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The shifting discourses of educational leadership

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The Shifting Discourses of Educational Leadership:

International Trends and Scotland's Response

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Abstract

Increasing emphasis has been placed on leadership within educational theory, policy and practice. Drawing on a wide range of academic literature and policy documents, this paper explores how the discourse of leadership has shifted and for what purposes. The authors are critical of the lack of conceptual underpinning for that discourse, evident both nationally and internationally, and they identify key issues that the teaching profession has been left to try to understand and make sense of. They caution that, despite attempts to align contemporary policy developments to position leadership as inherent in the role of every teacher, flaws in the conceptualization of leadership, and particularly in favoured forms such as 'distributed leadership' and 'teacher leadership', pose significant challenges to a serious attempt to 'reprofessionalise' teachers. Contemporary developments in Scottish education are referred to, exemplifying key tensions inherent in translating international trends into practice.

Keywords: leadership, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, management, education policy

Introduction and The Policy Context

Education systems around the world have recently become preoccupied with school leadership (Leithwood and Day, 2008; Mulford, 2007). Internationally, the improvement of leadership capacity is considered a major priority (Barber *et al.,* 2010: 5). A number of key drivers have formed the backdrop to conceptualizations of school leadership and new expectations for the teaching profession as a whole (see Torrance, 2012 for a fuller discussion).

International comparisons of educational achievement have increased the importance placed on education for countries to perform competitively in a global market (Freeman, 2006; Giddens, 1998). The devolution of governance to school level has been accompanied by higher expectations placed on all staff to address local needs within diminishing budgets (Bartlett, 1993; Paterson, 2003a). Devolution of governance has also brought with it pressure to continuously improve school provision and outcomes (Bell, 2007). The search for more effective mechanisms for change management has led to the promotion of leadership (rather than management) as a stimulus for workforce engagement with the improvement agenda (Gunter, 2012). This has been accompanied by a move away from models of solo, heroic,

charismatic leaders, which have been found to be ineffective in bringing about sustained change. These have been replaced by conceptualizations of leadership embedded both horizontally and vertically in school organisations within a distributed perspective. In short, leadership has been deliberately given prominence within the policy context to assist the process of workforce reform, through enhanced expectations placed on teachers. The focus for teacher leadership is often positioned as transforming curriculum and pedagogy (Hargreaves, 2009). Workforce reform for such purposes requires teachers to regard themselves as experts in curriculum and pedagogy, rather than simply as technicians implementing policies designed elsewhere.

At a surface level, this may sound promising. However, on closer inspection it is found that the roots of the contemporary educational leadership agenda are planted in less than favourable soil. It will be shown that, both internationally and nationally, the conceptualizations of leadership (Bush 2003; Gronn, 2003b and 2006; Gunter, 2012; Harris and Beatty, 2004), distributed leadership (Duignan, 2008; Gronn, 2003a, 2006 and 2008; Gunter, 2003; Leithwood *et al*., 2009a; MacBeath, 2009) and teacher leadership (Crowther *et al*., 2009; Gunter, 2003; Murphy, 2005b) are somewhat problematic. As such, despite the rhetoric of coherent policy formation, teaching staff, individually and collectively, are left to make sense of contemporary policy in school practice.

New Conceptions of Leadership within the Teacher Role

Reference was made earlier to a report by McKinsey & Company (Barber *et al.,* 2010: 5) which stated that the improvement of leadership capacity is regarded as *'a top priority and an area where more has to be done'*. McKinsey & Company were commissioned to compile the report summarising the findings from an international review of school leadership, undertaken in collaboration with the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services in England (later renamed the National College for Teaching and Leadership). It placed significance on the statement, taken from Leithwood *et al.,* that *'school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning'* (Leithwood et al., 2006:4)*.* That headline shaped contemporary thinking and policy. What McKinsey failed to do, however, was to convey the words of caution from Leithwood *et al.*:

> *This claim will be considered controversial by some. We could have claimed simply that school leadership has a significant effect on pupil learning, but our choice of wording captures the **comparative** amount of (direct and indirect) influence exercised by successful school leaders. Leadership acts as a catalyst without which other good things are quite unlikely to happen.* (ibid: 4)

Leithwood's belief in the influence of leadership on pupil learning is longstanding. For example, in 2004, with different colleagues, he stated:

Mostly leaders contribute to student learning indirectly, through their influence on other people or features of their organizations. (Leithwood *et al.,* 2004: 13)

Leithwood *et al*. perceive leadership as serving *'as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organisation'* (Leithwood *et al*., 2006: 5)*.* As such, it needs to be located in the many rather than the few and located close to the classroom. This perspective fits well with other widely publicised authors' work, such as Harris and Mujis (2003), who promote leadership focused on pedagogy, to impact on learning. Teacher leadership is generally perceived as distinct from and complementary to formal leadership roles, requiring power sharing through *'trust, integrity, and goodwill… mutual respect and regard, a sense of shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression'* (Crowther *et al*., 2009: 129; 66). The teacher 'micro' leadership role focuses on pedagogy arising from the overall school improvement process, while the headteacher 'macro' leadership role focuses on strategic development.

