

European Conference on Educational Research
Cadiz, Spain – September 2012

Pedagogical Leadership in Education Contexts: Evidence from the Field

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Pedagogical Leadership in the 21st Century: Evidence from the Field.

Introduction

'Pedagogical leadership' is a phrase that frequently appears in literature pertaining to leading educational organisations and is one that is often left undefined as if this version of leadership does not need explanation. It is almost as if the assumption is that if an educational organisation exists then the leaders within must subscribe to pedagogy. This paper examines the construct of pedagogical leadership more fully and particularly in the context of the twenty-first century.

Pedagogy has typically been taken to refer to the teaching of children. The word stems from the Greek language with the first component of the composite word pedagogy (*paidagogeia*) deriving from the word *pais*, meaning child, whereas the latter component derives from the word that, in verb form (*ago*) means to teach, to lead, to guide, to attend and in noun form (*agogos*) means teacher, leader, guide or attendant (Mohring, 1990). In ancient Greece, the *paidagogos* was a slave who supervised the education of his master's son and led him to school. So pedagogy is about walking the walk, or leading your learners. (Knowles, 1980, p. 40) had previously concluded 'pedagogy' to mean literally 'the art and science of teaching children' which, in turn, leads to the commonly accepted definition found in the eleventh edition of Merriam-Webster dictionary of pedagogy as the 'art, science or profession of teaching' (Merriam-Webster, 2004). By the end of the previous century, therefore, 'pedagogy' was associated almost exclusively with teaching.

This definition is problematic for a number of reasons in the current era. Knowles (1980: 40), for example, had suggested the definition of pedagogy based on teaching was based on the transmission of knowledge and skills that "have stood the test of time", before going on to cite the work of the twentieth century philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, who questioned the validity of such an approach in a fast changing world. Education based on transmittal approaches was only appropriate, Whitehead argued, when the time span of major cultural changes was greater than the life-span of individuals. Such an assumption "is false and today this time-span is considerably shorter than that of human life, and accordingly our training must prepare individuals to face a novelty of conditions." (Whitehead, 1931, p. 10). He supplemented these thoughts with the accompanying diagram which demonstrates the principle across the ages:

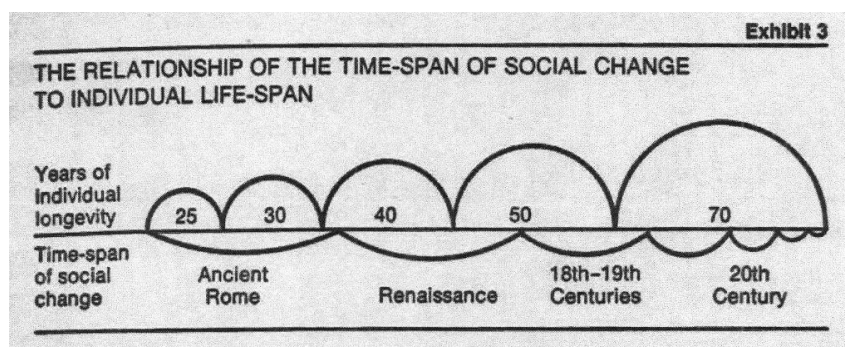


Figure 1: Major cultural changes and the life-span of individuals (Whitehead, 1931)

This led in turn led to the conclusion that:

[...] in the twentieth century [...] knowledge gained at any point of time is largely obsolete within a matter of years; and skills that made people productive in their twenties become out-of-date in their thirties. So it is no longer functional to define education as a process of transmitting what is known; it must now be defined as a lifelong process of continuing inquiry. (Knowles, 1980, p. 41)

Our contention, presented in this paper, is that the pace of cultural change has increased even more during the twenty-first century and this has profound implications for the understanding of pedagogy and pedagogical practice (or praxis as we will claim). Furthermore these implications will directly affect leadership behaviour where and if those leaders are committed to the development of educational opportunities for the student body in their community.

