

# *'Roots and Wings'*

## International Programme for School Leadership



*'There are two values which you can give your child as a present for life – first of all: Roots, and then: Wings' – American Indian proverb.*

## **Introduction**

Between 2002 and 2004, I have the privilege of being a participant in an innovative international school leadership development programme. This promotes collaborative work between nine trios of three headteachers from each of the following education authorities:

Velje, Denmark;  
Tuscany, Italy;  
Carmarthenshire/Ceredigion, Wales.

The aims of the whole programme are to:

- Raise school effectiveness, especially pupil learning, by developing leadership;
- Foster international understanding;
- Provide challenge for individual school leaders to develop;
- Use action based, inquiry approaches;
- Foster leadership mentoring;
- Develop a transnational model of leadership.

The main activities during the programme are:

- Professional development, focusing on leadership effectiveness;
- School development, identifying an appropriate theme based on an organisational challenge;
- Mentoring and coaching, by personal and electronic means.

Programme delivery involves a series of reflective conferences for all 27 headteachers in each of the three participating countries (Denmark, Italy, Wales), followed by collaborative working as trios, in the form of action research in each other's schools.

My partner headteachers are:

Signora Paola Conti, headteacher of the Istituto D'Istruzione Superiore Raffaello Magiotti, Montevarchi, Tuscany, Italy;  
and Mr Karsten Damgaard, headteacher of Jeulsminde Folkschool, Velje, Denmark.

The first cycle, in September 2002, took place in West Wales. The second cycle was held in Tuscany between 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2003. It involved the following activities:

7<sup>th</sup> March 2003 – travelling to Tuscany from Carmarthenshire;

8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> March 2003 – introductory conference for participating heads. This was held at the Hotel Demidoff, outside Florence. The conference facilitated deeper exploration of a number of leadership models (see below);  
10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> March 2003 – action research on the key leadership question agreed by my trio, in the Istituto D'Istruzione Superiore Raffaello Magiotti, Montevarchi;  
14<sup>th</sup> March 2003 – return travel to Carmarthenshire.

## **1. Key Points from the Demidoff Conference**

The main goals of the second cycle were to:

- Provide opportunities for coaching 'in order to do differently';
- To continue to build 'leaderful communities' (David Green) in each other's schools.

During the Conference, the following main issues emerged:

### **1.1 Conceptual basis for our action research**

Underpinning our work during the second cycle was the synthesis of complementary leadership paradigms:

#### **a) The Herrmann Profile – a model for individual leadership analysis**

This analyses leadership motivational preferences in relation to four brain quadrants:

**Quadrant A (blue)** – Rational/realistic: logical, quantitative, analytical, technical, and factual;

**Quadrant B (green)** – Practical/sensible: sequential, conservative, controlled, detailed, and organised;

**Quadrant C (red)** – Visceral/feeling-based: emotional, musical, humanistic, expressive, sensory;

**Quadrant D (yellow)** – Cognitive/idealistic: metaphoric, integrative, visual, synthesising, conceptual.

An analysis of leadership motivational styles showed that mine is an instinctive one, being informed by a triple dominant profile, encompassing

very strong scores on the interpersonal, emotional, musical, spiritual and communicative preferences, strong scores in quadrants B and D, and intermediate scores in quadrant A.

In this respect, we have established that, in order to improve one's leadership effectiveness, there was a need to tackle personal 'blind spots'. Thus, my own focus for development has been task-awareness, organisation and control.

### **b) The Intelligent School Model – MacGilchrist, Myers, Reed.**

As a trio, we have recognised that placing school improvement, school effectiveness, teaching and learning together has the potential for increasing a school's capacity for transformation. *This requires an intelligent analysis of the following complementary school leadership processes :*

1. ***Contextual intelligence*** relies on openness in truly describing the relationship between the school and the community.
2. ***Strategic intelligence*** relies on receptiveness to change, using contextual intelligence to establish clear goals.
3. ***Academic intelligence*** emphasises achievement and scholarship, but should be considered relative to the potential of each individual.
4. ***Reflective intelligence*** involves self- and team- monitoring and evaluation at all levels.
5. ***Pedagogical intelligence*** emphasises learning about learning, an exercise in empowerment.
6. ***Collegial intelligence*** views all individuals as learners, seeking to provide opportunities for all to learn.
7. ***Emotional intelligence*** values the expression of feelings.
8. ***Spiritual intelligence*** creates space to reflect on ultimate issues.
9. ***Ethical intelligence*** shows clarity of values and beliefs.

