Researching Leadership in the Learning and Skills Sector: By the Sector, On the Sector, For the Sector

Collaborative Research

Edited by Professor David Collinson
Volume 5

“In a rapidly changing adult learning environment with decreasing funding and re-focusing of funding priorities, collaborative leadership has arguably become an essential strategy rather than an option.”

(Clarricoates, Cope & Sapford, this volume)
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Collaborative Leadership

Editorial Introduction, Professor David Collinson

Introduction

“Promoting good outcomes is not just a matter of lecturing the players about the fact that there is more to be gained from mutual cooperation than mutual defection. It is also a matter of shaping characteristics of the interaction so that over the long run there can be a stable evolution of cooperation.”

(Axelrod “The Evolution of Cooperation” 1984: 141)

Policy makers, practitioners and theorists increasingly identify collaborative leadership and effective partnerships as important facilitators of quality improvement in UK education. In relation to the learning and skills sector (LSS), The White Paper, Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances argues that working with a wide range of partners in more structured collaborative arrangements (e.g. federations, partnerships and trusts) can enhance quality provision, develop capacity to operate effectively in a demand-led system and underpin the 14-19 reforms. Combined with the Foster Review and the Leitch Report, there is now a clear vision for the future strategic development of the LSS. It is generally acknowledged that no institution will be able to achieve this vision operating alone, and thus collaboration, often with multiple partner organizations, is increasingly deemed essential for implementing this vision for the sector.

Recognising the importance of this partnership model for re-thinking leadership in the LSS, CEL has created a new programme called “Collaboration in Leadership” designed to support cooperative leadership development and talent management within groups of providers. In addition to funding various HE research projects on collaborative leadership (e.g. Briggs et al 2007, Jameson 2007), CEL has commissioned a number of “practitioner” research projects on this theme and it is from this research stream that the following collection is drawn.

This volume of CEL research reports reinforces the growing interest in collaborative leadership by presenting case study examples from the LSS. The first two reports present case studies from FE colleges whilst the second two draw on empirical research from adult learning. Addressing the important inter-relationships between collaborative leadership, quality improvement and sustainable organizational change, these four research reports highlight a number of important policy implications for the sector for CEL and for leadership both in theory and practice. This is the fifth in a series of volumes designed to showcase research produced by “practitioners” in the LSS on important leadership-related themes.

The CEL Practitioner Research Programme

The CEL practitioner research programme enables practising leaders and managers in the sector to undertake research on highly relevant issues. It is the result of a personal initiative by the chief executive of CEL, Lynne Sedgmore, who was keen to encourage a community of “practitioner scholars” and to provide an opportunity for practising leaders and managers in the sector to undertake research on highly relevant issues. In the summer of 2006, the Lancaster research team launched phase three of the CEL practitioner research programme with a nation-wide tender process. This tender attracted an enormous response, thus illustrating the very strong appetite across the LSS to conduct research by the sector, on the sector and for the sector. From the 90 plus submissions, the evaluation panel selected 29 practitioner research projects (as well as 5 HE projects) and these were funded for the period, October 2006 to March 2007.

The four reports published in this volume are drawn from this round of commissioning. Research is central to CEL’s organisational mission. Concerned to enhance the inter-relationships between research, policy and practice, CEL seeks to increase the impact of research on leadership development and on sector policies and practices. Research impact can occur in numerous ways. By broadening the knowledge base of the sector, research can inform policy construction and implementation. The findings of research may change organizational structures, cultures, resourcing or delivery. More subtly, they might lead to changes in understandings, attitudes or practices (Nutley et al 2003). Hence in many ways, research provides evidence-based knowledge that is useful and usable for those in the LSS.

A distinctive feature of the CEL practitioner programme is that those working in leadership and management roles within the sector conducted the research themselves. Research in FE and the LSS more broadly is still very much in its infancy. This research programme and the series of edited volumes emerging from it enable employees in the sector to develop a research “voice” to participate in the setting of research agendas and to define the key themes for leadership. In doing so, practitioners are actively engaged as researchers in the process of knowledge production. During the six-month period of the 2006-07 research programme, two workshops were organised at Lancaster (one in November, one in February) to provide support, advice and guidance to all the researchers in undertaking the research, in analysing the data, and in writing up the final reports. This process of strengthening a research community in the LSS by encouraging “practitioners” to become researchers constitutes a very important objective of the CEL research programme.

CEL created the practitioner programme with the intention that research can positively influence the sector and inform CEL’s teaching programmes. Equally, research engagement itself can constitute a learning experience, enhancing organisations and researchers’ own understandings and practices. The programme is therefore designed to foster the research-based skills and expertise of staff in the sector. By so doing, it seeks to encourage the “research-engaged college”; a way of empowering staff and students through enhanced learning cultures to incorporate a virtuous circle of enquiry, critique and improvement into well-planned organizational and personal...
This increased focus on research-based knowledge and experience is particularly relevant at the current time, as the UK government is keen for FE colleges to offer more degree-level HE programmes. Underpinning this CEL practitioner research programme is also the view that theory and practice are both very important and often mutually-reinforcing. Much of the debate about research impact focuses on the importance of “evidence-based” perspectives, but sophisticated empirical research should also be theoretically informed. Explicitly or implicitly, theoretical perspectives inform all empirical research (Giddens 1979). For example, in the area of leadership studies many theories concentrate on leaders themselves and the qualities and behaviours deemed necessary to be an “effective” leader. Meindl et al (1985) criticised such leader-centric assumptions which tend to “romanticize leaders” by developing overly exaggerated views of what they, as individuals, are able to achieve. In contrast with mainstream approaches, post-heroic theories (such as collaborative leadership) start from a different assumption, that leadership can occur at various hierarchical levels and is best understood as an inherently social, collaborative and interdependent process. Suffice it to say here, that theory and practice are best viewed as highly inter-related and the CEL research programme seeks to encourage mutually-reinforcing relationships between theory, development, policy and practice.

**Key Research Messages**

As we have seen, there is increasing recognition of the pressing need for greater collaboration between individuals, departments, organizations, sectors and countries, and a growing view that leadership can play an important part in facilitating this enhanced cooperation. But, what is collaborative leadership? Clearly collaboration across organizations can take multiple forms and could include partnerships, federations, networks, joint ventures, alliances, franchises and trusts. Jameson (2007: 11) defines collaborative leadership as “A process of working together (literally co-labor-ating) in ways which require a sharing of power, authority, knowledge and responsibility for maximal effectiveness.”

In one sense, the term collaborative leadership appears rather tautological. For leadership in the LSS to be effective, it would seem self-evident that co-operation and interdependence (e.g. between employees, learners, employers and organizations) should be strongly encouraged. Indeed effective leadership could be viewed as the art of ensuring sustainable internal and external collaboration. In another sense, however, the term seems potentially contradictory, even an oxymoron, because certain forms of leadership and collaborative relationships could be in tension with one another. From this perspective, too much hierarchical leadership, too much top-down direction and control, could damage co-operation, commitment and creativity (conversely, too little leadership might result in a lack of direction or any meaningful outcome). Given the sense of mutuality, interdependence and equity that informs many collaborative ventures, defining who is the leader can also be problematic. Will participants be willing to accept leadership and direction from, for example, those designated as “managing agents” in partnerships?

