



Leadership and educational change

The present educational context needs reforms, if possible on a large scale and, above all, sustainable ones. This implies changes in how schools are organised and requires, to quote a term used by Alain Bouvier, collective mobilisation. The question of how change is controlled contains within it that of how schools are managed, but involves more than just this. The notions of leader and leadership that have been present in Anglo-Saxon countries for thirty years or so with the "school effectiveness" movement are thus coming back to the fore via large-scale national or international surveys, training for executives in the educational system or scientific publications.

Just what is leadership in education? What is successful leadership? What relationship is there between leadership and educational change?

All these questions act as a backcloth to a large amount of work that has been carried out on the subject. The term is an umbrella for a set of concepts that are not easy to pin down. And yet experts agree that there is little empirical research into the effects of leadership, notwithstanding all that has been written on the subject.

This letter attempts to assess whether there is a strong correlation between school heads who are true educational leaders and efficient schools, by giving an insight into recent research work. It shows how these leadership models change in time to the changing needs of schools in a context of educational reform.

For simplicity's sake, we will use the term "principal" to refer to the person at the head of each establishment. In France, for example, the head of primary schools is known as the "*directeur*", the head of *collèges* (schools for eleven to fifteen year-olds) is the "*principal*", and the head of *lycées* (sixteen to eighteen) is referred to as the "*proviseur*".

In many Anglo-Saxon countries, the "principal" directs both primary and secondary schools. The terms "*head-teacher*" or "*headmaster*" are also to be found, denoting the director of a primary school.

Our thanks go to James Spillane, a professor at the [Northwestern University](#) (Chicago), for the interview he gave us and the light he helped to shed on leadership practices, and especially on the concept of distributed leadership.

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International concept

New ideas for old: the role of the principal

OECD countries are today confronted with new challenges arising from the determination of politicians to reform educational systems. It is no longer enough for principals "just" to be good managers: they must now don the cloak of leader, for their efficiency is perceived as being of prime importance for setting up educational reform and improving learning conditions. For James Spillane, the manager is responsible for the upkeep of the nuts and bolts of school organisation, whereas the leader, through his influence, seeks to change that organisation, and preferably to "improve" it. He believes that both skills are essential for a school to be successful.

How has the principal's role evolved, and in what circumstances? Each author analyses the question for his/her own country in a [special issue](#) of *Politiques d'éducation et de Formation* (n° 13, 2005) on the management of educational establishments. Decentralisation policies, which have developed almost everywhere in Europe, bring in their wake greater independence for schools, complicate their leaders' or managers' tasks and add to the tensions between teaching staff and the administration. And yet the increasingly important role of the principal means that he/she is able to drive a specific educational policy and "make his/her establishment into a learning organisation" (Francine Vaniscotte, [2005](#)).

The notion of leadership is broached in the article by Lorenzo Fischer, Maria Grazia Fischer & Marco Masuelli about Italy (2005). The authors touch upon the simultaneous appearance of the term "director", the increase in the autonomy of educational establishments as of the year 2000, and changes in the principal's function: a process of transformation that is still under way. They even go as far as to discuss **the similarities between a school head and a company director**, arguing that the initiatives of the principal are necessary for the proper development of educational missions, that they are shared through the participation of teachers and that they involve "strong control over internal interaction systems". After directing two surveys on the functions and roles of principals (in 1997 and 2000), the authors draw attention to the way in which the functions of educational and pedagogical management, and professional development management have been amplified.

Special results dealing with the leadership dimension indicate that Italian principals are aware that this concept is now one of the qualities that are required for directing, promoting and encouraging the best conditions for teaching. They identify four types of profile: "innovatory leaders", "moderate leaders", "indecisive" and "supporters of the status quo", with the first two making up the vast majority (64%).

The work brought to light **the importance of leadership and "skill in governance"**, which are becoming key features of the profile of the principal, as is the emergence of a new typology describing their relationships with teachers: advising them, enhance the standing of their work and providing professional guidance and promotion.

They conclude that this research has made it possible to draw attention to the improvement in opinions and attitudes within the school, and especially to the change in the role of the principal who has become a **"transformational and collaborative leader"**. They add that this concept can operate provided the collaboration of a majority of teachers and a school support policy are assured.

In February 2006, the *Education and training policy* division of the OECD began a project entitled *OECD activity on improving school leadership* and proposes a [dedicated site](#).

It was in this context that in July 2006 a symposium on *"International perspectives on school leadership for systemic improvement"* was held. Two conferences, by Richard F. Elmore (Harvard University) and David Hopkins (Institute of education, London), illustrated this determination to highlight the notion of leadership. Other detailed reports will be published as of January 2007 in order to give an account of experiments set up in these countries. All this research has the same aim: to improve pupils' results and make learning easier.

Elmore (2006) examines the relationship between *accountability*, (for example the *Adequate Yearly Progress* assessment test of the national *No Child Left Behind* programme) and leadership, and proposes a model of leadership practices, illustrated by a diagram showing how the school operates in terms of improvement and success. This study is designed to provide ideas for decision-makers for them to implement a real leadership policy in schools that have had "bad marks" on AYP test.

The accountability policy cannot improve pupils' performance without significant investment in the human capital of the school and without developing or sharing out leadership practices.

