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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
The notion of a superhero principal is obsolete.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
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!

(Katzenmetyer & 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

- It's just changing shape!

Thank you!
references