

Growing Leadership Potential in Primary School Teachers: the Route to Sustainability

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Abstract:

This study explores various means of growing leadership potential in primary school teachers. Central to this study is the definition of teacher leadership and a framework that outlines the main elements of the concept. Moreover, the benefits, as well as the barriers to its implementation in schools, are examined. The teachers' willingness to assume leadership responsibilities is questioned. The research project was carried out in five Junior / Primary Schools across Nottinghamshire, England. A thirty-minute interview was conducted with four members of staff in every school. This was supplemented by observation of one staff meeting per school, as well as the distribution of a 'Self Assessment Questionnaire' about leadership practice. This was completed by every class teacher, resulting in a total number of fifty-three research participants. Definitions of 'teacher leadership' varied according to the interviewees' formal responsibilities. There is a possible correlation between how head teachers perceive their role within the school and the degree of decision-making power given to teachers. Although it is clearly evident that not all teachers want to lead, there is no doubt that all teachers feel the need to be consulted, to be valued and to be trusted. The benefits of teacher leadership identified by participants can be divided into three categories; those affecting teachers, those affecting students and those affecting the school as a whole. The strongest barriers identified were related to classroom practice. Collaboration through networks and peer support, as well as coaching and mentoring were identified by some participants as a means of supporting the development of leadership capacity.

Introduction

The hierarchical structures of schools, as well as the prevailing norm of egalitarianism in the teaching profession appear to be discouraging teachers from exercising their leadership skills beyond their classroom. There is a tendency in schools to base roles and responsibilities on rank (seniority and qualifications) rather than entrusting leadership responsibilities depending on knowledge, skill and initiative.

Developing leadership capacity might be a solution to the leadership recruitment crises being faced by English schools. Moreover, a single source of insight and direction, the head teacher, could become an unsustainable bottleneck for the development of the school. Teachers represent the largest number of adults in the school. Teachers are also politically powerful. Thus leadership development should not revolve around the tiny elite; rather a culture of leadership ought to be created throughout the school community.

This study aims at exploring the possible relationship between teaching and leading. The practices, perceptions and circumstances of shared leadership will be explored. The study also aims at establishing whether there is a relationship between teacher leadership and job satisfaction / morale.

Framework

The Scope and Nature of Distributed Leadership and Teacher Leadership

The concept of distributed leadership replaces the traditional bureaucratic notions of leadership premised upon an individual managing a hierarchical system and structure. This is because, construed holistically, this view of leadership 'incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school' such as teachers, parents and community members, 'who work at guiding and mobilising staff in the instructional change process' (Spillane, 2001, in Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 31). Distributed leadership thus involves the delegation of leadership authority, rather than the delegation of tasks.

This overlaps with Sergiovanni's concept of 'leadership density' in that the more people are involved in leadership roles and responsibilities; the denser is leadership in schools. Sergiovanni (2001, p. 112) claims that high leadership density results in:

- increasing the number of people who are responsible for and engaged in the work of others, thereby augmenting perception;
- increasing the number of people who are trusted with information and thereby enlarges memory;
- increasing the number of people who are concerned with decision-making and this augments reason;
- increasing the number of people who are exposed to new ideas and thus are more likely to generate even more new ideas, thereby enlarging imagination;
- increasing the number of people who have an important stake in the school and its success, which augments motivation

In Katzenmeyer and Moller's landmark publication, *'Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Leadership Development for Teachers'* (1996, 2001), the authors introduce the metaphor of a sleeping giant to illustrate not just the current dormant status of teacher leadership but also the power it might exert if aroused. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001, p. 5) claim that:

teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice.

However, this definition suggests that not all teachers can or are leaders and that leadership is a matter of designated roles, rather than being loose, in terms of providing the freedom to act. The definition implies that teachers have opportunities to become leaders at various specific times throughout their career. Barth (2000, in Harris, 2003, p.78) proposes the revolutionary idea that 'all teachers can lead'. Harris (ibid.) qualifies this statement by claiming that 'all teachers harbour leadership capabilities waiting to be unlocked and engaged for the good of the school'. What wakens the sleeping giant?

Growing Leadership Capacity in Teachers: The Route to Sustainability

Lambert (1998, p. 24) claims that because teachers are the largest group of adults in school and the most politically powerful, they should take the major responsibility for building leadership capacity in schools. Harris and Lambert (2003, p.24) argue that leadership capacity building can be defined as 'broad-based, skilful involvement in the work of leadership'. Involvement which is broad-based implies the participation of teachers, parents, pupils, community members, local authorities and universities. Hopkins and Jackson (2003, p. 86) refer to the concept as 'the internal organisational characteristics of the school'. Leadership does not reside in one person, it is dependent on context and thus it resides in 'the potential available to be released within an organisation' (Hopkins and Jackson, 2003, p. 97).

Development of the schools' capacity for improvement and the processes to support school improvement through professional development are inter-related. This is because investing in professional development in turn results in extending the potential and capabilities of individuals. This is the main means of building capacity in teachers.

Nurturing, fostering and developing Teacher Leadership through Professional Development

In the literature on developing teacher leadership, leading is also often intimately linked to effective professional development. The latter goes much beyond the traditional in-service provision to include different types of professional knowledge acquisition, including the development of an understanding of leadership. Collaboration, networks and 'communities of practice' all contribute to the teacher's learning. 'Collaboration is at the heart of teacher leadership, as it is premised upon change that is enacted collectively' (Harris, 2003, p. 77). Lieberman and Wood (2003, p. 487) regard healthy networks as those which:

...win commitment from members to particular ideas and ideals while also providing opportunities for intellectual challenge and new membership and ideas.

Huberman (1995, p. 198) refers to a more 'open individual cycle' in cases where teachers turn to fellow teachers, specialists or documentary sources so as to solve a problem. Many professional development opportunities occur by making the most of the knowledge and skills of teachers already in school - working alongside colleagues and sharing expertise and problem solving in a collaborative manner. Collaboration is now widely proposed as an organisational solution to the problems of contemporary schooling. Huberman (1995, p. 199) questions the standard of such internal easily-accessible knowledge. Collaboration within a school should not be assumed as automatically present. Further more, collaboration may not be easy to establish due to issues of equality with participants within the same institution.

Figure 1 illustrates the different kinds of network and peer support that can contribute to professional development.