Evolving views of pedagogy

When examining the literature it is evident that the nature of 'pedagogy' is a complex one. Various contributors have tried to define the concept of pedagogy through examining elements of teaching and learning that take place in learning environments. Some other writers, as we will see below, have linked the term pedagogy with the wider socio-political and economical context that impacts on teaching and practice. In these contexts pedagogy is used broadly to describe a discipline that:

... extends to the consideration of the development of health and bodily fitness, social and moral welfare, ethics and aesthetics, as well as to the institutional forms that serve to facilitate society's and the individual's pedagogic aims (Marton and Booth, 1997:178).

Watkins and Mortimore argue that parsimonious definitions of pedagogy as "the science of teaching" are fragmented as they lead to a "scientific" approach with formulation of laws and technical approaches, neglecting the views of pedagogy as a body of knowledge that acknowledges the "uncertainty, relativity, complexity and chaos and recognising the role of creativity and social construction in knowledge-creation" (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999: 2). Instead it is suggested that pedagogy is "any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another" (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999: 8). They move on to suggest that pedagogy is underpinned by complexity which:

... specifies relations between its elements: the teacher, the classroom or other content, the view of learning and learning about learning. Such a model draws attention to the creation of learning communities in which knowledge is actively co-constructed and in which the focus of learning is sometimes learning itself" (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999 : 8).

In the twenty-first century, learning environments are changing and are more and more now concerned not only with teachers, but with the learners and their context. They also have to take account of families, policies reforms and a number of other services such as health, social work and local and national global issues which we refer to as ‘the ecology of the community’ (Male and Palaiologou, 2012).

Effective education settings are those which have developed productive and synergistic relationships between learners, families, the team and the community, because the context, the locality and the culture in which learners live are vitally important (Male and Palaiologou, 2012: 112).

In other words, pedagogy no longer occurs in isolation or solely in educational settings; it is part of a wider socio-economic, political, philosophical, psychological and educational dialogue. Consequently there is a need to seek an in-depth understanding of these relationships in order to be able to discuss what pedagogy is in the new century.

In relation to understanding the concept there is a tendency in the literature to add a descriptive adjective to describe what pedagogy does, rather than what pedagogy is actually is. For example, views of pedagogy expressed in the latter stages of the twentieth century, mainly influenced by the views of Bruner, introduce the idea of “Meta-cognitive pedagogy” (Bruner, 1996; Hart, 1983; Jensen, 1994; Sylvester, 1995). In their view, pedagogy is concerned with the child and to what extent the child is aware of her/his own thought processes when learning and thinking. Another body of theorists introduced the idea of ‘critical pedagogy’ with an emphasis on how knowledge is used in a responsible and critical way to raise questions about the world in which children live (Giroux, 2011; Hall 2007; Mohanty, 1989). They believe that constant critical questioning, based on knowledge gained, is a powerful tool to change and improve the world.

Critical pedagogy asserts that students engage in their own learning from a position of agency and in so doing can actively participate in narrating identities through a culture of questioning that opens up a space of translation between the private and the public while engaging the forms of self and social recognition. (Giroux, 2011: 14)

Papatheodorou and Moyles (2009) suggest that pedagogy should be understood within the “relationality” between “the infinite attention which we owe to each other” (2009: 5). They describe pedagogy as a form of dialogue between teachers and learners in social and cultural contexts. In an earlier study, Brownlee (2004) defined relational pedagogy in terms of three key elements that characterise the relationship of the learner with the teacher and the learning environment. It was claimed that relational pedagogy is concerned with the respect between the knower and the teacher, the relation between knowledge and the learner’s own experiences and finally with the construction of knowledge as a way of acquiring meaning making rather than an accumulation of knowledge. Moyles *et al* thought that relational pedagogy:

[...] connects the relatively self-contained act of teaching and being an early years educator, with personal cultural and community values (including care), curriculum structures and external influences. Pedagogy in the early years operates from a shared frame of reference (a mutual learning encounter) between the practitioner, the young children and his/her family (2005 : 5).

Taguchi (2010) suggested a new approach to pedagogy – ‘Intra-active Pedagogy’ - where it is concerned with the engagement of learners, the value of previous experiences and activities and with the construction of knowledge as a tool for making meaning. Intra-active pedagogy shifts the attention from the traditional ways of creating a learning environment to intra-active relationships between the learners and their use of their immediate environments in their everyday life such as artefacts, spaces and places.