Suffice it to say here, that the emphasis on collaboration seems to imply a rather different, less hierarchical notion of leadership, which in turn, raises the question: if collaboration is to be encouraged, what is the nature of the leadership that can facilitate it? The traditional view of leadership tends to assume a tough, charismatic and “heroic” leader who utilises a rather dictatorial approach and operates within a single organization. Yet, alongside this growing interest in collaboration, new ideas about leadership have developed, emphasising the value of less hierarchical and more collective practices. In this approach, leadership is dispersed down and across hierarchies and organizational boundaries through fluid, multi-directional interactions and networks. Here the emphasis is on “shared”, “distributed”, “collaborative” and “networked” leadership forms. This perspective views leadership as deeply relational, facilitating the organization’s continuous learning and productive potential through the empowerment of others. Such post-heroic ideas about leadership are very compatible with the new emphasis on collaborative advantage.

Based on research in the US health sector, Weiss et al (2002) concluded that leadership is the most significant factor in stimulating synergy in partnerships. They found that “leadership efficiency” in partnerships should be evaluated using criteria such as: taking responsibility for the partnership; inspiring and empowering partners; fostering trust and respect; encouraging inclusiveness and openness, and facilitating voice and resolving conflict. In the UK, Huskam and Vangen (2003) view collaborative leadership in terms of embraacing, empowering, involving and mobilizing those in partnerships. CEL HE research by Briggs et al (2007) identifies the following enabling characteristics of collaborative leadership at partnership level: alignment of organizational goals; strength of common purpose; partnership energy; mutual trust; acceptance of others’ leadership; pooling knowledge and expertise; benefit to individual partner organizations, and mutual understanding.

The current concern with collaboration has developed in the context of a longstanding UK public policy of intensifying competition as the preferred means to achieve greater efficiency. Accountability and quality have been built on this competitive model (Newton 2007). The creation of data enabling performance comparisons has intensified pre-existing competitive tendencies within and between organizations. Yet, there now appears to be a growing view that this policy emphasis may have become disproportionate. Competition can generate productive outcomes, but taken to excess, it can also have negative effects. For example, CEL research suggests that funding mechanisms and audit cultures, that tend to privilege a competitive model, can act as a barrier to collaborative leadership (Collinson and Collinson 2003). Concerns about competitive advantage can also discourage inter-college collaboration and information sharing. Briggs et al (2007: 7) cite a recent Nuffield study which found that the...
measures in the 14-19 Implementation Plan to encourage collaboration "remain weak in comparison with the measures... that encourage competition."

Armistead et al (2007) review research that highlights additional, but related barriers to collaborative leadership, such as lack of trust, manoeuvring and political interference. Their study of leadership in multi-sectoral partnerships identifies four key “challenges”: differing expectations, consensus building, managing conflict and attaining performance. Briggs et al (2007) found that collaborative leadership across multiple organisations may be constrained by: personal ambivalence; questions of power between organizations; resource issues; and by the differing agendas and cultures of each organization. Both of these studies demonstrate that collaborative leadership and partnership co-operation are complex, challenging activities.

Finally, it is also important to acknowledge that, like competition, collaboration can sometimes have negative effects. Whilst collaboration is often automatically seen as a good thing, and is generally treated as a positive aspect of leadership in this volume, this may not always be the case. Excessive collaboration and cooperation can run counter to open, fair and meritocratic practices. Examples of such collusion, nepotism and/or favouritism include: collusive corporate practices that artificially and illegally fix prices or restrict market entry to the detriment of customers; selection decisions based on family, friendship or other personal connections; and shared masculinities between men within businesses organisations and/or trade unions that disadvantage women job candidates. Such incestuous, yet highly collaborative networks can cut across equal opportunity principles, reproducing inequalities based, for example, on class, gender and/or race. Suffice it to say here, that the term "collaborative leadership" should be used with caution and that the complex inter-relations and possible tensions between competition and collaboration in the LSS require further analysis and empirical research.

Against this background, the four research reports that comprise this volume present examples of relatively effective collaborative leadership in practice. In the first report, Kathleen Gardner (Worcester College), Pat Woolford (Worcester College) and John Collin (University of Worcester) identify collaborative leadership as the driver of organizational change in a general FE college, where ten curriculum based study centres replaced a library and computer centre. The researchers outline how these centres were introduced through a culture of collaborative leadership that was “cascaded” down and through the organization. As a result, staff were empowered to solve problems; barriers were reduced between academic and support staff, and tensions were jointly resolved. This initiative improved student retention and the dynamic learner-led culture of the college.

The second report adds an international dimension to our understanding of collaborative leadership in the FE sector. Greg Dean (South East Derbyshire College) examines the interactions and relationships within three partnerships and explores individuals’ experiences of network participation; how such partnerships are produced and reproduced and whether partnership participation contributes to organisational mission. This report analyses three networks all led by one FE college; a trans-European partnership, a national partnership and a local partnership. Each of these partnerships is distinct in their purpose, background and context, but they all rely on collaboration to achieve common purpose.

While these first two reports demonstrate that collaborative leadership can facilitate positive organizational change, the next two suggest that collaborative leadership can also be helpful when funding is tight. They concentrate on collaborative initiatives in the adult learning sector. Kate Clancicoates, Sharon Cope and Peter Sapsford (Leicestershire Adult Learning Services) observe that collaborative leadership has become an essential strategy in the current adult learning context of decreased funding. Describing how adult learning can promote collaborative leadership through effective teams, their research found that strong teams can be built on shared vision and principles communicated through clear target-setting and monitoring, and delivered through processes that support these values.

In the final report, Rose-Marie Best (Croydon Adult Learning and Training) and Rosemary Sloman (Croydon Adult Learning and Training), Neville Hayles (Hayles and Quin Ltd) and Sandy Hathaway (Hayles and Quin Ltd) explore the potential of a consortium for the delivery of adult learning provision across three London boroughs; all facing significant financial reductions. Best et al argue that funding constraints in adult learning increase the pressure on providers to rationalise their provision, be cost effective and maximise resources in order to maintain the current breadth and range of provision. This research project describes how Croydon has addressed these issues through collaborative working with neighbouring London boroughs.

Together, these CEL practitioner research reports highlight a number of key messages for leadership in the LSS. All four reports present case study examples about the positive benefits of collaborative leadership in practice. They illustrate the diversity of possible collaborative forms and demonstrate the importance of communication, consultation, trust, clarity, and shared understanding as preconditions for effective partnership working in the LSS.