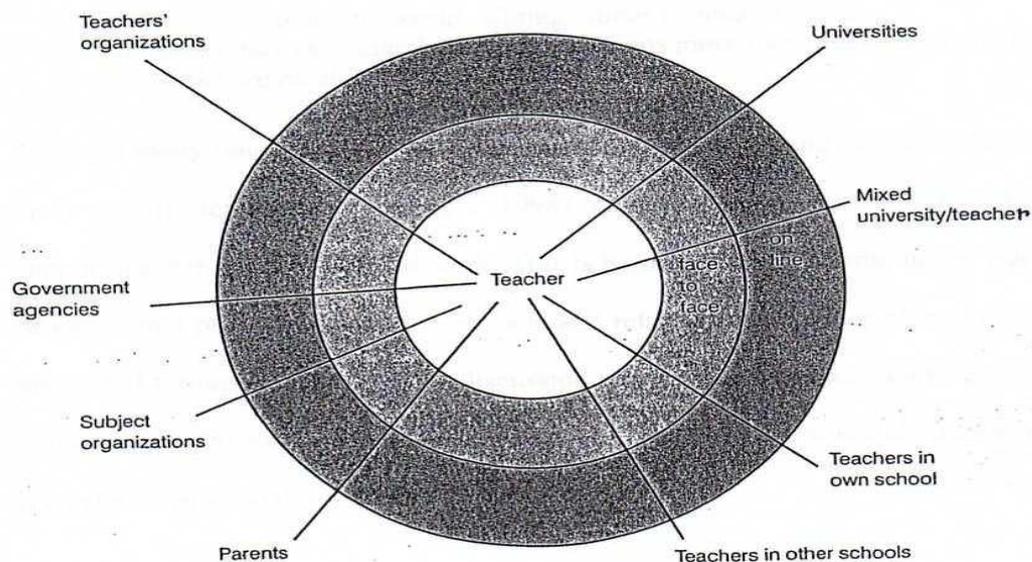


Figure 1: Professional Networks

Source: Neil and Morgan, 2003, p. 60

Networks extend out from the teacher in seven main possible directions and on two different levels – face-to-face and / or online. Successful learning processes are not restricted to one homogenous group of teachers (Day, 1999, p. 179). The potential strength of networks lies in the fact that the skills and knowledge of ‘outsiders’, compliment the practical knowledge held by teachers.

Amongst many other authors, Frost and Durrant (2003, p. 6) and Day and Harris (2002, p. 961) make specific reference to Wenger’s (1998) ‘communities of practice’ when discussing how to support teacher-led development work. This is because in such a community ‘teachers share a set of values and purposes; contacts are made and relationships developed, and practice is explored and tested through evidence-based discussion and more active inter-school collaborative inquiry and evaluation’ (Frost and Durrant, 2003, p. 6).

Below is a list of the ‘structural conditions’ and the ‘human qualities and capacities’ which have been identified as being conducive to the productive functioning of learning communities (Boyd 1992, Watts and Castle 1993, Louis and Kruse 1995 in Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 52/53):

- time to work together collegially;
- availability of resources;
- small school size and physical proximity of the staff to one another;
- schedules and structures that reduce isolation;
- the facilitative participation of the headteacher, who shares leadership and thus power and authority;
- interdependent teaching roles;
- well-developed communication structures;
- policies that encourage greater school autonomy, foster collaboration and provide for staff development.

Trust in Schools: a means of developing Teacher Leadership

Trustworthiness at the individual level and mutual trust and respect at the organisational level is essential to support the leadership climate needed in schools. Under trust one could include ‘self-esteem’, thus trusting in one’s own capabilities. Unfortunately, the climate of ‘performativity’ has led to the teacher’s lowering of self-esteem. This is because teachers tend to be judged only by simplistic measures of students’ academic performance (Frost and Durrant, 2003, p. 3). All kinds of trust are a precondition or concomitant of risk taking and change. Mutual trust results in:

...the creation of an environment conducive to the generation of new ideas, reflective of a willingness to acknowledge and support others’ ideas and supportive of the application of others’ proficiency.

(Crowther *et al*, 2002, p. 39)

Such mutualism brings to mind Bryk and Schneider’s (2002, p. 22) concept of ‘relational trust’

...its constitutive elements are socially defined in the reciprocal exchanges among participants in a school community, and its presence (or absence) has important consequences for the functioning of the school and its capacity to engage fundamental change.

Overcoming Barriers and Capturing Opportunities

Two particular barriers to teacher leadership are cited in the literature. Firstly is the contention that most teachers do not wish to lead, on the grounds that it will interfere with their teaching (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1998, in Crowther *et al*, 2002, p. 35). Secondly is Little's (1995, *ibid.*) claim that the evolution of teacher leadership has resulted in the emergence of new professional tensions, especially the traditions of specialization. The problem lies in the imposition of rigid whole-school consensus across the staff. Conflicts between bureaucratic control and teacher empowerment must be worked out. Hargreaves (2000, p. 18) argues that balkanization can only be avoided if schools 'search for more post modern patterns of organization and collaboration that are pluralistic and flexible in nature'. Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 56) claim that the 'design and organization of schools seems to present the biggest challenge to teacher collaboration'.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1990, p. 267 - 278) also describe how school leaders provide opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making and school development. They highlight the following structuring behaviours:

- distributing leadership responsibilities and power throughout the school;
- sharing decision making power with staff;
- encouraging teachers to run their own decision making teams;
- taking teacher's recommendations and opinions seriously and into account;
- ensuring effective group problem solving during staff meetings;
- providing teacher autonomy;
- changing working conditions so that teachers have collaborative planning time;
- ensuring the right kind of teacher involvement in decision making related to new initiatives in school;
- creating opportunities for continuing professional development.

This extensive list¹ could be contrasted to the several factors that influence a teacher's readiness to assume the role and responsibilities of a teacher leader. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001, p.60) suggest that teachers' level of preparedness depends on his or her:

- professional teaching skills;
- personal philosophy of education; attributes (Attributes such as a passion for learning or respect for individuals, grow slowly, often painfully, over time. You cannot send teachers on a course to acquire such attributes).
- interest in adult development;
- personal life stage (that allows one time and energy to assume a position of leadership);
- career stage (that enables one to give to others).

¹ The twenty – five statements presented in the questionnaire used in this study make reference to the provision of the above mentioned opportunities for developing teacher leaders.

Methodology and Method

The study focuses on the teachers' 'intentional and socially constructed behaviour' and on 'actions-with-meaning', as against the normative paradigm which views behaviour collectively as a set of stimuli responses external to the actor. The ultimate aim of this research is to understand people's accounts of how they make sense of school structures and the processes within it.

The evaluation of the research findings presented, flow from an account of how the differing structures of the five participant schools produce the events observed and the data collected.

Both qualitative analysis of interviews and observations, as well as quantitative analysis of questionnaires feature in the study. The strength of this research lies in the combination of both perspectives, thus making use of the most valuable features of each. Moreover, this is a comparative study since it explores the similarities and differences in leadership across a number of schools.

Data Gathering Methods

Triangulation has been used in this study since it is one form of validation which is particularly appropriate to the logic of qualitative research (Silverman, 2001, p.233).

The data gathering process in this study comprises a number of distinct research methods as follows:

Main research method:

- A thirty to forty – five minute interview conducted with four members of staff in every school;

Supplemented by:

- Desk research conducted on every school;
- Non – participant observation of one staff meeting per school;
- A 'Self Assessment Questionnaire' about Leadership Practice in Schools. This was completed by every class teacher in all five schools, resulting in a total number of fifty-three research participants.

Desk Research

Working out a timetable was extremely useful since the selection of techniques for gathering and processing evidence must match a realistic estimate of available time. As a means of adequately preparing for school visits, desk research was conducted at the beginning of the project. This involved collecting public background information about the five schools through the internet and other printed material provided by the school itself, such as the school prospectus.