The term 'teacher leader' is used for specific purposes. Teacher leadership is promoted within contemporary theoretical and policy rhetoric for the purpose of engaging teachers in a bottom-up approach to school improvement. Such an approach takes as its foundation the belief that professional learning and sustainable change begins with teachers critically reflecting in and on practice, enabling them to '*expand their current professional practice by using it as a starting point for leadership of change'* (Durrant and Holden, 2006: 89). The teacher leadership role emerges through teachers' actions rather than through ascribed formal hierarchical roles, through *'a "stance", a mind-set, a way of being, acting, and thinking as a learner within a community of learners'* (Darling-Hammond *et al*., 1995: 95) with shared accountability. Teacher leadership can be perceived as being concerned with *'action that transforms teaching and learning in a school, that ties school and community together on behalf of learning, and that advances social sustainability and quality of life for a community'* (Crowther *et al*., 2002: xvii)*.*

Although such principles are commendable in many respects, evidence of their translation into school practice is thin on the ground (Fox, 2009; MacDonald, 2004). This in part reflects significant issues with the specific discourse for leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership. These are discussed below.

Issues with the Discourse of Leadership

Educational leadership as a disciplinary field remains contested (Gunter, 2004, 2005, 2012; Gunter and Ribbins, 2003). The growth of specialist educational management courses from the late 1960s created a perceived need for the development of a separate discipline, *'with its*

own concepts, theories and related practice' (Bell, 2007: 5). The initial development of theory was mainly concerned with the application of industrial models to educational settings. As educational management became established as an academic study in its own right, *'its theorists and practitioners began to develop alternative models based on their observation of, and experience in, schools and colleges… with [their] own theories and significant empirical data testing their validity in education'* (Bush, 2008b: 275).

Leadership was raised to dizzying heights in a relatively short space of time. From the mid-1970s, the field of educational management expanded significantly due to a period of growth in the emphasis placed on management strategies in a drive to secure efficiency and effectiveness of teaching and learning. By 1977, the role of the headteacher was identified as a crucial factor in the overall success of a school. The centrality of the headteacher role was dominant in the literature for the next 20 years. By the mid-1980s, '*as part of leadership exceptionalism, commentators began to canonise leadership and to demonise management'* (Gronn, 2003b: 269). From 1990, the term leadership became established in the literature, distinguishing itself from management (generally used in the UK, Europe and Africa) and administration (generally used in the USA, Canada and Australia), the previously preferred terms. Reflecting the general trend, BEMAS changed its name in 2000 to BELMAS.

The rhetoric of school reform cast headteachers *'as new kinds of hybrid actors … given the role and the powers to bring about this "reculturing" of school organisation'*, concerned with changing hearts and minds, beyond a management perspective (Ball, 2008: 138). Educational leadership was politically positioned to provide the mitigated language of policy and practice to invoke public sector reform *'structurally privileged… with heavy investment from the taxpayer'* (Gunter, 2005: 166). From the 1990s, the term leadership became the dominant paradigm (Burton and Brundrett, 2005), associated with transformational change (Ball, 2008). Management was viewed almost in derogatory terms in part due to its association with managerialism (MacBeath, 2004), *'a stress on procedures at the expense of educational purpose and values'* (Bush, 2008a: 2), concerned more about efficiency than aims and purposes (Gunter, 1997). The importance of school leadership, as distinct from management, has since been emphasised by governments internationally. Effective leadership has been consistently identified as a key constituent of effective schools particularly in the UK (Bush, 2008a; Gronn, 2006; Leithwood *et al*., 2006; MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001; Sammons *et al*., 1995), despite lack of consensus as to what constitutes an effective school and issues with the narrow focus of school effectiveness research from the 1980s (Byrne and Ozga, 2006).

By the 1990s, Gronn was becoming concerned that, *'a significant amount of the field's understanding of leadership is grounded in highly dubious and problematic assumptions'*

(Gronn, 2003b: 269). He argued that in order for its retention to be justified, educational leadership as a field needed to adopt *'a much more measured and parsimonious approach'* (ibid: 285) with scaled down claims and better descriptions of the division of labour and related processes such as the interdependence between agents in an organisation.

In the last decade, privileging leadership (equated with transformation) over management (concerned with system maintenance) has been subject to critical questioning (Gunter, 2004). While their separation may be theoretically possible (Durrant, 2004), in practice it is much more difficult (Gronn, 2003b; Spillane & Diamond, 2007) and even unhelpful to do so (Bush, 2008a). Little consensus exists for precisely what leadership is, how/if it can be developed or how important it is (Connolly *et al*., 2000). Empirical evidence of *'the extent and nature of school leadership effects'* (Bush, 2008a: 7) is weak. That, however, has not hindered a vast range of theories from developing in relation to what constitutes effective leadership (Dunford *et al*., 2000).

