each year there is one definite person who is exercising the role and responsibility of principal and is accountable for everything that is done in the name of the principal" (SSC spokesperson, interview 1995). In practice, however, the Selwyn College co-principals said that all principal activities and responsibilities were shared.

potentially, for Karen too (Court, 1998). The three women shared their feelings about all of this and agreed that they needed to move on to focus on the professional purposes for their shared leadership.

Agreeing on a focus for the children's learning

Drawing on Karen's knowledge of the community, they decided that an initial focus should be on building children's responsibility for their own learning and that of others. (As a consequence of what Karen called the community's 'nanny culture', these children needed to develop more self-reliance and more caring attitudes to others, including their own nannies.) Workshops were held with parents, who told staff about their goals for their children's learning. These sessions developed into a full review of the school's learning charter. While this was happening, Veronica, the principal release teacher, monitored and reported on the children's learning behaviours. The teachers then collated all this information to clarify their school wide philosophy and learning aims for the coming year.

Developing open communication and decision making

The three women also worked on developing strategies for building open, honest and inclusive communication, not only between themselves, but with all in the school community.

Between themselves
Ground rules were agreed for staff meetings and these rules remained recorded on the whiteboard in the staffroom.

- confidentiality – issues may leave, but not individual personal experiences

- use equal amounts of meeting time – fair share of talk time

- take responsibility for talking and listening – don't interrupt

- build on to what others are saying

- respect each other's right to disagree

- deal with conflict

With children
The children were drawn into some of the decision making about school procedures, such as whether they should be allowed to ride bikes in the playground. One girl told me how, "At hui (whole school meeting) time we can talk about any subject we worry about or want to have a comment on. It's kind of like a sharing thing." Another said, "With these principals, we are sort of the first ones to know about things. Like when the building was begun, we knew they were thinking about it – before they had even decided."

With parents
During the first week, the co-principals heard that some parents were criticising their child's class placement and lobbying other parents about this matter. Veronica described the co-principals' different initial responses. "Liz said immediately, 'Well just blow that! It's just going to have to stop. I'm not going to be told what to do!' And Jane said, 'Well I think we should maybe go back and ask them to explain just what the problem is and let

us sort it out.' And Karen said, 'What's the policy? You know, how do we go about dealing with this?'" Veronica said that she "wondered how they would ever get on! But in fact they're three very good combinations – and they together worked out what to do."

As this situation involved parents of Jane's children, the co-principals decided that it was a good opportunity for her to model the direct, open and negotiating style of communication that they wanted to become the norm in the school. She talked with each parent, face to face, and after listening to and answering their worries, she asked them to trust the teachers' initial decisions and promised that they would review these at the end of the term. When she reported back to Liz and Karen, they decided that this kind of shared strategising, individual action and shared review was a useful way for them to work together.

With the board
Mary, the board chairperson who was involved in appointing the co-principals, was impressed that, "When Liz and Jane came, systems became very explicit. Before, we (the board) just kind of did things, like the treasurer held the purse strings and she did not share information. Jane and Liz stressed group decision making through negotiating processes, making it open and fair by making things explicit and transparent." She and the board were happy that school-wide decision making included Karen from the beginning, with her attending board meetings as staff representative.

Negotiating an 'acceptable' collective contract

It was throughout the first year, while the co-principals were working together and developing their collaborative shared leadership practices, that the board was negotiating a collective co-principal contract with the SSC. It took over 12 months before an agreement was reached that the co-principals could rotate through the 'named' principal position. Part of the 'sticking point' here was the SSCs insistence that the co-principals should establish and work within a clear division of tasks and responsibilities. They wanted a contract in which "clear lines of accountability" could be traced. The co-principals saw this as potentially constraining a fully collaborative approach to shared leadership: they wanted a mutual accountability principle to be accepted. They finally agreed that they could incorporate into their contract the individual liaison roles they had adopted as part of their shared responsibility practices.

Liaison roles

While Liz and Jane had taken responsibility at first for the administrative tasks, Karen said that there was "really no division between us, except that they wore the responsibility and had a bit more work in opening the mail and doing the returns and things like that". When Karen decided (after about six months) that she would join the co-principalship, the three women agreed that they would each undertake the liaison work associated with different areas of responsibility. They called these their liaison roles. These were not fixed 'positions of responsibility' such as in a senior teacher or head of department position, but communication and co-ordination roles that included being the first point of contact, dealing with mail and keeping the others informed.