These reports are also highly inter-connected with other key leadership-related themes. In particular, their findings confirm many of those in Hunter and Penhall’s research on effective partnerships published in the second CEL volume of practitioner research, “Leading Quality Improvement” (Collinson 2007b). They support the findings of several HE CEL research reports, particularly those by Jameson (2007) and Briggs et al (2007). Briggs et al also observe that, although 14-19 partnerships focus on the needs of young people, they are typically not included in the framework for collaboration, thus pointing to the potentially productive links between collaborative leadership and learner voice, where students are viewed as “collaborators in learning” (Newton 2007). Such arguments support the findings of various papers published in the CEL volume on “Leadership and the Learner Voice” (Collinson 2007c). Similarly, Clancicoates, Cope and Sapsford (in this volume) highlight the important strategic role of middle managers and the need for their empowerment if collaborative leadership is to be successful; a conclusion that is very compatible with many of the findings published in “Developing Middle Leaders” (Collinson 2007a). Finally, the emphasis on collaborative leadership is
also central to the focus on employer engagement (see Kelly 2007), which can reinforce inter-organizational co-operation, but might also increase competition.

In editing this volume, the original research reports have been condensed to enhance the overall integration and cohesion of the collection. Some of the original reports included extensive reviews, for example of the leadership literature and recent government policy documents, as well as presenting more detailed accounts of research methodologies and findings. In the interests of space, these sections have been edited down, most appendices have been removed and every report has been structured using a standard format.

References


Collaborative Leadership in a Study Centre Context

Kathleen M Gardner, Worcester College, Patricia M Woolford, Worcester College, and John Colvin, University of Worcester

Executive Summary

This research project explores how collaborative leadership in a general FE college facilitated the development of Study Centre learning, which in turn, has improved student retention and enhanced the learning environment. By replacing a single library and a computer learning centre with ten curriculum based Study Centres, the focus of the College is changing from being teaching and qualification centric to having a learner-led culture. Stymulated by the Principal’s vision and leadership style, collaboration has permeated through the various levels of management and created a synergy that has given the development a dynamic of its own. The research illustrates how staff were empowered to solve problems, and suggests that collaborative leadership can break down barriers between academic and support staff. There is also evidence that collaborative leadership can exist at different levels of management. Where tensions have arisen, these have been addressed collaboratively and jointly resolved. The model to be drawn from this study is one of cascading collaborative leadership within an organisation that begins with a leader having a clear vision and a drive to succeed and then empowering and encouraging others to collaborate. Critically, at each cascaded stage, there is another leader who possesses the same vision and drive for collaborative leadership.

Introduction

Many FE colleges are interested in ways of improving student retention and achievement as part of their quality improvement strategies. There is also an agenda for increasing the personalisation of learning across the educational sector. This study explores the considerable interest generated within the FE sector by the impact of Study Centre learning in a general FE college located within the Midlands. Study Centres are a way of developing the autonomy of learners within a supportive environment.

The College studied has 11,500 FE students and 600 HE students. The campus consists of predominately 1960s buildings in the city centre with little room for expansion. In 2002, the college was judged successful against many sector benchmarks. It was financially sound, enjoying “good” and “satisfactory” inspection judgements in both the curriculum areas and five areas of cross-college provision. The executive and the governing body were, however, concerned that in some areas retention was falling short of the highest standard. These concerns had been raised by the College’s quality reporting mechanisms. Inspectors had also criticised the lack of social areas for students.

As part of a package of performance improvement measures, it was decided to replace the existing conventional library and drop-in PC provision with a number of distributed curriculum-based Study Centres. Each Study Centre contains Information and Learning Technologies, class teaching spaces, learning resources, and access to both academic and learning support staff. Centres offer the equipment and resources specific to the area of learning, for example skeletons and laboratories in Science; musical instruments and performance areas in Music and Performing Arts, and an aeroplane fuselage for cabin crew training in Travel and Tourism. The spaces within Study Centres are flexible and mostly open plan and are used for teacher-led group delivery, task based learning or for a wide range of one to one supported and individual learning.

Since their introduction, there has been a significant change in the culture within the College and improvements in student success rates. There is now a greater emphasis on learning than in the past when the curriculum was more qualification and teacher focussed. Study Centres provide a different environment for students to attend formal teaching, individual self-study or one-to-one sessions for additional support. In Study Centres, students see and interact with other students of different abilities, and at different stages in their education or lives. Students also see staff engaged in purposeful work outside the teaching sessions and see many other functions of the college operating in a variety of work situations. This open style reinforces the concept that learning needs to be planned, people need to be collaborative, work needs to be organized and managers need to supervise. It helps students to understand their own responsibilities in the process, that they should manage and plan their own learning and that there is a need to conform to social norms, codes of conduct and ways of working.

Study Centre learning displays many of the following characteristics:

- Group and personalised learning activities where learners can easily interact with each other but focus on their own group and activities.
- High levels of access to Information and Learning Technologies.
- Use of written materials and worksheets for learners for the efficient presentation of concepts, thinking and knowledge rather than inefficient uses of whiteboards and/or methods that rely on copying or simple transmission.
- Environments that replicate typical workplaces - managers, teachers, learning support staff, 14-18 and 19+ students collaborating in their work. This reinforces productive attitudes to work, lifelong learning, social inclusion and the concept that achievement of any goal results from social collaboration on many levels.
- Higher attention spans and levels of good behaviour by students, and productive staff-student relationships.
- Reflective and innovative teachers who have developed new skills, supported and monitored by their peers and managers.
The relationships and the leadership model that has evolved, and the impact it has had in generating the changes, is the basis of this study. First, the research framework examines collaborative leadership of change and sets the context of this study. Secondly, the research model identifies the methodology that is grounded on “stories” collected from interviews, observations and reading documentation.

Research Framework

To achieve change, influence is necessary and most conceptions of leadership centre upon how that influence is generated; ... that leadership is to distribute or disperse responsibility and to empower others to give their best” (Earley, 2003: 354).

Studies suggest that collaborative leaders are “Self-aware, and have a high degree of accountability. They believe in the need for many people to have a seat at the table, and recognise the importance of diverse perspectives and skills. Through ... and are able to raise the level of motivation to help find solutions and ensure progress.” (Kellogg Foundation 2006:3)

Creating an environment where collaborative leadership can thrive begins “with a shared vision and the belief that the gifts and resources needed to accomplish that vision are found in the collective members of a group rather than a single leader. Sharing power and information, developing relationships and creating open learning environments are critical skills at the organisational, neighbourhood and community-wide level.” (Kellogg Foundation 2006: 2)

Collaborative leadership empowers others to act and allows the collective wisdom to surface with the “recognition that no one person (by position or authority) has the solutions to multifaceted problems. The function of collaborative leadership then becomes the creation of systems, structures and environments where continuous learning, open communication, interactive participation and attention to relationships can occur.” (Purcell-Jones 2006)
The evidence from this study is that consensus was achieved and the synergy created from the collaborative leadership produced innovatory responses. The current phase that the leaders of this project and the staff involved have now entered is one of self-reflection.

Through the collaborative development of strategy, new systems and processes are designed. Developing this trust takes time, but once gained, far more is achieved than is possible by non-collaborative leadership. The stories in this study provide evidence of this process. Their narratives provide a valuable insight into how collaborative leadership works in practice. The empirical evidence describes how collaboration across different levels influenced the attitudes of the staff involved. It appears that the collaborative leadership model espoused and generated by the Principal and senior leadership has been mirrored throughout the organisation and has generated an unexpectedly high level of dynamism to the project.