Moreover, definitions of leadership are *'arbitrary and very subjective'* (Yukl, 2002: 4). Rost attributes one of the main hindrances to progress within the field to lack of attention to precise meaning, with over 60% of authors *'not defin[ing] leadership in their works'* (Rost, 1991: 6). Having identified 25 definitions of leadership, MacBeath (2004) recognises significant ambiguity in the use and interpretation of the term. Despite his pronouncement that *'school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning'* (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006: 4), Leithwood himself concludes from his six studies of teacher leadership:

> *the meaning of leadership remains murky, and its present status is highly dependent on a set of possibly fleeting, modern, Western values* (Leithwood. 2003; 114).

Similarly, Harber and Davies (2003) highlight three specific issues in contemporary educational leadership: it refers mainly to conventional schools; is largely contextualised within northern industrialised countries; lacks acknowledgement of the ideology which lies behind it, based on the stated national goal of democracy (often contradicted by authoritarian leadership).

Issues with Distributed Leadership and the Discourse of Collegiality

As a theoretical concept, distributed leadership is *'a relatively "new kid on the block"'* (Gronn, 2006:1) now *'display[ing] a number of the hallmarks of survival'* (Gronn, 2009a: 197). Its distinctiveness lies in its *'function as a rallying-point for those commentators searching for '"post-heroic" leadership alternatives'* (Gronn, 2009b: 18) and in its resonance with organisational learning within the knowledge economy (Hartley, 2010). A distributed

perspective on leadership was welcomed as nurturing and sustaining school improvement (Day *et al*., 2007; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Timperley, 2005), seeking to address issues of succession planning (Hargreaves, 2008). However, in recognition of the problematic nature of distributed leadership Gronn cautions, *'just as distributed leadership appears to have come into its own, it would be profitable to begin thinking beyond it'* (Gronn, 2009a: 197).

Within the rhetoric, there is often an assumption that distributed leadership is aligned with collegiality. Indeed, it appears to share many of the same characteristics (Bush, 2003). In contrast to formal models and their association with managerialism, collegiality with its emphasis on shared power and decision-making gained popularity from the 1980s and 1990s, aligned to school effectiveness and school improvement (Campbell and Southworth, 1993), becoming regarded as *'the official model of good practice'* (Wallace, 1989: 182). Brundrett defines collegiality *'as teachers, conferring and collaborating with other teachers'* (Brundrett, 1998: 305). However, Ribbins (2003) observes that collegiality may be more complex than at first assumed. A tension arises since collegiality is a management model, and distributed leadership is conceived as a leadership approach. Bush (2003) recognises that collegiality can range from *'restricted'* to *'pure'*, depending on the extent to which power and decision-making are shared. Again, Humes (2008b) contrasts 'soft' collegiality (which is merely a form of social niceness) with 'tough' collegiality, which requires staff at all levels to engage with hard questions, some of which may be challenging and uncomfortable.

Distributed leadership has become the preferred term in use. However, identifying precisely what distributed leadership is proves problematic, given the degree of debate within academic and professional circles. The term is heavily contested (MacBeath, 2009), rarely fulfilling *'its lofty promises'* (Duignan, 2008: 4). Competing discourses lead to lack of consensus as to what constitutes distributed leadership theory and practice. Definitions and understandings range from normative to descriptive, leading to conflicting interpretations (Leithwood *et al*., 2009a). The extensive range of writings on and around the subject lacks empirical substance (Leithwood *et al*., 2004; Leithwood *et al*., 2009a and 2009b; Robinson, 2009; Spillane *et al*., 2007; Spillane *et al*., 2009), leading to limitations in understanding and potential application.

Furthermore, the evolution of distributed leadership suffers from conceptual confusion. As with leadership, distributed leadership has been artificially positioned for pragmatic purposes and political gain, seized upon as *'a mantra for reshaping leadership practice'* (Louis *et al*., 2009: 157). Leadership at all levels has been presented as a requirement in the agenda for continuous school improvement (Hallinger and Heck, 2009), with '*a growing appreciation of just how much influence people not occupying formal administrative roles actually do have in*

schools' with only *'mixed and indirect'* evidence *'to justify a belief in these consequences'* (Leithwood *et al*., 2009a: xvii; 3).

Within the UK as in a number of other countries, distributed leadership has become a government endorsed strategy for progressing an agenda of *'meeting externally set performance targets'*, providing *'subtle and clever ways to deliver standardised packages of government reforms and performance targets'* (Hargreaves and Fink, 2009: 191). Similarly, new managerialism has created new identities, work and cultures with remodeling based on thinking derived from private sector models. Writers promoting that policy direction have been canonised whilst those who dissented were *'written out of the present as well as recent history'* (Gunter, 2008: 254).

