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Paper 1:
New Structural Arrangements, New Models of Leadership and School Improvement:
What's the evidence?

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Abstract

This paper outlines five structural arrangements Federations, Academies, All-through Schools Trusts, Managed Structures and draws on the available literature to argue the evidence base for new leadership models is somewhat limited in scope, with only a few large-scale projects. Using England as an example the paper reports that most of the evidence is drawn from small, descriptive case studies and vignettes, often based on self-reported developments. Of the 70 English sources scrutinized for the NCSL study into New Models of Leadership, 52 report research funded by the Department or its agencies (NCSL, SSAT etc). Only 18 sources were independently funded.

The literature describes the current scene as one where there is a lot of activity taking place, much of it planned locally, and one where governors, headteachers and schools are seeking to collaborate in a range of ways which are producing a variety of organizational arrangements to deliver both improved educational standards and enhanced ECM outcomes for the students and wider communities they serve. However, this situation is shifting very quickly, with gains, losses, and developments happening rapidly and in ways that may not be immediately or fully understood. The literature suggests that collaborative activity can be highly political, contextually determined, and often underpinned by long-term personal relationships between key people involved. Incentives to collaborate tend to be focused around responses to educational failure, the securing of increased resources, or concerns about maintaining strategic advantage in the local educational marketplace. It is interesting to note there are few studies which have examined failed collaboration attempts in any detail.

In summary, the research literature currently available provides only a partial account of developments on the ground- The literature is more comprehensive in some areas than in others, tends to be descriptive rather than analytic and has many gaps. This is in part because the pace of development is so rapid that many of the available studies are being overtaken by events. As yet, there can be little, if any, substantive evidence of the impact of emerging models of leadership on student outcomes or students' experiences of schooling.

New Structural Arrangements, New Models of Leadership and School Improvement: What's the evidence?

Introduction

This study set out to examine emerging practice within various specific organisational arrangements, looking specifically for evidence of new developments. In this accompanying review we summarise what we learnt from our reading of previous research in this area. Given the newness of these developments, it is hardly surprising that this literature is relatively sparse. Nevertheless, it did provide us with some helpful leads in carrying out the study. Study commissioned by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) was guided by the initial work conducted by PriceWaterhouseCooper (2007) which attempted to map the terrain and provided a loose typology of organisational arrangements and emerging forms of leadership. In what follows we summarise available literature in relation to five of the forms they identified and which our study was concerned. The new organisational arrangements we focus on are:

- Managed structures
- Secondary federations
- All-through schools
- Academies
- Trust schools

As we summarise the literature in relation to this typology, it quickly becomes apparent that there is little research evidence available, particularly in terms of the impact of the new arrangements. It is also clear that the five categories overlap in a way that challenges their usefulness as a framework for analysing developments in leadership practice.

Managed structures

There is some uncertainty regarding the exact definition of this form of organisation. In their report, PricewaterhouseCooper (2007) define 'managed structures' as arrangements that have developed because of the limitations of traditional models. They note that while most schools still have a headteacher as the main leader - delegating leadership to others in the school in a variety of ways - this approach is under pressure because 'the current policy environment is placing significant stress on the sustainability of this model and that schools may need to begin to move away from it in order to ensure that pupil standards and pupil welfare are protected' (xi).

As yet, there is no literature available from independently funded studies related to this particular category. However, twelve relevant studies were identified, all of which were funded by government agencies, including the PricewaterhouseCoopers report itself. They included the evaluation of the pilot of the Remodelling the School Workforce initiative (Butt and Gunter, 2007) and a scoping study for the NCSL on the role of School Business Managers (Woods, 2007). In addition, there is a case study of Kingswood School, funded by the Innovation Unit, which examined the redesign of school change through an inclusive approach to decision-making. As noted, a key factor is that of shared headships and so we included studies by Court (2003) and Paterson (2003). There is a strong normative approach around managed structures and, with this in mind, we also looked at Coleman's (2006) advice and guidance on how to collaborate.