To satisfy the SSC, they agreed to the following statement being included in their collective contract:

On a day-to-day basis, each co-principal shall be allocated particular liaison roles within the school. For the most part, these roles coincide with the tasks and functions of board of trustees committees (eg personnel, property, community consultation) but there shall be a number of other liaison rules as may from time to time be felt necessary or that are the result of particular functions of the principal or the school. For instance, one co-principal may have a particular role to play with regard to enrolment.

The co-principals kept to their flexible and inclusive approach to sharing responsibilities, however. They 'crossed over' into each other's areas to help when one person was overloaded or not well, or when they realised that three heads would be better than one to solve a problem or to complete a task. Similarly to other leadership collectives, they also rotated the roles so that each person would have opportunities for professional development.

Significantly, all three co-principals were committed to joint accountability as fundamental to their three-way partnership. The validity of their view of professional mutual accountability was recognised by their board and incorporated into the contract. It stated:

As outlined in the job description and the performance agreement, the Hillcrest Avenue School board of trustees will hold the Co-principals jointly responsible for all decisions… (The Co-principals will) satisfactorily perform, between them, the customary duties and responsibilities of principal and senior teachers within the school and be held jointly accountable for this performance.

It was agreed also that the co-principals should be "assessed jointly" in a shared appraisal interview with a review panel (Hillcrest Avenue School Co-principal Contract, 1993). These parts of the contract and shared leadership practices at Hillcrest Avenue School flew right in the face of the single-line, hierarchical accountability model instituted into New Zealand education in the early 1990s. As such it is a brave example of professional resistance and the construction of a counter discourse of educational leadership.

Three years on: the community's view

Later, when I talked to teachers, board members, parents and children in 1996/97, they had some very clear opinions about how their co-principal shared leadership worked and what kinds of factors were contributing to its success in their school. All of the elements of conjoint, holistic distributed leadership identified by Gronn (2000) are evident in these accounts.

"Here there is no boss"

People were impressed by how the co-principalship had shifted the meaning of team leadership, from being 'a leader who builds a team' to 'a team of equals sharing leadership'. Mary Stevens had worked as board chairperson with the previous team of teachers in the school as well as with the co-principals. She said, "In the previous team, the roles were more set as to where their strengths lay, where they could contribute and where they couldn't – and Jim, the principal, was always perceived as the leader". In her

opinion, the co-principals' use of liaison roles in a more fluid and negotiated way meant that, "It is quite clear now that no one person represents the school. Parents don't see any one person as the leader." A student teacher said, "Here you have three people on a completely equal footing". Cherie Clark (who was appointed as a senior teacher when Karen resigned, in an internship prior to becoming one of the co-principals) said, "This is definitely a team without a captain, where it's a total team effort and you can lead wherever your strength is, but you are still responsible as a team member". Liz summed up, "Here a leader isn't the person at the front any more. For an idea to be successful, everyone has to feel at some time that they are leading it … It's ownership."

Phil Cody, the second board chairperson during the time I was visiting the school, said that "the advantage of the co-principalship is that all the teaching staff have the same status. This came home really clearly to me last year, when one of the kids in a discussion with Jane said, 'Well the difference between this school and others is that here there's no boss.'"

A team formed across personality differences: 'connected', 'whole'

People appreciated the women's differences of personality and skill and their ability to 'stitch' their differences into a co-principal team that appeared to be "quite seamless", as one parent put it. The board chairs and other staff observed that this was the result of many exchanges of views and careful listening to each other. Beth Lawson (the third board chair) said, "The administration side is wholly invisible because there's such a co-operative effort in the shared leadership. The co-principals have very clear and unified objectives, with planning processes that are done so smoothly that it's easy to forget that there's a lot of work and effort that goes into that." Karen summed up that once the three of them had reached a shared understanding, "Then that's it. There's no fuss, no bother, you move forward. We were like one brain, one organism, totally focused on what we were there to do… It was almost like you were the servant of the idea and there were three of you to carry it out." The result, as a student teacher observed, was that "they all go in the same direction in whatever they do".

