

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF A TEACHER LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME IN A TEACHING SCHOOLS ALLIANCE

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Abstract A teacher leadership programme was designed and delivered for a newly formed Teaching Schools Alliance based in the South East of England; the impacts of this course were researched. The programme ran over three days and was delivered over a five month period for twenty teachers. It focused on emotionally intelligent leadership and strategic vision. Torbert's (2004) 'Action Inquiry' and 'Teacher Action Research' (Hendricks, 2006) informed the design of the methodology. The key lessons learnt included: an improved appreciation of the importance of time for reflection and discussion; pitching programmes at a high enough level to challenge participants' thinking; and ensuring that courses are wholly relevant to teachers' contexts and practices. There is a significant body of evidence to suggest that teacher leadership is important for improving pupil outcomes, but this project raises questions about how to measure the success of a teacher leadership programme. It also considers what impacts should be expected from a short course; and whether courses are the best way of developing teacher leadership.

Keywords: teacher leadership, leadership, emotional intelligence, vision, strategy, teacher action research

Introduction

A three-day teacher leadership programme was designed and delivered for a newly formed Teaching Schools Alliance based in the South East of England. An intervention targeting teacher leadership was chosen because there appeared to be a significant body of evidence to suggest that teacher leadership is important for improving pupil outcomes.

Since the 1990s, teacher leadership has been investigated as a means of improving school effectiveness, accompanied by a call for more teachers to develop as leaders. Barth (2001), for example, says 'all teachers have the capacity to lead their schools down a more positive path, to enlist their abundant experience and craft knowledge in the service of school improvement' (p. 244).

This has been reflected in a proliferating literature on teacher leadership: the Educational Research Information Clearinghouse (ERIC), for example, lists over 19,000 published and unpublished papers on the subject. Yet Muijs and Harris (2006) argue that research into the methods that can be used to implement teacher leadership and what factors can enhance it are rare. This assertion is supported by Smylie and Bennett (2005) who suggest that the education community's understanding of effective practice itself is better developed than its understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to ensure the effectiveness of school leaders. Furthermore, Barber et al (2010), in a study of the top performing schools in the world, argue that there is much to learn from 'examples of good practice, but we are still a long way from capturing the leadership premium, one of the most important drivers of improvement in schools.' (p. 1)

The research questions

The following three research questions arose from considering how to design a programme and what I needed to know for future leadership courses and development opportunities:

1. What should the teacher leadership course comprise and why?
2. What are the perceived impacts of the leadership course on participating teachers?
3. What are the lessons learned from implementing the programme?

Literature review

What is teacher leadership? A clear definition of teacher leadership does not emerge from the literature: York-Barr and Duke (2004), in their review of 20 years of teacher leadership research, state that very few authors give a definition of teacher leadership. They explain that this may be because the term itself is so broad, encompassing a plethora of activities, roles and behaviours. A trend appears to be that later research more commonly defines teacher leadership as a form of distributed leadership where teachers at all levels, hold a pivotal position in both the ways schools operate and in their core functions of teaching and learning; this differs from earlier research, particularly pre-1990, which focuses more on teachers with formal leadership roles.

Muijs and Harris's (2006) 'five dimensions of 'teacher leadership' demonstrate the trend towards distributed and collaborative leadership. Their dimensions are:

Shared decision-making across the whole of the teacher body; collaboration with the aim of improving teaching and learning; active participation where teachers participate in the process of school improvement; professional learning; and activism where teachers engaged with issues on behalf of the school (p964).

This is supported by Day et al (2000) who, in a large-scale, 3-year research project conducted in England, found that leadership distribution was common in successful schools and 'distributed sources of leadership co-existed alongside or in parallel with more focused or individually enacted sources of leadership' (p. 193). Day et al (2000) also argue, however, that the extent to which responsibility and power had been distributed depended on the head's assessment of their school's context.