The review suggests two overall features of managed structures. These focus on the internal restructuring of schools in order to:

- ❑ **Distribute roles and responsibilities.** A key feature here is the development of a diverse workforce that enables those with QTS to focus on teaching and learning; for example the involvement of non-teaching staff on the senior leadership team. Research indicates that the wider workforce has grown in number and role (Gunter and Butt 2007a; 2007b; Lance et al. 2007, Woods 2007, Hollins et al. 2006).
- ❑ **Include other agencies.** This embraces the idea of a range of agencies in the same premises, together with membership of the school leadership team, and so there are examples that are

currently included in other parts of this review that would relate to this approach. An interesting example of what is involved is the Darlston Collaborative which works with a range of agencies, though it is not clear how the governance, leadership and management arrangements operate (Chapman, 2006).

The available literature does not suggest that governance has been affected by the development of managed structures. Indeed, none of the studies mention this issue and it seems that such arrangements do not have a requirement or expectation to establish supra decision-making boards or committees.

As with other parts of this review (see, in particular, the section below on secondary federations), much of the literature on managed structures is focused on the role of headteachers. For example, the NCSL (2006) study into primary strategy consultants gives pre-eminence to the single headteacher who has the skills of leading a successful school. Studies of co-headship (e.g. Paterson, 2006) examine job shares (i.e. two part-time heads) or joint heads (i.e. both heads working full time). However, there is no evidence provided of how these arrangements actually operate, and how the roles and responsibilities of other members of the workforce are affected by this arrangement.

Internationally, Court (2003) provides examples of shared leadership from Canada, England, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and the USA, and identifies approaches that are more radical. While the usual hierarchy is evident, she identifies teacher leadership arrangements where a team of teachers took on the former principal leader's work and responsibilities. Examples from Oregon, Norway, and New Zealand are used to show how teachers are appointed from within the staff, and develop democratic practices and cultures.

This form of capacity building has not been a feature of English schools, where usually leadership is developed through hierarchical roles, combined with the delegation of responsibilities. Unlike the examples presented by Court, distributed leadership usually involves a largely 'top down' approach. According to the literature, the main thrust for shared headship arrangements is in response to the stress of the job, or as a result of an inability to fill posts, rather than to increase participation and democratic practices. While work-life balance is recognised as a reason within policy texts for remodelling the school workforce, the evidence shows that reform has not recognised how teacher job satisfaction or how local conditions may impact on hours of work (Butt and Gunter 2007).

In terms of the impact of managed structures, there are no empirical studies from which to draw conclusions; neither is there research evidence on value for money. On the other hand, there are studies which examine what schools are doing on the ground and offer evidence of apparent gains. For example, Chapman (2003) examines the improvement of a school in challenging circumstances which improved its five A*-C GCSE scores from below 15% to over 25% (six years later the same school achieved 76% five A*-Cs). This school focused on building capacity through structural change, team building and distributing leadership. Similarly, Gunter and Butt (2007a) provide evidence which shows that schools sustained and continued to develop organisational changes, with reports of improvements in student outcomes. Hollins et al. (2006) describe the long-term nature of working in a successful school and bringing about a range of innovations through staff participation.

Co-headship is reported as having benefits. So, for example, Paterson (2006) presents these in terms of dealing with the recruitment and retention crisis. He argues that the success of co-headship depends on 'the leadership pairing and their match with the needs of the school...' He goes on: '... co-headship appears to offer a creative response to the challenges of contemporary school leadership and looming headteacher shortages' (p8). Court (2003) agrees about the personal aspects to making this successful but focuses on mutual learning by identifying the need for time for reflection, a commitment to experimentation, and the need to negotiate on pedagogic practices.

Secondary Federations

Secondary federations can be located on a continuum from 'soft' to 'hard'. There are no major empirical studies of such forms of organisation in the secondary sector. With the exception of the large-scale DCSF evaluation of federations (Lindsay et al 2007) the evidence base is a series of small-scale studies that are reported on the DCSF and Innovation Unit websites. Nevertheless, 14 sources were identified as being in

some ways relevant. These include accounts of secondary school collaborations that were not formally defined as federations. All but two of these accounts were from government financed projects and publications. They include studies of schools in collaboration in a neighbourhood (e.g. Harris 2005), a town (e.g. Wokingham 2007), a city (e.g. Ainscow et al. 2006, Ainscow and Howes 2007) and a region (e.g. Coulton 2006). We also drew on a paper by Ridowski (2005) on the role of business interests in federations.