The qualities of leadership can be seen both in the coherence of the internal organisation and also in terms of accountability. Elmore does not simply define the criteria of good leadership but develops them so as to understand the practices that are related to improvement.

The practice of leadership links policy to the school's performance. This involves a set of actions based on knowledge, skills and relational qualities that can be objectively defined and taught in training modules dispensed to the leaders.

Practices must be based on a series of objectives ("*theory of action*") implemented by the leaders and aiming to link these actions to pupils' results and performance. In order for them to be effective, once these objectives have been identified, they will be shared by the community.

The model proposed by Elmore (2006) applies to teachers in their schools, to the schools within their education system, and to the education system in its national context.

David Hopkins (2006) defines the type of leadership that may successfully go hand in hand with large-scale reforms and, consequently, with school improvement. He gives four vectors of change that are necessary for reforming educational systems: individualised learning, professional training, networking, and an intelligent accountability policy.

For Hopkins, **leadership acts as a catalyst for reforming systems**, as it can broaden the scope of actions beyond school structures by involving all educational leaders in improving pupils' performance, while optimising the notion of social justice by offering each child the chance to grasp opportunities.

Hopkins believes that this question of leadership has a moral dimension.

Three case studies are also presented on the OECD site:

- [Canada](#);
- [Sweden](#);
- the [United Kingdom](#).

Other work on an international scale contributes to the picture drawn by the OECD. During the *International Congress on School Effectiveness and Improvement*, John MacBeath presented two recent studies (2006):

- *Bridges over Boundaries* for the European Commission;
- *Leadership for Learning, the Carpe Vitam project* in Sweden.

Both these projects question the role of leadership in the creation of a learning-centred self-assessment culture. According to MacBeath, these projects bring to light improvement processes in very different contexts.

The results brought out by *Bridges over Boundaries* enabled twelve recommendations to be made to the European Commission to improve the quality of schools, including:

- encouraging self-assessment in schools as a method of fostering learning and improving the school;
- encouraging more active participation from school management staff, teachers, pupils, parents and experts so as to share work on actions to improve school.

Carpe Vitam was an international R & D project whose main aim was to assess the procedures by means of which schools created and maintained the relationships between learning and leadership. This study was funded for three years (2002-2005) by eight countries who also took part in the research: Sweden, Australia, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Greece, England and the United States. For each school studied, *Carpe Vitam* addressed several questions that were of interest to all the countries involved:

- how is leadership defined in different contexts?

- what is learning and how is it promoted in different contexts?
- what is the relationship between leadership and learning?

According to MacBeath, these studies are of key importance for getting a better grasp of the cultural, linguistic, historical and political contexts of each participating country in order to bring out the common factors of efficiency and improvement. The notion of leadership is central to these issues and becomes a driving force for: organising space and time to allow the leaders to meet, plan and think; assessing the local, national and international scope of actions aimed at improvement practices; and opening up the organisation of the school to potential leaders of the establishment, in particular the teachers.

For successful leadership:

During the convention of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE), David Gurr presented the results of the research project *The International successful school principalship project* (ISSPP): *comparison across country case studies* (Gurr et al., 2005), a transcription of his article which appeared in 2005 in the *Journal of Educational Administration* (JEA). This is a three-phase project in which eight countries were involved: the United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Norway, China, Sweden and Australia.

In most countries, **the principal is perceived as the natural leader of the educational establishment**. However, in certain regions of China, for example, little importance is attached to the presence of a director. The authors list, according to Leithwood & Rhiel (2003), several postulates, into which research was carried out, that are common to almost all educational establishments:

- a leader should contribute to improving learning;
- most leaders come from administrative management staff and teaching staff;
- the "reservoir" of leaders ought to extend to other categories (people who may or may not be involved in the educational community);
- the leader(s) should contribute to redefining school organisation by getting as many people involved as possible;
- the leader(s) should set up sustainable reforms that promote the quality of teaching, fairness and social justice.

The aim here is to define the common, shareable characteristics of the notion of leadership, whatever the country: getting deeply involved in the life of the school, considering success at school as their main preoccupation, being able to relate easily to others, giving accounts using national or regional assessment techniques, motivating all those involved in the community, etc.

For all the countries who took part, **the notions of trust and respect within the school sphere are of prime importance**. The system of moral and ethical values appears to be at heart of the criteria mentioned. For Danes, the principal's ability to develop a team spirit and to listen to his partners seems to be more important than the characteristics of the establishment. For Australians, successful leadership involves honesty, open-mindedness, availability and commitment within the school. The Chinese tend more to use the words "discipline" and "responsibility", which corresponds to their more hierarchical school system in which it is harder to implement shared leadership.

Common leadership concepts can then be found, whatever the country, but the criteria for setting up leadership remains related to the interactions between cultural and contextual factors inherent in the school structure.

In France

As a result of the recommendations of the Matringe report (2005), the education ministry decided to set up educational committees in public-sector schools. The minimum number of participants of these committees is fixed by law, but each school is responsible for *"determining, on that basis, the exact composition of the educational committee and the conditions under which members can be nominated, taking care to obtain as broad a consensus as possible from the teaching staff"*.

The committee is chaired by the principal and is made up:

- at least one form tutor for each level of teaching;
- at least one teacher per discipline;
- the year head, or dean;
- the workshop head in professional and technical colleges.