Most post-1990 definitions tend to state that the key objective for teacher leadership is to improve student outcomes, as exemplified by York-Barr and Duke's (2004) definition:

Teacher leadership reflects teacher agency through establishing relationships, breaking down barriers, and marshalling resources throughout the organization in an effort to improve students' educational experiences and outcomes (p. 263).

Mulford (2008) takes this idea further and contends that teachers take on school leadership roles in order to make a difference to young people's learning *and* lives. Importantly, he argues that leadership is not an end in itself; rather it is a process that enables the learning, achievement and development of young people and children. During the course design phase, the educational experiences and outcomes we hoped to improve through enhanced teacher leadership within our Teaching Schools Alliance were considered.

How can teacher leadership be developed? Adair (2011) says: 'an organisation should never give a team leadership role or position to someone without training' (p. 4). This is a view echoed by many authors, yet there is significant disagreement in the literature on how to develop leaders effectively. There is, however, consensus that the teaching of leadership in all professions brings with it responsibility (Snook et al, 2012). Within schools, for example, it has been consistently argued that the quality of leadership matters in determining the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching in the classroom (Mulford, 2008; Day and Leithwood, 2007; Muijs and Harris, 2006; York-Barr and Duke, 2004; Crowther et al, 2002; Fullan, 2001).

The disagreement over how best to develop leaders is echoed in the literature on education. Ross et al (2011) report that there has been limited guidance on effective methods of developing teacher leadership within graduate programs for practicing teachers, despite the growth of such programmes; they also found that there was little research on these programmes' impacts. Ross et al (2011) only found one example of research into a leadership programme for teachers: this was conducted by Ovington et al (2002) and the course was run through a university in the US as a primarily distance learning programme.

Ross et. al.'s (2011) research also considered the impact of their own university-based graduate teacher leadership programme in the US. Ross et. al.'s (2011) TLSI programme had four principles, which were referred to in the design of this course:

1. It should be job embedded;
2. Inquiry and reflection should be focused on;
3. Collaboration should take place;
4. Structural support for experimentation should be provided.

Methodology

Rationale for the research design. This research was informed by Torbert’s (2004) work on ‘action inquiry’, which he describes as a ‘way of simultaneously conducting action and inquiry as a disciplined leadership practice that increases the wider effectiveness of our actions’ (p1); it was also inspired by the traditions of Teacher Action Research and employed a series of a series of steps in which I, the researcher, reflected, acted, and evaluated (Hendricks, 2006).

Ethical considerations. The Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2011) were adhered to and ethical approval was obtained from a University’s Central Research Ethics Committee.

Research Sample. The 20 participants all came from our Teaching Schools Alliance; they were both middle leaders and aspiring leaders with varying levels of experience. All had volunteered for the programme and their motivations for doing so were diverse.

Data Collection Schedule. The table below shows the sets of data that were collected for each research question, when these data were collected and the sample.

Table 1: Data Collection Schedule

Research question	Data collected	Date
1	Questionnaire 1	6 May 2013
	Focused Group discussions x 5	7, 13, 18, 23 May; 7; 27 Jun 2013
	Email correspondence about course content	May and Jun 2013
	Meeting with University lecturer	21 May 2013
	Email correspondence with University	May-Oct 2013
2	Questionnaire 2	14 Oct; 29 Nov 2013; 13 Jan 2014
	Session evaluation	14 Oct; 29 Nov 2013; 13 Jan 2014
	Notes taken by me	14 Oct; 29 Nov 2013; 13 Jan 2014

	Focus Group discussions	20 Nov 2013; 10 Jan 2014; March 2014
	Interviews with 3 x course participants	March – April 2014
	Leadership journeys.	14 Oct; 29 Nov; 10 Jan; 23 Apr.
3.	Notes taken by me	14 Oct; 29 Nov 2013; 13 Jan 2014
	Session evaluation	14 Oct; 29 Nov 2013; 13 Jan 2014
	Focus Group discussions	20 Nov 2013; 9 Jan 2014; 20 March 2014
	Interviews with 3 x course participants	March and April 2014
	Leadership journeys	14 Oct; 29 Nov; 10 Jan; 23 Apr.
	Leadership journeys. Tracking the aims the participants hoped to achieve through the course and the impact they perceived the course had	14 Oct; 29 Nov; 10 Jan; 23 Apr.