Examples described on the DFES/Standards Site (2007) indicate that there is a range of local circumstances and histories that underpin the establishment and development of secondary federations. One of these describes a federation in Plymouth of three schools that has been established for 15 years. The schools collaborate on post-16 education, with joint planning, governor decision-making, professional development and workforce innovations. A Secondary School Federation in Cambridge has developed a whole city approach to curriculum planning and there is a middle leadership development programme. Peak 11 is a federation of Derbyshire secondary schools, where heads work with the Local Authority on developing strategies for disaffected pupils.

Some federations are about partnering schools together for particular purposes; for example, the VIP soft federation between a grammar and a community high school (Innovation Unit 2005), another federation focused on improving Key Stage 2 and 3 transition (Chapman and Allen, 2006) and another involved three schools partnering with an urban high school in challenging circumstances (Ainscow et al. 2006). Harris (2005) reports on the merger between two schools with a new leadership team and staffing. Examples such as these show the trend to undertake joint planning and to examine provision, and, in some cases, to focus on a particular problem that they all share.

The evidence is that most secondary federations retain separate headteachers and governing bodies for each of the partner schools. What seems to be the trend is to create collaborative meeting structures with a range of purposes, for example:

‘Sector 3’ in the East Midlands: here schools collaborate on a school improvement project aimed at raising attainment at KS4. The five schools are part of a much larger collaboration including: the Local Authority, a private education consultancy, and 19 secondary schools across the Local Authority (Coulton 2006).

West Sussex Federation: The four schools involved are a ‘soft’ federation, where the joint Governing Committee has delegated powers (formed under School Governance Regulations, 2003). Each school retains its own headteacher and governing body (DfES Standards Site 2007).

St Thomas More and St Edmond Campion Schools: This Federation, which consists of two secondary schools, operates through a committee with delegated powers under the Education Act 2002. It is led by an executive headteacher, who has overall responsibility. However, each school retains its own governance and leadership arrangements. The main aim has been to enhance links between the two schools through common aims and objectives, sharing policies and good practice, and common staff development programmes. The Federation is also enhancing links with primary schools, local community and parents.

The evidence from the literature on secondary federations is that governance based on community and stakeholder interests is being retained and strengthened. With the exception of one example of two schools merging, all the schools have retained their own governing bodies, and there is no indication of any new or innovative forms of governance taking place.

The general pattern across the examples is one of headteacher meetings, sometimes with one taking on the role of executive. In some instances, there are strategic cross school, town or city governing committees. These are based on a desire to examine and develop overall provision in a more strategic way. This is facilitated by moving decision-making upwards to embrace a wider geographical area.

The available literature does not suggest new forms of leadership or management, though - as with managed structures - there is some evidence of the sorts of re-thinking of management roles that were triggered off

much earlier by the introduction of local management of schools. The examples we found show the continuing dominance of leadership as a feature of position within in the hierarchy. For example, Ainscow and Howes' (2007) account of collaborative processes amongst groups of secondary schools in a city describes how, while various patterns emerged within the partnerships, '...it was mainly the school leaders, supported by the framework of the project, who determined what collaboration might mean in their group, and in their individual schools' (p. 289). Similarly, Ainscow et al's (2006) study of collaborative support arrangements for an urban high school, explains how a newly appointed headteacher, in partnership with three local heads, ensured that the final decisions were made within the school that was the focus of the improvement strategy.

Other accounts confirm the pre-eminence of the headteacher, whilst also providing some description on the part played by others. They mainly involve staff from across schools working together on various planning and implementation activities. For example, Coulton (2006) provides a description of a federation in the East Midlands which is said to have involved processes of both cultural and organisational collaboration. The collaboration has worked on developing a shared purpose through a strategic group of heads and an operational group of deputy heads. It has appointed a co-ordinator who has school leadership experience. The account states that heads were able to not only work in partnership with other heads but also to distribute leadership of the project to others in the school. However, no details are provided regarding what this means and how it works in practice.

While many of the sources make reference to the idea of capacity building within partner schools - particularly those that focus on schools where one is working with or merging with improve standards - there is little detail of what this might mean. More specifically, it is not clear if 'capacity' is seen as the ability for work to be distributed or delegated to others, or if it is a new experience of working across schools to do joint planning and/or professional development. At the same time, it is not always clear how those who are left to work in a school - while others work in schools in challenging situations - are affected, and how capacity might be affected in either productive or negative ways.