The mission of the educational committee is to **foster consultation between teachers**, especially for coordinating teaching, marking and assessing school activities. It prepares the educational part of the school project. In particular, it is called upon to study proposals for teaching experiments which would need to make use of the teaching staff.

Bernard Toulemonde (2004) approves of the way this is heading and believes that **"responsibilities must be entrusted to teaching and non-teaching staff, so as to involve them in the running of the school, not just for teaching aspects but also administrative and financial ones**. There are already functions that are taken on within schools (form tutor, discipline coordinator, board of governors, pastoral care committees in lycées, etc.): it is up to the principals to find new and varied ways of combining staff and responsibilities (educational committee, head teacher for a particular level, working party, etc.)".

In *"Les nouveaux pouvoirs des chefs d'établissement"* (New powers for school principals) (2006), Yves Dutercq takes a look at the changes that have come about in France since the early eighties in secondary school management, which he examines in the light of current trends in Europe and North America.

In the area of the sociology of organisations, **research has been directed since the early eighties on leadership and the establishment effect**. Certain work has illustrated the impact of the role and personality of the principal on the climate reigning in his/her school and its successfulness. But Dutercq feels that research has not succeeded in establishing *"a clear connection between what the principal does and the efficiency of his school"*. His work (Derouet & Dutercq, 1997) brought to light more the effect of groups or staff networks rather than that of the principal alone. **Researchers do, however, agree on the fact that the influence of the principal has more to do with his/her personality than with his/her effective institutional power**.

Principals feel that their authority stems less from their status than from the competence that their staff as a whole recognizes them to possess. As far as human resources management is concerned, they would like to have more power in choosing

technical staff, workers and ancillary personnel and in designating members of the management team. In contrast, they do not wish to get involved in recruiting teachers, but would like to have more resources available for differentiating between their profiles, fine-tuning the service they perform and rewarding them on merit. It is for this reason that they recommend a new system of assessing teachers, based not only on inspection but also including a performance review with the principal. Many would also like to see the development of intermediate grades for coordination between management and teachers, based on the model of the English "*senior teachers*", who, working closely with the management team, form a breeding ground for future principals.

For Dutercq (2005), principals have "**levers for action**", what Spillane (2006) calls "**tools and routines**", which mean that they have a certain amount of control over the teaching organisation. This idea comes close to the concept of leadership and appears in several pieces of research concerning France. Dutercq concludes that principals are "of necessity, vehicles of change", which above all involves mobilising teachers and in transforming the existing structure. Dividing up responsibilities, getting teachers involved in building an efficient organisation, provoking and encouraging collaboration – all this tends towards the definition of *distributed leadership*, backed in particular by Spillane (2006), and Timperley (2005).

□ And also

- In 2003 the Office for Standard in Education (OFSTED) published a report entitled [Leadership and management : managing the school workforce](#);
- A [special issue](#) of the *Cambridge journal of Education* (vol. 33, n° 3, 2003), devoted to leadership in an international context;
- The latest [issue](#) of *School Leadership & Management* (vol. 27, n° 1, February 2007) is devoted to leadership and fairness, via a review of international literature on the subject. Seven countries (Belgium, Canada, Greece, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden) took part in a comparative study on the challenge of accommodating populations of various ethnic origins in schools;
- A [special issue](#) of the *Journal of Educational Administration* (vol. 44, n° 4, 2006) on new school principals, offering international perspectives.

Leadership practices

Kenneth Leithwood, in his review of the literature (2005), gives an insight into some key concepts for setting up educational or pedagogical leadership (impacting curricula) together with a synopsis of experiments carried out into the effects of leadership practices that actually succeed in improving pupils' results.

He brings together three types of know-how that are essential in defining the concept of good leadership:

- the ability to clearly define the direction to be taken;
- the ability to encourage skills development;
- making over the school's organisational model.

There are many ways in which these qualities can be exercised, which creates several models of leaders. In all cases, a leader, whether formal or informal, exerts an influence on the structure.

He then asks what is the value and point of leadership, by citing several types of research into the question. First of all, qualitative research, performed in schools that obtain exceptional results, bears witness to the impact of leadership on how the school achieves. This research also shows that **doing the same things in a different context would have no meaning**. Next, large-scale quantitative surveys of the general effects related to leadership practices, which show that these effects are not greatly in evidence in terms of school results, but significant in pedagogical terms. Finally, a third type of survey, also on a large scale, takes a look at specific leadership practices. Leithwood identifies 21 of these and calculates the correlations between them and measurements of school success.

How does it work?

For leadership to have a chance of working, it is necessary to identify the sources of influence which have a part to play in improving school results and the people who exert this influence. Principals, for example, can directly encourage teachers to work together, which often leads to a change in teaching, which, in turn, stimulates pupils' learning.

More recently, in a study performed in the name of NSCL and the British education ministry, Leithwood *et al.* (2006) distinguish, as does Spillane (2006), between management and leadership: management (or steering) aims to ensure the stability of what works, while leadership aims to improve what is already set up. Synergy between these two means of steering is vital to make reforms easier to introduce.

Leithwood adds two new sources of studies on the effects of leadership: effects on pupil motivation and effects related to changes in management personnel.

