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A hybrid model of distributed leadership theory: Federated leadership

Dr Catherine McCauley-Smith, Teesside Business School, Teesside University

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Abstract

Over recent decades there has been a seemingly continuous reform of the UK public sector. Political intervention continues to have strategic impact on education in particular. Various approaches have addressed education improvement ranging from tackling failing schools to building new ones. This paper concerns a merger of three schools brought together onto a purpose built new site supported by a highly unusual leadership structure enabled though educational legislation known as 'federated' leadership. A case study organization is explored to determine if federated leadership is something new or a hybrid of existing leadership theories.

Introduction

Over recent decades there has been a vast and seemingly continuous transformation of organization forms. Major on-going reform has been a hallmark of the UK public sector since 1979 (Broadbent and Laughlin, 2005; Currie et al, 2005). This is no less true for the public sector when in the 1980s the UK government was persistent in its drive for institutional reform, and local government, the civil service, the uniformed services, the NHS and education all came under central scrutiny (Pettigrew et al, 2001). Political intervention continues to have strategic impact on the education sector including funding streams, parental choice, what and how young people would learn and the educational achievement of children (Harris, 2005).

Reviewing the literature

Approaches that have addressed educational improvement include government initiatives to tackle failing schools, government targets for local education authorities, published outcomes, league tables, SATs and various attempts to enforce performance related pay. New Labour came to power with its priority of 'education, education, education' and sought to achieve transformational change throughout the public sector through a far-reaching programme of 'modernisation and improvement', embodied in a plethora of policy initiatives (Benington, 2000:3). Schools were closed, merged or rebuilt and new builds sprang up contributing to transformed educational landscapes and communities. New building work stemmed partly from greater government investment and partly from private funded initiatives (PFI), specifically 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, and due to many premises coming to the end of their useable lives.

In the 1980s a 'leadership craze' emerged as an international phenomenon (Terry 1995). The education sector was not immune to this craze. Several scholars took up the challenge to investigate educational leadership (Harris, 2003; 2008). However, most interpreted school

leadership to be concerned with managing the delivery of nationally imposed curricula. There have been growing concerns with the dearth of qualitative research in the field of educational leadership (Chauvel and Despres, 2002; Kern, 2006).

The main characteristics of high performance work involve decentralized, devolved decision making and a move away from traditional hierarchies towards self-managed teams. The development of people capacities through learning and imbibing people-management processes to build trust and commitment can improve relationships between structures and systems. According to Nicholl and McClellan (2008) teachers value these forms of creativity, however, the pressure to be seen to be performing and getting favourable positions in school league tables and Ofsted inspections allows little opportunity for creativity in spite of this being one of the four key concepts underpinning all National Curriculum subjects. Furthermore, not only are such high stakes accountabilities oppressive to creativity they are also causing improvement fatigue (Harris and Chrispeel, 2006).

Performance of schools serves as a measure of the productivity (Ball, 2003; Craft, 2005). Monitoring systems and related production information make up what Ball (2003) refers to as 'the mechanics of performativity'. Head and senior teachers within a school are responsible for their school standards achieved through in-house mechanics and it is these mechanics that are inspected by OFSTED. Within a culture of performativity, it is output that counts and ultimately how schools are judged. Gorad (2010) draws attention to how dominant exam metrics as a measure of school effectiveness have become over the last fifty years and questions whether we can reprimand schools on this basis. Gorad (2010) argues that such metrics do matter as schools, heads and teachers are being routinely rewarded or punished on the basis of this kind of evidence. Furthermore school effectiveness results have been used to determine funding allocations and to threaten schools with closure (Bald, 2006; Maisell, 2006).

According to Hammesley-Fletcher and Qualter (2010), focusing on league tables and centrally designed teacher training has raised levels of pupil performance but at a cost in that teachers are viewed as *teacher technicians* rather than as *autonomous professionals* (:905). Thus a collaborative model of leadership 'may ignore some of the tensions facing school leaders who have to negotiate a way forward in the light of OfSTED views about their effectiveness, performance tables and government programmes and advice' (Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain, 2011).To address a lack of autonomy, workforce remodeling was introduced between 2003 and 2006 with the aim of freeing up teachers to be more creative through a sense of freedom to innovate in a less pressured work setting and a reduced teacher's workload. The remodeling agenda was intended to move teachers to *leaders of learning* as a means of raising standards.

