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Educational Enquiry 2


**How can leadership qualities improve my practice as a teacher?**

My narrative below is the beginning of an exploration of what I believe about leadership through my response to what I have read, observed, and experienced in my own practice. As part of my account I will draw on the concept of Living Educational Theory (Whitehead, 2007) to explain what I understand so far of my educational influence in my own learning and leadership roles and in the learning of others.  In making my embodied knowledge as a teacher public (Whitehead, 2007 & 2008) I hope to engage in a discussion of leadership that can be explored by teachers at all levels of the education strata.

There is a significant contrast between what I shall write below and what can be read in accounts with titles such as: Strategic Leadership *(*Preedy M, Glatter, R. Wise C,2003)  and School leadership for the 21st Century (Davies, B. Ellison, L). However I would argue that in order for the practitioner to move forward there is value in encountering a diverse range of perspectives and style presentations (Whitehead, 2008). In the same way that a symbol, parable or metaphor draws an audience into unfamiliar territory through the familiar so I believe the power of the epistemological transformation of what counts as educational knowledge (Whitehead, 2008) enables such material to be inclusive (Rayner, A. 2004 cited in Whitehead, Nov. 2008). Thus as a classroom practitioner I therefore feel empowered to enter into such discussion and exploration. I feel included not excluded. Within this approach there is room for the 'I' of the teacher. Therefore I feel there is room for me having been middle manager in both the pastoral and curriculum system of a school to explore the concept of leadership within my own experience and not to be overwhelmed by the term often being attached to senior positions in a school.

Nevertheless the most explicit and immediate form of leadership that one experiences within a school setting is that given by the headteacher. I have now worked under seven very different headteachers, each of whom has had an impact on the school within which they worked. Anecdotally, as an observer it seems that each has had to make decisions as to how to jointly manage the particular needs of the school with the expectation to meet the demands of government educational policy. The combination of their own values and their personality appeared to be instrumental in the path they have forged. However often within a school there have been individuals who emerge as leaders whether through a particular role within the school or through no official status or title but simply by who they are. Their ideas and values are respected and they can influence the direction of a school whether as union leaders, highly respected classroom practitioners, or as excellent public communicators.

Currently the concept of leadership appears to have a high profile. Three national training programmes for headteachers were set up as part of the central government's drive to iimprove schools (Ofsted: Leadership and Management 2003 p31); National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH); the leadership and management programme for new headteachers (HEADLAMP) and the Leadership programme for serving headteachers (LPSH). Lacey (2008) has warned that more than half of England's headteachers could retire over the next four years in part due to the 1950s baby boomer population reaching  retirement age. The NPQH has recently been reformed with greater emphasis being placed on accepting applicants who show evidence and aptitude and who will be applying for headteacher posts in the next 12-18 months. However it is not only headteachers who have been given the mantle of leadership. The 2003 Ofsted report on leadership and management states 'high quality leadership and management must now be developed throughout a school's organisation. The document:  Key Stage 3. National Strategy. Securing improvement: the role of subject leaders clearly outlines the leadership and management roles in the Key Stage 3 Strategy. In my own

school Heads of Faculty are now Curriculum Team Leaders and Heads of Year are now Year Team Leaders.

My exploration of literature to seek what guidance has been given began with two government documents:

- Ofsted document; 'Leadership and management what inspection tells us' (2003).
- Key Stage 3 National Strategy document: Securing improvement: the role of subject leader (2002)

The Ofsted document is a summary of evidence, acquired through Ofsted and HMI inspections, which presents information about good and poor leadership. (p1) I was particularly hoping to learn what according to this document was the definition and what were the characteristics of good leadership.

The document's main findings on p3 explain that there has been a rise in good leadership and management since 1996/7, and explains that aspects of leadership in school are generally better than aspects of management. It continues by stating that there is a strong link between the quality of leadership and management and key staff in a school and the quality of teaching. The background information given, reports that the role of headteacher is challenging and that since the 1988 Education Reform Act the responsibilities of the head teachers for running schools have increased as those of the local authority have decreased.