Leithwood *et al*. (2009b: 269) describe the field of distributed leadership as, *'an area of study in an adolescent stage of development'*, having lost its naïve confidence, currently struggling with complex identity issues, striving for a measure of independence whilst acknowledging its parental influence. There are, within its current growth spurt, *'efforts to grapple with normative and descriptive purposes for engaging with the distributed leadership concept'* (Leithwood *et al*., 2009b: 269). Gronn (2009a) considers that rather than a new way of conceptualising school leadership, distributed leadership was a natural progression from earlier management theory and research, interrupted by the promotion of the heroic solo leader.

Harris and Spillane (2008: 32) acknowledge that, *'how leadership is distributed and with what effect is relatively uncharted territory'*. Rather than being based on empirical research, much of the literature and policy rhetoric around distributed leadership is aspirational or normative. A common view or singular definition is lacking (Duignan, 2008; Harris and Spillane, 2008). Indeed, few authors and researchers define distributed leadership in and for their work (Spillane and Diamond, 2007). Before 2009, few published studies existed and those published since tend to be small-scale. Moreover, there is considerable professional suspicion with respect to contrasting motivations behind a distributed perspective. The various conceptions of distributed leadership evident across the literature illustrate that it is *'a contested concept embracing a wide range of understandings and often bearing little apparent relationship to what happens in schools and classrooms'* (MacBeath, 2009: 41).

By way of example, in the Scottish context, the term distribut*ive* leadership has gained some currency, thanks to its use in official inspectorate rhetoric (HMIe, 2007). MacBeath (2004: 34) is one of a very few authors who attempt to clarify how this differs from the more common term:

> *'Distributed' leadership… contains the notion that the leader appoints or delegates others to carry out work on his behalf …something that is in the gift of a headteacher … 'Distributive' or 'dispersed', on the other hand, suggests leadership being assumed on a more democratic basis, taking influence as a right and a responsibility rather than it being bestowed as a gift.*

This brings to the surface the dimension of power in professional relationships which often remains submerged within soothing policy rhetoric. As Gunter states:

> *If we are to begin with the realities of practice, and that the work of teaching and schools is distributed, then, as Gronn (2000) argues, we need to have a more sophisticated analysis of who or what does the distribution than just the leader empowering the follower* [Moreover] *…it is less helpful to talk in terms of distributing leadership and more productive to think in terms of how teachers take up positions in relation to those who seek to do the distributing* (Gunter, 2003: 125, 128).

Issues with the Discourse on Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership forms a distinct yet integral aspect of the distributed leadership paradigm (Harris, 2003; 2004). As with leadership and distributed leadership, the conceptualization of teacher leadership is problematic. In positioning teacher leadership as a distinct form of school leadership, reaching consensus on an agreed definition has proved impossible (Wasley, 1991). Definitions overlap and compete, leading to conceptual confusion (Muijs and Harris, 2003). Murphy (2005b: 12-14) highlights thirteen different definitions, referring to Crowther *et al*. (2002: xvii) for his preferred definition:

> *Teacher leadership is about action that transforms teaching and learning in a school, that ties school and community together on behalf of learning, and that advances social sustainability and quality of life for a community.*

One of the underlying conceptual problems with teacher leadership arises from the hierarchical positioning of leadership within school structures (Duignan, 2008; Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006 and 2008; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2006) as it *'allow*[s] *for only a two-fold division of labour: leader and followers'* (Gronn, 2006: 4), making no allowance for the reality and complexity of the labour process, imposing an additional set of roles on established formal positions. Harris (2005) and Spillane (2005a and 2005b) frame the role 'follower' differently from the conventional view, insofar as they suggest that, in shaping leadership practice, leaders are equally influenced by followers. Timperley (2009: 220) asserts, *'the way followers interpret the situation and respond to the leader influences how leaders think and act'*. However, an alternative view argues that school hierarchies are necessary for coordination and strategic direction within which, *'the concept of leadership still depends on the concept of followership to have any meaning at all'* (Leithwood *et al*., 2009b: 269).

Teacher leadership does not occur in isolation, being facilitated and constrained by many factors. It is embedded within a distributed perspective, enabled and supported by those in

formal leadership positions. Concomitantly, for the headteacher to have an effective and sustained influence, s/he is dependent on teacher leadership. Murphy *et al.* maintain that headteachers '*occupy the critical space in the teacher leadership equation*' (Murphy *et al.* (2009: 181); '*teacher leadership is not a chance event*' (ibid: 193). In the absence of a formal management position, the role of teacher leaders seeking to influence colleagues within the public spaces of the school organization is legitimised in part by the authority of the headteacher. Crowther *et al.* argue:

> *Teacher leadership is a particular form of school leadership different from, yet highly dependent on, metastrategic principal leadership. For it to exist at all, moderate encouragement and support from administrators is required. For it to thrive, substantial encouragement and support are often necessary.* (Crowther *et al.* 2009: 140).

