Leading change, changing leadership (Part 2).

System change moving to the next level of performance – incorporating two case studies

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Foreword

In July 2012 CSE published Leading change, changing leadership (Patricia Collarbone, CSE Occasional Paper 126) which was in effect Part 1 of this paper. For the benefit of readers who may not have read that paper, a summary follows.

The paper argued for cultural change in the public service generally and education in particular, at both a local and system level, away from a prevalent culture of command and control, and excessive bureaucracy. That model, it was argued, has cascaded down through the system so that many people do not know what it means to take up their own authority. This, in turn, has created inefficiencies and, all too often, low staff morale and ineffectiveness. Much of the reason for this could be traced back to a traditional and limited approach to leadership, inappropriate structures and inefficient processes, rather than deficient staff. Changing the role of leaders and staff, by developing a Distributed Leadership model, would change the culture of a whole organisation. But the practicalities of how to bring about such change sustainably are rarely specified.

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The need, potential and the opportunity exist. A coherent and structured approach to such levels and type of change is required. At the heart of this should be deliberate moves to reassess current practice and structures, and thence to planning and actions that will lead to organisations thriving on an ‘autonomy/innovation’ culture – characterised by trust, interdependency and mutual respect, rather than operating, as they often do now, on a ‘dependency/maintenance’ culture of management command and control, with its consequent staff rigidity and resistance to change (see Figure 1). These moves will involve the embedding of a system of distributed leadership, an empowered and contributing workforce, constructive and responsible feedback, and defined aims and outcomes that are measurable.

This is not about ‘revolutionary’ change, but rather about ‘evolutionary’ change – starting from where you are, experimenting, adapting and learning by doing – with all changes based on evaluated evidence. This model, based on learning with and from others, ensures staff involvement and support and leads to sustainable change. It requires not only authority from above, but from below and within, with feedback a vital element. The Distributed Leadership model is illustrated in Figure 2.

In education, one of the most significant changes we are seeing now is the growth in educators working together, within their schools, between schools, and with other agencies. Although you might say this is nothing new, it is happening to a much greater extent today than ever before, and in different ways. The emerging results are more than encouraging. In the UK, the Department for Education has made it clear that there are significant educational benefits to be gained from promoting and supporting both site-specific and broader collaboration (see Figure 3). Similar initiatives and results are to be found in the USA and other countries.

Collaboration between leaders and staff, and working in associated teams, learning communities and networks – together with the participating staff gaining confidence in their increasing degree of autonomy – has been shown to have benefits, for example, in

- improving teaching practice and the educational experience of students;
- sharing professional development for staff;
- knowledge transfer;
- raising standards; and
- helping schools that are in difficulty.

**Figure 1. The dependency/maintenance and autonomy/innovation alternatives**

![Figure 1](https://www.creatingtomorrow.org.uk/products-publications/)

Source: Home page at www.creatingtomorrow.org.uk/products-publications/
It also produces more versatile and skilled leaders, once they have overcome any anxieties about moving away from a top-down model and have accepted the benefits of the autonomy/innovation/collaboration model.

The leadership of the future will not be provided simply by individuals but by groups, institutions, communities and networks. One of the roadblocks for groups moving forward now is thinking that they have to wait for a leader to emerge: someone who embodies the future path... We have to nurture a new form of leadership that doesn’t depend on extraordinary individuals.


For change to be successful and sustainable there has to be a compelling reason to change, a clear vision of where you want to be, a coherent plan for getting there ... and a way of measuring and monitoring changes on an ongoing basis. Without all of this in place new collaborative ways of working are unlikely to be successful. It should also be recognised that vital to measuring and monitoring change is measuring what is truly important, not just measuring what is easy to quantify.

Not all performance measures are of equal importance. Perhaps the two types that are most important are:

1. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that show whether a service and its related functions are done well (‘quality of effort standards’); and
2. KPIs that tell whether clients or customers are better off as a consequence of receiving their service ‘quality of effects standards’).

It is this rigorous approach to continuous improvement, self-regulation and measurement that ensures a ‘quality culture’ in any organisation. Achieving this is dependent upon continuous improvement from each member of staff, whatever her/his role, with all taking full responsibility for what they do and being committed to the values of their organisation.
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