Interviews

The interviews conducted were semi-structured and open so as to enable respondents to raise important issues not contained in the schedule. An interview schedule

showing the main issues, topics and features covered in the study. The interview schedule is divided into three main sections, namely:

1. Roles and Responsibilities within the School
2. Supporting Teacher Leadership
3. Leadership Development for Teachers

The interview was selected as the main research method because it allows comparison between how different individuals categorise meaning and actively construct their own worlds. Moreover, the study is not concerned with obtaining objective 'facts' but with eliciting accounts of subjective experiences. Accordingly, the research questions posed are closely related to the research objectives identified. Moreover, the interview is an extension of the themes introduced through the statements in the questionnaire. Whereas the latter served as a means of surveying the five schools, the interviews generated in-depth data which gave greater insight into the respondents' views on shared leadership and its effects on teachers. All twenty interviews were fully transcribed and the researcher added comments throughout the process.

Observations

Open and non-participant observations supplement the data obtained from the interviews and the questionnaires. Moreover, they confirm the interviewees' opinions and offset the possibility that participants tried to present what they thought were the desired or most appropriate responses. The descriptive variables observed were the headteachers' leadership styles, as well as the opportunities exhibited during the meeting for growing leadership potential in teachers. Field notes about what was seen and heard were taken throughout all the staff meetings. These notes, together with the researcher's reactions, were then supplemented with fuller accounts when writing out the report. Moreover, reliability may be low because of observer bias.

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

The qualitative data gained from the interviews and the school visits were complemented by the pre-coded and structured self assessment questionnaire. The questionnaire designed in this study aims at providing data on the attitudes towards leadership as well as the teachers' involvement in school-level decisions. The responses indicate the degree of agreement with the twenty-five statements aimed at exploring teachers' perceptions of morale and school ethos in terms of leadership practices.

The piloting process was initiated with nine 'typical' respondents having similar abilities and backgrounds to the target population. In most cases, a copy of the first draft was sent by post together with a covering letter. A few days later this was followed up by a phone call. Adjustments were made to the draft after all the piloting respondents had highlighted any errors in design. The revised version was piloted again on another three respondents for further verification. For methodological purity, all twelve responses were excluded from the final analysis.

The most appropriate response format for the information being sought in this study is the Likert-type rating scale. In the questionnaire, the scaled statements have an even number of options, with no mid-point. This was purposely designed so as to lead

respondents to express an opinion rather than taking the easy way out by adopting a neutral stance.

The questionnaire was distributed in every school during the weekly staff meeting which the researcher has attended and observed. The first few minutes of the staff meeting were utilised by the researcher to introduce the research question to the teaching staff, as well as to explain why the project was being conducted, what is going to happen to the findings and how the respondent's privacy will be respected through anonymity. Time was then allotted for filling in the questionnaires and all replies were collected, thus resulting in a 100% response rate.

Sample Size and Selection

The data for this research was collected during Spring of 2005 in five Junior / primary schools across the county of Nottingham, in the areas of Broxtowe and Gedling. Attempts have been made to conduct the research in similar sized schools.

Since, this is a small-scale study, non-random selection techniques were adopted so as to provide at least a useful small sample. Since most participant class teachers volunteered to be interviewed they comprise a 'self-selecting sample'. Moreover, the five participant schools and the headteachers and deputy headteachers who were interviewed were selected purely on the grounds of accessibility, thus they make up an 'opportunity' or 'convenience' sample. Gaining approval to carry out research work in schools proved to be an arduous task, both in terms of time and effort. Permission was first sought through a letter addressed to headteachers. This was followed up, a few days later, by a phone call so as to receive feedback on the project described in the introductory letter.

Data Processing Techniques

In this study, two software packages were used for analysing the research material. The 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (SPSS) Version 11.5 for Windows was used for analysing the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire survey, while the qualitative interview data was explored by means of 'Qualitative Solutions and Research' (QSR) NVivo, Version 2.0.

Research Ethics

Reference to obtaining informed consent was previously made. The participant's right to privacy was protected by deleting any means of identification from the data released in the final report, such as names of schools and addresses. Since a subject agreeing to a face-to face interview cannot expect anonymity, confidentiality was promised. Participants were given the time to think about the interview questions beforehand. They were also given the opportunity to qualify or delete anything they had said.

Results and Discussion

An Overview Description of the Participant Schools

Structure and culture are inextricably linked. Thus, it is impossible to examine the structure of the five participant schools in isolation. As shown in Table 1, the five schools have similar structures. However, every institution defines its every day, taken for granted reality in different ways through culture. During an interview, a teacher strongly claimed that

Leadership is defined to me in one word and that is culture. Is there a culture where any member of staff can feel that they can go and voice their opinion?
(Teacher, School 4)

Since culture is elusive and largely implicit, visiting each school twice or three times enabled the researcher to capture only the surface aspects of the organisational culture. Thus, desk research provided the researcher information about the main characteristics of every school. OFSTED inspection reports, accessible through the internet, were particularly useful. Table 1 presents an overview description of all five schools.

School	Age Range Number of Pupils	How Well the School is Led and Managed -Latest OFSTED Inspection Report	Number of Class Teachers (including Job Shares & Deputy Head)	Formal Leadership Team
School 1	7 – 11 270	- Beacon School - The headteacher provides strong leadership which ensures that all staff and governors share a common commitment to succeed (2002).	11	Senior Management Team Consists of 4: - Headteacher - Deputy Head Teacher - 2 class teachers (SENCO & ICT Co-ordinator)
School 2	7 – 11 251	The school is still soundly led but not sufficiently effective (2000).	10	Senior Management Team Consists of 2: - Headteacher - Deputy Head
School 3	7 – 11 158	The new headteacher is providing outstanding leadership that is having a sudden and dramatic effect on the quality of education. ...(2001).	7	Senior Management Team Consists of 4: - Headteacher - Deputy Head Teacher - 2 class teachers (SENCO & Literacy Co-ordinator)
School 4	3 -11 410	The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is totally committed to implementing the school's aims and policies. (1999).	15	Senior Management Team Consists of 5: Headteacher - Deputy Head - -3 Teachers (Literacy Co-ordinator, Foundation Co-ordinator, Early Years / R.E. Co-ordinator)
School 5	7 – 11 237	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is very committed to the improvement of the school and the standards attained by the pupils in all aspects of school life. He provides very clear educational direction. (2001).	10	Senior Management Team Consists of 4: - Headteacher - Deputy Head Teacher - 2 class teachers (Numeracy & Literacy Co-ordinator)

Table 1: Overview Description of Participant Schools

Reports on the Staff Meeting Observed in Each School

School 1

The staff meeting observed in School 1 was led by three teachers with the aim of sharing their Comenius exchange visit experience. The atmosphere was very informal. Initially, the three teachers were unsure about how they had to proceed. When asking, the headteacher abruptly answered that 'It's your presentation!' Evidently, in this school, the practice of teachers leading staff meetings is not a habitual one.