Finally, theorists such as Oliviera–Formosinho and Formosinho (2001, 2011, 2012) refer to pedagogy as term linked with the terms praxis and the claim that “pedagogy as construction of praxeological knowledge in situated inaction refuses the reductive academicism in which the logic knowledge constitutes a single criterion for knowing and knowledge development; it also refuses the empiricism in which unexpanded or unreflected primary experience of everyday life translates into central reference” (2012: 7). Thus they claim that pedagogy in 21st century has shifted from transmissive pedagogies, where the main focus of its action is to transmit knowledge to learners, to participatory pedagogies that “involve a break away from the traditional pedagogy to promote a different view of the learning process, and the image and roles of children and educators” (2012: 9).

Pedagogy in the 21st Century

This discussion leads us to conclude that pedagogy in the twenty-first century, therefore, should be about offering the capacity to learners to learn, relearn and learn, subvert, bridge disciplines and cross fragmentations of axiologies, ontologies and epistemologies in an attempt to transcend disciplinary boundaries and move beyond a visionary learner environment where the contemporary is set against traditional, acceptance versus denial or standard versus visionary classrooms. In this environment Pedagogical Leadership is an ethical approach which respects values and does not engage in any project that will only benefit the individual, but instead looks after the ecology of the community.

Pedagogy, therefore, is essentially now the creation of learning environments in which the centrality of interactions and relationships among learners, teachers, family and community (i.e. their values, beliefs, culture, religion, customs and economic circumstances) interact with external elements (such as the global economy, climate and social phenomena that additionally influence the life of the community) in order to jointly construct knowledge. This understanding enables us to identify aspects of the environment that are pedagogical axes:

- Internal axes (values, beliefs, culture, religion, customs & local economy), and

- External axes (societal values, global economy, mass media, social networking, information communication technologies, national curriculum, the ‘academic press’ of student test scores).

In that sense leadership becomes praxis, and in particular pedagogical praxis, which goes beyond the simplicity of actions/practice and their causality. Leadership as pedagogical praxis is a set of actions imbued with theoretical substance and supported by a system which we claim as the ecology of the community of education settings. As illustrated in Figure 2 the ecology of community is defined as the active participation of learners, teachers, family and the local community and shaped in turn by all the internal axes (values, beliefs, local economy) and external axes (societal values, global economy, mass media, information communication technologies and social networking). The ecology of the community is also influenced by other relevant external pedagogical axes relating to education such as the national curriculum and the ‘academic press’ of student test scores.

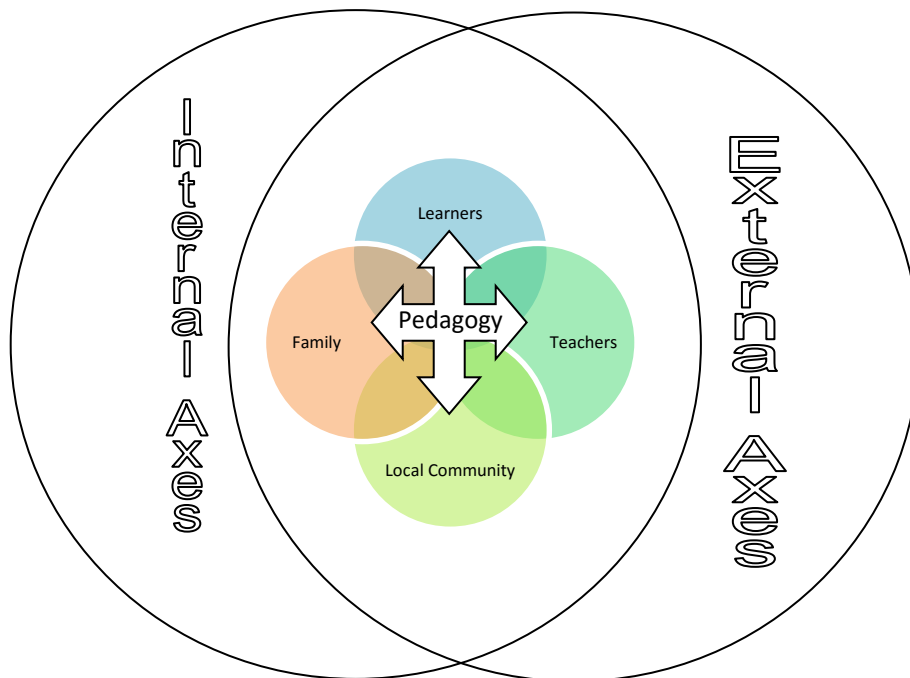


Figure 2: Interactions and relationships in learning environments in 21st century

