

Institution: St Mary's University College
Unit of Assessment: 25: Education
Title of case study: Rethinking educational leadership through empirical and conceptual inquiry
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study describes the significant impact of the research discussed on the debate about the design and delivery of leadership development programmes both nationally and internationally. In particular the work described has informed the rethinking of the nature of the content of leadership programmes and has contributed towards the emergence of an alternative consensus about the nature of the development of school leaders. Although hard to measure, the subsequent impact on attitudes and behaviours of school leaders can be traced back to the research. Increased international debate about effective leadership can be demonstrated through the demand for translations of the research into other languages.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The foundation of this research project, funded by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 2009, was to investigate the personal qualities and experiences that seemed to inform the success of outstanding headteachers using the Ofsted criteria as the benchmark.</p> <p>The purpose of this research project was to understand how effective leadership is developed. First, it was necessary to identify a group of excellent or outstanding headteachers to investigate their personal journeys and how these shaped them as leaders. The research aimed to uncover how <i>aspiring</i> heads shaped their careers to become <i>outstanding</i> heads themselves. It also considered the extent to which personal experiences, in addition to qualifications, experience and development strategies, explain leadership effectiveness.</p> <p>The research findings suggested that moral confidence is based on deeply held personal beliefs. It would also seem that effective leaders have significant relationships within a wide network of fellow professionals. Most effective leaders exhibit clarity and confidence about what works in terms of professional learning and display openness to learning from the example of other school leaders. They also demonstrate a real understanding and willingness of how to learn from experience and from pupils. Effective leaders have confidence in learning how to learn.</p> <p>A dominant theme from the interviews held with effective headteachers was that these outstanding school leaders have a very clear, robust and realistic sense of self. They knew who they were and they were confident and comfortable in that ontological knowledge. They invested in personal growth and development and, most importantly, exhibited a strong sense of vocation and a very clear personal professional ethical code. These aspects of professional conduct were nurtured and enriched by powerful networks of relationships.</p> <p>Methodology: A survey was sent to 500 heads from schools that had achieved a grade 1 (outstanding) from Ofsted for leadership and management. A total of 313 responses were received, representing 63% of those contacted. This was followed by 18 interviews.</p>

Research team: John West-Burnham, Professor of Educational Leadership SMUC and Senior Research Adviser, NCSL; Penny Campbell and Katy Emmerson, Research Managers, NCSL.

The research was published in a monograph (see below) in 2009 and a series of seminars followed. One of the issues to emerge from these seminars was that there was a very limited conceptual framework and lexicon through which to explore the implications of the research. This understanding led to the publication of *Rethinking Educational Leadership* later that year as an exercise in developing a theoretical model to inform future research by synthesising a wide range of sources to create an alternative language to describe outstanding leadership. Thus this publication focused on issues such as moral, spiritual, intellectual and interpersonal perspectives on leadership in education by drawing on sources not usually associated with school leadership.

Another dimension that seemed to be relatively underdeveloped was the idea of school leaders working in networks. This realisation led to work on social capital in education in general and the implications of such social capital and the concept of community (see below). The underpinning element in all of these studies was an attempt to contribute towards the creation of a rich language to inform dialogue about leadership in schools and to challenge reductionist and instrumental models that focus on outcomes through an emphasis on skills.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

West-Burnham, J. (2009) *Developing outstanding leaders: Professional life histories of outstanding headteachers*, Nottingham: NCSL

West-Burnham, J. (2009) *Rethinking educational leadership*, London: Continuum

West-Burnham, J. (2010) Educational leadership and social capital in *International Encyclopedia of Education* 3rd Edition. E. Baker, P. Peterson & B. McCaw, (Eds), Oxford: Elsevier

West-Burnham, J. (2011) Rethinking educational leadership in *Leading and Managing Schools*. H O'Sullivan & J West-Burnham, (Eds), London: Sage

In all cases these publications have been subject to external and internal review, have been published by established publishers and agencies, and have been marketed internationally.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact in this case study consists of very practical outcomes – the design and delivery of programmes designed to support the development of school leaders and headteachers in particular. The claims of impact are therefore directly related to the provision of developmental activities – in other words how academic research of various types informs and influences professional practice. Impact here is understood as the extent to which research and writing in the academic community influences, to a significant extent, the programmes that inform the career development of the professional community of school leaders. Significant changes to the delivery of programmes to accommodate the research findings are evidenced in the 2010 NCSL Middle Leadership Development programme.