Leithwood and Rielie (2003) summarized major findings from research on school leadership in five claims, these included: leadership is second only to the quality of curriculum and instruction, teachers and administrators provide most leadership but other sources exist, a core set of leadership practice form valuable basics of educational leadership, successful school leaders respond productively to accountability policies and to the challenges of educating a diverse range of pupils. These five claims were later developed in 2008 to seven claims when distributed leadership and personal traits were added to the list by Leithwood et al, (2008a). Subsequently, Day et al, (2009) were not only able to confirm and extend much of what is already known about effective leadership, they also make twelve new claims about the effects of headship on school improvement.

Distributed leadership

Gronn (2000: 333) described distributed leadership as 'an idea whose time has come' and since then there has been an ever growing interest in distributing leadership (Spillane, 2008, Harris, 2008a and b; Leithwood et al, 2008a; 2009). In recent times distributed leadership originates from within school reform that has been on-going for several decades. Contemporary schools with large numbers of students, diverse backgrounds, cultures and learning styles have produced a 'dynamic school environment where innovative, individualized responses are demanded (Crow, 2004:291). Bolden (2011: 256) goes on to notify us that distributed leadership 'appears to have been picked up and promoted within UK education policy' and has significantly shaped educational leadership (see also Edwards, 2011). Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain (2011) claim, that in England, 'distributed leadership' is a term adopted by the National College for School Leadership. The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) was launched by the Blair government in 2000, its remit applies to England and is not UK wide (Southworth, 2004).

Few publications provide conclusive evidence of a positive relationship between distributed leadership and school improvement. Connolly et al's (2000) study on leadership in educational change highlights that the role of leadership in change is new for head teachers. However, their study concerns performance associated with the functional side of management and hardly touches on the role of leading change. Prior to 2005 York-Barr and Duke (2004) only found five empirical studies and none reported positive effects. Bennett et al, (2003: 2) note that there is little agreement as to the meaning of the term *distributed leadership* and that there were almost no empirical studies of distributed leadership in action. Many theorists have and continue to analyze distributed leadership, however, a lack of clear definition for distributed leadership persists and interchangeable language provides a blurred picture (Bennet et al, 2003a; Bolden, 2011; Edwards, 2011; Fitzsimmons et al,. 2011; Kramer and Crespy, 2011; Thorpe et al,. 2011).

For many, defining distributed leadership is problematic and its exact meaning is elusive. In their discussions about what we have learnt about leadership distribution Leithwood et al,. (2009) point out that, although most authors acknowledge each other's conceptions of distributing leadership, there is a *buzzing confusion* of alternative perspectives on the idea. This is further compounded by distributed leadership viewed as overlapping with shared, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership (Vroom et al, 1998; Bennet et al, 2003a; Pearce and Conger, 2003). More recently distributed leadership remains problematic in terms of definition due to competing and conflicting interpretations of what distributed leadership actually means particularly as nowadays it is used as a catch-all or shorthand term to describe any form of collaborated or shared leadership (Day, 2010). This catch-all term has resulted in a common misunderstanding that distributed leadership means that everyone leads (Bennett et al, 2003). Benson and Blackman (2010) also acknowledge the difficulties of defining and what distributed leadership might look like. However, they usefully suggest that most models would most likely include collective responsibility and flexibility where there should be a shift from a traditional leadership hierarchy to one that crosses undefined boundaries 'so that distributed leaders can undertake their roles as and where necessary' (:2).

Defining distributed leadership

Gronn (2000) sees distributed leadership as an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals; a form of concerted action. He suggests that concertive distributed

leadership can take three forms: spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations and institutionalized practice – the latter, according to Day (2006:213), Gronn describes as 'a formal structure arising from design or through less systematic adaptation'. In his later work Gronn (2003) labels two forms of distributed leadership as additive and holistic. The latter, Spillane (2006) refers to as consciously managed and synergistic relationships among some, many, or all sources of leadership in the organization. Gronn's (2003) holistic forms of distributed leadership were later refined by Leithwood et al, (2007a) to include planful alignment, spontaneous alignment, spontaneous misalignment and anarchic misalignment. Findings suggest that planful alignment contributes positively to organizational change but that spontaneous misalignment and anarchic alignment would negatively impact upon organizational change.