Liz countered the suggestion of group-think though. She said that while "you must have forward thinking and plans, for teaching and learning, the budget and organising staffing and resourcing of things, a strategic plan isn't set it in concrete. If suddenly there is a crisis, you change direction."

Beth was fascinated by the women's team processes. She said, "When you talk about management by consensus, or a high performing team, what is usually meant is that you've got different characters bringing their own skills for undertaking different tasks or aspects of a task. But the management here is not split into categories – it is a very integral model." She saw the team structure as "a process that is circular, sort of like a solar system that's revolving, with the centre point being the need to administrate, to manage, but that point doesn't fall on a person. It's quite connected and whole". When I asked what is keeping it connected? Beth replied, "I'd have to say, intuitively, it's the communication flow, the openness".

Focused on professional collegiality but inclusive of other people

A common perception among many of the people who talked to me was that a co-principalship would not work if the people in it were not friends. Liz, Jane and Karen distinguished between friendship and colleagueship, however. They believed that the strength of their shared leadership owed much to the fact that they did not begin from a base of being personal friends. Consequently, they could not work from assumptions, but rather had to "learn about the other people and respect what they believe" (Karen).

This attitude was extended to others in the school. Veronica and Anne, the principal release teachers, both felt part of the team. Anne said, "Shared leadership is practised all the time. All the staff are given power to be involved in decisions about even very minor details." A teacher trainee said, "We are acknowledged fully" and the school secretary said, "I get lots of opportunities to be part of it and feel free to suggest ideas". The three board chairpersons and all board members commented on the collegiality of their work with the co-principals and parents saw the co-principals as "being very receptive to parent's ideas". Many parents thought that the school was being "run as one part of an extended family".

People also observed the co-principals including the children in the management of the school, with a "mutual respect" being developed between the co-principals and the children. A student teacher explained, "For example, if Jane is talking with a child and one of the other principals comes in, she doesn't stop talking to the child – she finishes whatever it is, and says, 'Excuse me' and turns to the adult."

Built on a shared vision...

People drew attention to the way this co-principalship "pulled together a common vision, a common understanding, that drives the systems and the processes". This key philosophy was focused on developing children who could take responsibility for their own learning while also caring about others and assisting them to develop.

… ongoing reflective dialogue and review

People also noticed Liz, Jane and Karen's commitment to ongoing dialogue and critical reflection about all aspects of their work. They saw this as a significant factor in the success of their co-principalship. They pointed out how the co-principals were constantly focused on the children's learning and reflecting on the educative impact of the shared leadership processes. Beth gave an example: "It's recognised that Karen is the person who is very talented and interested in art, but the women might say, 'Would it be good to not have Karen present the art work in the showing? Let's think about this a bit more broadly. What would it mean to the children if someone else presented it?'"

… honesty

Many people noted how much honesty was stressed in these dialogues and reflections. Mary said, "It's making core values explicit, so that they can be challenged... Honesty allows you to open up and be transparent, not to be threatened to deal with things in a very practical, reasonable way." A student teacher commented that the co-principals "really are more direct with us and each other than I see in other workplaces". A board

member summed up the school community's approval when he said, "When you have honesty, good things happen".

… debate

One consequence was the valuing of debate. The co-principals felt that because of their agreements over their base philosophy, "probably we argue more, have more rigorous debates". As Karen said, "Out of conflict you have growth". All three were pragmatic about the wisdom of sometimes 'letting sleeping dogs lie'. At times when they disagreed with something, they would weigh up whether it was, as Jane put it, "Is this something I want to go into battle on?" In Anne's opinion, however, while each of the three women was very strong, "having plenty of opportunity to talk about things means you don't have a 'winners and losers' mentality".

There were occasional 'spats' with a parent or a board member, of course, and on a few occasions, these could not be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. One parent thought that the shared leadership model could "push down some conflict". She was not comfortable about talking to any of the co-principals about her dissatisfaction over a discipline matter. (This was resolved later. From 1996, when children were enrolled at the school, parents were informed that if they felt they could not talk to any one of the three co-principals, they should in the first instance go to the board chairperson or a board member, who would mediate. A note was put in a school newsletter to the same effect.)