Research Methods

This study was undertaken by three researchers. Two are members of the College in the study and one is external to that organisation. This was to add a more independent perspective and to allow those interviewed the freedom to discuss events with someone other than a colleague or line manager. Study Centre staff were briefed about the project and then asked to complete a pro-forma highlighting three issues that had influenced the evolution of the Study Centre in which they worked. This served three purposes, first to engage Study Centre staff in the reflective process of this project. Second, to identify exemplars of leadership for further study, and third to provide a basis for semi-structured interviews with staff. Responses detailing thirty issues were received from Study Centre Assistants and these were analysed by the team to identify leadership issues.

Four Senior Study Centre Assistants and four Study Centre Assistants were invited to participate further in the project. All eight agreed and interviews were arranged. These interviews lasted approximately two months. They involved two Vice Principals, the HLSC, two Academic Heads and the Estates Manager. They all readily agreed to participate.

The nature of participation was clearly explained to all participants before and during the project. Assurances were given that all participants would remain anonymous. However the Principal and the HLSC requested use of their names. The interview notes were word-processed and returned to participants to correct and delete or amend any of the data. The “stories” that were elicited from interviewees used in this project were verified by data from at least two other sources including further interviews, email correspondence, observation and documentation. The interviews generated rich descriptions of complex real life situations. These are ambiguities and contradictions in the answers. In one instance there are two different perceptions of the initial consultation process. This narrative study provides unique stories of FE collaborative leadership.

The specifics of collaborative leadership may vary from organisation to organisation, but Wilson (2000) suggests that three conditions usually exist for it to thrive.

First, individual and organisational learning, as well as stewardship of and support for the learning process by leaders. Second, a set of values to guide the company in building a vision, developing strategy, and designing tactics. Thirdly, a model for distributing power.

The Kellogg and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2006) identified six strands for effective collaborative leadership – assessing the environment, creating clarity, building trust, sharing power, developing people and self reflection. These themes are reflected in our study, as follows. The process began with the appointment of a new Principal assessing the college, its context and performance. His vision of the future was clear and he set about building trust. As Fullan (2000: 9) suggests,

Collaborative cultures need to be built upon trust. So there is a need to develop trust amongst managers and staff. This takes time and effort. Collaborative planning requires the solving of highly complex problems, which may create anxiety and conflict for those involved.

In 2002, the college in this study was judged by an Ofsted inspection as “good”, but there were issues around student retention and a lack of student social spaces. The college community was set on a learning curve by the vision and inspiration of the new Principal who wanted to further improve the environment for students and staff.

Part of the process of building trust began when the Principal empowered a cross college group of staff to compile the College’s values which were adopted during his first year. These values of mutual trust, honesty and integrity, fairness, considerate open communications, leadership and co-operation, diversity and creativity, and responsible risk taking and accountability were ratified by the executive and governors. Implicit in this process is the trust, the sharing of power and the development of people that was achieved by the Principal engaging in this process to achieve his goal to create an environment of mutual respect where his leadership and vision would be accepted. Fullan (2000: 9) suggests that this capacity to promote and sustain trust is often overlooked in the collaborative process.

Leaders sometimes believe that, once individuals or groups are gathered together, a plan can be made easily and commitment obtained. If a collaborative leader fails to engender trust, the best ideas and innovative approaches will not be shared. Motivation alone is not sufficient, ideas and the generation of new knowledge and continuous improvement are also needed. These in turn bring new working practices and the possibility of overload. To move forward, there has to be a consensus for the innovation - securing consensus is not easy.
Research Findings

The stories containing the findings are themed into three sections. Section A relates to individual leadership by the Principal, Section B addresses collaborative leadership and Section C highlights stories of collaborative problem solving.

Section A - Individual Leadership Style

Story 1: The Study Centre Concept

The Principal was appointed in 2002. Prior to his interview, he noted that the College’s retention record had been highlighted as an area of improvement in the FEFC Inspection Report. During this interview he also became aware of the poor condition of the College’s buildings. The Principal was short-listed for a second interview where, as a solution to both the condition of the buildings and to improve student retention, he proposed the Study Centre concept that he had implemented on a smaller scale at a previous college. On appointment, the Principal resolved to implement his Study Centre strategy. He then invited the Principal of South East Essex College who had implemented learning centres in his own college to address the Corporation and explain his experience of the impact of introducing this concept. The Corporation fully supported the proposal.

Not all of the four vice principals were immediately won over by the Principal’s vision. Two had previous positive experiences of Study Centres and were enthusiastic to contribute their own ideas, but one Vice Principal was initially less committed. The Principal believes that:

“Leadership is not about one person. It is about developing good ideas together and recognising through collaborative working what will make the greatest impact – and about not being frightened to have a go.”

He won his senior team over, empowering them and also encouraging them to empower others to collaborate. Vice Principal B observed that The Principal, “really bought into the distributed leadership concept with the capital building project and I felt totally empowered to shape things.” This story illustrates how the principal led the vision for the future and elicited the support of the corporation by winning over the Executive and encouraging collaboration and empowering them to “make the greatest impact.”

Section B: Collaborative Leadership

Story 2: “Winning – over” the staff

The Executive identified an immediate need to win over staff to the Study Centre concept as it was apparent that not all staff were convinced about this radical approach to facilitating learning. The Principal promoted the concept at departmental forums and Vice Principals led the acceptance of the concept through faculty management teams. Following collaboration with the HLSC to identify an exemplar college, Vice Principal A organised a visit to review the Study Centres at Somerset College of Arts and Technology. This Vice Principal then collaborated with the HODs to identify the staff to attend the visit.

Story 3: Introducing new staff structures and work practices

Vice Principal A and the HLSC collaborated to devise a new staffing structure and working practices for prospective Study Centre staff. Vice-Principal A suggested that:

“We [the and the HLSC] enjoyed a fair degree of autonomy from the Principal in drawing up guidelines for staffing structures and duties.”

They collaborated successfully in putting these into practice. It was essential to ensure that these specifications would both attract and challenge applicants of an appropriate calibre and also be acceptable to the executive. Vice Principal A led the promotion and acceptance of the new structures and practices with the Executive and SMT.

Story 4: Initial concept design for individual study centres

When a new Study Centre is agreed, the Principal meets the Estates Manager to perform an initial needs analysis, determine the relevant academic HOD and HLSC and consider the educational needs specified by the Principal are melded with the technical options suggested by the Estates Manager.

Story 5: Study centre design and planning

The Estates Manager takes responsibility for promoting the outline design to the relevant academic HOD and HLSC and ensures that any technical modifications will be acceptable to the Principal. When a suitable solution between the relevant HOD, HLSC and Estates Manager could not be achieved, the Principal intervened and supported the Estates Manager. This outline design is sketched and refined through collaboration. The Estates Manager liaises with the Principal on the final design and acts as the conduit with external parties. The HOD and the HLSC lead the adoption of the designs to their respective staff teams. HOD A felt “fully involved in the process”, and HOD B stated that “the team were given great freedom in the design of this Study Centre.”
Story 6: Study centre strategic management teams
Prior to the opening of a Study Centre, a SMT meets on a number of occasions to agree the strategic aims and purpose of the Study Centre. This team consists of the relevant Vice Principal, HLSC, Head IT Support, relevant HODs and other co-opted staff. The collaborative objectives of the SMT are to monitor performance against targets and update action plans for the future. This team meets for a limited period to monitor progress. The Vice Principal helps to develop a new approach to learning.