I shall now describe how and why these data were gathered for each of the research questions.

Research question 1. What should the teacher leadership course comprise and why?

In order to establish a vision for the programme an initial survey: *'Teachers' Perceptions of our School's Leadership'* was sent out via email in May 2013 to all teachers in the school I work at; 41 teachers responded. A more strategic sampling technique such as stratified sampling would perhaps have given more reliable results; by sending it to all of the teaching staff, however, I was able to gather data from all of the teachers who were particularly interested in leadership and leadership development.

The questions in the initial survey asked:

1. What characteristics and behaviours of your leader(s) motivate you?
2. What characteristics and behaviours of your leader(s) demotivate you?
3. What do your leader(s) do, or could they do, to improve your teaching?
4. Do your leader(s) do anything that reduces the quality or effectiveness of your teaching?
5. What leadership training do you think that you and/or your leaders would benefit from?
6. What type of training would improve your leaders' ability to enhance the quality and effectiveness of your teaching?

The questionnaire was designed and distributed using the Internet programme: www.surveymonkey.com. The information from this questionnaire was used to begin the course design process and was coded. Before, however, I decided on any categories for the coding, I carried out a text analysis on the internet site 'SurveyMonkey', which gave me an indication of the words and phrases that were occurring most frequently in the responses for each question. I asked a colleague who had helped me in the initial stages of forming the categories to check my coding and the definitions of the categories to improve their reliability.

Four categories eventually emerged from this process as the most useful for designing the course:

1. Social emotional intelligence (EI-social)
2. Personal emotional intelligence (EI-self)
3. Vision and strategy
4. Values

Research questions 2 and 3. Data were collected for research questions 2 and 3 together. Research question 2 asked: '*what are the perceived impacts of the leadership course on participating teachers and on the researcher?*' and 3: '*what are the lessons learned from implementing the programme?*'

Questionnaire 2: *teachers' perceptions of their own leadership capacity*, was distributed to all course participants to assess their perceptions of their own leadership ability at the start of each session (October and November 2013, and January 2014). It was then re-distributed three months after the final session (April 2014). The questions used the course objectives to focus on aspects of the participants' leadership capacity that were being targeted by the programme. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following set of statements using a Likert-type scale:

1. I manage my team using emotionally intelligent leadership;
2. I have built a strategic vision;
3. I have communicated my strategic vision with my team
4. I can effectively use coaching approaches to challenging conversations.

Participants were asked to answer the questions using a numerical Likert-type Scale, giving a number from 1-5 to represent the extent to which they agreed with each statement (Wuensch, 2004), with '1' being: 'do not agree at all'; and '5' being: 'fully agree'. The results were colour coded to provide a visual representation of these data. These were, however, the least useful data set in answering the research questions due to the challenges of measuring perceptions and the potential difference between a teacher's perceived capacity of their own leadership and their actual capacity.

The session evaluation form given out at the end of the first day of the course (October 2013) to assess experiences of that day asked two questions: 'What went well for you?' and 'Even better if...'. These questions were also used for the second and third days (November 2013 and January 2014), but a further question was added, which was: 'What impact has the previous session had on your thinking and/or your practice?' Data from these questionnaires were used to edit the next day's content and delivery style. They were also used to provide a loose structure for the focus group discussions and interviews.

Focus group discussions were conducted after days 1, 2 and 3, close to the start of the next day/event, to gather more data that could be used to improve the course. They were conducted after at least 3 weeks had passed from the previous session; this gave teachers the opportunity to implement what they had learnt in their practices before they participated in the discussions.