Pedagogy in the 21st century can thus be seen as the episteme of the process for teaching and learning that is cultivated in an environment (i.e. education) where through situational and doxastic justifications the construction of knowledge is cultivated by the quest for understanding the being of the learners (ecology of their community), the experiences of the learners and their community, and the meaning making and problem solving for creating educational interactions and relationships. In that sense pedagogical axes serve as foundation elements of the praxis that is the key activity of educational organisations.

In that context leadership in the 21st century is an aspect of pedagogical axes, thus we call it Pedagogical Leadership. As pedagogical leadership is praxis the key focus is the development of:

- interactions in the ecology of the community;
- activities with all participants;
- the construction of knowledge using all available resources such as technology.

Thus in this research project we have a dual aim:

1. To investigate the views of leaders in the field;
2. To investigate whether we can add other axes to pedagogy.

The Investigation

This investigation undertaken for this paper explores the views and experiences of highly effective headteachers in schools and leaders/managers in early years settings in England. The participants were a purposive sample selected on the basis of reputation (e.g. sustained record of success) and recommendation from academic colleagues and local authority advisers familiar with their work. Our intention in working with these participants was to see how they dealt with the components of the internal and external axes which shaped the community and to evaluate to what extent this construct of pedagogical leadership was valid.

This study draws parallels with work conducted earlier in the century on a small sample of headteachers whose work “delivers the results the establishment wants [and] transformed standards in the most challenging circumstances” (Hay Group, 2002). That small-scale study explored the work of five headteachers in England who had done something dramatic or impressive in their schools and had achieved the scale of change that would justify the description of ‘breakthrough’ and sought to extract common themes of thought, behaviour and context that would enable them to sketch a model of how these heads achieved their results. Key findings of the ‘breakthrough’ investigation found that the heads in that study considered that they were:

- driven by a deep personal conviction that what they were doing was morally right and that the ends justify the means;
- not in charge of examination machines and not merely professionals living by a set of national standards;
- believing that the welfare of entire communities rested within their responsibility;
- at considerable pains to establish a culture and devoted time early in their headship to establishing the values that underpinned the culture;
- most commonly characterised by an almost complete indifference to other agendas – they were more likely to comment on being freed from a restriction or requirement (like the national curriculum, for example) than of achieving a particular target;

- able to establish goals for their schools and their communities, which seem so much more relevant, exciting and important than those posed from outside. (Hay Group, 2002)

The study showed that the five headteachers repeatedly confronted poor performance from the earliest days of their headships until they had established such strong values in their schools that the culture did most of the work for them. Goals were expressed in terms of changing communities or generations; in terms of improving self esteem and aspirations rather than exam results; and in terms of the greatest good for the greatest number rather than individual achievement (Hay Group, 2002, p. 21).

Our own study, based on the conceptual paper we published last year (Male & Palaiologou, 2012), coincidentally sought to identify similar leadership behaviours and established eight lines of enquiry which bear a good deal of similarity to those listed above. In other words our study was not driven by the outcomes of the Hay Group report, but there was a strong possibility that comparisons would exist. These will be examined in more detail later in the paper.