From all this work, he concludes that leadership practices have very significant effects on the quality of how the school is organised and how the pupils learn. **Leadership then acts as a catalyst for rolling out and organising skill potentials already present in the school.**

Distributed leadership

Each year, a new adjective is stuck in front of the term "leadership", creating the false impression that research has unearthed a new concept. In reality, many of the theories put forward are not based on any research in the field.

The principle of *distributed leadership* is not a new one: it is a topic that has been debated over since the sixties. Spillane (2006) confirms that little empirical research is available on the subject, but some researchers – himself included – propose conceptual structures based on surveys in the field describing a typical day in the life of a principal. The survey, developed and orchestrated by Spillane, [The Distributed Leadership Study](#), is carried out within the framework of the assessment of a training programme dispensed by the *National Institute For School Leadership* (NISL, a partner of the CPRE, Consortium for Policy Research in Education).

For Spillane, this theory is based on practices implemented by leaders, whether identified or not, their "followers", and the characteristics formed by what he calls "*tools and routines*", i.e. the specific organisation of the school (assessment system, statistics, educational advice, etc.). The principal often has the main role of leadership, but he is rarely alone in assuming this task. Other administrators and others involved in school organisation also play this role.

This leadership is a fabric of different influences involving educational and organisational aspects of the school. And yet it is very difficult to define the nature of interactions between the leaders and the co-performers. What results is nothing less than a network, with points of intersection corresponding to the various daily interactions between *leaders* and *followers*. Spillane speaks of network density, measuring the amount of activity in the network, with these interactions defining leadership practice.

In this way, he puts forward two key concepts, with the aim of managing the capacity of changing the organisation or at least maintaining the functional status quo:

- the *leader plus* aspect (more than one leader, formal or non-formal, identified or not);
- the *co-performance* of leadership practice, shared with administrative and teaching staff.

Within the context of his survey and during the annual symposium of the American Educational Research Association ([AERA](#)), Spillane presented an article ([2006](#)) which gives an account of the activities carried out by school principals, with particular emphasis on the people who assist them or accompany them in these tasks. He shows how, by means of a system of daily electronic *logs* and analytical questionnaires, his team has identified the school leaders. It very frequently happens that the principal is assisted by a co-leader, or is even a simple participant who observes activities (in the classrooms for example). He does, however, have some reservations about this "log" system, which does not make it possible to know whether the activities the principal is involved in lead to a transformation (leader) or whether they maintain the existing organisation (manager); nor does it make it possible to be aware of the roles of each co-leader, nor the exact nature of the interactions. The main advantage of this method is that it makes it possible to identify models of what leaders do which can later be associated with typical structures and contextual factors such as the gender of the principal, his/her age, the number of pupils and their background, etc.

With a distributed perspective of leadership in mind, Hatcher ([2005](#)), associates the concepts of leadership and power, pointing out that there is a contradiction in the notion of shared leadership, implying more decision-makers, and that of the hierarchical power currently in application in school structures. To make the development of distributed leadership easier the internal architecture of the school must be reorganised. He believes that this leadership perspective can be achieved if teachers are allowed to create a non-hierarchical learning network, separate from the administrative network.

For Anne Storey ([2004](#)) of the Open University, **fanatical preaching is not the way to get behaviour to change and to set up a real policy of leadership**. Wanting to bring about change at all costs can cause divisions within the teaching staff and lead to results which are the opposite of those aimed at. The research that she comments on in her article highlights the dynamics of competition between the various leaders. Little research is available on the difficulties of bringing about change in "difficult" schools, and the cases that have been studied – too few in number, according to Storey – show that vertical and horizontal coordination is necessary and that the difficult business of bringing many leaders into relationship with each other must be taken into consideration.

Helen Timperley ([2005](#)), of Auckland university, thinks that distributed leadership, split up over several leaders, not necessarily officially identified, is the most probable scenario for improving school. But she too denounces the lack of empirical research into the subject. She alludes to the almost heroic role of the leader, but observes that the **single leader must be replaced by multiple leaders**: considering leadership in terms of interactions set up between several people whose influence would be complementary, thereby creating several leader models.

She underlines the difficulty of maintaining changes when these are positive and promote successful schooling on a sustainable basis.

Timperley illustrates her conclusions by means of an empirical study carried out within seven schools and extracts the key concepts from these. She observes that the heroic leaders have mainly been *literacy leaders*, literacy specialists in a school, teacher leaders for their colleagues, or heads of department. By accepting to change their teaching methods and by taking into account specific aspects related to the context, several teachers have acted as leader. It is this activity and these practices that formed the influence network.

But this network cuts both ways and may result in sharing incompetence, for "**influence**" **does not necessarily mean "expertise"**. A quality influence network needs to be set up that aims to obtain a genuine improvement in teaching and in pupils' results. Timperley attempts, via her research, to identify these "qualities" in precise contexts and explains how leadership can be shared out.

Surveys in the field

A special issue of *School Effectiveness and School Improvement (SESI, 2006)* presents three articles that use quantitative research methods in different countries. These major studies are turning out to be more and more useful as decision-makers are asking questions about effectiveness and value of transformational approaches. But this research often turns up ambiguous results, since, **despite the assurance that transformational leadership works well in theory, proofs deriving from practice are more rare**.