After the final day of the programme, three teachers were interviewed to gather more detailed data about their experiences. They were selected from those who had not participated in a discussion group and were volunteers who were interested in this research.

Participants also all completed a written record of their leadership journeys on a set of three A3 templates, which they filled in between sessions and then presented at each of the three sessions (October, November and January). I also photocopied their leadership journeys at the final session and two months after the course. These leadership journeys covered a six and a half month period, with the first reflections being recorded in October 2013 and the final notes being made in April 2014.

Coding for research question two used three main categories, which were:

1. *Emotional intelligence (EI)*
2. *Strategy/vision (SV)*.

3. Inspiration to improve or change leadership practices (I)

I also used two sub-categories, which were:

a. Improved knowledge and understanding (KU)

b. Application of what has been learnt to their practice (Ap)

Research Question 3. The data collected for research question 3: ‘*What are the lessons learned from implementing the programme?*’ were coded collaboratively with four colleagues who had also been involved with coding for research question 2. Two main categories emerged: content and delivery. Content was further split into practical tools; case studies; coaching; and academic level. Delivery was divided into: time for discussion and reflection; time for group work and activities.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data frequently highlighted the complexity of teacher leadership and its development. Reflecting on the data also reinforced the idea that leadership, and leadership development, are not only cognitive, but also emotional processes, which needed to be approached with sensitivity. The interviews and focused group discussions demonstrated the passion many teachers feel about leadership, and the profound impact that both good and poor leadership can have on those being led.

In order to make sense of such a complex topic, I have used the three research questions to give a structure to what was actually a dynamic and continuous process of analysis.

Discussion of research question 1. What should the teacher leadership course comprise and why?

The strategic vision for the programme. I began collecting data for this project in May 2013 and it was two months before I began to shape the strategic vision for the programme. In mid-July, having consulted teachers and managers from my school; potential participants; the University; and the literature, I decided on the following strategic vision:

‘To design and deliver a teacher leadership programme which improves teachers’ perceptions of their own leadership capacity through two key concepts:

1. Emotionally intelligent leadership
2. Strategic vision.’

Programme objectives. The objectives for the programme’s delivery were inspired by Ross et al’s (2011) ‘Teacher Leadership for School Improvement’ (TLSI) programme principles:

1. It should be job embedded;

2. Inquiry and reflection should be a focus;
3. Collaboration should take place;
4. Structural support for experimentation should be provided.

The objectives for the course content were directly related to the vision and were to:

1. Describe and explain emotionally intelligent leadership;
2. Analyze different ways of practicing emotionally intelligent leadership;
3. Encourage teachers to practice using emotionally intelligent leadership in their own contexts;
4. Describe and explain how to create a strategic vision;
5. Encourage teachers to create a vision and strategy, and communicate this with their teams;
6. Encourage teachers to make their strategic vision a reality.

Questionnaire 1: Teachers' perceptions on school leaders. Questionnaire 1 provided a start point from which to begin designing the programme's content. Table 2 gives the categorized responses to this questionnaire.

Table 2: Categorized responses from questionnaire 1

	Question	EI-self	EI-social	Values	Strategy and Vision	Other
1.	What characteristics and behaviours of your leader(s) motivate you?	95%	87%	75%	46%	9%
2.	What characteristics and behaviours of your leader(s) demotivate you?	87%	80%	82%	46%	4%
3.	What do your leader(s) do, or could they do, to improve your teaching?	31%	34%	34%	53%	72%

4.	Do your leader(s) do anything that reduces the quality or effectiveness of your teaching?	21%	21%	19%	51%	73%
5.	What leadership training do you think that you and/or your leaders would benefit from?	EI - 43%		0%	14%	54%
6.	What type of training would improve your leaders' ability to enhance the quality and effectiveness of your teaching?	EI - 34%		0%	12%	60%