There are no significant studies of leadership effectiveness in regard to secondary federations. Similarly, there is little evidence regarding value for money, although it is argued that the collaborative efforts to turn round a secondary school in difficulties was seen as being more efficient than previous 'fresh start' strategies (e.g. Ainscow et al. 2006).

A large-scale evaluation of the Federation programme (Lindsay et al. 2007) suggests that headteacher leadership (alongside DfES financing) is seen as crucial to success. The report argues that there is strong evidence of the dominance of headteachers in the formation and development of federations. Directors of federations who were not also headteachers were recognised as taking on a facilitative role. Usually, middle managers were not directly involved in initiating federations but some played a key role in their day to day management. Patterns of involvement varied from those who had the opportunity to take on federation wide roles, to those who did not witness any changes to their work or the classroom. Variation in governance structures remained, with different arrangements within even the 'hard' types of Federations. This is consistent with the two main literature reviews (Arnold 2006, Glatter and Harvey 2006a and b), which state that the formation and development of federations is dependent on strong leadership. However, James et al (2007) make the point that too much emphasis is placed on leadership within individual organisations, rather than seeking to understand leadership within a system.

Distributed leadership is mainly practiced as forms of delegation, particularly in cases where heads are off-site through collaborative work and other members of staff take on previous headteacher roles. There is some evidence to suggest headteachers can feel disempowered by federal arrangements, perceiving their responsibility for one site within a federation as a down-grading in status (Chapman 2007). Work-life balance is not a feature of the literature but the accounts show a huge commitment to work and to making federations successful. There is no evidence about value for money, although a number of federations report the benefits of economies of scale (Lindsay et al, 2007).

The issue of wider involvement in the creation of federations is not a strong feature of the available accounts. So, for example, the potential role of students in decision-making for and about the creation of federations (and, indeed, other forms of collaboration) is rarely mentioned. A study by Lumby and Morrison

(forthcoming) uses notions of distributed leadership to examine how partnerships are developing and concludes that much of the theorising is within schools, rather than developing an external collaborative orientation. The authors argue that adults in schools tend to promote their own interests and that the interests of students are not always uppermost. They present evidence which suggests that the context of what is seen as an educational 'market place' dominates thinking and practice, such that collaboration is more about maintaining a strategic position in a competitive environment than about the public good. In another paper, Lumby and Morrison (2006) argue that there is a need to shift thinking towards the benefits of collaboration by examining notions of trust.

In terms of the impact of secondary federations, there is little evidence. What is available are case studies with self-reported impact, where gains are listed in regard to improvements in meeting national standards, together with gains in the provision of resources. For example, reference to capacity building is made on the Wokingham Secondary Schools Federation website. This explains shows how there has been joint staff development activities and subject working groups, but without providing evidence of the impact of these arrangements difference.

Coulton (2006) argues that federations can lead to a wider range of curriculum options being made available, particularly at the 14-19 stage. Ainscow and Howes (2007) describe how, in the city of Bradcaster, collaboration between groups of secondary schools led to some impact on student attainment and gains in relation to the reputations of particular schools.

All-Through Schools

This literature focuses on evidence relating to the growing number of schools that are organised through vertical integration (i.e. primary through to secondary). Here the definitions become rather blurred in that such arrangements may involve different forms of association, including hard and soft federations of primary, secondary and, sometimes, special schools.

Overall, 28 relevant sources were identified, 21 of which are from government financed projects and publications. They include two major government funded research projects: the PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) study into School Leadership, and the evaluation of the Federations Programme (Lindsay et al. 2007); and two reviews into the evidence base for collaboration (Arnold 2006) and models of shared headship (Glatter and Harvey 2006a and b). There are also examples of small-scale projects reported by those involved (e.g. Banks et al. 2002; Barnes 2005; DfES Standards Site Case Studies 2007; Innovation Unit Case Studies of Federations 2007), or by those commissioned to research and report on activity (e.g. Ainscow et al. 2006; Chapman and Allen 2006; Ireson 2007; Swidenbank 2007). In addition, we found relevant ideas in a paper by James et al (2007), which is not about all-through schools as such but has interesting things to say about collaborations; and an unpublished paper by Mongon (2007) on the development of systemic leadership. We also considered ideas from three papers on projects abroad: two from the USA (Grubb and Flessa 2006; Wohlstetter et al. 2003), and one from Australia (Thomson and Blackmore 2006), each examining aspects of structural and cultural association between schools.