Methodological approach

These lines of enquiry were examined in the subsequent empirical research with the participants being asked to consider the following aspects of practice in their setting prior to us meeting with them and to discuss these with us during interview:

- Examples of workforce and family participation in establishment of organisational vision and in decision-making;
- The type of structures and internal processes you have established to allow your workforce to lead and manage learning;
- Examples of productive and synergistic relationships where learners, teachers, parents, community and government have worked together to support learning in a manner natural to the learner's locality;
- How you are using digital technologies to bridge the gap between home and school. Any examples of use of Web 2.0 technologies (e.g. social networking)?
- Any comments you have on the 'Academic Press' (the drive for enhanced levels of student and teacher performance particularly in regard to outcomes required by education systems). Do you seek to avoid your school being a data driven professional community? If so what do you do?
- How far do you acknowledge the interplay between theory and practice, teaching and learning? What do you encourage in terms of CPD for your workforce?
- Have you got examples of how you encourage the construction, examination, deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge where learners try to answer and explain the world with questions?
- Examples of practice where the emphasis is on learners working together to achieve aims each could not achieve on their own.

There leaders explored in this phase of our investigation consisted of two from secondary schools, four from primary schools and two from early years settings in England. There

was wide variety in the type of organisation in terms of social settings and performance indicators. In other words these organisations were not necessarily high performing in terms of standard measures applied to educational settings and exhibited a wide range of socio-economic factors and inspection grades. The key feature linking the organisations was the perceived quality of leadership, therefore, as discussed above.

The views and experiences of our sample were examined through a semi-structured interview conducted during April, 2012 in an environment, mostly their workplace, where interruptions were kept to a minimum. Each interview lasted approximately one hour per participant: field notes were taken by one of the research team at each interview. Interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed by secretarial support, with each transcript subsequently being checked for accuracy by the research team and returned to the participants who have all indicated subsequently these to be an accurate record of the meeting. Subsequent content analysis was undertaken on the final version of interview transcripts through adaptation of the original lines of enquiry to align the findings to the internal and external axes of pedagogy illustrated above.

Further analysis was undertaken through the use of open coding systems which enabled unexpected elements of the data to be analysed (Strauss, 1987). This allowed us to determine whether further unexpected aspects of the pedagogical axes would be revealed. Resulting codes were refined by repeated analysis undertaken by the two researchers and then used to define recurring themes and patterns, resulting in the creation of separate categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This inductive process enabled emergent elements of the data to be analysed.

Findings

Internal Axes

As indicated above, the internal axes of pedagogical leadership were deemed to be determined by the values, beliefs, culture, religion, customs and local economic circumstances relevant to the community served by the educational setting.

Our investigation showed that explicit core values that exceeded the simple expectations of a performance culture were central to the desire of our sample of leaders, as summed up by the headteacher of a primary school in a village school which had doubled its numbers during his tenure and served a community with a population that was partly rural and partly professional/technical in nature:

We've created an ethos and a culture [...] ahead of any safeguarding agenda. Our spiritual morals, social and cultural atmosphere was genuinely inclusive.

This approach to establishing core values was echoed by the headteacher of a primary school which had evolved from one of concern in the early 1990s to become one of

outstanding capability a decade later, giving them national recognition that led to them being invited to brief the national inspectorate as to the reasons for their success:

I believe that we can't all be academics, we can't expect the children all to be academic but what I'm pretty certain of is that every child has something special to offer and it our duty to find out what that is. If all we are going to do is teach literacy and numeracy, with the rest of it all squashed into a small amount of time, we are letting those children down. We are never going to find out what that special skill or talent is that they have.

Another primary school headteacher in an area rated on the deprivation indexes as the least deprived catchment area in the local authority, nevertheless was dealing with an 'on entry' that was broadly average. His school, however, was consistently above the expected 'value added' quotient in terms of outcomes and had moved from a school that reminded him of "a 1950s hospital mentality that was desperately in need of enlivening". His aim, therefore, was to "facilitate these people to be able to do what they really want to do", leading to the situation where the school vision is encompassed within a central motivational motto:

Our vision is summarised by our motto which is 'Everybody Cares, Everybody Learns and Everybody Matters'. That is the core belief of the school. Now many schools have vision statements, and mission statements, but the last Ofsted inspector said had she never had that quoted to her by so many people. I always say if that everybody does care and everybody is learning and everybody really does matter then you can do anything.