The lack of reference that headteachers were leaders of communities of people with the need for values, respect and responsibilities not only to each other, but also to the world at large was significant by its omission. The document appears to be dominated by the statement that good school leaders are those who raise school standards and improve teaching and learning. To have the latter without the former seems to imply a significant weakness in an understanding of how to lead a group of adults and young people. To become a confident young person understanding respect and responsibility (Statement of values by the National Forum for Values in Education and the Community 1999) within themselves and as a member of a social group is surely a quality that however difficult and complex to develop is one that will influence their future as much as examination results and therefore should be given equal importance in the leadership qualities allocated to that of a headteacher?

The Ofsted (2003) report argues:

'The implications for schools are clear. They should focus their energies and resources on what really matters: raising standards and improving teaching and learning. (p5)

'Over time HMI and OFSTED inspectors have observed and described a number of characteristics of high quality leadership in schools. The latest thinking is represented in the 2003 framework for inspection( p7-8):

- clear vision sense of purpose and high aspirations, combined with a relentless focus on pupil's achievement strategic planning
- leaders inspire, motivate and influence staff and pupils
- leaders create effective teams
- there is knowledgeable and innovative leadership of teaching and the curriculum
- leaders are committed to running an equitable and inclusive school in which each individual matters
- leaders provide good role models for other staff and pupils.

As a Year Team Leader until recently albeit within 16-19 age range, I was further interested in the advice given in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy document: Securing improvement: the role of subject leader that identifies three core roles for year team leaders:

- making judgements,
- evaluating teaching and improvement and

- leading sustainable improvement.

The document continues to state that as a Year Team Leader one should have an overview of pupil and group progress, develop an overview of the impact of teaching and learning on attainment and personal development, ensure parents are aware of expectations and finally use pupil performance data to link targets for individual pupils with whole school targets. (p.3)

I am not opposed to raising standards, making improvements in myself or in the institution within which I work. In fact I have always taken an evaluative and reflective approach, which I believe can be creative and insightful because it enables changes to be made. For example I have always used the summer term of Year 13 to review with both students and sixth form tutors the previous two years to identify strengths and weaknesses of the Sixth Form provision in order to make improvements. However the list above from the Ofsted 2003 report concerns me in the following ways;

- the message given by some of the language used:
- the phrase: 'a relentless focus on pupil's achievement strategic planning'
- these are statements of 'what' not 'why'

The guidelines given in the Key Stage 3 document make no reference to leadership in the pastoral system having a holistic concern for the well being of the pupil as an individual and as part of a community and again, focuses on the measurable.

It seems to me that unless a leader has identified the values that not only drive them but also drive what they are leading then the qualities listed above are of limited use. To what extent can a leader in the current English Educational System have a vision and aspirations that go beyond a relentless focus on pupil's achievement? . To what extent is there space to strive for the ideal even if it cannot be ultimately achieved? To what extent is there a place for the learning journey of student not to be converted into a measurable statistic?

It seems that both documents are promoting the leadership of what can be measured and echoes the advice of Davies and Ellison (1999) who argued that the effectiveness of the implementation of the national curriculum, national testing and examination frameworks, school based financial management, parental choice and new inspection and reporting systems was partly dependant on the ability of the leaders and managers to be innovative and entrepreneurial. They urge school leaders to follow a business model, from the reengineering movement along with the reform and restructuring movement in education. They argue for the application of Total Quality Management ideas which includes concepts of focusing on the customer, setting benchmarks and defining fitness of purpose and aiming for continuous improvement.

However I have seen both the practical and emotional consequences on students of this relentless focus on pupils' achievement and continuous improvement. On the practical front I have seen the same student being expected by two different staff to attend their revision sessions at the same time in a lunchtime. I have seen a teacher return a piece of course work to a student who had not reached their target grade, but who already was dealing with five other pieces of coursework from five other subjects but was not behind on deadlines.