The role of teacher leaders within the school's public spaces is also legitimised by colleagues. In that regard, to have influence, teacher leaders require to be perceived as effective practitioners (Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Muijs and Harris, 2003; Murphy, 2005b): '*exemplary teaching is the foundation of teacher leadership*' (Snell and Swanson, 2000: 10). Additionally, they require to be perceived as having '*a level of expertise*' and to have competence in teaching adults as well as children (Gehrke, 1991: 2). Moreover, teacher leaders need to be motivated to continuously seek ways to innovate and improve, ensuring pupils achieve their best, through influencing others towards improved educational practice (Harris and Muijs, 2004). Harris and Muijs identify that something distinctive happens when teacher leaders cross over from the semi-private context of the classroom into the public spaces of the school:

> *Through stepping out of the confines of the classroom, teacher leaders forge a new identity in the school and create ways of engaging others in development work. This new role embraces a belief that there are different ways to structure schools and a different way of working with teachers* (Harris and Muijs, 2003: 11).

Teacher leadership is perceived as a means by which democracy can be nurtured as part of community development (Barth, 2001), positively affecting school-wide teaching and learning through developing teacher agency (Harris and Muijs, 2004) and advocacy (Crowther *et al*., 2009). It is perceived as potentially contributing to school improvement beyond the efforts of individuals (Crowther *et al*., 2009), exercising influence on the institution as a whole greater than the sum of those involved (Smyllie *et al*., 2002). It is also perceived as empowering teachers, enhancing their self-esteem and work satisfaction, increasing motivation and performance, potentially leading to higher retention levels (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001).

However, despite such laudable claims, critics argue that the impact of teacher leadership can be over-stated. Murphy, for example, asserts that teacher leadership '*outside the classroom*

has rather shallow roots' (Murphy, 2005b: 10). Furthermore, *'the construct of teacher leadership has not yet been subjected to research interrogation'* (Crowther *et al*., 2009: 39). Limited and mixed empirical evidence exists of the actual effects of either formal or informal teacher leadership (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1998; Leithwood, 2003). That said, the growing body of literature on teacher leadership provides insight into the distinctive nature of leadership beyond the semi-private domain of the classroom. Whether informally focused at classroom level or formally focused with wider school responsibility (Muijs and Harris, 2003), two recurring themes emerge from a number of teacher leadership constructs (Crowther *et al*., 2009; Forde *et al.,* 2011; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001): influence and pedagogic focus.

The nature of the teacher's remit leads some to argue that all teachers play a leadership role, leadership residing *'in every person at every level who, in one way or another, acts as a leader'* (Goleman, 2002: 14). Harris's (2005) view is slightly more guarded, advocating that all staff represent a source of leadership potential. Rhodes and Brundrett caution that schools should carefully consider that not every staff member may *'possess a predisposition to undertake a leadership role'* (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2008: 23). Slater further suggests the capability to step into a leadership role *'does not come easily to every team member, and often requires unique insight and support from the formal leader'* (Slater, 2008: 60).

Scotland's Response to International Trends
As an illustration of how the shifting discourses outlined in the previous sections has impacted on one particular educational system, the example of Scotland can be given. In line with international trends, the Scottish education system has recently become preoccupied with school leadership. A strategic policy for educational leadership in Scotland has been a long time coming, perhaps reflecting the distinctive Scottish context in which a well-established policy community, operating through strong bureaucratic institutions, proceeds cautiously, hoping to achieve consensus among political and professional stakeholders (Humes, 1986 and 2008a; McPherson & Raab, 1986; Pickard & Dobie, 2003).

Recently, the early buds of progress have emerged, as key players informing policy discourse in this area endeavour to set out a clear direction of travel. The Donaldson *Review of Teacher Education* (2010), the McCormac *Review of Teacher Employment* (2011) and the General Teaching Council for Scotland's (GTCS's) revised suite of Professional Standards (2012a) have aligned themselves to a serious attempt to 'reprofessionalise' the teaching profession. Leadership has been heralded as inherent in the role of every teacher, regardless of formal remit or status. Aspects previously located in the discontinued Chartered Teacher Standard have been repositioned within the new expectations for every teacher. In turn, the profession

is challenged to change its perceptions of what it means to be a teacher and individual teachers are encouraged to reappraise their sense of professional identity. In order to support that workforce reform, initial teacher education has been required to articulate more clearly the stages of professional development, from initial teacher education through to experienced headship, so that teachers at all stages come to appreciate the contribution they are expected to make.

The stakes are high for Scottish teachers, with the introduction of a five yearly cycle of *Professional Update* by the GTCS (2012b), and also for schools which are subject to regular public scrutiny through inspection programmes carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe), now part of Education Scotland (ES), a new body created in 2011 combining responsibilities for inspection and review, curricular reform and teacher development. The inspectorate works closely to the policy agenda set out by the Scottish Government, one result of which is that considerable emphasis has been placed on school leadership as part of the drive to raise standards of achievement.