Jane, Liz and Karen were aware that others could see them as collectively "formidable" and they had tried to counteract this by, for example, not all being present at a meeting with a parent. They were realistic though. Liz reflected, "Three years down the track if people were still feeling completely enamoured of us I would be very worried, because you must be disagreeing sometime – it's just the nature of a community. I believe though, that if you have conflict or disagreement you deal with it professionally, and professionally to me is out in the open, honest. It's not game playing stuff".

… and trust

Through all the above processes, but especially through the emphasis on open communication, a deep level of trust was built, not just between the co-principals, but also between them and others in the school community. In an October 1996 survey of the parents, in which the co-principals asked them to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of the shared management, trust was mentioned by a majority of parents as a strength of the approach. (There was a 95% response to the survey.) As Beth noted, this trust meant that, "One person could do a task or make a decision that the others would be happy with and there was an ongoing 'sounding board' for each member and for others, something that is so valuable in problem solving, planning and all other aspects of management."

Shared leadership for learning

Phil Cody was sure that the principle of equality within the leadership team had led to improved teaching and learning in the school, because it enabled all three staff to contribute fully to the development of a whole school approach. His opinion was

supported later, when in 2001 the Education Review Office (the New Zealand equivalent of OFSTED) reported the following positive outcomes that could be traced to the shared leadership. The co-principalship was in their view:

> Symbolic of the school's commitment to the philosophy of successful enterprise through co-operation, shared learning and personal responsibility… Students take an active role in determining expectations for their work and personal standards of behaviour… Trustees advocate strong teamwork approaches with staff, creating flexible boundaries between governance and management areas… The sound teaching and a supportive and affirming school culture where all members of the community are perceived as learners, promotes good standards of student achievement. (Education Review Office School Report, May 2001)

While my study did not investigate in any depth how this co-principalship was impacting educationally on the children's learning, it was clear that it opened up for many people in the school, including some children, a different way of thinking about and organising leadership. Children's comments about the sharing of leadership in their school encapsulated many of the points made to me by adults, when they said:

- "everyone gets to share their ideas – no one person is really bossy or in charge"

- "there seems to be more interaction between people"

- "children can talk to all the principals equally – if something happens you can tell anyone"

- "there is equal teaching time per teacher"

- "it means you have a range of skills – someone might be good at budgets, but someone else good at organising trips"

- "more things can get done – one can be doing one thing while another can get on with something else"

- "because all are equal, no one gets stressed"

- "if one person is sick, you can still have decisions made"

- "you think of the people as teachers more – before people could be sent to the principal"

- "it's good to have different people's opinions – like if one of the principals had an idea then maybe the other principals might have a different idea so – they would add on – so like we're getting – um – better opinions."

And now?

None of the original co-principals are still at Hillcrest Avenue School. Indeed, between 1997 and 2002 there have been several changes in personnel. The co-principal model has an advantage here in that when one principal leaves, another can be recruited into an intern/apprenticeship for sharing the leadership. This has maintained a balance between leadership continuity and input of new ideas and energy.

The board, staff and parents have remained committed to the co-principal flat management model. The School Charter foregrounds the following statement.

SHARED MANAGEMENT

Hillcrest Avenue School enjoys and is committed to a shared leadership style of management.

Philosophically this involves:

- the transformation of power from a single to a collective base
- shared responsibility and accountability
- a school culture based on consultation and collaboration
- a collective vision for the school not dependent on trends or the personality of one person

In a practical sense, the board of trustees believes that the investment in a shared leadership model provides significant returns to the school by way of a quality education programme and effective administrative practices that reflect the consistent, resourceful approach to management.

The school community also identified advantages of this model relating specifically to the sense of cohesion within the school, excellent lines of communication and a good role model for children.

Shared leadership is not about sharing out the workload or disabling the principal by enforcing 'management-by-consensus'. Rather, it is considered that shared leadership essentially empowers individuals by placing them in a position of collective strength. Individual strengths are respected and used to maximum effect, while the opportunity to improve development areas is enhanced through a supportive and co-operative working environment.

