

## Editorial

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I am privileged to be able to present the first issue of the second volume of the Teacher Leadership journal. This collection of papers, entirely focusing on development work led by teachers, provides impressive evidence of a profession that is not only alive and well but one in which its members are increasingly taking the lead in the development of professional practice. The development work represented here reflects a particular mode of professionalism, one that is essential if we are to improve the effectiveness of educational systems the world over. Whether it is a system which is struggling to find new strategies for innovation following years of centralised control – in what Andy Hargreaves (2008) has called the post-standardisation era – or whether the situation is one in which the process of transformation is only just beginning, educational systems need to mobilise the capital that so often lies dormant. This capital consists of the capacity that professional teachers have to put their creativity and effort into the enterprise of innovation.

This mode of professionalism can be characterised as one which is active and agential – teachers taking the initiative and courageously pursuing their own moral purpose even when faced with inertia and other institutional obstacles. It is also defined by a willingness to raise questions about curriculum and pedagogy, challenging taken for granted assumptions and habits and bringing evidence to bear on the debate. It must be emphasised however that this is not inquiry for its own sake – driven by idle curiosity or the need to impress university academics – rather it is inquiry that draws colleagues, students and other members of the learning community into the innovation process. The challenge is to lead such processes and this takes courage, persistence and ingenuity.

Caroline Mander's project reflects this mode of professionalism very well. Her article describes how she worked with her colleagues in an infant school to help them come to terms with the forms of literacy that their pupils experience in their daily lives. The narrative

illustrates very well the leadership challenge. Colleagues needed a framework for collaborative exploration through which they could develop strategies for working with the grain of popular culture and promoting children's speaking, narrative recounting and writing skills through the use of multimedia experiences. Caroline did have certain advantages in that she was Deputy Headteacher and the school's Literacy Coordinator; her colleagues' might reasonably expect that she would be leading change, but Harminder Thandi took on a similar challenge without the advantage of any formal position in the organisational structure.

Harminder's article describes how she worked with her colleagues in a secondary school to develop the art of modelling the writing process in their subjects. Students found the experience of seeing their teachers writing in front of them and verbalising the accompanying thought process powerful. This strategy was not easily developed. It involved Harminder working with a small number of willing volunteers and then using video recordings to show other colleagues what could be done.

The scope of Harminder's project was school wide. In contrast, Kari Esterhuizen's project sought to influence practice indirectly by developing networking for Early Years practitioners. Her goal was to provide for the professional learning needs of teachers of very young children across the county of Hertfordshire but her focus was the understanding and skills of the team of network facilitators.

Paul Rose's project was focused on the development of his own practice as a teacher. He describes how he developed 'learning how to learn' approaches as a way of supporting students as independent learners. However, along the way he found that he had to redefine the role of the teacher as someone who works in partnership with students helping them to grasp the essence of what learning is and to make judgements about the value of this or that learning activity. Paul felt that he had to undertake this personal journey before turning his attention to the professional development of his colleagues.

As in previous issues of Teacher Leadership, the stories are brief and are written on behalf of the teachers who were the leaders of the development work in focus. Like the articles the stories provide accounts of teachers setting their sights on pedagogical problems and planning projects to bring about changes in practice.

The story of Paul Andrew's development work is interesting in that he began with one focus – the way students pose questions in lessons – but as his project progressed, he realised that his project was as much about strategies for scaffolding professional dialogue as it was about the role of students' questions in the learning process. He has since developed this work and now focuses on creating the conditions for teachers' reflective practice.

Tim Smale's project began with a narrow focus on the teaching of RE (Religious Education) in a secondary school. He was particularly interested in questions about literacy within his subject but what he came up with was valuable more widely across the school, with the consequence that Tim was subsequently appointed as Literacy Coordinator. He is now working to support colleagues in all subjects on aspects of literacy.

In the UK primary school children now have an entitlement to learn modern foreign languages. Some enthusiasts have been pioneering primary modern languages for some time but many colleagues in the primary sector have found this challenging. Simon King led the way in his primary school by integrating languages learning into aspects of the curriculum. He reached out to draw in expertise in the local secondary school and in the local authority advisory team. He also built international partnerships. Simon's initiative helped colleagues to see that they had nothing to fear.

This theme of enriching the curriculum through international partnerships is continued in the story of Helen Gosnell's development work. She drew on her experience before becoming a teacher to develop collaborative projects with a high school in Zambia. Helen shared accounts of this activity at her school's annual staff residential conference and was subsequently able to help colleagues to make use of the links she had pioneered. One of the outcomes of this development work was to show students that they can make a difference through social action.

Another whole school issue was taken on in Rachel Noble's project – the development of the use of tutor time - but it is interesting to note that she wisely entered into collaboration with colleagues who held key positions in the organisational structure. Rachel knew that to have maximum influence she would need the cooperation of those who had greater leverage within the school because of their formal positions.

Kelly Dalkin's development work was focused on the use of practical activities in science lessons. She asked her colleagues to join with her to evaluate a series of practical activities in which the voices of students were harnessed not only to improve the activities but also to share responsibility for their learning and generate a sense of ownership.

The final story in this issue features development work on a national scale. This Turkish project can't be attributed to the leadership of a single individual although Ozgur Bolat is undoubtedly a key player. Like Paul Rose's project mentioned above, this focuses on transforming the role of teacher to one of facilitator. The idea of project-based learning was seen as a vehicle for developing a more student-centred learning pedagogy and Ozgur played an important role in bringing external evaluators to the project. It is interesting to hear of such efforts to build a pedagogy which empowers students in a climate in which preparation for national tests can have a constraining effect. A major outcome of this project is the realisation that there is massive scope for teacher leadership in Turkey. Ozgur's next project will focus on strategies for developing modes of professionalism that can contribute to national reform in Turkey.

I am confident that in publishing the articles and stories described above we have made a further substantial deposit in the bank of teacher-generated knowledge. I am sure that teachers from all over the world who read these accounts will be inspired to make their own contribution to the improvement of professional practice.

After a number of false starts, the new Teacher Leadership website is now fully functioning and we are at last able to celebrate the fact that all the material published in this journal can now be downloaded from the site. The site is provided by 'Leadership for Learning: the Cambridge Network' as part of our effort to build knowledge about distributed forms of leadership and learning. I hope that our readers will register with the site ([www.teacherleadership.org.uk](http://www.teacherleadership.org.uk)) and explore other aspects of the work of LfL.

In the forthcoming academic year we look forward to publishing the second and third issues of Volume 2 of the Teacher Leadership journal as well as an additional special issue in association with the National Union of Teachers. Our intention is to showcase the development work of teachers not only in the HertsCam Network but

also from the rest of the UK and from other countries around the world. We hope that, through our new website, many more teachers will discover these accounts of teacher-led development work and will be informed and inspired to take the initiative in leading change and improvement in their schools.

## **References**

Hargreaves, A. (2008) The coming of poststandardization: Three weddings and a funeral, in C. Sugrue (ed.) *The Future of Educational Change: International Perspectives*. London: Routledge Education.