Within Scottish policy rhetoric, there is an assumption that distributed leadership is aligned with collegiality. The nationally enshrined contractual agreement for teachers (currently under review), *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* (SEED, 2001), recognised the centrality of collegiality to the establishment of professional working relationships (TAC Team, 2004). As is often the case with policy documents, however, collegiality was presented as unproblematic, without exploration of issues such as 'contrived collegiality', which is *'designed to have relatively high predictability in its outcomes'*, and is potentially *'superficial and wasteful of [teachers'] efforts and energies'* (Hargreaves, 1994: 196; 81). Developing collegiate processes in schools has proved to be a very slow process indeed (EIS, 2010). The invocation of collegiality is a good example of the mobilization of appealing discourses as part of the management of change (Humes, 2000).

The slow-to-develop policy for Scottish educational leadership is reflected in its shifting discourse, with terminology since 2000 suffering from both lack of clarity and continuous change (see Torrance, 2009). The ambiguous nature of policy discourse along with the absence of explanation as to the motivations behind policy terminology on leadership, in part explains why the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), as the largest teaching union in Scotland, took its time before recognising leadership as distinct from management. The EIS (2008, revised 2010: 5) leadership policy position set out in *The EIS and Leadership in Schools* constitutes a major shift in the perception of a teacher's role:

> *As a general principle, the EIS believes that leadership is not merely a function associated with a specific post or with school management. ...every teacher ...has, by definition, a leadership role to play in schools.*

That policy shift paved the way for Donaldson (2010) and McCormac (2011). Both reports identified new expectations of the teaching profession, positioning leadership firmly within the role of every teacher. Donaldson proclaimed, '*There is an urgent need to challenge the narrow interpretations of the teacher's role which have created unhelpful philosophical and structural divides'* (Donaldson, 2010: 5)*. McCormac's report on changing teachers' conditions of service carried forward that view of leadership, making explicit its endorsement of Donaldson. The GTCS, in its 2012 review of the professional standards, formally endorsed the expectations of the Donaldson report, thereby augmenting the expectations of the teaching profession. Leadership now underpins each set of standards: the standards for registration (provisional and full); the standards for career-long professional learning; the standards for leadership and management.

However, neither the standard for provisional registration nor the standard for full registration explains what form(s) of leadership are intended, how teachers are expected to enact such leadership, or how teachers and formal leaders are intended to interact to fulfil those expectations. Instead, the few references made to leadership are kept to generic statements. The standard for career-long professional learning comes closer to explaining what form(s) of leadership are intended. However, it does little to explain either how teachers are expected to enact that leadership, or how teachers and formal leaders are intended to interact in synergy. Again, references made to leadership are fairly generic. In both sets of standards (for registration and career-long professional development), practitioner enquiry appears to underpin the model of teacher leadership espoused. Is the profession to interpret the standards as equating practitioner enquiry to teacher leadership? If so, why conflate the two terms? Why not stick with practitioner enquiry as the basis of what it means to be a professional teacher?

The answer may in part lie with the GTCS's attempt to align different, and to an extent competing, political agendas. On the one hand, it sought to take forward the leadership agenda set out by Donaldson and endorsed by McCormac. It also sought to use its developing understandings from its *accomplished teacher* working group, aligning those understandings to the leadership agenda through teacher leadership. Moreover, it attempted to build on understandings of practitioner enquiry arising from the Chartered Teacher Programme and to appease those who felt its disbanding represented a retrograde step. This involved embedding expectations previously located in the Chartered Teacher Standard in the new expectations of what it means to be a Scottish teacher.

As the official policy discourse emerged, the GTCS saw an opportunity to redefine the professional status of teaching. Potentially, this calls for radical changes in relation to perceptions of what it means to be an 'ordinary' teacher (without promotion or enhanced remuneration), in turn requiring a significant shift in teachers' sense of professional identity. Perhaps greater clarity will emerge as teachers' minds are focused on demonstrating that they have met the competences of the different standards with the introduction of *Professional Update* (GTCS, 2012b) on a five yearly cycle.

Discussion

Until recently, leadership was ascribed to headteacher and senior management post holders; teaching was ascribed to teachers. Teacher leadership roles were limited to classrooms as were teachers' field of authority and influence (Barth, 1988). Schools as organisations were hierarchically structured around formal management (and leadership) roles. The headteacher was charged with taking forward school improvement directives, resulting in the traditional roles of headteacher leader and teacher follower (Murphy, 2005b).

More recently, with recognition of the limitations of the heroic, charismatic, individual leader, a distributed perspective on leadership developed within which the role of teachers, in both formal and informal positions, was promoted. The argument developed that, although the impact on pupil outcomes of headteachers' leadership is powerful, it is indirect and mediated through the exercise of teacher leadership (Harris and Muijis, 2003; Leithwood *et al*., 1996). Some would argue that the promotion of leadership as a concept is an aspect of new-managerialism, *'the means by which the reform agenda was configured and secured'* (Gunter, 2012: 4). Others relate school leadership to the broader educational and social purposes of schooling in relation to democracy, arguing strongly against headship as managerialism (Grace, 1995) and viewing the headteacher as a moral steward striving to build a democratic community (Murphy, 2005a).