Spillane et al (2001:37) suggest that distributed leadership is best understood as 'practice distributed over leaders, followers and their situation and incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals'. Spillane and Zoltners (2004:31) suggest, 'distributed leadership is a way of focusing upon leadership as practice as the co-production of knowledge rather than leadership as role, position or set of competencies'. The central argument from Spillane and Zoltners Sherer's studies (2001 and 2004) is that distributed leadership is stretched over a school and it is the school rather than the individual leader that should be the focus for distributed leadership. Spillane and Sherer (2004:37) looked at what distributed leadership might entail and concluded that 'leadership is stretched over leaders, followers and their situation'. They also argue that combinations of leadership activities enacted by leaders and followers lead to 'leadership practice that is more than the sum of each individual's practice' and that is the interplay of what these leaders know and do together that is a key area to focus on in order to understand how leadership is stretched over leaders and followers.

Spillane's model of distributed leadership lends itself well to the practice of leadership that is shared within extended groups – it is not limited to a particular form of leadership delivery but rather it emerges from 'the actions and interactions of individuals engaged in problem solving or development work. To help us visualize how Spillane differentiates distributed leadership he 'compares distributed leadership practice to a dance where the interactions of the dancers rather than their individual actions allow us to understand what is taking place' (Harris, 2005a:14). Similarly, Leithwood (2006) views distributed leadership as a form of leadership practice that involves many organizational members interacting. Spillane and Diamond (2007) developed Spillane's (2006) 'stretched' perspective to characterize different types of co-leading including collaborative, collective and coordinated distribution.

According to Harris and Lambert (2003) distributed leadership is a leadership model that implies 'broad-based involvement by teachers, other professionals, students, parents and the wider community in decision making'. Dean's (2007) conceptual framework of distributed leadership in theory includes eight hallmarks including shared responsibility, shared power and authority, synergy and leadership capacity, the latter concerns harnessing leadership potential and investing in, and, maximizing leadership potential. Harris (2009b) identifies a formal pattern of distribution wherein responsibility is allocated with the boundaries of existing roles and based upon Day et al,'s (2006) distinctions of decisional distribution concerned with formal and full responsibility and consultative distribution where decision making resides with those in formal leadership roles.

Harris asserts that Spillane and Diamond (2007) examine how 'leadership practice shapes some of the key organizational routines and tools and how these in turn shape leadership practice' (:73). Harris (2008:73) on the other hand, draws upon several case studies that offer insights into the way that schools have 'actively restructured leadership roles and refined leadership practice'. In each of the case studies, the schools took risks in order to achieve radical change. They did this by changing roles and leadership responsibilities but most importantly the head teacher and other senior leaders relinquished some of their responsibility and autonomy. Mayrowetz et al, (2007) offer insights into how such a redesign process might progress based upon work reform. Distributed leadership in schools is generally characterized as teachers taking on more formalized leader roles therefore teachers need to see their roles differently and take on responsibility beyond the classroom particularly if change is about whole school improvement. According to Mayrowetz et al, (2007) the main characteristics of redesigned work as outcomes of distributed leadership include skill variety, task identity and meaningfulness and balancing of autonomy and interdependence. Day et al, (2009) provide a model of purposeful distributed leadership where people are put into specific leadership roles.

Distributed leadership aligned to teacher practice

Although distributed leadership is commonly associated with school leadership it is largely concerned with distributing teachers to lead curricula and not leadership per se. In spite of educational research on distributed leadership in schools emerging in the early 2000s (Thorpe et al, 2011), educational research has been omitted from the wider field of management and organization studies (Fitzsimons et al, 2011). According to Firestone and Marinez (2007) teacher leadership is not new. Historically, schools as organizational structures have equated leadership with status, authority and position. However, more contemporary notions of leadership advocate a more dispersed leadership. In this sense 'leadership is separated from person, role and status and is primarily concerned with the relationships and connections among individuals within a school' (Harris and Muijs (2003). According to Hopkins (2001), where such conditions are in place, leadership is a much stronger driver for change and in practice means empowering teachers with authority and opportunities to lead. Harris and Muijs (2003:3) define teacher leadership as 'primarily concerned with enhanced leadership roles and decision-making powers for teachers without taking them out of the classroom'. It is also defined as comprising leadership roles connected with pedagogical responsibilities (Muijs and Harris, 2006; Spillane and Camburn, 2006). Harris and Muijs (2003: 5-7) conclude that one of the most important approaches to teacher leadership is upon collegiate ways of working and a real distribution of leadership. They provide glimpses of how school leadership can be deployed more widely and beyond the classroom:

> …this view of leadership is not hierarchical, but federal. It is a view that is both tight and loose, tight on values but loose on the freedom to act, opportunity to experiment and authority to question historical assumptions…empowering teachers in this way and providing them with opportunities to lead is based on the simple but profound idea that if schools are to become better at providing learning for students then they must also become better at providing opportunities for teachers to innovate, develop and learn together…teacher leaders not only make learning possible for others but in important ways are learning a great deal themselves. Through stepping out of the confines of the classroom, teacher leaders forge a new identity in the school and create ways of engaging others in development work. This new role embraces a

belief that there are different ways to structure schools and a different ways of working with teachers.

Harris (2003a) adds to a confusing range of definitions of distributed leadership where teacher leaders are *sometimes* leaders, *all* are leaders or *not everyone* is a leader (later reiterated by Leithwood et al, 2007a and b). This debate is further compounded by some suggesting that teachers have been able to influence but do not have authority over other teachers (Firestone and Martinez, 2007). Whatever the definition applied, what is clear is that collective action and empowerment are key features and for distributed teacher leadership to happen, then appropriate internal conditions and support systems must be in place in order for it to develop as something other than merely adding the word 'teacher' to 'leadership' (Leithwood et al, 1999; Leithwood et al, 2007a). In concluding her comprehensive review of the literature on headship and principalship, Harris (2003a:322) warns that we cannot ignore the notion of teacher leadership as a form of distributed leadership and that to do so ' is to knowingly invest in forms of leadership theory and practice that makes little, if any, difference to the achievement of young people'.

Methodology

Narrative and storytelling has been used in research on people for a long time particularly in case study research and may be applied as a method of viewing the storying nature of human experience (Sims, 2003). Stories are compelling because they 'are carriers of life itself, not just reports on it' (Czarniawska, 1997:21). They include narratives about the past, present and future, plots and detail about social engagement with change activity. They form personal histories donated by those either actively involved in change or stories about other key players and serve to convert anecdotal commentary into actual experiential accounts (Boje, 1991; Collins and Rainwater, 2000). Thus they legitimize practitioners as producers of valid knowledge. Dawson and Buchanan (2005) draw attention to two important elements when taking a story/narrative approach; firstly that this method presents change as a process and secondly that process-based narratives could potentially generate unique and distinctive insights into change and that analysis of narrative and process is likely to provide unique insights into the design and implementation of changes into the workplace.

Personal stories open privileged windows into individuals' organizational life histories and experiences (Gabriel, 1997) Telling stories has been a part of history and human behaviour for millennia (Boyce, 1996; Foster et al, 1999; Johnson, 2001). Organizations are full of stories that are naturally occurring and often untapped and powerful resources (Tyler, 2007). They are engaging (Snowden, 1999) and serve as a means though which to link events and learn about lived experiences of change. They are persuasive (Kelly et al, 2005), detailed narratives of the past that include accounts of human agency and their actions and interactions with typical change incidents. It is the different experiences and constructions of reality by several individuals that form the Education Village story: a collective of social reality (Berger and Luckman, 1967). Storytelling focuses on the story creator (Snowden, 1999, Bailey and Tilley, 2000) and it is through well-crafted stories that we gain authentic information, faithful descriptions and thus deeper understanding of events told by people within the situation being researched - in other words a narrative construction from the teller (Moon, 2010; Koch, 1998). Boal and Schultz (2007) draw from Bluck and Habermas's (2000) study whereby story telling provides coherence among events across the history of an individual…and thus provide a sense about the life lived.

Bate (2004: 27) tells us that stories are central to change experiences yet 'their significance has not yet been adequately highlighted in the organizational change literature. Bryant and Cox's (2004) paper highlights how people talk about positive organizational change experiences, that they define as conversion stories where an individual demonstrates turning from one view point to another. Moon (2010:136) cites several occasions when story has been used to initiate or support change and personal stories reflect how a group or individuals within a group progress through change. She proposes that stories can be used in 'case studies in which change has occurred' and which needs to be studied and that 'story can illustrate change.

