

Editorial

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Welcome to this, the second issue of *Teacher Leadership*, a journal dedicated to publishing accounts of teacher-led development work.

A new direction?

Following the successful launch of the journal last year we have been delighted to receive messages of support and appreciation from readers both in the UK and overseas. It seems that there is a keen hunger for authentic accounts of teacher-led development work. *Teacher Leadership* was originally conceived as a way to publish the work of members of a particular network – the HertsCam Network – to help to build knowledge about teaching and learning. However, the response we have received from all over the world indicates that the journal is unlikely to remain exclusively tied to this particular network. Teachers not only want to read about other teachers' development work; they also want to contribute their own stories.

There is much to be gained from comparison and debate across national and cultural boundaries so we would like to extend the scope of the journal to include articles and stories from elsewhere. However, in doing this, we face a dilemma. Our current editorial policy is to avoid the sort of selection procedures which often involve a long delay while referees' comments are sought and can result in disappointment for those whose papers are rejected. Instead all the articles and stories in *Teacher Leadership* are based on masters theses or portfolios of evidence that have already been scrutinised and examined by the University. We also play a very direct, hands-on role in helping to shape these accounts. These procedures enable us to maintain the focus on the particular values we are seeking to promote within our network. This has been successful so far because of the good relationship between the teacher-authors and the journal editors, involving as it does high levels of trust and flexibility.

So the question is: how can we expand the scope of the journal without losing its coherence and integrity, or having to adopt time

consuming editorial procedures that could lead to disappointment for teachers submitting material deemed to be unsuitable? As a tentative move forward we decided, for this second issue, to include an article from another network. The article is mediated and edited by the network facilitator who is known to us and who shares our aims. So far this experiment has been very encouraging in that we have been able to include an article from elsewhere in which we have complete confidence.

Core values

In the light of the proposal to expand the scope of the journal it is perhaps timely to clarify and articulate our core values. They are of course provisional and open to debate. I set them out below and illustrate with reference to the articles and stories published in this issue of the journal. The core values of *Teacher Leadership* can be represented as having four dimensions: shared leadership, teachers' leadership of development work, teachers' knowledge building, and teachers' voice.

Shared leadership

The title of the journal signals that we seek to promote teacher leadership but this is just one important dimension of a perspective in which schools are learning communities where senior leadership teams support and orchestrate the leadership of **all** members of the school community whether they have formal roles and responsibilities or not. Susan Thomas' article about using drama to support children's writing exemplifies how teachers can develop their leadership capacity by initiating change and working with their colleagues to support that change across the school. The story of Tom Murphy's development work is distinctive in that it celebrates how a newly qualified teacher was able to take the lead and influence colleagues across the school in spite of having no formal position and very little experience as a teacher. Tom's story is also interesting in that the focus of the development work was student leadership in the classroom. Tom's work is supported by the culture of shared leadership described by Jo Mylles in the last issue of *Teacher Leadership*. This can also be seen to be working to support Tom's colleague, Liz Brown, who has done some very interesting work in which she has cast students in roles of responsibility with regard to peer-supported independent study. Nicky Bourne's article also deals with student leadership although in her case the project began as a whole school initiative.

Teachers' leadership of development work

The journal sets out to portray and exemplify the concept of 'development work' which is about acting strategically to bring about improvement in the practice of teaching and learning. This involves taking the initiative and managing a project in which teachers consult and collaborate in order to influence colleagues and improve practice throughout the school. Inquiry is an important element here, but rather than being an end in itself, it is used to fuel the process of review, evaluation, planning and so on. In Scott Martin's and Amanda Roberts' article we have an account of a students' workshop and follow-up interviews that generated evidence used to fuel a school-wide dialogue about teaching and learning. In the story of Wendy Wilson's development work we see the use of peer observation within a subject department to focus on the development of strategies for improving students' oracy. Wendy planned a professional development event for the whole school – a characteristic of many of the projects showcased in the journal. Portrayals of Sonia Turner's development of strategies to combat boys' underachievement were shared with all her colleagues at a staff meeting which led to the establishment of a system of Boys' Achievement Action Plans. These are just a few examples of accounts that demonstrate how teachers can build collaborative processes that lead to change. I have put forward detailed arguments for teacher-led development work in a number of publications that can be accessed through our website: www.teacherleadership.org.uk.