Leadership and distributed leadership have become established in contemporary rhetoric and policy discourse despite the reality that *'leadership is difficult to describe, theorize and contain'* (Harris and Beatty, 2004: 243). Both have been perceived as providing public policy solutions through creating a *'powerful bandwagon effect'* in a *'shared-power world [where] the advocates of policy change cannot force outcomes'*, and where *'there is no substitute for leadership'* to *'influence the flow of action in such a way that problems, solutions, and politics are joined appropriately'* (Bryson and Crosby, 1992: 254; 345; 346; 347).

Beyond the functionality of the label, 'leadership' constitutes a political process enabling workforce reform by effecting agency and practice in schools. Although the intention may be to engage teachers as empowered professionals in improving pupil learning within schools, the reality may reflect Gunter's view that, *'being labelled a leader is not so much about what you do as about creating a distinctive individualised status and identity that make it more efficient and effective to control what you do'* (Gunter, 2004: 24). Arguably, it depends on whether it is simply performance leadership or genuinely educational leadership that is the goal. Educational leadership represents a social practice, focused on the education system, concerned with education, *'integral to learning processes and outcomes, and is of itself educative'*. It is *'underpinned by a richness of research and theory located in the social sciences, and based on valuing dialogue and differences of views'*. Educational leadership enables teachers to *'position themselves as being in control of their knowing as primarily policy makers rather than just policy takers'* (ibid: 32; 32; 38).

The political dimensions of educational leadership, not least its contested nature, point to the potential of a Foucauldian analysis of the concept, drawing on Foucault's accounts of the complex ways in which knowledge and power operate within disciplinary institutions such as schools. What he has to say about 'governmentality' – in particular, the relation between the sense of self that individuals possess, or come to acquire, and the social structures established by the state and political agencies – is also relevant. The professional identity that teachers and headteachers are encouraged to develop is an important part of this process, often involving a tension between apparent encouragement to engage in free intellectual enquiry and the constraints imposed by bureaucracy and hierarchy. Interestingly, two recent studies of Foucault, one mainly empirical, the other mainly conceptual, have focused explicitly on the implications of his ideas for educational leadership (Niesche, 2011; Gillies, 2013).

Leadership in general and its distributed form in particular represent the favoured discourse of both academic literature and Scottish educational policy although the terms are seldom defined. Staff in schools may attribute different meanings to the terms: *'It is unwise to assume because we share a common language or use a specific term that we all share a common meaning'* (Duignan, 2008: 4). Clarity in definition is therefore critical since the way leadership is conceptualized affects how leadership is practised. It is how leadership is practised that ultimately matters (e.g. Gronn, 2009a and 2009b). Contemporary conceptions (Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Bush, 2008a; Gronn, 2006; Yukl, 2002) often define leadership in terms of *'a relationship of social influence'* (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 78). When leadership is located in a relationship of social influence, expertise rather than formal position forms the basis of authority (Timperley, 2009). Through conceptualising leadership as a

relationship, the roles of follower and leader become equally important. Indeed, the distinctions between the roles *'tend to blur'* (Harris and Muijs, 2003: 1).

Gronn (2000), on the other hand, advances a completely different analysis of schools as organisations, suggesting that conceptualizing the division of labour in terms of leader and follower is unhelpful, as this separates the design from the implementation of the work. He argues that what is needed is a more sophisticated analysis within which the distribution of leadership is explored not simply in terms of the leader empowering the follower. He asserts, *'the construct "leadership", and the closely associated and well-rehearsed constructs "leader", "follower" and "followership" have ceased to provide adequate ways of representing the work activities of organisations'* (Gronn, 2003c: 23). Gunter aligns herself with that argument:

> What we need is theory and theorising that is able to recognise the complexities of how agency and structure work within practice, and so teacher motivation to act is revealed or cloaked because of the shaping influence of structures such as organisational culture which approves of or criticises such activity. In this way the emphasis is less on being or not being an official in-post leader, and more on what agents do, and how we seek to capture and understand it within real time and real-life practice (Gunter, 2003: 126).

Gronn (2009b: 17; 19) currently favours the term hybrid leadership representing *'mixed leadership patterns'*, *'characterizing an emerging state of affairs'* rather than a new type of leadership. Hybridity encompasses, *'the intermingling of both hierarchical and heterarchical modes of ordering responsibilities and relations'*, *'reflect[ing] more accurately the mix of the work of solo, dyad and team leadership than "distributed"'* (Gronn, 2008: 150; 152). He calls for researchers to adopt the rubric of 'hybridity': *'varying combinations and degrees of both concentrated and distributed leadership, the balance and form of which may oscillate over time'* (Gronn, 2009a: 199). Gronn (2009b) identifies that within Scottish policy discourse, the possibility of a hybrid perspective is glimpsed through HMIe's view of leadership as *'both individual and shared'* (HMIe, 2006: 93).