Stories were captured thoughout a longitudinal single case study to explore the role of leadership in change. Disadvantages of the case study method have been well documented by theorists including issues of reliability, validity and external validity (Yin, 1984; Eisenhardt, 1989, Dyer and Wilkins, 1991; Pettigrew et al, 2001; Bamford and Daniel, 2005). However, any concerns about the repetitive issue for generalisation does not apply to case study research (Stake, 1995). For the most part, qualitative case studies reveal specific insights from specific circumstances more concerned with affirming or challenging existing knowledge within academia, rather than developing theoretical knowledge. It is the responsibility of the researcher to investigate what goes on 'behind the scenes' in order to challenge orthodoxy and contribute to knowledge (Diefenbach, 2009). Afterall, longitudinal research is defined by Pettigrew (1990: 270) as 'a search to catch reality in flight' and where Abell (1997) advocates that readers should be taken on a voyage of discovery in which they face the unexpected, are enlightened and encounter controversy and twists and turns – just like a good story.

Primary data capture took place over 4 years (2008/9/10/11) with a story telling phase occurring in each year. The units of analysis are the Executive Director and two leadership teams: the whole of the senior leadership level collectively known as the 'Executive Leadership Team' and the leadership sub-group collectively known as the 'Wider Leadership Team'. All story tellers participated willingly and were pleased to be asked to take part in the research.

At the outset the Executive Leadership Team comprised seven members; five are female including four teachers, and one non-teacher and two males, one a teacher and the other a non-teacher. The Wider Leadership Team comprised eighteen members of which thirteen are female and all are teachers, and five males of which there are four teachers and one non-teacher. Most participants in the research provided two stories, those from whom one story was provided were not available to provide a second story either because they had left the organization or were absent from the Education Village at the time that the second story telling phase happened. For their first session each participant was invited to tell their story in their own way starting with where they had come from, how they felt they had contributed to envisioning the Education Village, and perceptions about their leadership role in the Education Village Journey – this served the purpose of the story tellers being able to frame *their* story along similar lines to *each other* and which was particularly important in terms of building themes, reliability and validity of data. Participants were advised that they could conclude their story when they felt appropriate to do so. From the researcher's perspective it was important that the participants felt comfortable to tell *their* story in a free flow style and that the equilibrium shifted from the researcher to the story teller (Davis, 2007). The first

story telling sessions lasted between seventeen minutes to three hours and the second session from six minutes to just over one hour.

Data analysis

The stories were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were analysed using a code and theme method (Nadin and Cassell 2007). With the research aim in mind, the researcher pre-determined that two themes: *leadership* and *change,* would form the mainstay of the template. The context of the research was an innovative new school thus themes of *school leadership* and *new organization form* were also predetermined. From the literature the research was able to confirm the relevance of her early thoughts about themes and also make assumptions about others including *capacity building* and *the role of leadership in change* and *change.* A Predetermined and literature derived thematic framework comprised 6 themes:
1. New organizational form(s)
2. Leadership
3. Leader or manager
4. Capacity building and leadership development
5. The role of leadership in change
6. Change

The theme focused upon for this paper is theme 2: *Leadership* supported by illustrative views from the Executive Director. The remaining themes are and will be the subject of other papers.

The case study

The Education Village is an educational institution in the North East of England that offers an excellent case study site for several reasons. Firstly, it can be seen as a product of the change drivers (government policy and opportunity for new build). Secondly, there was from the outset, an explicit focus upon leadership as a key factor in the change process. Thirdly, education leadership and its effectiveness generally and the leadership of schools specifically are high on the national agenda (Department of Education, 2010). Fourthly, it is widely viewed as having been highly successful by Ofsted and other key stakeholders, both in terms of the change process and in terms of the educational outcomes it is now delivering, details of which are provided in the analysis and findings chapter. Fifthly, it involves three different types of school (primary, secondary and special needs) formerly on three separate sites and lastly, the schools are not merely together on a new shared site, they have also gone through a formal merger (technically known as a 'hard federation') and are now managed as a single organization.