“Learning in Study Centres has to be task-centred and much more personalised than in class and group learning. Study Centres offer teachers the opportunity to plan sessions that encourage a much wider range of resources to meet the different learning styles.”

The HODs assume responsibility for ensuring delivery is consistent with the strategic aims. HLSC assumes responsibility for ensuring that the environment and support offered by Study Centre staff is consistent with these aims. The HOD suggested that,

“It is perhaps interesting to examine how the role of the Library Manager has changed from one of a traditional librarian, managing a small team in one location to that of a manager of a large team based in four different buildings and nine different locations. People handling skills are of crucial importance. This new role also places much greater emphasis on pedagogic issues and liaison with other members of the College Management Team.”

Story 7: Study centre operational management teams
In parallel to the Study Centre SMT, an Operational Management Team (OMT) is formed and meets to plan the collaborative operation of the Study Centre. This team consists of HLSC, HOD, Senior Study Centre Assistant, Programme Managers (programme area & essential skills) and Study Centre Technicians. The brief of the OMT is to monitor student progress, retention and action for improvements as appropriate; to update and create curriculum resources; to meet identified student needs; to ensure effective and efficient staffing and timetabling of centres and to collate termly reports for the SMT. Subsequently this team meets to monitor progress.

Story 8: Organising individual student support at a course level
A Senior Study Centre Assistant collaborated on a number of occasions with a HOD (D) and two course managers to provide support for students in two Study Centres. This support included individual key skills, proof reading, and advice on research and on how to structure assignments. HOD C promoted this type of support and its acceptance. Course Manager A and Course Manager B led the promotion of the support and its acceptance within their course teams. Course Manager A suggested that this collaboration was “very useful!” The Senior Study Centre Assistant promoted the support and its acceptance by other Study Centre Assistants.

Story 9: Regular management meetings
HOD B and Senior Study Centre Assistant B meet both on a regular and ad hoc basis to plan and deal with problems associated with a particular Study Centre. The ad hoc meetings are initiated by both parties. They work through a synergistic process to resolve problems and plan future developments. Both parties own the agreed resolution, the HOD leads its implementation in respect of academic staff and the Senior Study Centre Assistant leads its implementation amongst her staff. An example of this occurred when Senior Study Centre Assistant B collaborated with HOD B to resolve a computer availability problem by persuading the time-tabler that,

“We should divide the 16 computers, nominally assigned to his department, into two groups for timetabling purposes. This way we can cater for small groups more effectively and also are able to manage the issuing of free/spare computers more productively for both students and groups. This has proved to be very successful.”

Stories 2 – 9 demonstrate collaborative leadership in practice. This leadership was encouraged by the Principal and has permeated through the various levels of management and created a synergy that has given the Study Centre project a dynamic of its own.

Section C – Collaborative Problem Solving

Story 10: Printer keypad problem
In April 2005, new networked printers that doubled as photocopiers were installed in all Study Centres. When the system went live a number of teething problems were immediately apparent, the most serious of which was the small size of keypads at the network print stations which posed problems for students, resulting in frustration and queues. A problem-solving team was initiated that included staff from Management Information Systems (MIS), Educational Technology (Ed Tech) IT Support and various Study Centres. The solution was the introduction of a SWIPE card system that still exists today.

Story 11: Study centre portal content structure
In April 2006, Study Centre Assistant A considered the Study Centre Portal pages poorly structured and difficult to navigate. This point was raised at a Study Centre Marketing Group and it was decided to redesign the pages. Meetings of the Cross Study Centre Marketing Group were convened at which the content and structure of the Portal pages were specified. Subsequently Study Centre Assistant A collaborated with an IT Technician on the implementation. This collaboration took place both in a Study Centre and IT workshop. Further collaboration has occurred, for example, Study Centre Assistant A has conducted user-testing for IT.
Story 12: In-class support
In one Study Centre the Assistants provide various levels of support to classes, depending on the lecturer’s level of IT literacy. This ranges from ‘hands-holding’ some staff by dealing with most of their IT problems and also those of their students, to providing occasional IT help to the students of IT-competent staff when multiple problems occur simultaneously. This variation of support is typified by the following examples,

Lecturer A is very IT literate, but when they are all logging into the network to use Moodle in a class, he may have several users who are locked out or who have problems, and it is time effective for me to help them at the same time as him. Again this was not a one off occasion.*

and

“Lecturer B is the complete opposite of Lecturer A, she would be the first to admit that she has trouble finding the ‘on’ button. When she uses IT she needs my help. Presentations in the breakout room help putting the kit on, help for the students to access their presentations and work the kit. If she uses the PCs for a lesson I will need to sort out any and all problems with kit, logging on and software - ppt, publisher, outlook, IE or word.”

Story 13: Collaboration over misbehaving students
In one Study Centre, the Assistant and teaching staff collaborate in situations where the behaviour of drop-in students prevents other students from pursuing their academic endeavours. The initial strategy is for Study Centre staff to warn the students that, if they do not settle down to their work, they will be asked to leave because they are disrupting other students. If the behaviour persists, then the student’s personal tutor is contacted usually by email. The tutor then interviews the student concerned. So far, this approach has been successful, evidenced by study centre staff receiving two verbal and two written apologies from students.

Story 14: Creation of learning materials 1
Initially, Lecturer C asked Study Centre Assistant B to create materials on CV writing. After he had created the materials he collaborated with the lecturer to refine these materials that were successfully created in a range of formats - hardcopy, electronic and as wall displays. As a consequence, further collaboration on learning materials has occurred with other lecturers including the design of templates, tips and tricks for assignment writing and Moodle materials. Study Centre Assistant B suggests that,

“My previous teaching experience has clearly been significant, enabling me to evaluate materials, appreciate different levels and construct effective learning objects. I see my own collaborative role as essential if sufficient student-centred learning objects are to be made available.”

Story 15: Creation of learning materials II
Study Centre Assistant C collaborated with Lecturer G to create Level 1 Numeracy materials for her students,

“I asked her if she had any work and she gave me subjects in Level 1 Maths that needed resources - time, prices, length, area, metric measurements - very basic conversion from millimetres to centimetres to kilometres etc.”

After using the restaurant exercise, Lecturer G was very positive about it and the students enjoyed completing the exercise. These resources are now on the Level 1 Key Skills Moodle site.

Story 16: Reorganisation of book stock to facilitate browsing
When one Study Centre was created, all the books allocated to it had identical DEWEY root numbers. Consequently, books were sorted alphabetically by author, which does not encourage topic-specific browsing by students. Study Centre Assistant D approached Lecturer H and collaborated on a solution. This collaborative solution involves him in devising sub-DEWEY groupings for books and updating the records in the catalogue, devising a colouring system to identify different groups. He has re-ordered the shelved stock to reflect the new groupings.