In an article co-authored with Doris Jantzi ([2006](#)), Leithwood, using data from a British study, examines the effects of setting up transformational leadership on primary school teachers (in the areas of motivation and work context), on how they teach and how their pupils succeed.

This survey was set up within the framework of a huge national programme, *The National Literacy and Numeracy strategies (NLNS)*, which aims to introduce educational reforms with a view to raising the literacy and numeracy levels in British primary schools.

Leithwood & Jantzy used a list of sixty or so variables to list leaders' areas of influence in a questionnaire given to teachers selected from a panel of 1000 people representing different contexts in British primary schools.

Their research brought out the following points:

- transformational leadership has a large amount of direct influence on the work environment and on teachers' motivation, and, to a lesser extent, on their skills;

- transformational leadership has a moderate amount of influence on educational practices, and, unfortunately, the model cannot make it clear whether this change leads to an improvement in pupils' results;
- the ability of leadership to increase the learning level of pupils rests on specific features of the teacher's behaviour, stimulated, encouraged and promoted as he/she is by this same leadership.

The authors also draw attention to two outcomes related to their work: forthcoming studies on this subject must question the sources of leadership practices. Leithwood & Jantzi admit that these measurements suggest that such practices are divided up between several leaders (*distributed leadership*) inside and outside the school, but they put forward few proofs to explain how far these extend and where they come from.

They also argue that forthcoming research should be empirical, on a large scale, and designed differently so as to give a better idea of the scale of the effects linked to the practice of leadership, especially in specific contexts where the influence of the principal is considered as primordial.

The increased importance given today to the effects of leadership shows the growing interest of decision-makers who see in this concept one of the most direct means of introducing reforms. The lack of empirical research is nevertheless a stumbling block in the way of any attempt to bring about reform in this area.

In primary schools

Coral Mitchell & Joyce Castle (2005) present a study based on observations and group discussions with head teachers. The amount of importance attached to teaching aspects by head teachers influences the direction that the school takes on this issue. **The head teacher's priorities become those of the group.** This idea confirms that leadership is becoming a key feature of the head teacher's role. The problem studied shows how far principals are aware of their influence on questions of teaching dealt with at school. How do they use this, and why do they do it? Previous research tended to tackle this question from the standpoint of the effectiveness of the role of leader assumed by the principal. But how leadership is carried out is linked to the context, the difficulty being to scientifically describe this context and to give it quantifiable and measurable attributes.

The school context is not only a cultural phenomenon, but describes a network of relationships and influences. The function of leader, whether associated with the teachers or the principal, must give an overall guideline for all those involved with the school with a view to distributed leadership.

Finally, the authors have discerned the importance of links between the cognitive and affective climate that reigns within the school: the cognitive can only be improved if a healthy affective climate prevails (learning conditions, culture, levers for action). They believe that teaching responsibilities must not be taken away from the school head, since that would be harmful to the intellectual climate of the school.

Teacher leadership

In the United States, Canada and Australia, the concept of "*teacher leadership*" has received a significant amount of debate in research work. For Daniel Muijs & Alma Harris (2006), there are indeed, in the United Kingdom, some examples of teacher leadership which emerge through initiatives such as the [Networked Learning Communities](#), but no real surveys on the subject.

The authors present a study based on teacher leadership practices that are already functional in English primary and secondary schools. This study is a follow-up to a project launched in 2003 by the *General Teaching Council for England* (GTC) on the forms of professional collaboration between teachers and how this improved school.

Muijs and Harris wish to: identify the different types of leadership and ways in which it is practiced, show how these practices are developed and encouraged and show the link between teacher leadership and school improvement. In schools the term "leadership" was not used as such to describe teachers' activities. But **the concept of teacher leadership was accepted to describe the different kinds of collaboration and professional initiatives, such as developing teaching materials, curricula or preparing for inspections.**

Research has made it possible to identify five dimensions of teacher leadership: sharing responsibilities, collaborating, taking part in educational projects, professional training, and commitment to change and development concerning the school.

This kind of leadership can be recognised through the participation of these teachers in joint programmes (such as *Improving the Quality of Education for All*, [IQEA](#), for example). These working parties involve several schools and enable views to be exchanged on these practices (research-action).

The relationship between teacher leadership and improving school was observed when the teacher's actions are perceived as positive and especially when he/she takes on the responsibility for applying a given change in teaching approaches. Most principals then feel relieved to be actively backed up in their strategies for improvement.

In order to encourage this type of leadership, it is necessary for the culture and the context of the school to allow it. **Teachers must be guided by a principal who is a leader and the leadership must be shared.** Finally, these efforts should preferably be recognised and rewarded.

What slows these actions down is often the rigidity of the educational system, and local and national bodies that try to impose reform from the top down.

Muijs & Harris conclude that **teacher leadership implies a redistribution of power** (more democratic) and a realignment of authority within the school structure. If successful, this kind of leadership is a very strong driving force for improvement and change in schools, provided it is associated with the notion of sustainability.

In *Leading the Teacher Work Group*, William Greenfield (2005), re-examines the idea of collaboration between teachers and explains the importance of the social and cultural dynamics of such a group. For the author, making teachers work together and getting them to accept changes in the way they do things is the real challenge for successful leadership. It is up to the principal to identify and understand the mechanics of the teams, whether these be identified or not, and what are the influences that make them work.