Table 2: Categorized responses from questionnaire 1

Discussion of results and their impact on the course content

Emotional intelligence. As can be seen from Table 2, I categorized 95% of responses as relating to social emotional intelligence (EI-social) and 87% relating to personal emotional intelligence (EI-self) for the first question regarding the characteristics and behaviours of leaders that motivated respondents. The results were similar for the second question about leaders' behaviours and characteristics that led to de-motivation, with 87% categorized as EI-self and 80% as EI-social. Fewer results were considered to be related to EI for the third question, which asked about improvements to teaching. 65% of responses were classified either as EI-self or EI-social, making EI the category with the joint highest number of responses (tying with 'a greater focus on learning and teaching'). When asked what training teachers believed their leaders would benefit from (question 5), the highest percentage of responses related to training in EI (43%). For the final question (question 6), which asked: 'what type of training would improve your leaders' ability to enhance the quality and effectiveness of your teaching?', EI was the second highest scoring category after 'other'.

These results suggest that the teachers felt that EI was an area in need of development in our school's leaders. It is disappointing not to have results from the other schools that sent teachers on the programme, but the emphasis on the importance of EI for leaders is also supported in the literature (Mills, 2009; Kerr et al, 2006; Leban and Zulaf, 2004; and Srivastava & Bharamanaikar, 2004; Wong and Law, 2002; Goleman, 1998). Some authors have, however, questioned the statistical significance of the correlation between EI and leadership effectiveness (Grunes et al, 2014; Cavazotte et al, 2012; Antonakis, 2009; Barabuto and Burbach, 2006; Brown et al, 2006; and Conte, 2005). I chose to include EI in

the programme and as part of my strategic vision for the course, as I felt that the literature supporting the links between EI and leadership, combined with the results from this small-scale questionnaire, justified its inclusion.

I decided which aspects of EI to cover by reviewing the individual comments in the questionnaire and through interviews, focus group discussions and email correspondence with participants. A discussion with the University about these data allowed them to send me a long list of topics they could offer, which were relevant to what had been suggested by the data. All teachers who had signed up at this point were sent the long list of topics and were asked to choose those they felt were most relevant to them. The following topics, related to EI, appeared to be of most use to those on the programme:

1. What is emotional intelligence?
2. What does emotionally intelligent leadership look like?
3. Motivating, developing and managing people through emotionally intelligent leadership.

One other topic concerned with EI was covered:

4. Coaching approaches to challenging conversations and managing performance.

Coaching didn't form a category in its own right in my analysis, as it was only relevant to two questions in the questionnaire. 10 % of responses, however, mentioned coaching in answer to question 5: 'what leadership training do you think that you and/or your leaders would benefit from?' 7% of responses also included coaching in answer to question 6: 'what type of training would improve your leaders' ability to enhance the quality and effectiveness of your teaching?' This led me to investigate coaching as a means of developing leadership further.

Coaching has the capacity enhance EI, as it provides leaders with tools that enhance their capacity for listening, therefore also their ability to understand others; it is also recognized as a useful method of developing other leaders (Barber et al, 2010; Snook et al, 2012). Further evidence of the benefits of coaching for leaders is provided by Boyatzis et al (2013); Ely et al (2010); Kampa-Kokesh and Anderson (2001); Olivero et al.(1997). The perceived relevance of coaching in my teacher population is highlighted by the fact that all coaching courses that have run at our school have been oversubscribed. Coaching was also a popular topic on the list of options given to me by the University, and was therefore included in this programme.

Values. Table 2 gives the percentage of responses that were categorized as relating to values for each question. For questions 1 and 2: 'what characteristics of your leaders motivate/de-motivate you?', the category receiving the second highest number of responses was 'values' (75% and 82% respectively). When course participants and the University I was working with were consulted on the inclusion of values in the programme, it was felt that this would be difficult to deliver, but could be explored as part of a wider

consideration of the role of EI in leadership and through the development of a vision based on shared values. This was supported by the results to question 5: 'what leadership training do you think that you and/or your leaders would benefit from?', as none of the responses were categorized as an expression of values. This is, however, an area I am keen to explore further in the future, as values are considered to be critical to effective leadership by many authors (for example, Chatman and Kennedy, 2010; Conger, 2010; Podolny et al, 2010). We also considered how we can re-invigorate our school's core values through a full staff CPD session in September 2015 and the leadership course that has emerged from this research spends a significant amount of time exploring this topic. Leadership values also now forms a core theme in the new leadership courses we are delivering for our Teaching Schools Alliance.