Three examples of all-through schools helpfully describe organisational changes that have been taking place (Banks et al. 2002, and two Innovation Unit case studies). For example, the account of developments at Chalford Hundred Campus in Thurrock explains how integrated nursery, primary and secondary provision is linked to a community library and adult education provision. Here there is a leadership team of two headteachers, two assistant headteachers, and a business manager. At the Darlington Education Village three schools (primary, secondary, special) have been brought together with an executive head, one governing body, one management structure and a single curriculum. There is a strategic committee for each school which reports directly to the federation governing body. Similarly, Serlby Park is one school made up of a former infant, junior and secondary schools, where each site has a phase head and one acts as principal, with a single governing body.

The accounts indicate that there is a range of organisational structures, from single governing bodies through to autonomous schools with their own governing body and headteacher (Arnold 2006). The prevalence of schools retaining their own governing body and headteacher is evident, with 15 sources mentioning this as a feature. For example, the Shrewsbury Partnership for Education and Training - made up of seven secondary schools, one special school and two colleges - is a 'soft' federation, where the joint governing committee has

delegated powers (formed under School Governance Regulations 2003). The governors have worked on developing a joint approach through action planning, sharing of information, projects, personnel (e.g. clerk, project manager for subject co-ordinator meetings, CPD co-ordinator) and the shared involvement of advisers (some from the LEA and a media consultant). The federation – which involves separate schools and colleges, each with their own governance and leadership arrangements - has established a way of co-ordinating and collaborating on agreed aims and projects.

Another example shows a more integrated approach in which the Cumbria South Lakes Federation has formed a limited company. This Federation consists of eight secondary schools, one special school and one further education college. Each organisation has retained its own governance and leadership structures. A Federation board comprising the head/principal of each institution has been formed, with an executive of lead headteachers, an executive officer and consultants in teaching, learning and ITT. There are also other leadership roles within the Federation; e.g. the formation of an enhanced Federation CPD group of senior leaders, and a co-ordinated system of school self-evaluation and peer review. It is reported that the Federation has enhanced links between the schools and the local community through the establishment of strategic partnerships, including education business partnerships, the local business education consortium, Connexions, Aimhigher, the LEA, HE and FE institutions, the LSC and work-based providers.

The evidence is that within the various all-age arrangements that are developing, governance based on community and stakeholder interests is being retained and strengthened. Where all-through school governing committees or groups are being formed, these are usually based on a reallocation of work from one group to another, rather than a fundamental rethinking of governance. However, there is no evidence of new or innovative forms of governance emerging.

Similarly, there is no evidence of new forms of leadership or management emerging in the all-through schools. As with secondary federations, however, there are indications of the redesign of management roles. Capacity building is seen as largely being about the identification of new roles to deliver collaborative tasks, where more people are working vertically and horizontally between schools/agencies.

Overall, the literature on all-through schools suggests that leadership remains a feature of role and hierarchy, rather than as a communal and relational concept (Gunter 2005). We found no evidence of the more unusual approaches identified by Grubb and Flessa (2006) in the USA where they found examples of rotating principals, where key decisions are made in teacher committees; and an instance of four people running a school without a principal. Similarly, the position of children and young people decision-making processes is not written about, apart from a few examples referring to student councils or parliaments involved in the operation of school-to-school collaborations.

Whilst there is apparently great enthusiasm for all-through schools, there is little evidence as to their impact. From accounts written by those involved, the gains can be grouped as follows: first, personal and group learning for adults and students; second, organisational efficiencies through pooling resources; and, third, an extension and strengthening of provision through integration and joint staffing. Particular mention should be made here of the impact on the integration of learners with special educational needs that is facilitated by the co-location of special schools within mainstream contexts (Ainscow, 2006).