Stories 10 – 16 provide examples of where a number of non-management staff have mirrored the collaborative leadership style of senior managers by collaborating to solve problems within their own context. These staff have felt sufficiently empowered to solve problems across the traditional departmental academic and business staff divide.

Conclusion
The findings of this study describe the impact of the Principal’s vision upon his senior staff, managers and the staff involved in the Study Centres. His style of open collaboration empowered the Vice Principals to collaborate with managers to make “maximum impact.” Further collaborative leadership by Vice Principal A and the HLSC achieved collaboration across the traditional FE academic and business divide to develop and implement innovative staffing structures. This collaboration has permeated through the various levels of management, creating a synergy that has given the Study Centre project a dynamic of its own. Indeed at the non-management level there are many exemplars of collaborative problem solving. Where tensions arose, these were addressed collaboratively and jointly resolved. Through collaborative problem solving and collaborative leadership a significant number of staff have developed new skills. Hence, the power relationship within collaborative leadership is based on trust where leaders and managers are able to create a professional synergy with others to interpret visions within a shared value base.
This study provides numerous examples of where power is shared, for example:

- Vice Principal A and the HLSC collaborated to devise a new staffing structure and working practices for prospective Study Centre staff.
- When each new Study Centre is agreed, the Principal collaborates with the Estates Manager to determine the feasibility of the proposed Study Centre and to devise an outline design.
- Academic and support staff collaborate to agree strategic aims for the Study Centres.
- The stakeholders collaborate to plan the operation of the Study Centres.
- Study Centre staff collaborate with academic staff to provide support for students and to create teaching materials.

The following model illustrates how collaboration was cascaded through a process of empowerment. Each story identifies that there was one leader, either the Principal, the Vice Principal or the HLSC, who believed that collaboration was important.

In conclusion, we suggest that the model to be drawn from this study is one of cascading collaborative leadership within an organisation. The model begins with a leader having a clear vision and a drive to succeed and then empowering and encouraging others to collaborate. Critically, at each cascaded stage, there is another leader who also possesses the same vision and drive for collaborative leadership.

Further research could potentially identify whether the status of collaborative leadership is the same for a middle manager as for a senior manager, the extent to which leadership plays a part in collaborative problem solving and whether the model of collaborative leadership identified is applicable to other projects within FE.

![Model 1: Cascading collaborative leadership and collaborative problem solving](image-url)
Collaborative Leadership in FE-Led Multi-Agency Partnerships: A Local, National and Trans-European Perspective

Greg Dean, South East Derbyshire College

Executive Summary

This report focuses on the interaction and relationships within three partnerships and explores individuals’ experiences of network participation, how such partnerships are produced and reproduced and whether partnership participation contributes to organisational mission and common purpose. It analyses three networks led by one college, a trans-European partnership, a national partnership and a local partnership. Each of the partnerships is distinctly different in their purpose, background and context but all rely on the participation of individuals to achieve common purpose. This report considers how individuals work together to contribute to a common purpose, revealing similarities and differences across partnerships and how this may be transferable to other contexts and networks. The research findings are explored in relation to four key themes: personal development, organisational development, themes of common interest and economic benefits.

Introduction

Partnerships and networks through multi-agency working are a fact of life for colleges and the success of strategic and operational implementation of policy (e.g. DFES, 2002; GLEF, 2005; DFES, 2006) relies on such approaches. Bourdieu (1990, 1991) described the underlying purpose of the formation of groups of individuals as “social magic.” For FE, Colleges and others in the LSS, collaborative leadership of groups is a critical and necessary skill for leaders and managers. However, the social magic of successful collaboration retains its mystery and challenge.

Within any FE college, a myriad of networks and partnerships exist. This project examines the experience of leaders and networks. The college which is the subject of this study participates in a large number of partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders including schools, employers, the voluntary and community sector, statutory agencies, local and national funding bodies and others. This study examines three networks which are led by the college, a trans-European partnership, a national partnership and a local partnership. Each of the partnerships is distinctly different in their purpose, background and context but all rely on the participation of individuals to achieve common purpose.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Centre for Excellence and Leadership for supporting and funding this project. We would like to also thank the Principal and staff who contributed so willingly to inform this project.

References


The trans-European partnership results from a Socrates Grundtvig Learning Partnership spanning three years and was formed at a conference in Romania. The group has seven participating organisations in Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Finland, Romania, Germany and the UK. The group meets face to face 3 to 4 times per year and communicates through an email group which is used for information transfer and discussion. This partnership is less structured in terms of management and how business is conducted. It has a co-ordinator not a leader. Meetings are held up to 3 times a year and are semi-structured to take account of the participants' cultural backgrounds, language abilities (all meetings are conducted in English), but with an awareness that business and actions for the following 4 months must be agreed in 2 meetings. There are outcomes, agreed with the relevant national agencies, which have to be met. However the timescale for achieving these outcomes is longer than it would be for a European Social Fund project, for example.

The national partnership has been in existence for 2 years and arose as a result of the collapse of a software house, whose products were used by the College and other colleges. On its collapse, the staff employed by the software house were transferred (via The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) which preserves employees’ terms and conditions when a business or undertaking is transferred to a new employer) into the employ of the college partnership. The partnership comprises South East Derbyshire College (Derbyshire), College A (Shropshire), College B (Cleveland), College C (Warwickshire) and College D (West Midlands). The colleges jointly support a MIS suite of products and employ consultants who service the needs of the partnership in terms of data management, management information provision, financial claims, performance statistics and alterations to software tools.

The local partnership focuses on a learning alliance approach between the College and the local voluntary and community sector in the two boroughs served by the college in central England. This partnership was formalised through ESF co-funding in 2001 and seeks to widen participation and support inclusion. This project is more structurally managed, with both a Strategic and an Operational Group. The Operational Group meet monthly to discuss targets, outputs, outcomes and milestones. They are joined every three months by the Strategic Group. This project has a dedicated project manager to whom both the Strategic and Operational Groups are answerable. The Project Manager in turn is responsible to the LSC for ensuring the success of the project. The partnership members are:

- A social enterprise located within one of the most deprived areas of the region.
- A mental health day centre providing two bases locally for clients to access learning, support and guidance.
- A charity providing crisis housing for homeless people.
- A volunteer bureau in the heart of the local community, providing services to local residents and the community utilising their 400+ volunteers.

- An FE college working in partnership with voluntary and community organisations to provide training opportunities for hard to reach and socially excluded groups.

Research Methods

Bourdieu’s (1991) term “social magic” refers to the creation of new social realities through the utterance of particular combinations of words. Exploring the mechanisms by which discourses and words create their own realities, Sriribe (2000) uses the ritual incantation of a politician as an example of social magic. Sriribe argues that the politician’s declarations can alter social reality and changes to social reality can have consequent effects on physical reality. Drawing on these ideas, this report examines the words that partnership members use in describing their feelings and experiences of collaborative leadership.