On the economic front, however, the headteacher of a secondary school which is the sole provider to a town with a long history of endemic high unemployment and poor job prospects was more focused on the needs of the local economy. In our interview she was proposing radical changes to internal structure in order to provide greater employment opportunity for their students:

I think our driving vision and mission is that we are here for the kids and that's the only reason why we want to make changes in the school. If it wasn't going to be for the improvement of the young people here we wouldn't have done it! That moral purpose is exactly what drives us and it's the moral purpose that we agreed as a senior team very early on. We then agreed it with the entire staff team and every one of them came down to the same kind of vision for the school, which I think is great!

In this instance the school was looking for greater correlation between the world of education and the world of work, "because what we are finding is that kids don't really understand why they are in a school and what these qualifications are all about, and what it should lead to". In this way they were trying to do the best they can for the students and to raise the aspirations of the community.

Meanwhile the head of our fourth primary school involved in this stage of the research, whose school was located in an area of continuous economic deprivation lasting over three generations, indicated that the economic needs of the community were better served with an ethical approach that was designed to change children's perspectives. Although a designated Church of England school, in this instance religion was described as a 'backdrop' to the mission statement:

We spent a long time coming up with an ethos statement which was that we will work together to be the best people we can be. So I have no picture of taking them out of the situation, I just want them to have a horizon that is other than this locality. So that if they end up somewhere that is other than here that would be good. I don't think it's a case of having to come out of that to do that, however, I think it can be done here.

Her ambition for the school, therefore, was to improve life chances within the local community rather than to move children out of the community in order to be successful. This principle was endorsed by the secondary school seeking to improve employment opportunities for their students (cited above) as explained by the Deputy Headteacher:

On first moving into the area the new, major employer took our students on because they thought there was a readymade workforce here. Then they let them all go as their attitude and the skills were so poor that they ended up firing a load of them. We recognised that for a long period there were no adult skills in the area which, of course, affected our vision. If this school doesn't transform this community then who is going to? We are one of the last establishments that can make that happen. Certainly the link between business and our school is massive because people won't invest in an area if they think there is not a workforce ready to deliver and actually be able to work, so that drives us on.

External Axes

External axes were defined as: societal values, global economy, mass media, social networking, information communication technologies, national curriculum and the 'academic press' of student test scores.

The participants in this study were chosen specifically because they had managed not only to sustain equilibrium between the influence of internal and external axes, but had systematically managed to maintain a preferred focus on matters relating to the ecology of their community. Leaders in these educational settings, therefore, had moderated expectations of the national and local stakeholders and adapted the vision and mission of their setting in favour of the local community and the student body. The freedoms emerging from this determination to create such a development space are perhaps best exemplified by the primary school headteacher in the school that had grown from one of concern to one of national recognition:

One of the things is that we are not bound to what people see as 'must do', 'have to do'. There is very little actually, if you do explore the primary national curriculum,

that you 'have' to do. Actually if we look at the bits that you 'have' to do it fits very nicely with our philosophy, because it is not as dictatorial as people would believe. [...] My philosophy is based on, children being engaged in practical, first-hand experiential, investigative activities. So the idea was if we free ourselves from a timetable we were allowing the children the time and space to be able to see an activity or an investigation, or a problem solving activity, through from beginning to end, and in that way there was real deep learning and understanding, rather than skimming across the top. (Headteacher – rural setting with social challenges)

This approach to establishing a provision to the local community needs security and stability, particularly in the face of external accountability and scrutiny. In English settings the two principal concerns of educational leaders are national inspection teams and the mass media (often manifested through local newspapers, radio and television). Our research demonstrated how these leaders worked to establish their 'space' which allowed them to focus on internal axes. Based on the capability to "turn average students out well above average" the headteacher of the primary school serving the village with the rural/professional population found he was effectively left alone by external agencies, particularly as Ofsted grades were consistently outstanding. This favourable position was echoed elsewhere (although not universally) in a way typified by the leader of a privately owned early years setting:

Obviously I've got to remember the proprietors, Ofsted and the local authority, but since we have a 'good' Ofsted grade we're kind of just left to ourselves. It's more about whether I've got the energy to do it and if I've got the vision to push it forward. As long as I've got a reason and justification to do it, the proprietors and local authority are more than happy to help me, so we hardly see any of them. You've sometimes got to run things by them, but for a lot of things I can, to a point, do what I like.