### **c) Hay McBer research into the relationship between Professional Characteristics, Leadership Styles and the Climate for School Improvement:**

In this model, based on research studies of leadership effectiveness, the dimensions of school climate are described as:

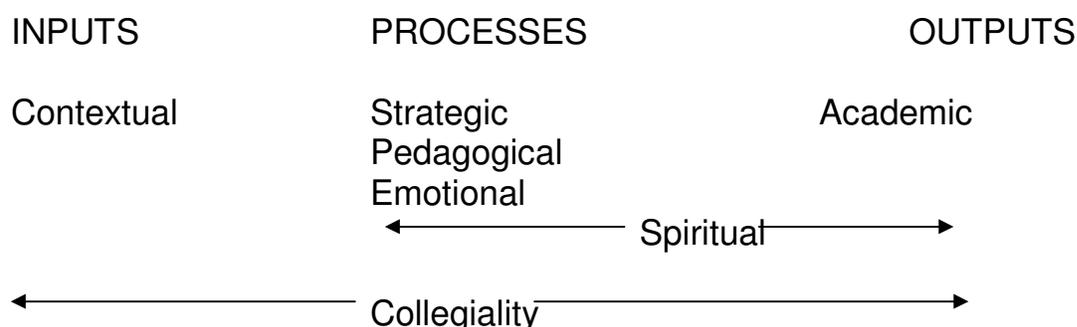
- Flexibility – behaviour which enables openness, showing a willingness to listen and to change
- Responsibility
- Standards – emphasis of any learning organisation
- Rewards
- Clarity of purpose
- Team commitment.

In this context, leadership styles are described as:

- Coercive;
- Authoritative;
- Affiliative;
- Democratic;
- Pacesetting;
- Coaching.

### **1.2 Application of the above models**

As a trio, we decided to synthesise these individual and system-based approaches, producing our own analytical model relating transformational leadership to a school's intelligences thus:



The function of transformational school leadership is to provide an appropriate level of interaction at all levels, relating inputs and processes to the desired outcomes for a school.

### **1.3 The Leadership Question**

As a result of the collaborative visit to Ysgol Glan-y-Môr School in Carmarthenshire in September 2002, our trio decided to examine the role of effective dialogue and the quality of interaction in effective school leadership. We concluded that a dysfunctional organisation has poor interaction especially at the level of leadership.

Our preparation for the second cycle in the Demidoff Conference confirmed this premise. Thus, at the beginning of the Conference, we noted the following interim conclusions:

a) The Tuscan experience – there has been an overarching aim to strengthen collaborative leadership in the school by creating a culture of diffused leadership. However, this has been challenging as there are contractual and logistical reasons why staff and/or pupils cannot be brought together;

b) Developments in Velje – the headteacher has been working to develop his leadership in order to improve the school's ethos, and thence its outcomes. The visit to Wales caused some re-thinking on the importance of morning assemblies, although practical problems have prevented the introduction of formal gatherings. In addition, there is a local leadership project being undertaken which plans to redefine school values and aims. The approach to be taken in Jeulsminde will be to raise the question, 'What do we want to be known for?'. This is to be examined in relation to social competence, academic skills, home-school cooperation and international links.

c) The Welsh experience – the Programme has provided a paradigm for analysing individual leadership style and for developing the leadership question on the quality of interaction. Some progress has been made in improving interaction, although some external pressures have mitigated against this, notably the introduction of a national system for Performance Management, and the continued application of industrial action by two of the major teacher unions.

It was apparent that a common thread had emerged in the context of relationships and communication.

The Demidoff Conference confirmed that this was an appropriate question for further exploration and analysis during the second cycle in Tuscany.

At the outset, we agreed to conduct our work as a trio in a collaborative, questioning, intense manner, seeking a common idiom for analysis and application. We sought to adopt a 'rational' approach to an 'emotional' issue, as we considered how to improve a school's climate/ethos by concentrating on the quality of interaction. This was examined in relation to the four sectors of the Hermann model.

For the purposes of our enquiry, we defined dialogue as the capacity to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine thinking together. This means a free flow of meaning through a group to discover insights not attainable individually. In order to move forward with any improvement strategy, teaching and learning opportunity or forging of a true professional relationship, there is a need to uncover and share each other's own individual lines of reasoning. Mature exploration of these should help to develop leadership in relation to:

- Reacting to what is being said;
- Encouragement to challenge the degree of clarity;
- Testing of assumptions and beliefs.

The inherent danger of this line of enquiry is an absorption with thinking and a failure to act. However, the essence of genuine dialogue is not thinking about what we are doing; it is when we do something about what we are thinking. It catalyses insight and uncovers the thinking processes for both the individual and the collective whole. Thus, we set out to examine whether or not an intelligent school will attain creativity through metacognitive dialogue, i.e. management of paradoxical processes in a spirit of enlightened discourse.