Vision and strategy. A significant number of responses related to the category vision and strategy in all of the questions. Vision and strategy had the highest number of related responses to question 4: 'do your leaders do anything that reduces the quality or effectiveness of your teaching?', with 51% of answers. 14% of answers to question 5: 'what type of leadership training do you think that you and/or your leaders would benefit from'; and 12% for question 6: 'what type of training would improve your leaders' ability to enhance the quality and effectiveness of your teaching?', related to vision and strategy; I had perhaps expected this to be higher. Vision and strategy were, however, topics that were specifically requested by participants in focus group discussions and interviews; and they were also recommended by the University as being particularly beneficial to teacher leaders. In addition to this, vision and strategy are considered to be central to effective leadership by our Head Teacher, and there is a significant body of research into the importance of strategic vision for leaders (for example, Kotter, 2011; Wasserman et al, 2010; Leithwood et al, 2008; Hallinger and Heck, 2002). Vision and strategy, therefore became the other major theme of our programme.

Other significant responses. There were a number of interesting responses, which were not categorized since they did not inform the content of the programme. It is worth, however, mentioning a few of these since they are relevant to a discussion we are having within our Alliance and school about the type of leaders we hope to develop and how best to train our leaders. Question 3 and 4, in particular, led respondents towards an answer that was related to learning and teaching. For question 3: 'what do your teachers do, or could they do, to improve your teaching?', it was perhaps unsurprising that 65% of the responses related to allowing teachers to focus more on learning and teaching.

Interestingly, 17% of responses to the final question: 'what type of training would improve your leaders' ability to enhance the quality and effectiveness of your teaching?' related to training in teaching and learning. Because, however, the potential participants consulted felt that we had a broad and interesting continuing professional development (CPD) programme focusing on learning and teaching, their preference was to examine leadership specifically

on this course. This was supported by members of my school's senior leadership team and the university.

Discussion of research question 2: What are the perceived impacts of the leadership course on participating teachers?

The main purpose of this research question was to gather data that would inform the design of future leadership interventions. The quantitative data collected from questionnaire 2 (teachers' perceptions of their own leadership capacity) was arguably the least useful for learning how to improve our impact on teacher leaders and their practices. This was because it did not provide explanations of why teachers had, or had not experienced an impact from the programme. It was, however, useful for establishing more general trends, which could be investigated further. In contrast, the focus groups were the richest sources of data and they were particularly helpful for following up on points that had been made in the session evaluations and questionnaires.

The coding of data helped to identify the main areas in which an impact had been made. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these areas of impact related closely to the course objectives, with improvements in participants' knowledge, understanding and application of EI, strategy and vision being recorded. A small, but significant number of teachers felt they had been inspired to make a significant change to their leadership practice and even, in one case, to make a career change. An aspiration for future courses would be to inspire more teachers to reflect and, if necessary, change their leadership practice. Achieving this is not easy, as both my experience from this project and published literature attest (George, 2012; Fairman, and Mackenzie, 2012; Ibarra et al, 2010; Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Getz, 2009; Day and Leithwood, 2007; Hirst et al, 2004; Frost and Durrant, 2003; Harris and Muijs, 2003; Crowther et al, 2002; Cranton, 1994).

Discussion of research question 3: What are the lessons learned from implementing the programme?

The feedback provided valuable recommendations on how each session could have been improved. Because the course was delivered on three days, each separated by over a month, it was possible to implement many of the participants' ideas in time for the following session. The key areas relating to the programme content that could have been improved further were as follows:

1. The inclusion of more practical leadership tools;
2. More case studies and examples;
3. A more practical approach to coaching;
4. Pitching the course at a higher academic level.