The staff had the opportunity to ask questions and to ask for further details and clarification. There was a sharp contrast between the kind of questions asked by the headteacher and those asked by the teachers. The headteacher asked questions related to strategic, whole-school issues, while the teachers' questions focused more narrowly on the actual teaching process. This brings to mind the reactions during the interviews to the statement 'Teachers are the ones who are in the best position to make decisions since they are most aware of problems and needs':

You've got to be a little bit careful because teachers see a microcosmic world ...they can be so involved in the minute details of teaching that getting that big picture, getting an overview is not easy! (Headteacher, School 1)

School 2

No teacher in School 2 is a member of the SMT; this is the only school in the study in which the SMT consists of solely the headteacher and the deputy. The headteacher was not in school during the staff meeting observed. In School 2, strong cultural values do not seem to guide the teachers' behaviour. One teacher described the headteacher as:

...too laid back, he lets us do whatever we want...we are not led, it is the hard working teachers who lead the school...at times there is nobody in school and decisions are not taken.

Such comment echoes the OFSTED inspection team's claim that the school's leadership 'is not sufficiently effective in establishing strategies for dealing with the pressures facing the school' and that a strong sense of direction is 'less evident and effective currently in terms of the longer-term strategies for taking the school forward'.

A meeting between class teachers was observed. The aim of this meeting was to draw up class lists for next year on the basis of ability, behaviour, gender, friendships and parental requests. This was the first year that teachers were given the authority to classify students into appropriate groups. The teachers seemed to be pleased about this. Usually, this process is done by the headteacher on the basis of the friendship groups identified by the children.

School 3

The staff meeting observed was initially led by the headteacher and it was 'chaired' by her all throughout. At the beginning of the meeting, the headteacher gave out the 'Staff Meeting Agenda'. The 'Lead Behaviour' Co-ordinator and the Physical Education (P.E.) Co-ordinator took over at various points and the other teachers also joined in the discussion. Ideas were 'put on paper' and discussed, but it was the headteacher who had the final say. This decision making process was reflected in the interviews through the comments made by the teachers in this school.

I think final decisions should be taken by headteachers. There must be somebody who says 'Ok, I've listened to everything, we are going to do this, because..' (Teacher, School 3)

All the seven teachers were present but no teaching assistant attended the staff meeting. When answering the question, 'Would you say that you have developed leadership potential within your teachers?' the headteacher made reference to this staff meeting:

I've got interviews with some people who are still here... when I first arrived...they were saying things like, 'Oh, I want to always just be a class teacher, I don't ever want to take a leadership role'. The teacher who was in the staff meeting last night was one of those teachers...she is now the SENCO, the behaviour person, she is preparing herself for deputy headship. So yes, I think that we have grown leaders here. (Headteacher, School 3)

School 4

The staff meeting observed was led by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Co-ordinator and the Literacy Co-ordinator. This was one out of a series of three meetings dedicated to reviewing performance management. In the interview conducted with the headteacher, the following strategy of working round the school day so as to offer more opportunities for teachers to lead was described:

...we list the staff meetings that are available every term and different members of staff sign up to say which ones they are going to lead... I introduced having a daily briefing meeting, for 10 minutes early in the morning...I don't lead them...I can give them over to members of staff who have something to share.

During the meeting, good practice was shared. There was no sense that the headteacher or the people leading the staff meeting knew something that the other teachers did not know. Any body entering the room would not be able to identify who the headteacher was.

School 5

In School 5 there was no opportunity to observe a full staff meeting. Instead, a short 'diary' meeting, routinely held every week, was observed. This only lasted for fifteen minutes, before the commencement of lessons. It was held in the staff room and both

teachers and teaching assistants were present. In such a 'managerial' meeting, there was little time and opportunity for teacher involvement. In describing what he believes are his roles and responsibilities, the headteacher however, makes a clear distinction between 'management' and 'leadership':

Creating an environment, for me means that my management is to be everywhere. I walk about... 'management by walking about'... But leadership is a different issue altogether and leading change is the big priority because nothing stays the same! (Headteacher, School 5)

Combining Interview Data with the Figures from the Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Difficulties are incurred when attempting to quantify complex variables such as teacher leadership. Thus, this small scale study is largely qualitative, employing convenience samples and self-report methodologies, mostly interviews. However, attempts have been made to combine the interpretive approach with quantitative methods, namely the use of questionnaires.

Tables are used to display data in their 'raw' form and in percentages. From such tables, the reader can easily determine the 'mode' of the sample; that is, the category that occurs with the greatest frequency.

Roles and Responsibilities within the School

In the interviews, participants were asked to define teacher leadership. Only three (one deputy head and two teachers) out of the twenty interviewees were unable to provide an answer. The rest of the responses could be divided into three categories:

- Definitions of teacher leadership restricted to decision making in the classroom and strictly related to the curriculum;
- Definitions of teacher leadership on a wider scale with reference to school-level decision making;
- Definitions of teacher leadership with specific reference to peer leadership and collegiality.

The definitions seem to vary according to the interviewees' formal responsibilities. There was a tendency for most teachers to provide a more restricted, classroom-based definition of teacher leadership, while deputy headteachers focused more on leading change through teacher collaboration. This could be because the deputy head's role is 'like a channel between us and the head' (Teacher, School 2), 'he has a foot in both camps' (Teacher, School 3) and 'his power is in the background' (Teacher, School 1). The headteacher in School 1 claims that he 'wouldn't see so much leadership in a collegial approach where everybody is working together'.

The head teacher's definition of his or her leadership role and the opportunities made available for teacher leadership in schools seem to be in a symbiotic relationship. Teacher leadership is not possible without the head teacher's support; the success of one is determined by the extent to which the other is available. This is because, as

indicated in the literature review, shared leadership is 'usually given, not taken' (Hay Group, 2004, p. 6).

Both the headteachers in School 4 and School 5 emphasised their role in providing an environment which is conducive to learning. This could be related back to the literature review which focused on a lifelong disposition towards and commitment to learning as a means of nurturing and developing teacher leadership. Furthermore, in the literature the job of those in formal leadership roles was outlined as being

primarily to hold the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship...to create a common culture of expectations around the use of individual skills and abilities. (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 28)

The 'all embracing role' depicted by the headteachers in School 1 and School 2 can be sharply contrasted to the 'humble' opinion of the headteacher in School 3 in the quote below:

...I can't and don't take all the decisions. For example, I've got a very good site manager, he knows what he is doing with the building and what would be the best priorities to work on. (Headteacher, School 3)

This could imply that the headteacher is necessarily 'laid back'. However, when questioned further, she highlights the benefits of such an approach to leadership:

I think, because people have more professional autonomy, then they get more job satisfaction and because they have more job satisfaction they do a better job. (Headteacher, School 3)

She shares power because it enables her to create capacity within the school, raising morale and commitment, enabling more things to happen at once. In fact, there seems to be a correlation between how the headteacher perceives his or her role within the school and the teacher's questionnaire responses to statements about their decision-making power. This is mostly evident in the case of School 2 and School 3.

The results in all the following three tables indicate that over 86 percent of teachers in School 3 agree or strongly agree that their opinion is sought on a regular basis by those in leadership positions. Moreover, 86 percent of teachers in School 3 regard themselves as change agents, who also create a vision for the school. Such percentages are in sharp contrast to the results obtained for the same three statements in School 2: 44 percent agree or strongly agree that their opinion is sought on a regular basis, 67 percent regard themselves as change agents and only 20 percent claim that they create a vision for the school.