Although this was not always the case, nearly all educational settings also had been able to capitalise on a type of systemic good will engendered by rapid improvement followed by sustained success. The headteacher of a primary school from an ostensibly middle-class village, but one that has also had a number of social challenges, indicated that her opportunity to create an alternative path was enhanced considerably by being able to make the school successful after a 'bad' HMI report in pre-Ofsted days:

I've been here long enough to admit that I had the luxury of the early days of there being no Ofsted, no SATs, there wasn't the pressure on the schools to produce the results that there are nowadays [...] The other bonus was that when I came to the school it had, a couple of years before that, a very bad HMI report so the only way was up, and it very quickly moved the children up. In fact it was phenomenally quick and the parents just see the difference, they see the children enjoying coming to school, they see the children advancing and progressing at a speed that they had not seen before. So it's a win, win, they were on our side and then success breeds success, those parents would tell the next generation of parents that things are different but it's really good what they do, and success goes on.

Similarly the headteacher of a large secondary school in a challenging urban context with a history of under-performance was able to become more self-determining following a batch of short exclusions on an 'epic' scale for 400 pupils which, he enigmatically indicated gave him "the chance to meet the parents/carers". As a consequence he not only earned the respect of the local community, but also was later recognised through the award of a national honour. More importantly, from his point of view: "not only was this an efficient way of meeting the local community, but I was subsequently left alone to get on with what was important to students".

Conversely, however, the other secondary school continued to be judged only as 'Satisfactory' by Ofsted which not surprisingly angered them:

When we prepared for Ofsted we knew exactly where we are as a school. Every single performance indicator has gone up since we were inspected last time, every single one [...] everything has moved forward, but this time we were 'satisfactory' instead of 'good'! They didn't tell us, however, and they couldn't tell us one thing that we didn't tell them. We know our school, we knew what we needed to improve.

Consequently the school felt they were being prevented from delivering their chosen mission by the need to satisfy Ofsted which meant that drive and enthusiasm had to be sustained by the senior leaders, but without the haven for development space described above. Their choice of action was interesting in that they opted to become an Academy as it gave them greater flexibility and far more control over finances and curriculum.

They were not alone in opting for that status, although their reasons were perhaps more expedient than the primary school in our study that also chose to become an Academy. Of the 'carrots' offered by Secretary of State Michael Gove it was only the additional finance that attracted this headteacher who had no interest in changing start and finish times of the day or term, was not the subject of much attention from the local authority (so did not need additional freedom) and had absolutely no intention of changing the terms and conditions of staff. His motive was simple "[it gave us] that little bit of extra budget - about eight to nine per cent on top - to run the same shop". That financial flexibility allowed him to prevent potential cuts in staffing and sustain provision. In other words his motive was expedient rather than political in nature which, in his words was: "changing to stay the same". This, together with his success in maintaining his focus on internal axes, had allowed him to develop a curriculum that was meaningful to him and to the students in his local community:

I think the beauty of the curriculum is nearly there. The freedom to create a more beautiful curriculum, a more creative, more innovative, more relevant curriculum, needs to flow through peoples veins naturally and not be something that they have to quiz and worry about. We've had 20 odd years now of being told precisely what they had to do, except not here! We tore the good pages out and stuck them in our own book, cut it about and jiggled it and we're nearly there, very nearly. I think we now have the ability to work intelligently to make our curriculum as relevant as the old integrated day was in the 1970s, when we didn't quite get it right because there

was no accountability with it! We are moving much towards a good skills base, rather than knowledge based, so we are giving skills!

Conclusions:

Final Thoughts:

There is a need to acknowledge, however, that this dialogue will never be complete in any discussion about pedagogy: “stable and finalised; there is no final point of permanent and perfect equilibrium” (Dahlberg and Moss, 2010 : xix). Palaiologou (2012) claims that the quest for “standardised, finalised theoretical models of pedagogy might entail the danger of limiting practice rather than developing practices which expound alternative ways of doing things with children and to the enrichment of [...] pedagogy” (Palaiologou, 2012:12). In other words the construct of pedagogical leadership is a work in progress, but the leaders explored in this investigation are exemplars of leadership praxis within current criteria.