Students are also paying an emotional price for a school making continuous improvement and having a relentless focus on pupils achievement: At a recent Sixth Form parents' evening a parent was in some state of anxiety because her conscientious daughter did not meet her GCSE target grades of As but got Bs and Cs now believes she is a failure and is depressed. It reminds me of the four different sets of parents at a Year 11 parents evening whom recently said there was no fun in learning. I am reminded of some of the most able students commenting that the school put more effort into the CD borderline students than the A/A* students because that would improve the school's statistics. I am reminded of the very able student who was de - motivated, because she always met her A/A*targets, and yet the hard work she put in was not in her eyes recognised to the same extent as the less able student who exceeded their target.

Is this what is meant by a relentless focus on a pupils' achievement? Is this what Davies and Ellison meant by continuous improvements? It seems that the price being paid by this approach to education is not the leaders but the students and to some extent the teaching staff who in such system must face the possibility of being labelled failures.

As a leader at what ever level it seems imperative that one has a critical and analytical voice and that one responds using the opportunity to put one's responses in the public domain. It seems key that one has to balance taking on new initiatives to cope with constant changes and at the same time ensure one is grounded in what it is to be a human being amidst these changes regardless of political pressures and expectations. As a teacher we are capable of responding to these documents at whatever level we are at in our professional development. We are able take the initiative to respond if it challenges our values as a teacher and our response need not be dependant on our status in a school. If leadership is giving guidance and being in front then there is an argument that each one of us is entitled to develop that role. I myself, and the way in which I am writing, is an example of what I generally understand by Rayner's (2004) inclusionality. I would much prefer to argue for a higher profile being given to the pleasure of learning, the development of intellectual curiosity and a sense of awakening a natural enquiry. I believe there is space for a leader to have a critical and analytical voice in the state system of education and the issue is finding that opportunity for expression. In my response to the documents above I have taken encouragement from the voices of the two speakers below.

Mick Brookes, General Secretary of the National Association of Headteachers previously a headteacher for 27 years made this comment:

> 'The whole culture of assessment and accountability has to be looked at. We
> have to change from a punitive culture to a collaborative culture. We need
> to move away from league tables, which humiliate people in nationally
> challenging areas. In New Zealand the assessment process is called assess
> and assist – it is assumed that people are coming to school to make
> children's lives better not worse.'

Once such headteacher of an Oxfordshire school has publicly articulated her values and concerns of what is required of schools and leaders. In her introduction to her Farmington Institutes' report Bartlett (2008) uses the following:

> 'Of concern are the results of the UNICEF survey of 21 OECD countries (2007)
> in which the UK appears at the bottom of the table on Child Well-Being.
> The Convention on the Rights of the Child indicates that children's circumstances
> should allow 'the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and
> physical abilities to their fullest potential'.

This is measured in six dimensions –
- material well-being,
- health and safety,
- educational well-being,
- family and peer relationships,
- behaviour and risks and
- subjective well-being.
In the latter three the UK is ranked last.'

Bartlett continues:

> 'One of the causes of some of the greatest difficulties schools have faced in
> recent years has been a decision to place education within a 'market' driven
> system. Governments and politicians have seen parents, not pupils, as the
> consumers of education and have increasingly expected institutions to be
> run on a business model.(Whitty et al 1998; Merrett 2006).The 'market' model
> has led to increased accountability and bureaucracy, treating schools as
> businesses and regarding students as products, the quality of which can be

numerically assessed. Thus gains or achievements that are immeasurable
are seen as unimportant or irrelevant. Teachers have become 'deliverers' of
a given body of knowledge that, according to government agencies, if only
they were to deliver it in the correct way, would lead to massively
improved product outcomes i.e. improved test and examination results.'