Shared leadership is not necessarily 'easier', but the combined effort makes it easier to focus on educational and professional goals and not personal agendas. It is also more fundamentally sound because of the inherent processes of quality assurance and continuous improvement.

Implications, conclusions and recommendations

The studies I have discussed in this report demonstrate that in different parts of the world a range of approaches to sharing school leadership have been established successfully. It seems clear to me, these are professionally supportive innovations that offer a variety of ways of addressing current difficulties in headteacher recruitment. The Hillcrest Avenue teaching co-principalship and the Norwgian teacher collective leadership show that in small primary schools in particular, including all the staff in a shared leadership is a practicable, sensible and effective way to organise teaching and learning.

Sharing school leadership can also empower teachers and others in the school community to contribute more fully and with more personal satisfaction to the development of a school as a learning community. It is worth highlighting that both the New Zealand Education Review Office and OFSTED have reported that shared school leadership can be highly effective in developing strong commitments to improving student learning.

Some researchers have claimed that shared school leaderships can enhance understandings about both democracy and gender equity. It has been argued that this can occur through providing children and adults with day-to-day examples of democratic approaches to organisation and management and of women and men working together in effective leadership teams (Bergersen and Tjeldvoll, 1982; Dass, 1995; Glenny et al, 1996). The Norwegian teachers at His School reported that their students developed more generous, helpful attitudes to others and made increased efforts to work co-operatively with others rather than on individual projects (Løddesøl, 1976). Selwyn College staff considered that their teamwork structures and strategies were educationally beneficial for students in their modelling of "responsible citizenship in a democratic society"(Glenny et al, 1996). While the Hillcrest Avenue co-principalship did impact positively on people's understandings about and acceptance of the viability of shared leadership, it did not seem to impact significantly on children's perceptions about a long established gendered discourse that 'men lead, women follow and support'. However, further research is needed to determine the impact of shared leadership approaches on all kinds of student learning.

In regard to modelling democratic practices, some of the schools I have discussed were starting to involve children in decision making about their learning and school procedures. Few, however, have done this to the extent described by Apple and Beane (1999) and Gribble (1998). At Sands School (in Ashburton, Devon, UK), for example, students meet with the staff to make decisions together about how the school should be run. Gribble (1998) describes the school meeting where this occurs, as:

> …all-powerful. Its authority extends, for example, to the appointment or dismissal of staff and the admission or exclusion of students. All students and staff have the right to take part and usually about three-quarters of the school do so; parents and visitors may attend by invitation. Some responsibilities are delegated; the financial business of the school, for example, is run by one of the

staff, but even in this area the school meeting is asked to confirm any new developments.

In David Gribble's view, "Children and staff deliberating honestly together make better decisions than either staff or children could make on their own". This is a view that goes well beyond common rhetoric about the need to empower student voice in schools (see Fielding, 2002 for an extensive discussion of this topic). It is one that all those who argue for more inclusive approaches to school organisation need to take seriously.

Another argument that needs more consideration emerges in the Hillcrest Avenue co-principalship's approach to accountability. This initiative has demonstrated that mutual accountabilities and responsibilities can be expected and enacted in ways that go beyond relying on tying people down to task specific, linear and contractual legalities. Throughout the seven years I have had contact with this school, the board has remained comfortable with their original decision to treat issues of accountability as related to the position of the principal, rather than to a single person, the principal. They have remained satisfied that a joint appraisal procedure for assessing the work carried out by those sharing that position (rather than undertaking individual appraisals of each co-principal) is appropriate and effective. On the other hand, as the Telford case also showed, if one of the co-principal partners is not fully competent in carrying out whole school leadership responsibilities, individual appraisals can be used to rectify the situation.

Considerations of personal ethical, moral and caring responsibilities and jointly shared multiple accountabilities are significant elements of shared leadership. However, to attempt to regulate these kinds of accountability through top-down external systems of control risks undermining the trust and collegiality on which they depend. Webb and Vulliamy's (1996) study has provided a timely warning that the collegial trusting relationships, which are considered by many to be central to positive educational processes and effective schools (Lee et al, 1993), may be lost within the imposition of surveillance forms of managerialism. Webb and Vulliamy reported that because of the increased demands being made on schools and in particular on heads in UK schools, decisions were increasingly "emanating from the hierarchy... with heads and senior management maintaining control through mechanisms for the management of quality – for example, school initiated contracts linking allowances to objectives within the school development plan to be completed within set criteria within specified timescales." (Webb and Vulliamy, 1996) Such strategies, these researchers acknowledge, may increase efficiency, but they can also be demotivating. They can "work against the development of a school ethos of mutual trust and commitment where teachers work together without coercion" (ibid).