Teachers' knowledge building

The journal also seeks to promote the idea that teachers have a major role to play in building professional knowledge. This is not to deny the importance of the knowledge that may be generated through professional research, but hypotheses or proposals from that source need to be tested in practice so that professional knowledge is grounded and illuminated by portrayals of action in different institutional contexts. In addition, evidence from networks such as HertsCam indicate that teachers are constantly innovating and breaking new ground, but their ideas and experience stand in need of synthesis and dissemination. The themes addressed are not just of local relevance. Tony Delany's article for example, has something very important to contribute to the current national debate about 'personalising learning' and the Sam Murray story puts forward a very interesting proposal regarding the teaching of older students and the use of teaching approaches disseminated under the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.

Often the knowledge shared is about the process of development itself rather than about a particular aspect of teaching and learning practice. The story about Lesley Hetherington's development work is, on the face of it, about a teacher experimenting with assessment for learning strategies which are quite well known, but the power of the story is in the way it illuminates how a single teacher with no positional power can initiate a process that leads to whole-school review of practice. Similarly, when we look at the Lee Wells' story about the use of writing frames we can derive inspiration from an account of a process of development led by a newly qualified teacher.

The knowledge generated by teachers is often lost, perhaps because it is not embedded in the fabric of the institution and not disseminated. Sometimes accounts of teachers' breakthrough practice are dismissed as 'vanity publishing'. This is why it is important that such knowledge is built within critical communities such as the HertsCam Network, where claims made can be subject to scrutiny not just by the university academics but by other Network members, and, through the journal, by other professionals throughout the world. Such communities also draw on the work of 'semi-detached teachers' (Biott, 1991) such as local authority advisers or consultants who may be supporting groups of teachers, engaging in collaborative inquiry and helping to shape the agenda for change and improvement. Shelagh Mackenzie's article for example showcases a project where the adviser, Shelagh, has evaluated Control ICT strategies for building problem-solving capacity by working with a number of teachers and schools to give support and test out ideas in different kinds of classrooms.

Another important characteristic of teachers' knowledge building is its cumulative nature. Within networks it is possible to rise above the traditional competitive approach to knowledge acquisition and instead build on the knowledge generated by peers and fellow network members. In the Tony Delany article for example, we see how he was able to use strategies developed in a project that was showcased in the last issue of *Teacher Leadership* (see Jackie Johnson's article in Issue 1) and use them to further his 'personalising learning' agenda.

Teachers' voice

It is perhaps self-evident that the journal aims to promote the teachers' voice – that is, to articulate and amplify teachers' views about educational issues. This is linked to a more general aim to

enhance teachers' agency – their capacity to experience that natural human desire to be self-directed and to pursue their own goals and purposes (Frost, 2006). The journal is part of a general movement in the UK at least, towards models of professional learning that draw deeply on teachers' practical experience through direct participation. Networking and coaching for example are elements of this approach to the development of professional knowledge. The teachers who are published in *Teacher Leadership* are also called upon to lead workshops at Network Events and to act as consultants to schools who are interested in their development work. For example, Tom Murphy's work has been the subject of a presentation at a National Union of Teachers conference, Tony Delany's work has been presented at an ICSEI conference in Slovenia and Sonia Turner has made a keynote presentation at a HertsCam Network Event. At a similar event, Liz Brown has made a virtual presentation through the medium of a DVD shot in her classroom.

We hope that the journal lends weight to the teacher's voice by publishing accounts which are high in quality and relevance.

Conclusion

In the future the editors of *Teacher Leadership* will seek to widen the scope of the journal to include accounts of teacher-led development work from a range of networks in the UK and in other parts of the world. We will seek to build relationships with other facilitators of networks in which our values are shared so that they might act as mediators and co-editors. In so doing we hope to be able to maintain the journal's integrity and its focus on the core values set out above.

In presenting these accounts I want to congratulate the teachers whose names appear on the Contents page of this issue of *Teacher Leadership*, and the countless other teachers engaged in similar work, who have done so much to improve the life chances of young people through their relentless pursuit of quality in learning and pedagogic innovation.

References

- Biott, C. (1991) *Semi-detached teachers: building support and advisory relationships in classrooms*. London: Falmer Press.
- Frost, D. (2006) The concept of 'agency' in leadership for learning *Leading and Managing* 12(2) pp. 19-28.