Statement:			My opinion is sought on a regular basis.				Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
SCHOOL	1	Count	3	5	2	1	11
		% within SCHOOL	27.3%	45.5%	18.2%	9.1%	100.0%
	2	Count	0	4	4	1	9
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	44.4%	44.4%	11.1%	100.0%
	3	Count	3	3	1	0	7
		% within SCHOOL	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%	.0%	100.0%
	4	Count	4	7	3	1	15
		% within SCHOOL	26.7%	46.7%	20.0%	6.7%	100.0%
	5	Count	0	7	3	0	10
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	70.0%	30.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	26	13	3	52
		% within SCHOOL	19.2%	50.0%	25.0%	5.8%	100.0%

Table 2: Frequency Counts - Teachers who believe that their Opinion is Sought on a Regular Basis by those in Formal Leadership Positions

Statement:			I have changed the way some things are done round here.			Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	
SCHOOL	1	Count	3	5	3	11
		% within SCHOOL	27.3%	45.5%	27.3%	100.0%
	2	Count	1	5	3	9
		% within SCHOOL	11.1%	55.6%	33.3%	100.0%
	3	Count	4	2	1	7
		% within SCHOOL	57.1%	28.6%	14.3%	100.0%
	4	Count	6	5	4	15
		% within SCHOOL	40.0%	33.3%	26.7%	100.0%
	5	Count	1	5	4	10
		% within SCHOOL	10.0%	50.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	15	22	15	52
		% within SCHOOL	28.8%	42.3%	28.8%	100.0%

Table 3: Frequency Counts – Teachers who regard themselves as Change Agents

Statement:			I help to create the vision and long-term strategy for this school.				Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
SCHOOL	1	Count	1	6	3	0	10
		% within SCHOOL	10.0%	60.0%	30.0%	.0%	100.0%
	2	Count	0	2	6	2	10
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	3	Count	4	2	1	0	7
		% within SCHOOL	57.1%	28.6%	14.3%	.0%	100.0%
	4	Count	4	6	3	1	14
		% within SCHOOL	28.6%	42.9%	21.4%	7.1%	100.0%
	5	Count	1	7	2	0	10
		% within SCHOOL	10.0%	70.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	10	23	15	3	51	
	% within SCHOOL	19.6%	45.1%	29.4%	5.9%	100.0%	

Table 4: Frequency Counts – Teachers who feel that he or she helps to Create a Vision

Furthermore, headteachers have described how their roles and leadership styles changed depending on school circumstances and the headship stage they were at. Thus, the quantity and the quality of teacher leadership could be determined by the circumstances the school is in. For example, OFSTED inspections play a role in the choice of leadership style adopted by the headteacher. Headteachers might refrain from sharing their leadership responsibilities because of the anxiety created by forthcoming inspections. The price for trusting teachers with new roles might be regarded as being far too high if the school is expecting an inspection.

My role has changed...when I came here five years ago the school had serious weaknesses...My leadership style was at this end of the authoritarian scale. I don't make all the decisions anymore but I had to in the past... (Headteacher, School 3)

Moreover, the headteacher in School 5 adds that a democratic leadership style is more suitable in 'good times, when things are going well'. Two headteachers described how in their first year of headship they tended to adopt a more 'commanding' leadership style.

My leadership style at the time came across as fairly forceful. As years went by I realised that the best models of leadership are around coaching and working along side and with colleagues. (Headteacher, School 2)

This can be related back to the literature, in that Goleman *et al.* (2002, p. 67, 107) also claims that effective leaders act according to one or more of the six distinct approaches to leadership and switch between the various styles depending on the situation. From the interviews, one could conclude that effective leadership involves choosing the right style at the right time.

All five headteachers acknowledge the value and importance of teachers' curriculum leadership roles. In all participant schools the work is increasingly delegated to deputy headteachers, SMTs and curriculum co-ordinators.

Some teachers, as highlighted by the deputy head in School 5, experience such leadership opportunities as being an additional workload rather than being experienced as empowering. It is vital that teachers not only have the full support of the headteacher and the other colleagues but they must also want to assume a leadership role.

Interview responses indicate that even though not all teachers want to lead, there is no doubt that teachers feel the need to be consulted, to be valued and to be 'part of the loop' (Teacher, School 4). However, as indicated by the deputy head in School 2, the subject nature of the decision is a determining factor in teacher involvement. This idea was further reinforced by the Headteacher in School 4:

When we first got our own management of school budgets I tried really hard to involve the staff in the budget setting ...I soon learnt that they don't really want to know about the nitty gritty of it...they are quite happy to leave it to me!

Moreover, a common assumption is that 'leaders are born':

I think some of us, as teachers, are born leaders and some aren't! (Teacher, School 2)

Although as indicated by the other teacher in School 2 and by the deputy head in School 3 interpersonal skills and personality may be considered prerequisites for a leadership role, leadership can be learned and developed, hence the title of this dissertation.

There seems to be a disparity between the varied opinions about teachers' willingness to lead (expressed in the interviews) and the statistical figures obtained for the questionnaire statement related to how the staff perceive their colleagues' willingness to bring about change (refer to Table 5). In the latter, only one teacher in School 5 strongly disagrees that all teachers want to bring about change. The statement could have led to such an ambiguous response due to its lack of clarity. Moreover, such a mismatch in the data obtained could imply that teachers do not associate leadership with bringing about change in schools. In the literature, 'leadership' is regarded as being a broader concept; a concept that is not synonymous with formal authority (Lambert, 1998, p.5). School leadership should constitute collective learning processes that lead to constructive change.

Statement:			I believe that all the teachers in this school want to bring about sustainable change.				Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
SCHOOL	1	Count	0	8	3	0	11
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	72.7%	27.3%	.0%	100.0%
	2	Count	2	5	3	0	10
		% within SCHOOL	20.0%	50.0%	30.0%	.0%	100.0%
	3	Count	2	5	0	0	7
		% within SCHOOL	28.6%	71.4%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	4	Count	4	9	1	0	14
		% within SCHOOL	28.6%	64.3%	7.1%	.0%	100.0%
	5	Count	0	7	2	1	10
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	70.0%	20.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	8	34	9	1	52	
	% within SCHOOL	15.4%	65.4%	17.3%	1.9%	100.0%	

Table 5: Frequency Count – Teachers who believe that their Colleagues Want to bring about Change

Central to the discussion of teacher leadership are the myriad advantages to be gained from tapping into this rich resource in schools. The interview responses can be divided into three categories:

- Benefits affecting the teacher;
- Benefits affecting the students;
- Benefits affecting the school.

There was a tendency for teachers to focus on the benefits affecting students and themselves, rather than focusing on the impact at whole-school level. In their final report, the Hay Group (2004, p.58) claim that they were unable to make any judgments of a relationship between shared leadership and academic performance.

The barriers to teacher leadership, as identified by interviewees can also be divided into three categories:

- Teacher – related barriers;
- Students – related barriers;
- School – related barriers.

The strongest barriers identified in this study are related to classroom practice. Much fewer challenges at school –level were identified.