A related and important message for state policy and lawmakers emerges from this report on shared leadership approaches. It is that no single model of leadership and management can be successfully imposed on schools, regardless of the amount of legislation and regulation that may be introduced to bolster it. Co-principalships developed in New Zealand in resistance to a generic model of efficient, effective management that was seen as counter-productive to a professional approach to leadership for learning.

Difficulties can be encountered, as I explained in my discussions of the Chafford Hundred, Telford and St Mary's initiatives. However, studies of different shared leadership approaches have identified some commonly experienced benefits.

Benefits

Successful co-principals and teacher leadership teams agree that the advantages for themselves include:

- reduced isolation and stress
- enhanced professional development, stimulation and enjoyment

Advantages for schools include:

- an increased skill resource
- better decisions
- more completed projects
- improved professional supervision

Teachers have reported:

- increased opportunities for professional development and leadership
- enhanced control over the issues that affect them
- increased individual commitment to responsible management of resources
- improved staff morale

Factors that contribute to success

Studies have also identified a range of factors that can contribute to successful shared leadership practice. Perhaps the most significant of these is open and honest communication, both within the co-principal collective and between them and other staff, board members, children and parents. This is, of course, important for all schools.

When critically reflective professional dialogue is established as part of daily practice, however, it is more likely that leadership teams will be able to engage collaboratively in early problem identification and development of effective strategies for action. The successful shared leaderships at Hillcrest Avenue School, His School and Anzar High each:

- developed individual and group skills of professional critical reflection
- scheduled time together for professional dialogue
- were assertive in stating personal beliefs and debating ideas within their team
- were not afraid of differences of opinion

- recognised that disagreements, conflict and tension are 'normal' in interpersonal working relationships and can be productive when a team is committed to being open and valuing debate

Another very significant factor is the support given to a shared leadership team by people in their education authority and their local school community. This support was most effective when it included firstly, an understanding of and commitment to enabling the development of democratic organisational processes that suit the local school context; and secondly, an understanding of and commitment to the need for shared responsibility and accountability for children's learning.

The Hillcrest Avenue teaching co-principal case study demonstrates the wisdom of starting small and moving slowly, with potential partners getting to know each other first and then letting shared leadership practices evolve in ways that best suit the school and its wider contexts (Court, 2001). The findings of the LOLSO (leadership for organisational learning) study endorse these points for school improvement.

First get the personal/interpersonal collective teacher trusting and collaborative climate 'right'… then use this to focus on the educational/instructional, including having a shared and monitored mission… once this is 'right', the leaders and school can move to development learning/change… one needs stability for change, a base or agreed position from which to develop. (Mulford, 2002)

People in successful alternative team leadership approaches also:

- value individual differences of personality, skills and beliefs

- negotiate these differences to reach agreements about educational philosophy, aims and strategies for effective learning

- share information (vital for full participation in planning and policy-making)

- develop transparent decision-making processes

- widen participation in decision making to include other staff, board members and parents

- accept that increased meeting time for decision making will be needed initially (this decreases with the development of good communication and decision-making strategies and shared understandings about educational aims)

- negotiate and undertake individual liaison and administrative responsibilities

- experiment with different collaborative leadership approaches

- regularly review and revise these when necessary

- develop interpersonal trust within the shared leadership team and between themselves and board members, other staff, children and parents

- develop individual and group commitments to shared responsibility and mutual accountability

Suggestions for initiating and developing shared leadership initiatives

Shelley Brown and Wendy Feltham, the job-sharing co-principals at San Pedro Elementary School (California, US), offer this summing up advice for beginners: "Do your homework; find the right partner; write a bullet-proof proposal; be prepared to answer questions; emphasise how your partnership will benefit others." (Cole, 1999)

Teachers who have had experience in shared school leaderships at middle management level have the following further advice for those considering initiating a shared leadership within their department/syndicate (Court, 1994). Most of these ideas are just as relevant for teachers aspiring to shared leadership at the level of deputy head or co-headship.