The research constituency was established by approaching the members of three multi-agency partnerships in which South East Derbyshire College participates. Two of the partnerships are led by a middle manager at South East Derbyshire College. The three partnerships selected enable access to a breadth of participative experience from the perspective of the leadership and membership in a number of contexts and hierarchies.

The study adopts two research techniques pioneered by Ainscow et al (1994). These techniques were originally designed to map change in schools and comprise six complimentary techniques divided into two phases. The first phase comprises three techniques focussed on the individual and the last three on the institution. Ainscow et al observed that the successful implementation of change often primarily results from the commitment of individuals, and suggested that the techniques might be used in other contexts, particularly to establish some understanding of how individuals reconstruct their experience. Whilst these techniques were originally designed to facilitate the mapping change in schools, it is suggested that they may also be transferable to mapping the diachronic phenomenon of the evolution of these networks.

The two techniques were originally entitled “The timeline of change” and “The experience of change.” Within the context of this study the researcher has replaced the word “change” with “network.” The timeline of network technique is designed to highlight the key events during the formulation and development of the partnership providing a convenient record of each individual’s perception of the change trajectory. Through this, a composite perceived history of the change in the life of the partnership or network could be established. Each of the participants told their story of participation using the pre-constructed timeline as a prompt.

The interviewees were asked to participate in the second of the techniques in which they were given a series of cards containing a range of feelings and then selected those eight that best reflected their feelings about their experience of network participation, which then led onto a fuller discussion within the interview. Ainscow et al noted that feelings were notoriously difficult to uncover during interviews and suggested that this approach legitimated participants talking openly about their
feelings but without forcing any particular words into their mouths. Participants were also offered the opportunity of describing their emotions in their own words through the use of blank cards.

For the purpose of this research project, the twenty-four words were then categorised (Appendices A, B & C) as being either positive/favourable, or negative/unfavourable. This process enabled a more detailed analysis of the words selected. Both interview processes, with the permission of the participants, were tape-recorded and the verbatim transcripts were then returned to the participants for verification to ensure accuracy and demonstrate the validity of the research. A letter “buying in” to the research was signed by each individual.

The analysis of the data followed “The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction model” (Carney 1990). This methodology is rooted in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Carney’s (1990) ladder of analytical extraction includes three levels of analysis: summarising and packaging the data, repackaging and aggregating the data, and developing and testing propositions to construct an explanatory framework. The data for each of the partnerships were initially analysed separately before being merged with the findings from the other partnerships. This enabled a multi-layered approach whereby findings could be drawn from each of the partnerships as separate entities, the findings of each project could be compared and contrasted with each other and finally, the whole data could be viewed as one dataset. This provided the opportunity for a deeper analysis and offered opportunities for triangulation to support validity of the research process. The timeline for participation in the respective partnership strand is indicated in the table opposite:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>6 months</th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>18 months</th>
<th>2 years</th>
<th>30 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trans- European</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dropped out after 18 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Joined at end of Year One</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>College A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>College B</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>College C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Organisation 1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Organisation 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation 3</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation 4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation 5</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of presenting the data, we outline the “Timeline” of the partnership so that it is clear exactly which period is being examined. This is essential where similar partnerships are running in parallel within a theme. We create a “Table of word usage” to see if there are any common words and feelings within a theme and across themes. This will enable participants’ positive and negative feelings to be analysed. The report will examine the “Frequency of word usage” to see if there are any common words and feelings within a theme and across themes. All words within the top three scoring levels within each partnership strand are analysed. Certain words within the 24 highlighted (Appendix A) could not be used at the start of a partnership because the experience had not yet happened. These words have been removed at this stage and I have called this process the “pre-partnership emotion filter.” Appendix A shows the words used and (FOI) indicates which words are filtered out because they cannot be articulated until participation has been experienced.
**Research Findings**

**Trans-European Data Findings**

Trans-European Timeline:

- Contact meeting in Brasov,
- First Partners’ Meeting in Romania,
- Second Partners’ Meeting in England,
- Third Partners’ Meeting in Barcelona,
- Fourth Partners’ Meeting in Finland,
- This Meeting in Italy/The Future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Trans-European Table of Word Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Trans European Word Frequency data:

- Positive words were used in 70 out the 80 potential responses. This equates to an 87.5% positive response rate.
- Negative words were used in 10 out the 80 potential responses. This equates to a 12.5% negative response rate.

**National Data Findings**

National Timeline:

- Start of Project,
- Implementation of products and services,
- Progress after 6 months,
- End of last full year,
- March 2007,
- August 2007.
Local Data Findings

Local Timeline:
- Prior to start of Project,
- Project Start – 1st Meeting,
- Progress after 6 months,
- End of first full year – evaluation,
- 18 Months,
- End of Project – November 2006.

Table 4: Local Table of Word Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>N3</th>
<th>N4</th>
<th>N5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words selected by each respondent from the Experience of Network Technique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Interested</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Pleased</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valued</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>Pleased</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Committed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>Pleased</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimist</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>Supported</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: National Frequency of Word Usage

In the National Word Frequency data:
- Positive words were used in 30 out the 40 potential responses. This equates to a 75% positive response rate.
- Negative words were used in 10 out the 40 potential responses. This equates to a 25% negative response rate.

Table 3: National Table of Word Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words selected by each respondent from the Experience of Network Technique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Valued</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Pleased</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimist</td>
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<td>Confident</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Valued</td>
<td>Valued</td>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bored</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Pressured</td>
<td>Committed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleased</td>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Local Frequency of Word Usage
I think it’s a great partnership, for our organisation and personally. We wouldn’t have missed this opportunity.” (Chief Executive)

“We’ve got a good reputation, each of the people working at grass roots level and the organisation they’re from have got a good reputation to deliver and be supportive. So anybody coming to (project worker) for training knows they will be supported right the way through.” (Chief Executive)

Organisational Development

From the outset it was unclear whether the trans-European network would work with so many differing organisations, cultures, and languages. The early days of the project were a testing time for all. In terms of organisational development, only one country (the Netherlands) had been involved in a similar type of trans-European network before. For the remainder, this was a new experience. The sharing of best practice and information between partner organisations has enabled the formation of a Volunteer Bureau in Romania and has also promoted the setting up of a foundation to sponsor some of the more disadvantaged children in Romania. Experiencing the European element of partnership working and collaboration has been a rewarding experience for all.

I was really stimulated because I could not imagine how it would work with so many different cultures working together.” (Germany)

“Enthusiastic is what I feel after every meeting I attended because meeting so many people just brings energy and new ideas.” (Germany)

The national partnership produced a high degree of organisation development comments. This is because of the mission critical nature of its funding. Partners have to demonstrate to the LSC, boards of governors and internal managers that the partnership delivers material organisational improvement,

“The partnership has been a godsend to this college in that we’ve worked very hard to vastly improve data systems and through partnership and the skills and software that it has bought, it has been a perfect solution for a college of this size.” (Principal)

“At the last project meeting everybody was very optimistic that we were going to be able to keep this thing sufficiently well funded so it continues to be a viable option. What I do hope, is that as partners we need to have more discussion not just about the business, but about how we see the systems that the partnership can deliver, develop to support the other business objectives such as individualised learning. So I felt that we had reached a certain stage of maturity in the partnership in terms of trust and having warm glow.” (Principal)

In the Local Word Frequency data:

Positive words were used in 29 out the 40 potential responses. This equates to a 72.5% positive response rate.