Throughout the interviews prominence was given to OFSTED inspections, to league tables of test results and to meeting government literacy and numeracy targets. The emphasis placed on such a ‘performativity discourse’ of assessment which currently dominates educational policy-making in England, hinders schools from becoming enquiring communities with teachers identifying the problems in teaching and learning and working together to solve them. In a context where teacher learning is prescribed, teacher leadership and personal authenticity cannot be realised. This brings to mind the transactional model of leadership in which the school’s priorities

and goals are determined externally. In transformational leadership, the vision of the headteacher on the direction and developments of a school is crucial.

How do you keep your best people and how do you keep them going, when you know that the best form of motivation is success? So you want them to be successful, you look for opportunities to give praise and there is only so much, I as head can do because what comes from outside is more important. (Headteacher, School 5)

Webb (2005, p. 74) claims that since the Educational Reform Act (1988) governments have steadily increased headteachers' management responsibilities, thus prioritising the maintenance functions of schools and their efficient running. A shift to managerialism is manifested particularly in the setting up of SMTs. Such a structure has an impact on the teachers' participation in decision-making. The term could be considered an oxymoron, in that the two ideas of 'senior management' and 'teams', though contrasting in meaning are combined to form a phrase. Structural changes in SMTs, as well as school size determine teacher involvement:

In a smaller school you still have the same number of jobs but they have to be shared between fewer people... (Teacher, School 3)

The interviewees are here suggesting that in smaller schools it is easier to involve more teachers in decision making. However, as highlighted by the following teacher, this is not always the case:

It is possible to have a very small school but still no shared leadership.... Things didn't work with the previous head, even though we were and still are a small school...because it was definitely top down. But we are consulted much more now, so it feels as if instead of being two tier system, we are all together. (Teacher, School 3)

Supporting Teacher Leadership

Sharing responsibilities implicitly suggests the essential need of knowing the staff both as people and as professionals. Leadership opportunities need to match the teacher's aptitude and abilities.

I think this head knows her staff very well...she is very good at assessing people and where they are going to slot into things. She knows the sort of thing you would like to do... (Teacher, School 3)

Headteachers create problems for themselves when they do not trust other members of staff. This was highlighted when asked about the barriers encountered in performing a leadership role:

I have much less problems now than I use to because people know that I trust them and because they are trusted they act in a trustworthy way. The accountability is built in, isn't it, when you have built up relationships with people. (Headteacher, School 3)

This relates back to Bryk and Schneider's (2002) concept of 'relational trust' in that trustworthiness is described as being essential to support the leadership climate needed. As indicated in Table 6, all the teachers, with the exception of one, agree or

strongly agree that there is trust between them and those in formal leadership positions.

Statement:			There is trust between me and those in formal leadership positions.			Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	
SCHOOL	1	Count	4	7	0	11
		% within SCHOOL	36.4%	63.6%	.0%	100.0%
	2	Count	0	9	0	9
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	3	Count	4	2	1	7
		% within SCHOOL	57.1%	28.6%	14.3%	100.0%
	4	Count	10	4	0	14
		% within SCHOOL	71.4%	28.6%	.0%	100.0%
	5	Count	1	9	0	10
		% within SCHOOL	10.0%	90.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	19	31	1	51	
	% within SCHOOL	37.3%	60.8%	2.0%	100.0%	

Table 6: Frequency Count – Teachers who claim that there is Trust between them and those in Formal Leadership Positions

However, when asked whether they feel powerless to influence activities beyond the classroom the responses vary extensively. This indicates that ‘trust’ is an elusive concept. During the interviews, teachers seem to relate trust simply to ‘being listened to’, to ‘consultation’ and to ‘consideration’ rather than teacher autonomy and authority.

The newly qualified teacher in School 1 clearly describes the difficulties in influencing established procedures and set ways of doing things. Moreover, the image of trust being both earned and grown over time is very adequate. This idea recurred in the interviews conducted with the headteachers:

I only think that through continuous honesty, you can actually get anywhere and gain people’s trust. (Headteacher, School 4)

Thus, just as the title of this study favours the ecological metaphor of capacity ‘growth’, the core components of trust in schools were also depicted in the interviews as being organic and authentic communal qualities. This implies that communication plays an important role in the development of trust. This is clearly indicated in the quote below:

Our premise of working is that we are honest and truthful with each other and I think that the clarity of our relationship makes everything very easy. (Deputy Headteacher, School 3)

Again, there is a mismatch between the results presented in Table 7, which indicate that the majority of the teachers believe that their recommendations are taken seriously and the

interview data, all of which suggests that ultimately the ‘head is definitely the head’ (Deputy Headteacher, School 5).

Statement:			My recommendations are taken seriously by those in formal leadership positions.				Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
SCHOOL	1	Count	4	4	2	0	10
		% within SCHOOL	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
	2	Count	0	8	2	0	10
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	80.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
	3	Count	4	1	2	0	7
		% within SCHOOL	57.1%	14.3%	28.6%	.0%	100.0%
	4	Count	4	9	1	1	15
		% within SCHOOL	26.7%	60.0%	6.7%	6.7%	100.0%
	5	Count	0	10	0	0	10
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	12	32	7	1	52	
	% within SCHOOL	23.1%	61.5%	13.5%	1.9%	100.0%	

Table 7: Frequency Counts – Teachers who Believe that their Recommendations are Taken Seriously by those in Formal Leadership Positions

Leadership Development for Teachers

In addition to becoming competent in teaching and learning skills, teachers must learn leadership skills. Leadership development relies on building relationships and developing shared capacity to reach desired goals (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2002, p. 48). This can be achieved by providing teachers the right amount of opportunities to lead.

You have to build your teachers up and their expertise before you start to devolve leadership. You have to know when they are ready for it and you don’t have to overpower them with it.... (Headteacher, School 5)

In contrast, when questioned about the opportunities provided for developing leadership skills, teachers replied that training in such an area ‘leaves much to be desired’:

One day I was just a classroom teacher, the other I was a subject co-ordinator! (Teacher, School 2)

However, all the teachers in School 3 and School 4 claim that at least they do have the freedom to act and the opportunity to risk and experiment. In School 1 and especially in School 2 (Table 8), more than half the staff disagrees with such a statement.

Statement:			I have the freedom to act and the opportunity to risk and experiment.			Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	
SCHOOL	1	Count	1	5	5	11
		% within SCHOOL	9.1%	45.5%	45.5%	100.0%
	2	Count	0	4	5	9
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
	3	Count	3	4	0	7
		% within SCHOOL	42.9%	57.1%	.0%	100.0%
	4	Count	8	7	0	15
		% within SCHOOL	53.3%	46.7%	.0%	100.0%
	5	Count	2	6	2	10
		% within SCHOOL	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	14	26	12	52
		% within SCHOOL	26.9%	50.0%	23.1%	100.0%

Table 8: Frequency Count – Teachers who claim that they have the Freedom to Act and the Opportunity to Risk and Experiment

Deputy Heads confirm that headteachers play an instrumental role in developing leadership potential:

I remember the head at my last school, saying as I arrived there... 'You write your own CV..' Anything I identified as an opportunity he would say, 'Yes, go ahead, do it.' (Deputy Headteacher, School 1)

Both School 3 and School 5 strongly advocate the 'Primary Leadership Programme' as an effective means of developing leadership capacity in teachers:

It gives the chance of identifying potential leaders within the school...allowing them to come in the programme which means they actually have a say in how they would want to change the school. (Deputy Headteacher, School 3)

In School 3, the 'Primary Strategy Network Learning' was also mentioned as a means of developing leadership potential in teachers. This relates back to the literature in that collaboration through networks and peer support was described as being 'at the heart of teacher leadership, since it is premised upon change that is enacted collectively' (Harris, 2003, p. 77).