Suggestions for teachers

Initial thinking and planning

- *Discuss and clarify your aims.* Talk about why you individually want to share leadership and what the possible advantages might be, both for yourselves and others, but most importantly for the children in your school.

- *Discuss your educational philosophies and values.* Developing a shared vision is an important element of successful shared leaderships. You could begin by brainstorming, but it is important to enable debate and negotiations of individual ideas and values. Honesty, empathy and compassion are helpful in exploring questions such as:

  - do we agree on what is important for our teaching and learning, leadership and management?

  - can we reach a compromise on areas where we differ?

- *Think about your own values and philosophies in relation to your school culture.* Instrumental talk about school/syndicate/department goals and objectives focuses on the school aims, subject schemes of work, specific job descriptions and so on. There are other less commonly thought about factors that can significantly influence the ways we work together in school organisations, however. Our values and beliefs are reflected in:

  - our language (what stories do we tell? who are the heroes? what are the popular symbols and images?)

  - social networks (who talks to whom? about what?)

  - school and staff rituals and ceremonies – both formal and everyday, like who makes the important announcements at school assemblies and who organises the staff muffin competition for morning tea

  - classroom and staffroom physical environments; patterns of dress for both staff and students

  - what happens in sports and cultural events

Talking about these dynamics could help you to clarify your school values and what you want to emphasise in your own group. If there are significant differences between what

you have identified as your school culture and your own (embryonic) team-shared values, beliefs and practices, it could be useful to think about how these differences could be handled.

Remember that each of these elements is affected by wider socio-political contexts that vary from country to country and are cut through by different inequalities of class, gender and/or ethnicity. Such dynamics also impact on how different people may view and respond to suggestions for a shared leadership.

Negotiating your team initiative with the principal (or board) and the staff

- *Think about how you could introduce your ideas to others in your school in ways that will gain their support.* Be strategic here. For example, the principal still has final responsibility for how the school is managed and how staffing is organised and so it necessary and sensible to talk to her/him early on. If you are considering introducing a co-headship, consulting the board chairperson could be your first step.

- *Prepare some ideas about how you'd like to work as a team in your area and in relation to other staff and the school community.* However, research suggests that it is not necessary to have all the details sorted out at the beginning: successful shared leaderships evolve their own practices and procedures over time, in ways that best suit their own contexts.

- *'Float' your ideas as suggestions.* Try not to present them as already set in concrete and be prepared to talk about both the possible advantages and potential difficulties. Ask others for their ideas.

- *Try to involve the whole staff in discussion.* If you have a staff who are used to debating ideas and using consensus decision-making processes, one of the following strategies could be a useful catalyst to open up discussion that will get to the heart of important areas:

  - develop a written statement outlining your suggestions and addressing points that have been raised in your informal discussions

  - circulate your statement with the staff meeting agenda so that others have time to think about it beforehand

  - go to a meeting with your own list of pros and cons but seek others ideas first. The letterbox strategy is a good way to get a larger group of people (seven, eight or more) talking about their reactions. For example, you could ask each person to write (anonymously) on separate slips of paper their responses to the following kinds of statements: I think the children would benefit from this proposal in the following ways… I think the children could be disadvantaged by… This proposed change makes me feel… The responses are then 'posted' (a 'letterbox' for each question). A helper collates the answers onto large sheets of white paper (or OHT) and these are shared with the whole group. The aim of the letterbox strategy is to get people's concerns out in the open. The more frank the responses are the better so encourage this.

- Have some questions ready as discussion starters. For example, how should the team be involved in school-wide decision making?

If there seems to be a deadlock over potential problems, remember that research into shared leadership initiatives suggests that good solutions can often evolve through trial, error and revision.

- *Shared responsibility needs shared representation at meetings.* Try to get the agreement of other staff members that all members of the team have the right to attend all school meetings that impinge on your work. Open communication and information sharing is very important if your initiative is to develop constructively and make a positive contribution to the school as a whole.