The Education Village declares itself as 'unique' and there was from the outset an explicit focus upon leadership by the Executive Director as a key factor in the change process. This paper represents a very small but significant part of the research that illustrates how an educational institution shifted from a traditional school leadership structure to a a 'federated' leadership structure and in particular concerns whether it is something new or a blend of what already exists in terms of leadership theory?

Findings

The Education Village strongly reflected policy initiatives that featured in the DfES 2001 White Paper, 'Schools Building on Success' including building on achievement by putting in place a new strategy for delivering excellence for children with special needs. It also provided opportunities to improve mainstream school results in general and to place special educational needs (SEN) at the centre of mainstream education rather than on the periphery. Following on from the 2001 White Paper, The 2002 Education Act allowed for the creation of 'federations'. Under the terms of the 2002 Education Act, a federation is a group of two or more maintained schools (primary, secondary and/or special schools) with a joint governing body. They can operate with a school home base but co-share resources. 'Hard edged' federation takes the grouping a step further and includes 'close collaboration' between schools in a variety of circumstances who formally agree to work together to raise standards. The shift to a 'hard federation' was reported in the Times Education Supplement (TES) in September 2005. The existing governing bodies of the three schools had dissolved and a new single board of governors convened on 1st September 2005 and all three schools pooled their budgets. It was anticipated that the Education Village would significantly impact school leadership:

> The Education Village aims to be much more than a federation of schools. It is rewriting the concept of a school and sets those running it some challenges… they are having to re-write the rule book on leadership in schools
> (Whitaker, 2005)

The aspirational vision was to step into a future with a school building that had no barriers to operating an inclusive vision. Several challenges were identified concerned with the strategic bringing together of three schools (and along with them three separate management and leadership structures), seamless transition of the pre-existing school systems into one, curricula, inclusivity and all-through education. The bringing together of three well established educational organizations at one location would be less of a challenge if they were to be managed and lead as separate entities, however, the innovative nature of the Education Village was that it was to be without boundaries, integrated and lead by one team. The Executive Director stated:

> We are structuring fit for purpose teams who will be able to lead I think what will be the incredible new challenges and certainly get things rather better. We want to raise achievement, raise standards…. There's a great deal of expertise and support in there.
> (Whitaker, 2005)

The early concept of the Education Village was structured through a Federation Director and three heads of schools who retained autonomy for the operational running of their schools. That structure was a barrier to integration and federation. Early on in the research it became clear that 'federation' and 'autonomy' did not go hand in hand and were not compatible. Federation meant that each school would subordinate its power to a central authority whereas autonomy means exactly the opposite i.e. a right to self-government. It was also unclear if or how the three heads would be line managed. The original leadership design indicated that not only would each of the three schools retain a headteacher but that the schools would be led by a federated director. Hence the leadership structure, actually put in place, see Diagrams 2 and 3, bears little resemblance to the original concept seen in Diagram1.

Diagram 1 here

Things had to change, the Education Village is a unique development and as such required a very different approach to leadership from that focused solely on curriculae and a traditional structure. At the heart of the planned change was a concept of co-leadership running alongside a distributed model aimed at raising pupil achievement and strengthening succession planning and management. The *incompatibility between autonomy and federation* meant that the federation needed a single leader rather than three heads of schools. The Executive Director stressed that the status quo was not an option (i.e. carrying forward shared leadership by three heads) if real change was to happen and that if all did not commit to this she said that 'the Federation is dead in the water'.

The eventual model was the result of a great deal of planning, in finding a form of leadership appropriate for what is a unique setting and major change that took them from 'headship' to 'federated leadership' – essentially a shift away from a hierarchical, traditional leadership model unchanged since the 19th century. The essential rationale behind the integrated leadership concept is that Education Village did not require three head teachers and an Executive Director, as this would perpetuate a traditional leadership model and contravene integrated leadership principles. Thus the traditional role of the head teacher was deemed redundant. We see in Diagram 2 a flatter and more distributed executive leadership structure. Heads of schools are replaced with new strategic, cross organizational leadership roles that include teaching and non teaching staff. Note that Diagram 2 is represented by the purple boxes in Diagram 3 and the Director of Teaching and Learning role is shared by ELT 5 and 6 – this clarifies an anomaly of there appearing to be seven 6 members of the Executive Leadership Team