Christian Maroy (2006) shares this opinion concerning the necessary internal mobilisation and teamwork of the teachers which depends on "*school strategies driven by the principal who is able to get added value from teamwork*". He lists three types of teamwork, which are organised in different ways: routine work (teaching committees), pragmatic work (concerted action) and reforming work (educational projects). This latter type of teamwork requires special institutional support and the adoption of a shared pedagogical consensus.

❑ And also

- Two American teacher networks practising leadership in their school: the [Teacher Leaders Network](#) and [Leadership Teacher](#);
- An English review published in Cambridge: [Teacher Leadership](#).

From leader to expert

In their article "School Principal Expertise: Putting Expert-Novice Differences in Problem Solving Processes to the Test" (forthcoming), James Spillane, Kathryn Weitz White & Jennifer L. Kaplan today put forward the concept of **school expertise**. Defining the nature of the school principal expertise is a new challenge for schools administrations. Research into the effectiveness of professional training courses is practically inexistent (Smylie & Bennett, [2006](#)). Without in-depth empirical knowledge of the nature of this expertise, it is very difficult to improve the conditions of leadership and to put together a special training programme. One of the difficulties encountered is to identify the experts and to compare the schools whose results had improved on three precise dates. The method is a complex one, but the authors have distinguished between **three types of principal: the experts, the typical and the novices**

Identifying the experts is of great importance for the shared leadership model. To go further into the nature of school principal expertise and map out this expertise in terms of the ability to affront difficulties and solve problems is becoming a major challenge for those in charge of educational systems. Even though school principal expertise is generally aimed at a precise and restricted area (human relations, project steering, communication, etc.), the skills mobilised may be transposed into other areas of activity.

Christopher Rhodes' team present a project ([2006](#)) with backing from the *National College for School Leadership* ([NCSL](#)) on the identification of effective leaders, their characteristics and the way of keeping and encouraging talented leaders within the school structure. The idea of "*growing our own leaders*" is a central one in the document. The authors suggest that leaders identified from among management and teachers should receive training in human resources management. They should be able to ensure the continuity of quality leadership, identify and encourage talented and influential leaders, help and advise people about their career, promote the creation of work networks, etc.

As a result of this multiplication in the number of tasks, recruitment, training and management of school principals should become a priority for political authorities.

Training leaders

One of the problems that a majority of school administrations have to deal with is the lack of candidates for the post of school principal. Political decision-makers have placed a great amount of pressure on their shoulders, and the number of tasks has increased to such an extent that it sometimes seems impossible for one person to carry them out successfully. Today a principal needs to be a teacher, a curriculum expert, an assessment expert, a bringer-together, an authority, a public relations and communication expert, a financial analyst, and the guardian of legality and fairness.

A German education researcher, Huber ([2004](#)) coordinated a survey into the training of principals in fifteen countries: nine in Europe (including France), two in Asia, two in Oceania and two in North America. In his book, he presents trends in how training systems for school principals have evolved (before interpreting these results, it should be noted that English-speaking and Scandinavian countries are over-represented):

- training is given in regional institutions, but is subject to nation accreditation;
- training combines theoretical and practical approaches, around problem-solving activities involving concrete situations (questioning the practice induces the theory, rather than the reverse);
- certain programmes are more turned towards ethical values, the ability to develop a global project, the ability to learn from practice;
- training is less centred than it formerly was on legal and administrative skills and more on communication and cooperation skills. The methods used make use of the principle of "*learning together and from each other*";
- training aims to help the school principal to build a framework that fosters continuous improvement of the school and that can react to outside changes. The school principle is trained as a "driver of change, able to make the school into a "learning organisation" in which teachers are "thinking practitioners";
- more and more the training courses include the management team and the teaching staff that is in a position of responsibility and influence.

The recommendations of the HayGroup, a firm of management consultants (HayGroup, [2003](#)), tend in the same direction: school principals must receive special training to develop leadership skills and become vehicles for change.

According to Arthur Levine ([2005](#)), the few pieces of research carried out into the quality of leadership invariably reach the conclusion that training for school principals is inadequate, much too divorced from practice and based on no empirical knowledge. For him, research carried out in the area of educational administration does not answer even basic questions like: "*do training programmes for school principals have any impact on pupils' results?*".

A study ([2006](#)) financed by the [Stanford Educational Leadership Institute](#) analyses eight training programmes implemented in five American states, by following the career path of newly-qualified principles as they take up office. By cross-referencing their results with existing research on the subject, the authors present four areas of work for improving these courses:

- the factors leading towards quality leadership;
- running effective programmes;
- the many directions which lead to the development of successful leadership;
- reforms and funding.

Starting out from the postulate laid down by Leithwood ([2006](#)), Davis and his team show how research has particularly examined three aspects of the school principal's job: understanding how to help teachers, working on programmes so as to en-

courage learning, and developing the ability to transform school into an efficient learning organisation.

The official standards governing school principals' work drawn up in 1996 by the *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium* (ISLLC) and adopted by forty American states are by and large respected in the training courses. However, it would seem that these standards do not attach sufficient importance to the practice of effective leadership and **training courses for school principals today appear inadequate**.

