



# **6<sup>th</sup> World Education Alliance Congress**

**Jan 26<sup>th</sup> 2011**



# **Leadership in an era of curriculum reform**

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# Education reform

- Central to government thinking
- Global
- Engine of change and competitive progress
- Creates a need for schools and teachers to develop
- Here to stay!

School as servant + as model for citizenship



# Curriculum reform

- Key feature of global educational reform
- Changes *everything* in schools

# Many changes with education reform here in Hong Kong



- content: what is taught and learned, for example
  - Learning to learn not simply to know
  - Whole person education
- process:
  - in teaching and learning
  - in assessment *for* learning,
- how long students are in school
- what being at school is about.....



# Leading to.....changes in



- relationships in school: how teachers and learners work together
- wider relationships: how schools relate to
  - their parents,
  - communities,
  - employers
  - higher education
- School Leadership must reflect these.....

# What I'd like to discuss today



- Who are the leaders?
- What is leadership in an era of reform?
- What leadership might be most useful?

# B.E.R. model of leadership



- Formal school leader..Principal
- Stereotype *was*
  - Principal is 'king' .....or 'queen'!
- Firm leadership (nobody argued!)
- Clear fixed vision
- Top down decisions
- One way communication



# National Association of State Boards of Education (US,2010)



- The notion of a **superhero** principal ..is obsolete.
- The challenge of school reform is far too complex for any single individual.
- **Superhero** idea dangerous in an era of reform.....

# National Board's solution?



- a new paradigm of school leadership
  - a distributive model that involves teacher leaders.
  - all members of the school community have knowledge and expertise that can benefit the school as a whole.
- 
- not just dividing up the work
  - engaging school personnel as active co-participants.

# Recent ideas on leadership



- *Distributed*
- *Transformational*
- *Servant*
- *Teacher*
- *Student*
- All move away from concept of hierarchy
- All encourage widespread participation
- Many leaders not one
- They focus on leadership tasks + functions

# Educational reform and teacher participation



Tatto (2007) argued that, globally

- Reform in education happened in two ways: **to** teachers and **with** teachers
- **With** teacher participation, teacher motivation and commitment were better sustained

# Is teacher participation attractive and workable?



- Active engagement of staff (and students) in school (and wider) policy making and implementation offers opportunities AND threats
- Opportunities to
  - contribute ideas, views, suggestions,
  - draw on expertise and values to shape events
- Threats to
  - some of those with traditional power
  - those reluctant to take responsibility



# Legitimate professional concerns of teachers



- Participation in school development takes time from teaching and learning tasks
- Adds to current criticisms: paperwork and accountability steal time from 'core' work
- Not wise to simply dismiss as 'resistance'

# Evidence of teacher impact on school development



- Impact of Principal's leadership is mediated by teacher leadership, Muijs and Harris (2002), UK,
- Teacher leaders bring 'sophisticated capabilities' which affect teaching and learning in classroom and impact on wider school, Katyal and Evers (2004), HK



# Leadership in schools

- All ideas cannot come from formal leader/manager
  
- May come from
  - Colleagues
  - Collaboration in school
  - Collaboration beyond school

'Formal' Leaders can facilitate these

If they don't, they won't work



So ..

- What can formal leaders do to facilitate teacher participation in the development of teaching and learning?

# What might Collaboration look like?



- McGregor (2003) argues that for progress to be made teachers need to
  - engage in concrete talk about practice
  - plan research and evaluate together
  - share core values

*Leaders need to establish supportive structures for joint work*



## Collaboration in school: some challenges reported by teachers (Leonard, 2002)



- Lack of expectation or support for regular substantial collaboration
- Teachers' work is competitive and individualistic
- Work context lacks trust and care
- Need to share values and practice but respect diversity
- Dissatisfaction with scheduling of collaboration
- Professional development for collaborative skills

# Lieberman and Miller (2007)



- Potential roles of teacher leaders:
  - reculturing schools
  - building community
- 
- As well as developing teaching and learning!

# Blasé and Kirby (2009) suggest:



- Teacher leadership can be supported by
  - Empowering and supporting teachers
  - Praise
  - High expectation
  - Inclusion in strategy and developments
  - Giving and ensuring autonomy
  - Supporting not directing
  - Using the 'language of suggestion'

# For staff to participate, they need to believe



- they have something to offer
- they will be heard
- that actions will follow from some suggestions
- it is acceptable to offer half a thought or a question
- it is acceptable to suggest something 'different'
- that new ideas will not be taken as a personal criticism of current practice
- that participating will not be regarded simply as a career motivated act
- that rewards for progress will be shared

*These beliefs are shaped by how formal leaders  
act.....*



## .....what can teachers do?

- Offer ideas
- Volunteer for tasks
- Talk about their teaching with colleagues
- Suggest how the context might be improved to help them work better
- Speak up when they have a view
- Help others develop
- Be activist professionals (Sachs,2000)



# Working with colleagues beyond the school



- Professional learning communities (Fullan, Senge, McLaughlin, Wenger)
- One example of application in Hong Kong

Professional development schools programme

- Networks of schools share experiences and provide support



# Leadership must consider

- Logistics of participation
- Staff are schools' key resource
- Evidence showing teachers are stressed
- Work-life balance (wlb) for personal and professional life and development
- Humane (teachers are people!) but also strategic
- 'Commitment' is engagement, not a life sentence



# Work life balance issues

- Scheduling of collaboration and meetings
- Trust: when and where people work
- Agreeing priorities: what won't be done?
- Modelling professional AND whole person development.....

# Student leadership: the sleeping dragon!



(Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, Owen, 2005)

- Enabling leaders in schools and classrooms
- Leadership in the curriculum *and* modelled in how schools work
- Leadership skills for all students of all ages
- Long way to go..many challenges ahead
- *Increasingly the test of education systems is not how well they cater for their elite, for all do that quite well, but how they cater for everyone else..*

# Final thoughts and conclusions



- The role of formal school leaders/managers is to try to create the conditions under which teachers and students can do their best.
- Teacher engagement is crucial to progress
- Everyone in school can play a leadership role in reform
- But someone is needed to organise and support it!





# Leadership is not dead

- Its just changing shape!

Thank you!



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