- *Agree on a trial period and a date for review.* Trialling a shared leadership for a term or a year could be a good way to start. Agreeing to this will give people an out if the shared leadership does not work for everyone.

Development: putting shared leadership into practice

At an early stage, it is important to think about how effective communication can be set up and maintained. Teachers in shared leadership initiatives stress the need to:

- Communicate, communicate, communicate!

  - Allow time for consultation and information sharing meetings both within your responsibility area and between you and the rest of the school

  - Which decisions should everyone be involved in making?

  - What areas that can be most usefully delegated to one person in your team?

  - Do any of the existing school communication processes need to be modified and how could this be done?

  - Timetable sessions for shared professional dialogue that includes critical reflection on how you are working together. For example, you could discuss whether your shared leadership practices are enabling a constructive reflection of your agreed values, beliefs and aims in your teaching. Are each person's skills and strengths being fully utilised? Are there areas where your individual or group skills need more development?

- Undertake ongoing professional development. You could:

  - Use your school's staff development programme and time

  - Invite in a skilled critical friend to facilitate your own and group learning

  - Use journalling or action research as tools for identifying areas of need and strategies for development (Banks et al, 2002)

  - Enjoy some friendly rivalry within the group – it can energise!

Reviewing, modifying and improving

Be prepared to give and receive constructive criticism that focuses on how your team is working both within your own area and within the school as a whole. You could:

- develop a survey that includes questions about the positive outcomes for teachers, children, parents, principal, yourselves

- ask whether the team leadership is contributing to better learning for kids and how do people know this?

- ask whether the shared leadership has caused any difficulties

- brainstorm problem solving and fresh approaches

- investigate how students could be involved in the school's decision making

Suggestions for principals with middle management leadership teams

- Try to always remember that there is a team here. It is vital to involve each member right from the beginning. Regular brief meetings will help.

- Support the team's decisions – unless it is something really controversial!

- Allow the team the freedom to innovate, and to make mistakes.

- Enlist the support of your board of trustees for your team's initiative.

Suggestions for boards of governors/trustees

Board and parent ongoing support for a collaborative approach is crucial. Therefore before selection and appointment of co-principals, boards would be wise to:

- Inform themselves about how shared leaderships have been introduced and practised in other schools, including finding out about the advantages and disadvantages that have been experienced.

- Consult parents about their views and give them some reassurance about commonly raised questions, such as: How will parents know who to go to? What happens when one principal is ill or if one leaves? How will the salaries be worked out and paid?

- Ensure before appointment that each participant is experienced and knowledgeable enough to be competent in a school leadership and management role.

Throughout the life of a co-principal or teacher leadership collective, it is also helpful for boards and collaborating leaders to:

- Identify individual and group professional development needs.

- Ensure that appropriate training and support is provided to enable full and productive participation.

Recommendations for policy-makers, professional development providers and further research

Policy-makers

- Review the constraining effects of prescriptive legislation and regulations that have embedded hierarchical, individualist forms of leadership and accountability.

- Develop new policy and guidelines for shared, collective forms of leadership.

Professional development providers

- Most leadership training is devised for the single leader. Also develop programmes for a leadership team where all members of the team in a school attend together.

- Enable trials of shared school leadership initiatives and collaborative reviews of their processes and outcomes.

- Collect and disseminate to schools information about the practices of successful shared leadership initiatives (as in EEO resources distributed in New Zealand).

- Establish a web-based discussion network (as in the NCSL networked learning initiative).

- Hold a mini-conference to establish a support network for those who are interested in or working in a shared leadership initiative (as done in Norway).

- Provide workshops for building critical reflection on shared leadership processes, such as how to use a critical friend, journalling, action research, including analysis of a videoed team meeting (as in the Chafford Hundred initiative, see Banks and Finn et al, 2002).

Further research

- Investigate the impact of different shared leadership practices on student learning and achievement.

- Study the influence of gender and ethnicity on different understandings of and approaches to shared leadership in schools.

- Consider the impact on shared leadership of national political, cultural and social factors as well as local institutional, community and school cultures.

- Develop longitudinal studies to identify factors that shape how shared leaderships evolve and change over time.

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