Academies

The development of academies has been occurring at an increasing rate in the last few years. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there is very little literature beyond those sources that argue for and against the general principle. 13 relevant sources were identified, five of which are from government financed projects and publications. The DCSF has a site where academies are explained and advocated. Other sources consulted include: the DCSF Standards site, which describes and provides examples of academies; the PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) study into school leadership; a vignette of the Harris Federation of South London academies on the Innovation Unit site; a leaflet distributed by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (Prentice 2007); and, significantly, the evaluation of the programme by PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The Academies programme has attracted the attention of researchers more than the other four categories. Many of the resulting publications are about the initiative itself and the way it is operating (Beckett 2007; Gorard 2005; Needham and Gleeson 2006; Rogers and Mignuolo 2007; Woods et al. 2007), and more

targeted analyses of local responses (Hatcher 2007; Wilby 2007; Woods et al, 2007). The challenge faced by some independent researchers is access; for example, two trade union sponsored projects (i.e. Needham and Gleeson 2006; Rogers and Migniuolo 2007) received few questionnaire returns. An independently funded project on leadership in one academy by Woods, Woods and Gunter will report in late 2008.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) report on school leadership provides little detail on what is distinctive about an academy in terms of governance, leadership and management. Indeed, whilst it examines the progress of academies through the use of surveys, interviews and an examination of data sets, there is no evidence provided of how leadership, management and governance are distinctive from other state schools.

Some sources suggest that governance is dominated by sponsors (e.g. Beckett 2007; Woods et al. 2007), with the public conceptualised as consumers rather than as citizens (Hatcher 2007). A case study provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) shows a division between strategy governance, controlled by the sponsor, and the local governing body, where implementation decisions are taken. Sponsors need not invite teachers on to governing bodies, though there is evidence that they do. Rogers and Migniuolo (2007) provide some evidence that teachers in academies feel that they have less involvement in decision-making. There are also some concerns about how sponsors may influence the curriculum.

There is evidence of how some parent groups are operating in relating to proposals to establish academies (Needham and Gleeson, 2006). For example, some parents are campaigning for community schools in areas where there is a gap in provision, or seeking to protect schools threatened with closure, in opposition to proposals to set up academies. These authors go on to conclude that academies need to be brought into partnership with local authorities, so that governance arrangements can engage with issues that affect the strategic provision of schools, such as how to handle surplus places. More recently, such approaches have been encouraged by Government documentation on academies (DfES, 2007).

There is no evidence to suggest that distinctive approaches to leadership and management are emerging within academies. Attention is drawn to the high turn over of principals, which, somewhat surprisingly, Beckett (2007) calculates as an average 'life expectancy' of six months (see also Needham and Gleeson 2006). The main thrust of official descriptions and reports about academies is on what some would see as leader-centric approaches. For example, the DCSF Standards Site (2007) identifies the key role of the principal as 'leading their Academies towards excellence'. Emphasis is also placed on working with sponsors and partners in developing ethos and in planning for development. Here, no mention is made of teachers, or the wider workforce, in decision-making.

A more detailed account is provided about the Harris Federation in London, which involves six academies, a single board of trustees and a single board of governors (Innovation Unit 2007). Prentice (2007), in a four-page leaflet distributed by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, outlines the structure and outcomes of this Federation, but with little mention of leadership and management. The emphasis is on the role of the principal rather than on leadership more generally. There is an emphasis on school-to-school collaboration as a means of raising standards. There is also an emphasis on students and staff being part of the Harris Federation 'brand'.

There is no literature, as yet, that focuses on key issues regarding academies, such as the remit requirements regarding capacity building, distributed leadership, work-life balance, leadership effectiveness or value for money. One commissioned evaluation of the programme (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007) provides some evidence of impact. The report emphasizes the importance of strong leadership in transforming a previously failing school. It argues that strong and stable leadership is critical in setting vision and strategy in the start up period. Sponsors are generally seen as a positive element, particular through their access to resources and networks. Some sponsor-principal relationships are based on mentoring and some are hands off. Principals are, it is argued, generally highly regarded by sponsors, staff, parents and pupils. Claims are made of new leadership models developing, particularly with executive principals supporting a group of schools. However, as our review indicates, these are new organizational arrangements rather than new models of leadership. Furthermore, such arrangements are not a distinctive feature of academies, since some schools under local authority control are working in similar ways. Importantly, there are no comparative studies to show how what is being done in academies is distinctive from other forms of schooling.