Bartlett later in her report very clearly identifies the values by which she believes she should be leading:

'One of the main aims of education must be to draw out potential from an individual to
prepare him or her for a full life in a community. Not all young people are able to
achieve equally in academic examinations; not all are talented in one specific area;
not all perform equally across a range of basic life skills. Yet all are citizens,
most will have paid employment and many will be parents and carers. A
sense of community is therefore crucial for learning.' ( p58)

What Bartlett has shown to me as a headteacher and leader is the benefit of combining her experience of working within a school with her values of compassion for young people. She has used her capacity of independent thinking and critical analysis within her leadership role to argue with force that the current approach to measuring schools and pupils should be changed.

The Ofsted report fails to give equal importance to the values that are promoted in a school. The report states that it is hard to define precisely what are the characteristics of a good leader but uses this quote to help its explanation:

'Successful leaders use a variety of strategies and styles depending on what
it takes to create an environment for learning, and actively search out the
many good practices that are out there, but they also adopt them to their
particular context.' (Fink 2003)

Yet it seems to me that as a leader at whatever level in education in which  one is placed, one has to understand the values for which one stands before one starts working with others. This is  surely a quotation about the how and the what and not the why? Bartlett (2000) has shared her own educational thinking which has been powerful and as Laidlaw, M. Mellett P. Whitehead, J. (1995) stated:

'That's the whole power of it. As we go around and talk about what we're
actually doing and saying, it is actually captivating the imagination of
people because they actually recognise themselves in it - and they want to share it.'

It is this quotation that perhaps encapsulates what I do, it is as a result of reflection and questions that I seek out others' opinions. I use their criticism to refine my ideas and move on looking for ways or opportunities in which these ideas could have practical benefit. I tend to feel my way forward. I don't mind putting myself above 'the parapet' to be criticised but I am more wary of putting others in the situation of where they will be criticised because of what I have done.

Riding (2008. p68) identifies the benefit of action research as expounded by Lomax, McNiff, and Whitehead (1996).

'We believe that well-conducted action research can lead to your own
personal development, to better professional practice, to improvements in the
institution in   which you work, and to your making a contribution to the good
order of society.'

Action research has been a further development of my cycle of reflection, evaluation and change but I hope accompanied by a sense of value. This seems to be part of being a good leader: the sense of developing the self as:  a way of improving your own practice so that you can promote improvements within other people's practice and hence improving the quality of

learning that takes place within your own school and beyond. As a teacher I firmly believe in giving students as much as  possible ownership of their own learning. For me it gives them the opportunity to answer their own questions and not those of others (Philosophy for Children 2008). If students can be given the structure with which to understand the process of thinking through a problem (Wallace et al. 2004.) and if their learning journey can be recognised (Level 3 Extended Project Qualification.  2007)  then I believe there are the ingredients to excite young people to enquire and want to find out more. On the other hand I do concur with Boud (1988) that there is also a place for the delivery of knowledge and understanding by the senior learner or teacher as well and  I would hope I strike a balance between the work of Carl Rogers (1902-1987), the American  Psychologist who advocated pupil-centered learning and the argument by Boud that the teacher is the senior learner.

I also believe that schools are not in the business of making a product that can be measured and weighed. Each young person is too complex and too unknown to be labelled. What I do believe is that where both staff and students feel valued for who they are and not what they produce there is then the possibility of providing an opportunity for staff in schools to experience respect and responsibility  in the day to day running of the school and therefore to model it to students upon whom those expectations can be placed. Davies and Ellison (1999) describe how it is important for leaders to be able to lead a school into the 21st century however it seems that what should underpin any leadership strategy is the ability to value the other and to know what values are being promoted.

In 2005 I was given the opportunity through a Masters Unit to explore the question: How can I help my students understand and develop the skills of independent learning? (Cartwright 2007).  From this Understanding of Learners and Learning unit I was able to apply my findings to work with other colleagues in ways I did not expect. From a visit to a Bristol primary school I learnt  the importance of children having the language of learning. From my own learning I worked with the Head of English and other subject leaders to develop the language of learning that could be used by each department to support students describing what they had studied at A S Level and A 2 Level on their UCAS (University and Colleges Application Service) personal statement.

