

TESS Donaldson Response Article, Jan 2011

I am pleased to see Graham Donaldson's report on CPD for experienced headteachers. The recommendation of a virtual college of school leadership, to provide a greater range of CPD for experienced heads with clear pathways beyond the SQH, to provide means by which heads can contribute into the wider system is a relief. At last, someone from within the profession is saying this clearly! As an executive coach, working with leaders of schools, I have voiced the same needs and given ideas on how they might be met, but have often felt these were dismissed as being from outside. Other sectoral experience can be used and so I offer a multi-sector thoughts on how to deliver Donaldson's recommendations for leadership.

I believe one of the most important objectives should be to make CPD for headteachers desirable.

CPD for heads is difficult. Time, relevancy of the guest speaker message, energy required to bring learning back, all requiring effort within the 60-70 hour weeks that heads work.

IMD⁽¹⁾'s research ⁽²⁾ states that leadership education has to be high-impact for it to 'stick'. Old approaches to executive development, from the academically based – to enlivening with multimedia - to the wonder entry of the guest speaker sent in to liven things up!– are not adequate. Worldwide research into executive education shows four fundamentals of impact that could be missing from current Educational leadership development: emotion, energy, context and full multi-dimensional learning. Accounting for this means at a systemic or programme level, ensuring that learning

- is centred around *genuine personal engagement* by designing and managing the energy and emotion of the structure and the relationships of educators, learners and peer groups
- *ensures a real world context*; it's not just about using relevant examples, but facilitating emotional engagement and suggesting new ways to turn learning into action. It also means right content for right level. IMD's work suggests senior executives benefit most when they can bring their own experience into the room, and what they look for is path-finding and execution, not problem solving or skill-building which might be more useful for the less experienced.
- *follows 3 dimensional learning* – building knowledge, building emotional intelligence and skills, and embedding learning through action-based application and follow-ups

So how could this play out in Education?

Most importantly, cocreate a framework for consistency around leadership qualities and pathways. The framework would consist of a new set of leadership qualities, leadership pathways, processes both centrally and locally to bring real-life learning of how to make these alive, consistent tools such as 360, and a common performance contract. I hear negative views of a common framework, assuming it's a common way of doing *everything* and therefore not taking the local context into account. It can be light-touch and motivating, and supported at low cost through the virtual college idea. The framework needs to take leaders beyond SQH, beyond the Standards for Headship which are so focussed on management of the efficient school, to focus on leadership of people, of change, of ideas, of performance, of impact.

The NHS has done just this, and uses real-world language to describe leadership qualities. It has a strong performance management system, and uses both local leadership programmes and coaching (all working to the same framework of outcomes) to support development of all CEOs and senior management:

NHS LEADERSHIP QUALITIES : DESCRIPTORS

Personal Qualities

Personal Governance : commitment to service excellence; integrity and probity; account for performance; engage with others in decision-making; develop team and self

Personal Management: self-awareness; emotional competence and consistency; articulate and live by values (.being-the-talk)

Knowledge Management: asking the hard questions proactively; listening empathetically to understand : maintaining a contemporary knowledge of best practice

Service Excellence

Ensuring Focus: directing attention to the key issues; regulating the temperature (managing pace and stress)

Delivering Governance: looking after the needs of patients, staff and the public; balancing risks

Achieving Results: creating a climate of performance delivery and accountability; resolving complex problems through a win:win approach

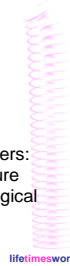
Future Focus

Identifying goals: creating purpose with a focus on outcomes; shaping and articulating the future with passion

Creating and making choices: thinking flexibly and innovatively; making choices in uncertainty and ambiguity; taking risks with political astuteness

Developing capability : building relationships and partnerships which recognise and capacity with partners: interdependency and which share learning; instilling a staff, team and organisational development culture

Leading Change: aligning people, structures, systems and processes to secure goals; seizing technological solutions to improve healthcare; inspiring others and unleashing energy to change



The Education virtual hub can offer stimulus around the most stretching aspects of the framework, but it would really come alive through local communities of practice. Donaldson quotes McKinsey who found that the best professional learning communities were ones that analyse, research, try, share, articulate, observe and mentor one another. Why not this for headteachers and SMT members? I advocate group coaching and/or action learning sets as ways of ensuring that learning is embedded personally and within the local schools, both cost-effective ways of offering development. The group would work on common challenges, supported via the models and ideas in the virtual hub.

The framework would also help implant two important realities of leadership today: (1) excellent self-evaluation skills and (2) a balance between all the aspects of running, and sustaining the energies of a school.

What better means for self-evaluation to become part of the culture than transparent 360 evaluation for all heads and senior management teams. Raise accountability to live by the leadership qualities. Using the consistent framework would ensure that any patterns of skills/experience gaps on a system-wide basis would become clearer and more easily addressable. A framework process would ensure it went beyond the now-and-again Kirkland Rowell reports or other ad-hoc means that are used today – instead this could be a serious attempt to improve the school's self-evaluation skills by underpinning it with evaluation of the leadership of the school. Ownership of leadership would rise and leaders would be able to say 'do as I do, not just what I say to do'.

Also, consider a head's performance contract based around the framework. This might offer the genuine opportunity for striking the appropriate balance between all aspects of running the school: 'seen from the outside aspects':-: parent and community stakeholders, the budget, attainment – versus - 'seen from the inside aspects': learning & teaching, vision, strategy and capacity building. Too often, I meet heads who feel under pressure to drive attainment or budget at the expense of other aspects within the system. Leadership involves all of these things, and the underpinning pillars of vision, strategy and capacity building are crucial to enabling the whole system to work together. My experience of these pillars is that they are not afforded due consideration because of the fire-fighting that goes on.

Lastly, the framework would help hold suppliers and partners to account for delivering fully into the whole system and not exploit its fragmented nature. The whole system would gain more for less.

I offer my initial thoughts here only - I am sure there would be more in debate and I look forward to it!

References:

- (1) IMD, International Institute for Management Development, based in Switzerland is 1st in Europe/2nd worldwide for executive education.
- (2) Mastering Executive Education, Prentice Hall 2005; www.masteringexecutiveeducation.com