Nevertheless, in many education systems, such as Scotland's, formal school structures have been established to facilitate distributed leadership. To deny the hierarchical structures embedded within schools would be to deny the need to problematise the 'lived reality' (Spillane and Coldren, 2011) from the perspective of staff working within those structures. Similar issues arise in relation to debates about collegiality and collaborative practice. Fox (2009) provides a detailed discussion of the liberal and interchangeable use of the terms 'collegial' and 'collaborative' as the approved discourse within the current policy context. Hammersley-Fletcher (2005: 47) draws a distinction between working collaboratively and distributed leadership, requiring *'new levels of professionalism'* for which the headteacher

role is key in legitimizing, promoting and enabling changes to conceptions of teachers as professionals. Fox's findings suggest that despite the promotion of such approaches and the legitimization of their role within collaborative school practices, Chartered Teachers in Scotland face considerable challenges when engaging with a collaborative perspective: *'It would appear that the promoted and the unpromoted don't talk easily to each other about power, control, accountability, trust and respect'* (Fox, 2009: 207). Furthermore, MacDonald (2004) found, despite the policy and professional rhetoric, teachers locate authority within the headteacher role, complying with that authority through choice and imposition. This suggests that despite the rhetoric, schools are still at an early stage in developing professional knowledge, understanding and practice in relation to becoming mature learning organisations. Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett argue:

> *there perhaps needs to be a greater honesty about where authority lies, who has a right to exercise it and when, together with a greater understanding of the complexity of the head teacher's position as the school leader and what can reasonably be asked of them* (Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2008: 15).

Despite the emphasis placed on leadership at all levels of the school organization by Donaldson (2010), McCormac (2011) and the GTCS (2012a, c and d), there is a lack of both coherence and detail in the presentation of leadership across the framework of the various GTCS Standards. Perhaps this is in recognition that little is yet known about *'the interplay between the formal and informal leadership structures and processes',* the *'relationship between principal and teacher leadership'* or *'the formal and informal leadership interdependencies and interconnections'* (Harris, 2009b: 242). Indeed, whilst traditional school structures remain, it may be that *'The "heterarchy" of distributed leadership resides uneasily within the formal bureaucracy of schools'* (Hartley, 2010: 282).

Conclusion

Educational leadership is a contested field, still trying to prove its heritage and utility, still developing, still finding its way. The rejection of management in the policy rhetoric as the solution to contemporary educational challenges is questionable. So too is the elevation of leadership, the promotion of distributed leadership and the assertion that leadership forms an integral part of the role of every teacher.

The emphasis placed on educational leadership by policy shapers such as those in Scotland is understandable when considered in relation to the international discourse. So too is the lack of clarity as to what is meant by educational leadership, given its ambiguous and often confusing presentation in the academic literature. The lack of clarity evident within the revised professional standards in Scotland is explicable in relation to the conceptual confusion across the field of educational leadership. However, this raises a number of concerns in relation to

the purposes of standards: making explicit the minimum 'expectations' of competence; setting out key aspirations for a teaching profession. Such goals are hampered without a clear sense of progression in relation to the development of leadership qualities, skills, knowledge and understanding, and professional actions. Articulation is also required as to the distinctive and complementary nature of leadership and management. Without that clarity, it may well prove challenging for teachers to conceive of what it means to be a leader and what the practice of leadership looks like within different roles and at different points of their career. There is also the danger of staff *'talking past one another'* (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 26). Moreover, it may prove challenging to develop coherent pathways for professional development to support the policy rhetoric of leadership at all levels of the school organisation.

For the policy drive behind leadership to have positive impact on school practices, conceptualizations and definitions of *collegiality, leadership* and *management* need to be made clear. From there, articulation is required of the relationship between leadership and management within a more balanced perspective of the importance of management in all roles within and outwith the classroom. Similarly, explicit articulation as to the distinctive and complementary nature of different forms of leadership is needed. Having set out the fundamental parameters, it would be helpful to identify specific leadership and management expectations for different roles, individually and collectively. It would also be helpful if each Standard defined more clearly what was meant by leadership in the particular context to which the Standard applies, rather than presenting leadership in a homogeneous manner.

Tension often arises at the policy/practice interface from lack of clarity, generating misunderstandings and suspicion as to the motivations behind policy discourse. If we are serious as a profession about valuing and developing the different leadership strengths of teachers, regardless of formal remit or career stage, then we need more than well-intentioned but vague generalisations about leadership. Much clearer articulation is required if leadership at all levels is to become a positive reality for school communities of practice. Identifying the expectations, responsibilities and boundary spanning dimensions of different roles is necessary. In so doing, how each role relates to the other leadership roles should become clearer. Recognising the specific sets of multiple and often competing accountabilities facing leaders would more closely reflect leadership in practice.

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