Judging impact in leadership development is complex because there are so many significant intervening variables. It is very difficult to demonstrate a precise correlation and causality between following a leadership development programme, attending a course or reading materials and confidence that any change in effectiveness can be attributed to that experience. Therefore impact is being understood here as 'first level' i.e. engagement rather than 'second level' i.e. demonstrable change. Leadership effectiveness is the result of a highly complex series of interactions and there is no accurate methodology for isolating out the specific factors. However it can be argued that changing the processes and content that informs the design and delivery of leadership development is therefore, of itself, significant. Innovative leadership development, at the very least, contributes to the debate about sustainable educational practices. The programmes coming from the research have the potential to shape the nature of school leadership and the resultant impact on school communities and the values and attitudes held by social communities associated with these public environments.

The outcomes which demonstrate the practical application and impact of the research described include:

1. Designing and writing the NCSL Middle Leadership Development Programme 2010. This became the standard text for middle leadership development programmes 2010-2013;
2. Designing and writing the National College for Teaching and Learning Modular Programme for Level 1 – National Professional Qualification for Middle Leaders 2012-2013;
3. Writing the Learning Centred leadership modules for the European Community funded project on 'Deep Learning' in Slovenia on behalf of the National School for Leadership in Education in Slovenia 2011-2013;
4. Contributing to the design, development and delivery of the 'Forbairt' (Forwards) programme for experienced school leaders For the Leadership Development in Schools programme in the Republic of Ireland 2005-2013;
5. Contributing to programmes on outstanding and high performance leadership organised by the OBE Consultancy in the Netherlands 2008-2013;
6. Designing and delivering 'Good to Outstanding' programmes for a number of local authorities in England – Cambridgeshire 2011 and 2012 and Suffolk 2012 and 2013;
7. Acting as a reviewer for academic journals on proposed articles relating to alternative perspectives on school leadership;
8. Acting as external examiner for doctorates in this subject area.

West-Burnham's research and writing has continued with a range of publications on the theme of aspects of outstanding leadership:

West-Burnham, J. & Chapman, L. (2010) *Education for social justice: Achieving wellbeing for all*, London: Continuum;

'Leadership for outstanding teaching and learning.' *School Improvement and Inspection* Issue 31, May 2012;

'Kje so Meje? Izobrazevanje, sola in skupnost' in *Vodenje v vzgoji in izobrazevanju* 2/2011 ('Where are the boundaries? Education, School and Community " in Leadership in Education 2/2011 Ljubljana Slovenia);

'Passend onderwijs begint met inclusieve schooltaal' *Kader Primair* Vol 17, No 4, December 2011 ("Effective education begins with a shared language in schools")

'Primary Framework Vol 17 No 4 December 2011).

West-Burnham's work has been translated into Malaysian, Slovenian, Dutch, Swedish, Arabic and Chinese. The translations are evidence of the impact his work has had in the international community where the debate and discourse about effective leadership has spread to many practitioners and contributed to developing the values underpinning school leadership.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Principal, Nottingham University Samworth Academy

Design and Development Director, National College for School Leadership

0-11 Lead for Teaching and Learning Children's Services, Leeds City Council

The National School for Leadership in Education, Slovenia

The Director, School Leadership Development, Professional Development Service for Teachers, Republic of Ireland

Review of *Rethinking Educational Leadership* in International Journal of Educational Management, Feb 2011