The main areas identified for improvement of the delivery included:

1. More time for discussion and reflection;
2. More group work and activities;

The data suggests that the feedback relating to the course content was more effectively implemented than that which referred to the delivery, since there was more positive feedback referring to the content in the later focus groups, interviews and session evaluations than in the earlier ones. Less positive feedback remained in data that was collected later regarding the delivery. This is probably because it is faster and easier to change topics than style of delivery; furthermore, we had two different facilitators, neither of whom had the advantage of being present during the focus groups or interviews.

Summary of the results and discussion

The data confirms that, to some extent at least, the objectives for the content of the programme were met and, by the end of the course, teachers perceived that they were able to:

- Describe and explain EI leadership;
- Analyze different ways of practicing EI leadership;
- Describe and explain how to create a strategic vision;
- Encourage teachers to create a vision and strategy, and communicate this with their teams;

The programme had also:

- Encouraged teachers to practice using EI leadership in their own contexts;
- and,
- Encouraged teachers to make their strategic vision a reality.

The feedback suggested that the topics selected (EI, strategy and vision), were appropriate and of benefit to the teachers attending. This provides some evidence to support the consultation process that was used before the course to decide what to cover. The limitation, however, of asking teachers who have never received leadership training what they want to study is that they may well not know (as reflected in two focus groups and interviews). Starting the consultation process by asking more general questions about leadership, which could then be categorized to inform potential programme topics was therefore useful. The follow up discussions, which were informed by these results were also beneficial for confirming initial ideas and narrowing topic options.

The exclusion of values from the programme was an error; after EI, the expression of a leader's values appeared to be the most significant driver of motivation for the teachers who answered the initial questionnaire. I am, therefore, working with a range of experts on values and leadership and we have incorporated values as a central theme in our new leadership programmes. A full staff training session also took place in our school at the beginning of September to discuss the role of values and character in education; we are also

working on embedding the importance of the development of these in our school culture in a range of ways including through training, coaching, mentoring and working groups.

Limitations

Programme design. Course participants and members of my schools senior leadership team were consulted before the programme began, but other key stake holders within our Alliance who have a strong interest in the leadership development of their staff, such as head teachers, were not. Ideally, students should also have been consulted to find out what they value in a teacher leader, since they are central to the purpose of any teacher leadership intervention. It would also have been useful to spend more time working with the University to tailor the programme more precisely to the participants' requirements. As our Teaching Schools Alliance is now more mature, I am in a better position to carry out wider collaboration before our next major cycle of interventions begins in September.

In the course design phases I did not fully answer the question: *what exactly should the parameters of success look like for this leadership programme?* I should also have reflected more deeply on the question: *what outcomes would justify teachers being away from their classrooms and how could these be measured?* I have not fully answered these questions for future courses, but I believe a broader collaborative process is necessary to get closer to solving them.

Impacts of the programme. It is challenging to measure the impact of any course targeting leadership. Even on a longitudinal study, it is difficult to decide what to use as measures of success, and to find a measure that will be both reliable and valid. We were aiming to enhance teacher leadership in order to improve outcomes for pupils, both through raised attainment and increased wellbeing. The literature review suggests that teacher leadership can be an important driver of pupils' outcomes; in a study of this scale, however, it was not possible to measure whether the programme had affected student outcomes with any degree of confidence. Teachers' perceptions of their own leadership capacity were therefore chosen as a measure of impact.

This has many weaknesses. Gallrein et al (2013) for example, found there was evidence for the existence of idiosyncratic 'blind spots' in people's perceptions of themselves in a study of 65 students; their literature review presents further evidence for this phenomenon. This research is echoed in Argyris and Schon's (1974) work on two theories of action: 'espoused theory' and 'theory-in-use'. The mis-match between people's perception of themselves and how others perceive them is an interesting topic for future leadership development programmes. The extent to which a teacher's perception of their leadership capacity correlates with the impact they actually have on pupil outcomes may also be an interesting longitudinal study.