As indicated in Table 9 most teachers, in all five schools, claim that they have an influence on their colleagues. Similarly, in Table 10 most teachers also claim that they participate in committees and teams to evaluate new ideas. In fact, the results obtained for both statements are very alike for every school. For example, in School 5, 67 percent maintain that they influence their colleagues and 70 percent claim that they participate in teams. The results obtained for both statements in School 1 and School 3

are identical, 64 percent and 86 percent respectively. Disparity is only presented in the case of School 2 in which although 67 percent of the teachers claim that they influence their colleagues, only 40 percent maintain that they participate in committees and teams. This could imply that in School 2, much of what teachers learn comes from unstructured day-to-day contact with colleagues.

Statement:			I often influence my colleagues.			Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	
SCHOOL	1	Count	2	5	4	11
		% within SCHOOL	18.2%	45.5%	36.4%	100.0%
	2	Count	0	6	3	9
		% within SCHOOL	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	3	Count	0	6	1	7
	% within SCHOOL	.0%	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%	
	4	Count	4	6	3	13
	% within SCHOOL	30.8%	46.2%	23.1%	100.0%	
	5	Count	0	6	3	9
	% within SCHOOL	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%	
Total	Count	6	29	14	49	
	% within SCHOOL	12.2%	59.2%	28.6%	100.0%	

Table 9: Frequency Count – Teachers who claim that they have an Influence on their Colleagues

Statement:			I participate in committees and teams to evaluate new proposals and ideas.				Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
SCHOOL	1	Count	3	4	4	0	11
		% within SCHOOL	27.3%	36.4%	36.4%	.0%	100.0%
	2	Count	1	3	5	1	10
		% within SCHOOL	10.0%	30.0%	50.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	3	Count	2	4	1	0	7
	% within SCHOOL	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%	.0%	100.0%	
	4	Count	4	5	5	1	15
	% within SCHOOL	26.7%	33.3%	33.3%	6.7%	100.0%	
	5	Count	1	6	3	0	10
	% within SCHOOL	10.0%	60.0%	30.0%	.0%	100.0%	
Total	Count	11	22	18	2	53	
	% within SCHOOL	20.8%	41.5%	34.0%	3.8%	100.0%	

Table 10: Frequency Count – Teachers who Participate in Committees and Teams

Moreover, as indicated by some teachers ‘mentoring would be a solution for leadership development so that there is a period of transition between not having responsibility and then having one, because it’s a big difference!’ (School 4); ‘I will need to almost shadow the person I will be taking over from...you need to see the person in action’ (School 1).

The purpose of mentoring in professional development is in fact to facilitate the learner's growth, not only in terms of teaching and learning skills, but also in terms of leadership skills. Unlike the common belief expressed by most teachers interviewed, leadership development is not aimed at assuming a particular role and position within the school. Rather it is an empowering process whereby the staff work together to discover and develop latent abilities.

Recommendations for Growing Leadership Capacity in Primary School Teachers

In the literature, professional development through collaboration, networks and 'communities of practice', as well as through mentoring and coaching are depicted as the most effective means of developing leadership capacity in teachers. Teacher leadership can also be nurtured through a sound change in organisational design. Namely this involves a move from the traditional school structure represented in Figure 2, to a school structure which mirrors a more democratic learning society.

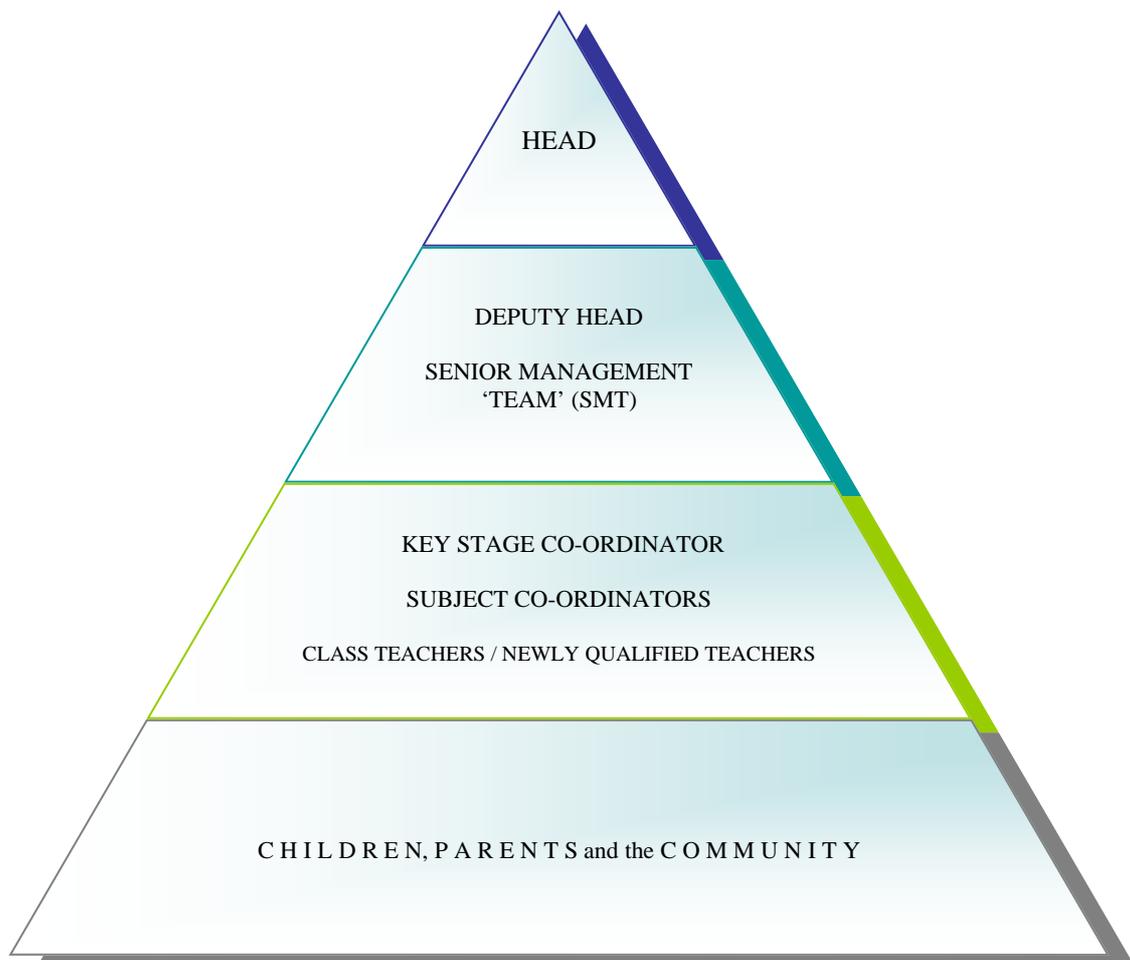


Figure 2: Hierarchical Leadership

Depending on school size, any typical English primary / junior school would have one headteacher, one or two deputy headteachers, between ten to twenty-five teachers and between one hundred to four hundred pupils. Thus children, parents and the community occupy the widest but also the lowest section of the pyramid because they traditionally have very little say in the running of the school. Even though they represent the largest group of professionals in the school, class teachers (especially those who are not co-ordinators) are not too far off from the bottom. In this figure, the headteacher is depicted as being the single source of insight and direction. In several occasions during the interviews, headteachers compared the teachers to children:

You give teachers opportunities, they are like children....you present children with learning opportunities so that they can learn and you present teachers with leading opportunities so that they can lead. (Headteacher in School 3)

When asked about barriers caused by formal leadership power a teacher describes the following scenario:

If you make a mistake... you are told off. It might be one to one...you are taken into the office...