There are several distributed leadership theories in use as can be seen when the Executive Director purposefully placed, thus, planfully aligned the Executive Leadership Team (Gronn, 2003; Leithwood et al, 2007b). Similarly the Wider Leadership Team was also planfully aligned however here there is greater resonance with Mayrowetz et al,'s (2007) workforce reform model and a way of developing leadership capacity (Benson and Blackman, 2010; Salfi, 2010). The Executive Director defines the Education Village distributed leadership model as:

> Although many of the statutory functions are devolved to the five directors [the Executive Leadership Team] in the Village, distributed leadership goes deeper than this. It is concerned with the allocation of responsibilities within and across the organization. An increasing range of staff, therefore, at all levels [the Wider Leadership Team], have distributed responsibility for key functions (Smith, 2008:4).

Diagram 2 here

Diagram 3 here

Discussion

The Education Village leadership structure is characteristic of several distributed leadership models commencing with Day's (2006) reference to Gronn's description of distributed leadership as a formal structure arising from design and Serpieri et al,'s (2009) *delegated* concept of distributed leadership as a device of organizational design that focuses and stresses the positional aspects of social structure, roles and procedures' (Serpieri et al, 2009:218). We then see a three pronged distributed leadership structure that includes Leithwood et al,'s (2007) *planful alignment* coupled with Day et al,'s (2009) *purposeful distributed leadership,* where people in the Executive Leadership Team were placed in specific leadership roles by the Education Village Executive Director and others into the Wider Leadership Team by the Executive Director and the Executive Leadership Team. Both leadership teams were also formed through a redesign process that focused on the main characteristics of redesigned work as outcomes of distributed leadership including skill variety, task identity and meaningfulness and a balance between autonomy and interdependence (Mayrowetz et al, 2007). We also see evidence of Spillane and Diamond (2007) 'stretched' perspective that includes types of co-leading including collaborative, collective and coordinated distribution Benson and Blackman (2010) usefully suggest that most distributed leadership models would most likely include collective responsibility and flexibility where there should be a shift from a traditional leadership hierarchy to one that crosses undefined boundaries and this is a key underlying philosophy of the Education Village concept. In the wider field Currie et al, (2009: 677) see the development of hybrid models as a *menu of leadership possibilities* may be drawn upon. As a result of extensive and complex leadership theories in use, the Education Village federated leadership model is an intricate one comprising a hybrid model of several distributed leadership theories where the importance of cross organizational leadership roles, collaboration and integration are evident (Harris and Muijs, 2003, Currie et al 2009).

The overall approach to distributed leadership is institutionalized practice arising from design (Gronn, 2000), and is top down leadership co-existing with distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006; Serpieri et al, 2009). The commonality between Gronn's and Spillane's models seems to be *conjoint agency* and *inter-dependancy* respectively so both models are applicable so long as relationships between people, structures and the organization are addressed. What is notable is a shift from the person solo (leader as hero), as indicaed in Diagram 1, to personal plus (collaborative leadership), indicative of Spillane's (2005) leader plus perspective, and is stretched to include co-leadership (Spillane, 2006; Spillane and Diamond, 2007). The distributed leadership theories having most significance for the Education Village are:

- Mayrowetz (2007) workforce remodeling perspective.
- Harris (2008a) purposefully redesigned leadership.
- Day (2009) planned alignment.
- Serpieri et al, (2009) positional delegated concept.

Senior staff in the Education Village schools purposefully redesigned leadership in order to meet their particular context rather than borrow structures from other schools (Harris, 2008a). The Education Village leadership structure reflects a break away from the constraints of traditional school design. Furthermore, not only did they change leadership roles and leadership responsibilities but most importantly the head teacher and other senior leaders relinquished some of their responsibility **and** autonomy in order for wider leaders to