## **2. The Trio's visit to Istituto D'Istruzione Superiore Raffaelli Magiotti**

The Istituto D'Istruzione Superiore Raffaelli Magiotti is a vocational school serving a mixed community. There are pockets of relative deprivation and some students with special needs. However, it serves a predominantly prosperous, mixed rural and urban community.

The school takes students from ages 15 to 19 and divides them into 5 year groups with a qualification at the end of three years and a final diploma for those who remain in the school at the end of year 5.

There are three campuses, each with a specialist qualification. One of the campuses at Terranuova had a problem with falling numbers. This has created challenges in relation to sharing of responsibilities and tasks. The challenge of maintaining a federal structure cannot be underestimated.

The school is organising a multi-cultural musical festival when each school will be able to express elements of peace and understanding through poetry, music and art.

The school is committed to complete integration of students of all abilities. The Progetto Sorriso is aimed at promoting integration of special needs students. Around 12% have recognised SEN, proportionately higher than the national trend due to the nature of the courses offered at the school and the nature of the communities it serves. The trend has been for families of more academic students to enrol them at the Liceo and the Technical/Industrial Schools. However, this is a very complex issue.

Relationships are good. The school has an awareness of students' problems which is seen to be important in developing relationships. There is a identifiable need for 'social care' for the students. Assessment methods differ in order to reflect the needs of the students.

There is a student committee which links across the three campuses. It meets once per month to discuss issues of concern. Members are elected by the students and they believe that their views are taken into account. On the whole, the buildings on the three campuses are in need of capital investment and there is a shortage of recreation space.

The headteacher raised a series of questions for investigation:  
How can she encourage leadership across the school?  
How parents be engage actively?  
How is clarity to be maintained in relation to communication?

### **3. Some conclusions on the three days of action research at the Italian School:**

#### ***3.1 Context – the challenges facing the headteacher:***

**a) Leading a school on three sites –**

This causes challenges in terms of:

People – dealing with students, staff and parents;

Processes – planning, monitoring, reviewing and evaluation;

Buildings – repairs and maintenance;

**b) Uncertain funding from the government –**

the challenge of not being able to undertake effective budgetary planning;

**c) Competition from another institution, the Liceo B. Varchi –** that school's buildings are only ten years old, resources are excellent, courses are academic in focus;

**d) Sharing a campus** with a Scuola Elementare at Montevarchi and with Scuola Elementare and Scuola Media at Terranuova;

**e) Students in need of support –** a number of students come from less affluent and less academic backgrounds;

**f) Political interference –** an example of this was an instruction for the school to take down the peace or 'PACE' flag it had placed in its reception area;

**g) A member of staff's relations with some students –** a particular issue was being dealt with, by the headteacher during our visit;

**h) Limited delegation of tasks and responsibilities –** due to the diverse nature of the buildings and other institutional factors.

#### ***3.2 Exploration – the issue of Relationships:***

a) There are relaxed relationships at many levels;

b) Evidence exists of students being given ambition through support;

- c) The headteacher creates opportunities for all staff to be engaged in dialogue;
- d) There are effective relationships with other agencies (e.g. health service involvement in the Progetto Sorriso);
- e) The headteacher's own style can be characterised by drive, energy, calmness, commitment and care (e.g. her involvement in the Progetto Sorriso).

### ***3.3 The focus for Cycle 2 - further work for investigation:***

- a. The role of the head in transforming the school;
- b. The development of shared leadership;
- c. Delegation of tasks and responsibilities;
- d. Examination of strategic planning;
- e. The willingness of the local/regional authorities to support the school in its aim to have new buildings and additional resources.

## **4. Some interim reflections**

*'Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much' – Helen Keller.*

It is to be hoped that the 'Roots and Wings' International Programme for School Leadership will continue to facilitate further developments in our respective schools at many complementary and contrasting levels. This cannot be done by rigid application of models for school effectiveness and school improvement. However, by placing an appropriate emphasis on improving dialogue, there is a fundamental recognition of the human and humane nature of a school as an organisation. This may be achieved by seeking to enhance the nature of interaction at all levels within each school. In visiting each other's schools, the professional dialogue on these issues will be strengthened, as will the synergy of the analytical models we have examined. What is being done will continue to facilitate leadership development in our respective schools and we hope that our experiences will continue to assist others in their quest for personal, professional and organisational improvement.

Tim Day – 24<sup>th</sup> March 2003