And yet research has pointed to topics that need to be included into programmes for leaders, such as joint decision-making, shared leadership, the collegiate culture, the processes of change and innovation, and also the use of ICTs for managing everyday tasks. According to the authors, one of the keys would be **to include more placements in schools as part of the training** so as to give novices more experience in the field. Another proposal already studied in Spillane's article quoted above would be to intensify "*problem-based-learning*" experiences which put the principal into a situation where a problem needs to be managed and brings him to think about these practices and his ability to solve difficulties.

In France, the Ecole Supérieure de l'Éducation Nationale (Higher national teacher training college) ([ESEN](#)) trains school management personnel and inspectors. It is active in initial training and in-service training which aims to "*help all school management personnel to adapt their skills to changing educational stakes*". Documentary support is provided to help with the day-to-day tasks of principals (for example a file on the changing teaching techniques used by teachers, [2006](#)). The ESEN offers, however, only meagre thinking on leadership practices, this being a concept that remains resolutely Anglo-Saxon.

Sustainable leadership

In November 2006 a conference entitled *Leadership for Sustainable Innovation* and sponsored by the *International Networking for Educational Transformation* ([iNet](#)) was held in Boston. It highlighted the importance of the notion of sustainability in change management and in leadership practices.

For Andy [Hargreaves](#) ([2005](#)), the **question of how principals succeed each other is a real problem** in terms of leadership. According to his survey, many principals today reason more in terms of their own career plan and less with regard to their school. The continuity or discontinuity of the educational guidelines of systems put into place may weaken the implementation of changes. For Hargreaves, this question must be taken into consideration and thoroughly planned by educational policy-makers.

Hargreaves & Fink ([2005](#)) also tackle one of the most important aspects of leadership: its sustainability. The authors list seven indispensable principles for maintaining the quality of successful leadership.

Sustainable leadership:

- generates quality learning;
- guarantees the long-term success of actions;
- maintains the leadership of others;
- is interested in the problem of social justice;
- develops human and logistics resources more than it reduces them;
- develops the diversity of contexts through innovation;
- commits leaders to actions that are beneficial for their school.

Leaders who attempt to sustain improvements made to the learning context are likely to see their efforts last. They must encourage diversity, since, Hargreaves believes, standards are the enemy of sustainability.

□ And also

- David Reynolds ([2001](#)) presents three studies into the effectiveness of educational research via leadership characteristics;
- A study by Hargreaves & Fink ([2003](#)) on the seven key principles for sustainable leadership;
- In *Leadership succession: an overview* ([2006](#)), the NCSL also advocates thoughtful planning of how school principals are distributed and posts permuted;
- Civil servant college in Canada, [course in leadership and career development](#);
- Agnès Pélage ([2003](#)). "La redéfinition du métier de chef d'établissement secondaire : changement statutaire, construction de l'engagement professionnel et épreuves pratiques", *Revue française de pédagogie*, n° 145, p. 21–36.

Managing change in schools

In the introduction to their work *Améliorer l'école*, Gaétane Chapelle & Denis Meuret ([2006](#)) state that: "*a radical transformation of school is not possible*". For her part, Helen Timperley says: "*hopes that the transformation of schools lies with exceptional leaders have proved both unrealistic and unsustainable*" ([2005](#)). For these researchers, there is today a paradox in the way change is to be managed in order to reform the educational system, as these reforms do not operate everywhere in the same way, depending on the context and the culture prevailing in the school. Antoine Prost ([2006](#)) explains why certain changes are very difficult to implement, especially those requiring team work or even just **"consultation between teachers"**. Change management is, then, faced with resistance on two fronts: from individuals and from the educational system.

Culture, school climate and efficiency

According to MacNeil ([2005](#)), school principals who want to drive their school rather than administer it must first understand and integrate its culture before drawing up their educational guidelines. This notion of culture is a complex one, since it is often proper to each school and therefore unique, implying one, and only one, way of working. Despite the weight of a very restrictive administration, the leader(s) should do his/her (their) utmost to ingest the culture of their school and foster interactions. **Leadership must be broken up between, several clearly identified people**. The hypothesis is that schools with a good climate and a strong, recognised culture have more motivated teachers and get better results.

MacNeil differentiates between culture and climate thus: culture offers a more anthropological viewpoint, whereas climate looks at things from a more psychological standpoint. Climate is related to behaviour, whilst culture includes values and standards that are proper to the school (definitions of these two concepts can be found in Lunenburg & Ornstein, [2004](#)).

According to Olivier Rey (2007), out of the factors of "school effectiveness" that schools can control, researchers have identified leadership and everything which revolves around the school culture (collective projects, school identity and the feeling of belonging, relations between teachers, the management and parents, etc.). Edmonds (1979) had also brought to light five factors related to improved performance for elementary schools in underprivileged areas in the USA:

- strong management: leadership;
- high pupil achievement expectations;
- a disciplined climate, without being rigid;
- the teaching of basic knowledge is stressed;
- frequent progress tests and assessments..

School cannot be said to be just a sum of isolatable factors; **configurations of interconnected characteristics must be made to emerge which bring to light the social system reigning in the school (relationships between people), together with the culture proper to the school (standards, values, beliefs, etc.).** Several outside factors and elements will impact leadership practices: personal or contextual factors, political interventions, pressure from parents and the ability to build a network of referent leaders that take part in decision-making.

Certain studies tend to show that efficient schools are those in which teachers' expectations (and often those of the management) with regard to pupils' performance are high.