Some writers have focused on strategic issues related to the academies policy, and so leadership and management are not engaged with directly. So, for example, the impact of having sponsors dominate governance is identified by some authors as being about the transfer of public assets into private ownership. They go on to discuss how private interests – for example, views about the purposes of schools and issues in community regeneration - are being given more attention than those of the wider public who live in those communities (Beckett 2007, Woods et al. 2007).

Gleeson (2006) refers to academy principals as being ‘in a goldfish bowl’, under immense pressure to meet targets and reach national standards. Meanwhile, Gorard (2005) raises questions regarding standards, noting that sponsors, governors, and principals may select up to 10% and that this can impact on any claims for improvement. He also suggests that improvements in GCSE outcomes may be attributed to a fall in students who are eligible for free school meals, rather than as a result of ‘innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum’ (375). Gorard argues that limited evidence at this stage has not prevented claims of success being made by the government and by academies themselves.

Some studies provide a critical examination of how the regulations have been used in ways to advantage particular people and groups (Beckett 2007; Hatcher 2007). Rogers and Migniuolo (2007) also articulate concerns about the dominance of private interests. However, they do note that in the DfES (2007) prospectus *400 Academies: Prospectus for Sponsors and Local Authorities*, it is clear that local authorities are now more actively involved in the academies programme and that government is stressing the importance of the link between local provision and academies.

Trust Schools

Our review of the literature review revealed no empirical studies about this very new form of organisation. The three publications we considered are: first, a DfES (2006) booklet that outlines what Trust Schools are and how to go about securing Trust status; second, the PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) study of school leadership, which acknowledges the development of Trust Schools; and third, a DEMOS (2007) report which examines the implications of Trust Schools for governance.

Both the DfES (2006) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) texts make the case for Trust Schools, and the former notes the importance of leadership. It is advocated that, within trusts, forms of leadership needs to be 'strong' because this 'gives schools a clear sense of purpose and direction, and makes sure that resources and effort are focused on increasing opportunity and raising standards'. However, the document does not say who should exercise this leadership function. It goes on to say that the governing body is the place to explore and agree a Trust status application.

The DEMOS report examines the implications of Trusts for governance and is a helpful contribution to thinking about this important issue. It presents six scenarios:

Conglomerate or branded schools, with entrepreneurial leadership, e.g. like Tesco, with a CEO as the form of leadership

Community governance, like a political federation, with leaders at different levels (macro, meso, micro), where issues of the balance between the centre and locality needing to be considered.

An **Alliance**, with collaboration and pooling of resources e.g. NATO. This form of leadership will need possible diplomatic or military models.

The **Self organising network** e.g. peer review, Wikipedia, eBay, where leadership would emerge from within through peer recognition.

Employee owned school networks, where, for example, teachers might own a school in partnership and leadership would be provided through partnerships of professionals.

Consumer governed schools, with parent trusts governing and leading the school, e.g. as in parts of Scandinavia and US. Governance would be through a school council, with parents being actively involved in performance management, budgets and could be balloted on policy changes.

The report goes on to argue that each of the scenarios has different implications for how leadership, leading and leaders are conceptualised. The key issue, it argues, is that of authority: Who has it? How is it exercised? And, to what effect? Other important questions are: How do current governance and political arrangements interconnect with these scenarios? What are the issues of accountability, communication and decision-making. Importantly, these scenarios raise broader questions about existing structures for national and local governance. It is out of the scope of this report to engage any further with these issues, except to add that the Demos paper provides a useful way of examining, more generally, what is currently happening and what might happen, whilst stimulating questions regarding participation in decisions about change.

Concluding remarks

Our review of literature reveals that, across the country, significant restructuring of schools is taking place and that this leading to interesting new thinking regarding leadership, management and governance. However, as we have seen, the existing literature is mainly descriptive and does not report much evidence of significantly new forms of leadership and management emerging within the organisational structures that are developing. This is why this particular study is potentially so important in that it should begin to fill this gap in the literature.

The extensive involvement of members of the University of Manchester team in the field prior to carrying out this study led us to be enthusiastic about looking more closely at some of the interesting developments that are occurring. In particular, we were keen to look at the extent to which any new developments in leadership were increasing the capacity of schools to innovate. More specifically, we took with us into our field work a deep concern with the agenda of finding ways of improving overall standards across the education system, whilst, at the same time, reducing the gap between high and low achieving groups of learners.

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