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undertake their roles as and where necessary (Benson and Blackman, 2010) (readers please note that finer detail about who and how the leadership was redesigned and changing responsibilities are beyond the remit and limitations of this paper but will be addressed in future ones) . In Diagram 2 we see how the Executive Leadership Team is positioned based on their prior experience. In Diagram 3 we see the leadership structure that was in place when the Education Village opened its doors for the first time (the Executive Director and Executive Leadership Team are presented in purple and the Wider Leadership Team in pink, green and blue) and here we see cross organizational roles that than roles within individual schools. Spillane and Diamond's (2007) stretched distributed leadership is strongly indicated by the Executive Leader level. Although less evident, this is also true for the Wider Leadership Team (notice that there are no individual school names in the revised 2007 structure), this team was formed largely as an outcome of workforce reform (Mayrowetz, 2007). However, both leadership teams emerged from organizational redesign (Harris, 2008a) with an ensuing federated leadership model formed through positional delegation and purposeful and planned alignment. There is a concept of a 'leadership partnership' comprising the Executive Director, the Executive Leadership Team and the Wider Leadership Team, who are drawn from all three schools in the federation, in operation in the Education Village (Senge, 1999; Balkundi and Kilduff, 2005; Stacey and Griffin, 2005; Ensley et al, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Pearce and Conger, 2007; Archer and Cameron, 2009; Fernandezet al, 2010; Higgs and Rowland, 2011).

There is clear evidence that an executive leadership model, where a headteacher leads more than one school (Harris, 2005a), and several theories of distributed leadership have shaped (and continue to do so), the Education Village (Bolden, 2011; Edwards, 2011). The Education Village federated leadership structure represents a new way to structure a school and different ways of working with teachers in a more integrated and cross-organisational leadership structure. The demise of three schools, new legislation and relentless leadership by a highly driven Executive Director based upon her vision for inclusivity, for both teachers and students, led to the bringing about of the Education Village. The bringing together of three schools onto one purpose built site to be led by one 'federated' leadership structure had implications for how what leadership theories are drawn upon. Leadership theories in use in the Education Village are wide ranging and a complex blend of an executive model, distributed leadership and traditional education leadership theories that form a new federated leadership model. It is widely viewed as having been highly successful both in terms of the change process and in terms of the educational outcomes the leaders are now delivering. From a conceptual stage, it was clear that the Education Village would be something different from what had gone before, both in terms of external and internal structures and systems – new organizational form, new build, new *Federated leadership*.

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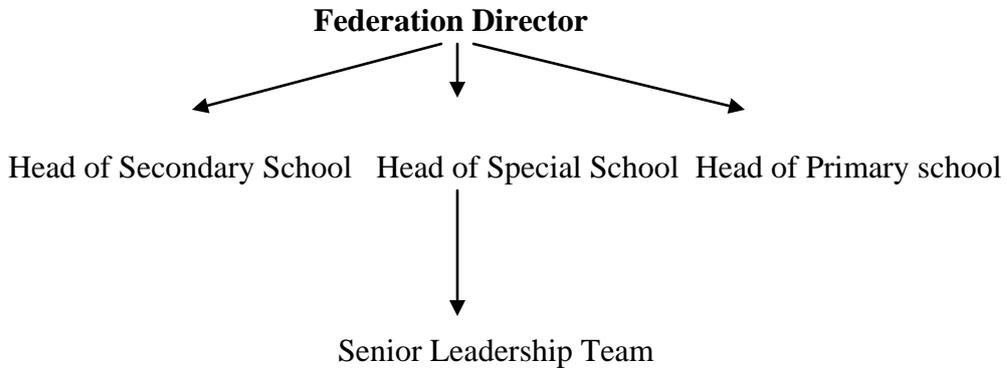
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Diagram 1. The Original Proposed Leadership Structure

Federation Director

Head of Secondary School   Head of Special School   Head of Primary school

Senior Leadership Team

Diagram 2. The Executive Leadership Team Structure showing relevant experience prior to joining the Education Village (red text) and their leadership role in the Executive Leadership Team (black text) immediately prior to operational stage.

ED	ELT1	ELT2	ELT3	ELT4	ELT5	ELT6
• Led merger of three special schools • Led the Education Village concept as Executive Director	• Designed inclusion awards • Director of Inclusion	• Experienced in SEBD • Director of Pupl Engagement and welfare	• Experienced in managing public money • Director of Business Strategy	• Led major capital projects • Director of Community	• Secondary eduation • Deputy Head Haughton School	• Secondary education • Director of Project Devel'pment

Diagram 3.The Education Village Distributed Leadership Structure on becoming operational

Darlington Education Village
Leadership Team Structure
Updated September 2007