Further visits to our local feeder schools introduced me to Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power (2002), Philosophy for Children and the use of the traffic light colour coding system of assessment. The Senior Educational Psychologist for Bath and North East Somerset, Marie Huxtable, introduced me to the problem solving framework: Thinking Actively in a Social Context (Belle Wallace. 2003). The consequence has been that the Social Studies Faculty within which I work, uses all approaches and is  at the heart of the school's Learning to Learn agenda. At the end of this term the faculty will lead  the whole school in  workshops on Philosophy for Children and the use of Guy Claxton's four (now 5) Rs. Each faculty teaching room has a display of the 4 Rs and the TASC framework. For two years running a group of staff from a range of faculties including English, ICT and Social Studies have met to plan and deliver a cross curricular set of lessons in a project using the TASC framework. In Year 12 it became the vehicle through which students of Psychology planned and developed a presentation on Classical Conditioning. The Key Stage 5 Coordinators Group has included problem solving  from the TASC framework  as part of its model of skills that students should develop.

I have enclosed some of the staff comments involved in the pilot project recorded in the Educational Enquiry (Cartwright 2007) because I firmly believe that the teaching staff of a school are an outstanding resource and have a huge insight into how a school can develop, as they are dealing with the issues on the ground, in the classroom and have first hand experience of the implication and consequences of how changes and developments are working for themselves and for the students. In the same way I believe it is important to empower students so I believe it is important to empower teaching staff. Macbeath (1998) cited in Strategic Leadership and Educational Improvement (p207) argues the case for the school leader to maximise the leadership qualities of others. The honest comments from staff in Appendix 1 I believe are powerful and have been used to take the project forward into a second year. This development is now out of my hands and is being delivered by three faculty heads. In some small way within a part of the school I have as Manz and Sims (1994) cited in

Davies & Ellison p147: 'lead others to lead themselves'. There are times when it can be appropriate to stop being a leader when it is clear that others can apply their experience to continue, shape and develop what has been started.

Finally through the Master's unit entitled: How can I enable the gifts and talents of my students to be in the driving seat of their learning? (Cartwright, 2008) I was able to introduce some our Sixth Form students to a qualification that gave them the responsibility to ask and answer their own question through a 5000 word essay which was then summarised by each student in a 15 minute lecture given to an invited audience. In this situation my influence has been with a wider audience as the students have spoken of their work publicly on two occasions, one to an invited audience of student families and friends, staff and governors, and also to an audience of adults engaged in their own MA research. It was at this meeting that I started to see some of my own educational values about empowering students coming to fruition in the students' reflective comments:

- 'It's a lack of communication which stifles progress.'
- 'You can explore without fear.'
- 'The atmosphere Mrs Cartwright has created gives a degree of freedom with
- boundaries. You need just enough freedom that's the best way to learn.'
- 'We set our own curriculum – it was a journey from the title to the conclusion
- which we thought would be a straight line.'
- 'You have to challenge yourself to keep to the task'
- 'The question is how can this be applied to everyday life. Its not fun but its enjoyable. It's the sheer joy of finding out more about something that you are interested in.'
- 'Its our own interests in something we felt really passionate about.'

In each of these units my motivation has been to answer a question that will be of practical benefit to students. The process has been one of evolution and through a response to the other there has come development. Through conversations with colleagues and through seeking their advice and criticism and expertise each process has had its own learning journey and taken both staff and students with it because in part I believe they have had the opportunity of ownership. I also believe by allowing the discussion of how to manage and implement each of these projects we were able to overcome some of the barriers to the implementation. In this situation both management and leadership were intertwined. As I reflect on these developments I wonder how many of the skills of leadership have been present in this process and whether this challenges the traditional view of leadership and reflects more the concept of Distributive Leadership (Bennett et al. 2003)