Leadership and educational reform

The article by Fullan (2006), which appeared in the *Journal of Educational Change*, shows us how the notion of sustainable educational reforms is key for defining what good leadership is. The latter must not be content with achieving good school results, but must give thought to, and develop, sustainable pedagogical organisation. It is the organisation leaders who must act to change the context in which they work.

Fullan speaks of "**change knowledge**": understanding the ins and outs of successful reform, integrating key concepts which enable change to be successful in practice, in the field. Fullan enumerates eight keys for success for implementing a reform:

- moral intention: understanding the objective of the change: change is made to improve pupils' performance and therefore that of society as a whole, through a better educational system, promoting equal opportunity, reducing differences;
- collective intention: develop collective motivation so as to strengthen infrastructures, develop new skills locally, regionally and nationally;
- transformational intention: understanding the process of change, taking into account the context and difficulties related to the process of change which enable innovations to be made;
- collective knowledge intention: developing a collective culture proper to the school, which strengthens the knowledge network;
- assessment intention: bring together data on pupils' learning and report on changes;
- leadership intention: divide up the responsibilities of leadership, encourage interactions and innovations;
- coherence intention: make interactions and strategies for change coherent;
- three-dimensional intention: reform on a local scale, reform on a regional scale, reform on a national scale.

In order to bring all these actions to a successful conclusion, the principal has the major role in managing change. The accumulation of tasks entrusted to heads of schools becomes a super-human ordeal.

The principal: a heroic figure

In his article for the *Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN)*, Michael Fullan (2006) insists on the importance of the personality of the principal and his/her influence over colleagues and pupils. The educational system must redefine the principal's role to make his/her functions more autonomous and efficient. All researchers are in agreement on this point: the principal remains the centre-stage figure who exerts an influence on interactions and allows teachers to work together both inside and outside the school structure. Fullan goes back in detail over the influence of the principal on pupils' learning (he takes up Leithwood's theories on the three factors for success), over the obstacles standing in the way of development (and paradoxically over the increase in responsibilities allotted to school principals). A study carried out in three American districts (Chicago, Seattle & Milwaukee) in 2005 (*Cross City Campaign*), on educational reforms implemented in public-sector schools underlines the difficulties that can arise from this and the committed responsibility of school principals.

Anne Barrère (2006) who describes the daily lot of school principals in France puts over well this same feeling of powerlessness in the face of tasks which are both great in number and very different (from the administrator to the teacher) and with which they have to cope.

The school principal often dons the robes of main leader, but he is rarely alone in this task. Administrators, teachers and others involved in school organisation also play this role, which Spillane (2006) defines by the concept of the "*leader plus aspect*", meaning that several people will be involved in leadership management and that they must build a system of interactions between the different leaders.

However, Gordon Donaldson (2006) wonders about the **need for a leader at the head of schools**, and what model of leader? The author draws the portrait of the ideal leader who would combine three types of skills (which he refers to as the "*three stream model*": the relational, the ability to act, and *action-in-common*). His definition of leadership is the ability to adapt to the practices and convictions of the school so that academic success for each pupil is optimised. Central to his view is the demonstration of how leadership is in fact a set of relationships between those involved in education, the effect of which is to mobilise these people in order to achieve objectives which he believes to be necessary for success. To do this, he puts forward the idea that only teamwork between management and teaching staff can attain these ambitious objectives. Several chapters are illustrated with concrete examples and advice to help the reader to get a better grasp of reforms and to implement them on a sustainable basis.

For Spillane, in France, it is **the inspectors who could hold the key to educational leadership** as their role is more and more to guide, advise, observe, assess and drive all these qualities that Anglo-Saxon leaders cultivate to improve pupils' performance.

❑ And also

- [Analytical bibliography](#) by Odile Jouanne, Regional teachers' resource centre for the Orléans-Tours academy);
- Peter Gronn (2003) identifies three major changes in the current context of leadership practices: the distribution of leadership centres, "*design leadership*" and the disengagement of teachers from leader roles. He analyses the pressures and restrictions that weigh on leaders. His remarks mainly apply to the Australian context, but are also valid for the USA and the UK. This book, which came out in 2003 is very frequently quoted as a reference;
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning: [CASEL](#);
- The study by Spyros Konstantopoulos & Larry Hedges (2006) looks at methods of evaluating school reforms in the American context, and attempts to supply an operational framework for measuring the magnitude of effects on pupils' achievement. How can we determine whether a given reform has sufficiently important repercussions to be qualified as efficient? The forms of logic at work suggest two methodological frameworks: identifiable discrepancies between different social groups and those related to the schools themselves.

❑ Worth noting

Some reviews:

- [Educational Management Administration & Leadership](#);
- [School Effectiveness and School Improvement](#);
- [Journal of Educational Change](#);
- [School Leadership and Management](#);
- [The Leadership Quarterly](#);
- [The Australian Educational Leader](#);
- [Journal of Educational Administration](#).

Some sites:

- National Institute for School Leadership ([NISL](#));
- Center for Educational Leadership ([CEL](#)).

Some conferences:

- Professional Challenges for School Effectiveness and Improvement in the Era of Accountability, [ICSEI 2007 conference](#);
- The conference of the [ECER 2007](#), network 26 : educational leadership.

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