This echoes an adult – child relationship more than a headteacher – teacher relationship.

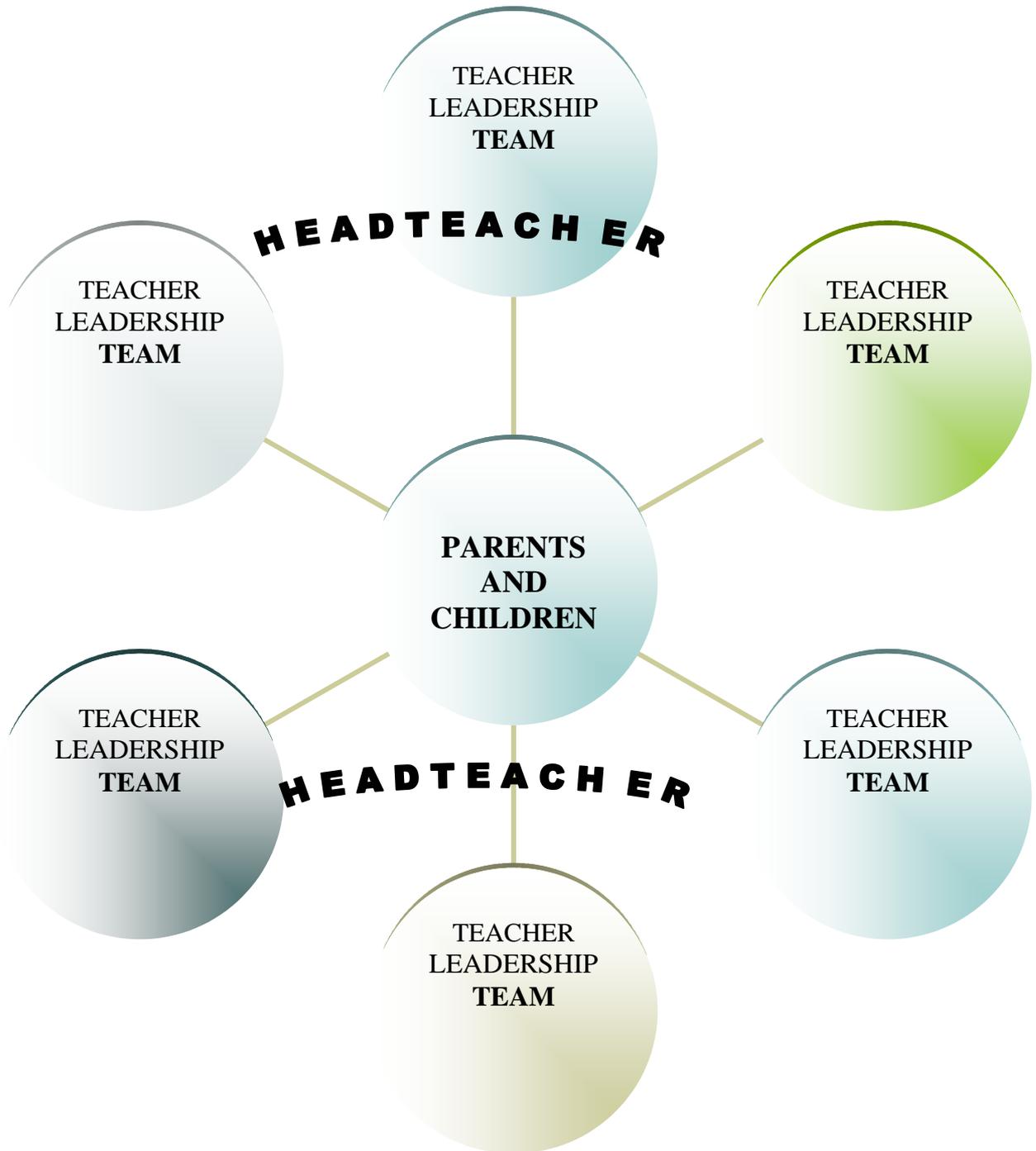


Figure 3: Team Based Leadership

At first glance, this figure suggests 'congestion' especially when compared to the previous clear-cut pyramid in which everybody 'knows his or her place'. This has been purposely designed so as to depict the dynamic, inter-personal relationships in learning centred schools. The various shades imply the fusion of ideas which surface as a result of the uniqueness of every teacher who forms the team. The 'solitary' SMT in Figure 2 is here being replaced by many teams which are led by teachers, all of which make up the school's leadership. Children and their parents and communities should be the core elements in schools. They are the 'clients' for whom the 'service'

is provided; they should be at the heart of all the initiatives 'run' by the teams of teacher leaders.

Rather than describing the headteachers' role as being 'all embracing', 'having to do *everything*' and being 'responsible for *everything*' (Headteachers, School 1 and School 5), the headteacher and his or her influence should be *everywhere* (as indicated in Figure 3) especially when leading learning. This brings to mind Fullan's (2005, p. 104) claim that sustainability requires system thinkers in action who are at their best 'when they are on the dance floor and the balcony on the same day'. Team based leadership implies high levels of shared authority and autonomy. Thus, it is here being recommended as a tool for implementing the concepts of teacher leadership in schools. This is because it is widely accepted that one person cannot possibly encompass all the knowledge, skills and qualities that schools need so as to function. Where multiple skills, experiences and judgments are required, a team gets better results than a collection of individuals operating within confined job roles. Moreover, team dynamics support the learning of both the individual teacher and the school as a whole (Katzenbach and Smith (1994, p. 16). Expressing leadership through teams implies an acceptance of the concept of shared leadership. Katzenbach and Smith (1994, p. 15) claim that teams are flexible within permanent structures and processes. They can adjust their approach to new challenges with greater effectiveness than can individuals.

Concluding Note

The latest literature on teacher leadership, does not locate leadership in individuals. It defines leadership as lying between people, within teams, in collective action, which defies attempts to single out 'a' leader. If one equates leadership with formal position, one disregards the complex cooperative relationships among the staff that are so required to get things done. Thus, leadership is not about being promoted or about having more power. Leadership is 'learnable' but it takes time and, most of all, commitment. Although this study reveals that not all teachers want to lead, they all feel a strong need to be consulted, to be valued and to be trusted. Teams can be a tool for implementing the concept of teacher leadership in schools.

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