The document Head for the Future developing Leadership styles defines leadership styles Styles gives definitions of leadership which defines leadership styles as the patterns of behaviour adopted by a leader. The six styles outlined are echoes of those identified by Goleman, D et al (2002), the first four of which carry the same name: coaching, affiliative, democratic, and pacesetting. The latter two are coercive and authoritative replacing Goleman's terms of commanding and visionary leadership. The Head for the Future document was helpful in that has provided the language of leadership. In the same way that we often cope with large amounts of information by putting it into categories or chunks so this document does the same. However unlike Goleman et al (2002) it did not discuss the importance of the emotional role of leadership as summarised below:

> 'the primordial emotional task though by now largely invisible – remains foremost
> among the many jobs of leadership driving the collective emotions in a
> positive direction and clearing the smog created by toxic emotions.' (p5)

While I do not believe I fall into any one category, what I can now do is to reflect on my practice and identify where I have had the opportunity to respond and done so and also where I have not done so.

The democratic style is described as one that is used when team members are competent, they possess critical information, have clear ideas about the best approach and when the authoritative style has already been used to create and champion a vision. The style is described as being more effective when information sharing meetings are held and everyone is kept informed and involved, when meetings are managed well, agendas are set, time is managed, reticent people are drawn out, decisions are shared with staff and students and consensus has been built by listening to the views of others. I would argue that the opportunity to run the TASC pilot project was done very much along these lines.

I would also say as Year Head working with a team of seven tutors and a learning coordinator there were elements of the coaching style. I supported team members in their professional development and created development opportunities wherever possible, in particular for the learning coordinator who was encouraged to develop links with local employers to provide opportunities for those not going onto university. As Assistant Director of Sixth Form I have drawn on elements of the Affiliative style to give personal help to others as a new team of six staff have settled into their new roles.

Through this essay I have come to recognise the importance I place on values that underpin all forms of leadership and also believe in the importance of having the courage to make a critical stand. I take from this essay the real challenge of working to standards where I can allow myself to be seen as a role model.

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Staff responses to the Pilot Project

**A colleague designed the staff questionnaire which included the following questions and received the enclosed replies from a representative of each of the subject areas involved in the pilot project.**

| Review questions | 1.What were the positive aspects for your students? | 2. How could the TASC process have been improved for your students? | 3. What if anything will you use from the TASC experience in your future classroom practice? | 4. What general comments could you make about the TASC process and using the approach at Wellsway? |
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| *Teacher 1* | **Nice group work Making links with other subjects Allowed use of imagination** | **All teachers fully participating. ICT issues(!) May be lessons too spread out** | I will be able to use TASC in an informal way during Year 7. | Fab! But needs all teachers on board Possibly collapse timetable and do over 1/2/ days. |
| Teacher 2 | **Extended group work and independence – reliance on each other for work to progress. All groups produced something by the end.** | At times handovers between lessons were problematic – may be 1 or2 days rather than 2 weeks of non-stop TASC would have run more smoothly? | Increased self and peer evaluation during and after tasks and group work. Trust them more to work in groups for longer periods of time**.** | Good to do special " event". Good to work a bit with other curriculum areas. |
| Teacher 3 | They enjoyed the group work task and were very excited by the prospect of doing power points. | I found the powerpoint detracted from the process of the TASC work. | I really liked the group work and independent learning aspects. | I enjoyed it and I think that it was a really valuable experience. |
| Teacher 4 | **Special " project" was appreciated. Team work More active learning.** | Not sure. I should have known more about the whole process rather than 'my' lessons with in it. | TASC fits some things in Business Studies and ICT which I will use. | I would like to see further developments so this is not a 'one – off' and forgotten. |
| Teacher 5 | **Working with Year 7 classes Reviewing their** | More definition from the class teachers as to | Thinking (and discussing) more about | Needs a TASC team to coordinate all |

| | **own TASC work from Year 12 Being independently responsible for others.** | how Year 13 students would be used in lesson 2. Being able to show more of their own work. | each stage of the TASC framework. | the TASC timetabled lessons. Had some great social interaction between Sixth Form and Year 7 students. |
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