Lessons learned. The lessons discussed in the previous chapter are reflective of the group of teachers who participated on the programme. All of these teachers were drawn from a small geographical area, covering two counties in the South East of England. The extent to

which these lessons would be relevant to others wishing to design a teacher leadership programme is, therefore questionable. Many of the points raised, however, were echoed in the literature, perhaps indicating their relevance to a wider audience.

Concluding Remarks

At the beginning of this project, I carried out a search on the Internet search engine 'Google', using the term: 'leadership development' (www.google.co.uk). This returned 7,930,000 webpages: a result of that size implies that a significant level of uncertainty must remain over how best to develop leaders. The challenge, therefore, of creating a meaningful leadership development programme that would have a positive impact on teachers was not going to be insignificant. The complexity of the task was compounded by the fact that a clear definition of teacher leadership does not appear to emerge from the literature. Indeed, York-Barr and Duke (2004), in their review of 20 years of teacher leadership research, state that very few authors even attempt a definition. Furthermore, despite the number of webpages concerned with leadership development, Ross et al (2011) only found one example of research into a leadership programme for teachers (conducted by Ovington et al., 2002). This, however, made the project fascinating and gave me the opportunity to reflect on research from a broad range of fields.

One of the key questions I have considered throughout this project is: *what is the purpose of teacher leadership training?* No doubt, it is to improve pupils' outcomes (York-Barr and Duke, 2004; Mulford, 2008), but how can a programme achieve this and how can you know whether your course has been the catalyst of better results for students? At a meeting with head teachers from our Alliance, this point was discussed and the group concluded that any leadership course must 'inspire and energize' teachers to improve their practices; programmes must 'excite [teachers] and keep them in the profession'. The head teachers also said that any intervention should also have a 'long-term impact'. Only the first of these suggestions was specifically analyzed by this project, but all could potentially be interesting to research over a longer time period.

A particularly interesting question is what impacts can be expected from short teacher leadership courses. The previous question, concerned with the parameters of success, may go some way towards addressing this, but it is something that is worth reflecting on further before the next programme is launched: striking an appropriate balance between taking teachers away from their classes and providing high impact leadership development opportunities is crucial. The advantages of teachers researching their own practices are widely reflected in the literature and facilitating on the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leaders (NPQML), has given me the opportunity to witness the benefits of asking participants to complete a leadership project where the teacher leads a change in their setting and reflects on this process. Many of the teachers on this programme, however, had chosen our programme as they didn't feel ready to commit to the NPQML, so were more comfortable with the non-assessed format of this course.

On reviewing the literature, however, I came across work suggesting that stand-alone courses are unlikely to have a transformational, long-term impact, and that a more blended approach is preferable (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Getz, 2009); this meant going beyond this course's requirement for teachers to focus on a specific project within their practice, to a more holistic, longer-term programme of coaching, mentoring and visits.

For our new programme, we have given participants the opportunity to complete reflective assignments and ask their team and senior leaders about the impacts of their leadership and the leadership strategies they have learnt on the programme, supported by a mentor or coach within their school. These written assessments, with attendance on the modules, lead to a certificate or diploma. It is also possible, however, to attend individual modules that are of particular interest to teachers without writing assignments, giving greater flexibility to busy teachers and hopefully introducing them to leadership ideas that they feel are worth learning more about in the future.

Overall, the complexity of teacher leadership and its development has provided me with a thoroughly engaging project, which has provided me with many more lessons than I had anticipated when I began. It has been particularly interesting to review literature from a range of disciplines and evaluate the extent to which research from beyond education can be used to enhance teacher leadership development. This project has had a significant impact on the way that I personally lead, as well as the manner in which I have approached leadership development opportunities for teachers, not only through formal programmes, but also informally through coaching and leadership support and research groups.

About the Author

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