Negative words were used in 10 out the 80 potential responses. This equates to a 27.5% negative response rate.

The interview themes are now examined through the following common themes: Personal Development, Organisational Development, Themes of Common Interest, and Economic Benefits.

Personal Development

The trans-European project has had the biggest effect in personal development, creating increased confidence, cultural awareness and self-esteem,

“My self esteem was very much increased during this partnership and during these activities of the project and meeting people from so many different cultures and countries and traditions.” (Romania)

Although this project was conducted professionally throughout, the bonds and friendships made will be the lasting reminder of it,

“For me, it is a great experience because actually I have never met people as kind and generous.” (Spain)

“It was a really warm welcome from the first minute which I think also characterises, somehow, how the whole project really goes…” (Germany)

“There is a sort of energy which flows from one person to the other, from one country to the other and then all of a sudden you see that things stretch and that people become really involved. It’s incredible!” (Netherlands)

For some, it also provided the opportunity to travel outside their own country for the first time. Feelings of excitement and interest are evidenced below,

“And I begin to wait very, very excited for the second visit in England because …for me it was the first time that I was outside of my country and …that was a very exciting experience.” (Romania)

“It made us interested when he came (back) from Finland because he had never been, as far as I understand, he had never been abroad, at least not on an official things, so it was his first ‘assignment’ shall we say?” (Netherlands)

Within the local network, the working relationships and familiarity have grown over a number of years, so that an increase in confidence has resulted on a personal and organisational level.
Themes of Common Interest

A key area highlighted by a number of respondents was the way in which meetings were conducted. The trans-European partnership meets either two or three times per year. The host country is decided upon up to a year in advance. Rather than a Project Manager, this network has a Co-ordinator. The agenda for the meetings is populated by all members of the network. Over the last two years of the project, the network group have become more than just business partners, they have become firm friends, and so a softer approach to the management of the project has to be adopted. It has always been the case that the co-ordinator’s role at the meetings is to keep people on track. There is a tendency to drift from the subject matter and lapse into anecdotes,

"Our meeting here was quicker than I am used to. We made decisions more quickly than we do in Catalonia where we spend time thinking before we decide the way to go." (Spain)

The quote above highlights one of the cultural differences between the countries involved. The infrequency of the meetings dictates that decisions must be made quickly, the meetings take place over two days and it is essential to be able to allocate the work which needs to be done for the following 4 months.

The role of the Co-ordinator has been described as being that of a politician, in that persuasion is a key factor in achieving a positive outcome. However, unlike a politician, the Co-ordinator also needs to take into account the wishes of one country and try to ensure that this spans the wishes of everyone,

"It is better to do it this way, not the formal way – ‘you do this, you do that’, no! – you have a very good way to lead us.” (Romania)

"The Co-ordinator is very helpful and very patient making sure that we are all involved. She is the head, heart and hands of this partnership, but I don’t mean that she tells us to do things, she somehow pulls it all together and makes sure that everyone is contributing what they can to the work. We are a democratic group led by our Co-ordinator.” (Finland)

"The existing partnership works because everyone is determined that it will work, and I think that’s where the strength is. We all know all the issues, we all know all the problems but we all work round it to the best of our abilities.” (Chief Executive)

"Looking back from the end of year one, the leadership from the College, the direction from the College – absolutely brilliant.” (Manager)

"I think one of the keys to the success of the partnership is the way it has been managed. All the partners, and the project manager have been classed as equals, everyone has had an equal voice, and the opportunity to air it.” (Project Worker)

A key factor to be taken into account when allocating work in the trans-European project is that, whilst the spoken English of the participants is exceptional, for some the written word is more difficult. In one instance, all emails sent to one of the partners were forwarded by the partner to her daughter for translating into her native tongue. The daughter would translate, and then return this to her mother. The mother would then send the response in her native tongue to her daughter for translating back into English before the response to the original e-mail was made.
“Our differences and cultures are very big but when we work together they are smaller and we are closer to each other.” (Italy)

“Our project works because we are all interested in the same things, some of this is to meet the targets of the project but more than that we are interested in sharing experiences, in culture and the benefits of volunteering for individuals.” (Spain)

The national project group’s comments concentrate on credibility, trust and confidence within this theme.

“And coming to the lead college reassured me because at every meeting I had been to, every partner had been there, and the people who had been there have been at the right level to make those meetings meaningful and to actually have meaningful dialogue. I think the other thing about the partnership was the openness of the information that was put on the table. So the absolute openness regarding the business part of the partnership was the key to maintaining the trust and confidence of the individual partners.” (Principal)

“I hadn’t personally met anybody from the other colleges so again during the initial stages when we were introduced to all the other partners it gave us more confidence because I think part of the strength of the partnership itself is the fact that as colleges we may be of different sizes but we are very similar in what we are trying to achieve.” (Deputy Principal)

The local project holds an Operational Meeting monthly, every third month the Operational Group is joined by the Strategic Group. The decision to make this happen was taken at the outset of the project. The organisations involved had worked together before and so the shared experience of this working allowed these meetings to be combined. This also reduced time and effort in organising meetings which was appreciated by all concerned.

These meetings were structured with a set agenda published, and included the opportunity for all project workers to voice their achievements and concerns from the preceding month. The meeting is chaired by the Project Manager. In addition to the monthly meetings, all members of this network are in touch on an almost daily basis through telephones, e-mail and one to one contact.

“I think that we moved very quickly to one meeting for (the project), which combined both the strategic and the operational elements. And I think that was something that we learned and were able to do more quickly because of the experience we’d had from our previous work.” (Chief Executive)

“Combining the Partner (strategic) and Operational meetings has been a great time saver and gives the chance for the project workers to blow their own trumpet in front of their bosses.” (Project Worker)

“The end of the project is always a bit of a sad time and as much as anything, that’s because from our point of view, we don’t have any other means of accessing the staff costs for training delivery.” (Chief Executive)

“The opportunity to be able to fund learning brokers in the community and voluntary sector is just great, we could never have completed this project without doing it.” (Project Worker)

Economic Benefits

Neither the Local nor the trans-European projects make a profit. The budget available to run these projects is very limited, and the budgets are designed so that no profit is made. This is not to say there are no economic benefits to the organisations. The ethos of the local project is that FE historically seeks to engage the harder to reach learners, whilst the community and voluntary sector have the empathy with their client cohort, but often lack the learning delivery expertise. Therefore, funds are made available to employ Learning Brokers on a part-time basis within these organisations, which is a huge benefit to them.

The trans-European project does not have any tangible economic benefits. However, it has enabled a number of people to travel out of their country for the first time in their life, and it has also led to the formation of a foundation which sponsors some of the more disadvantaged children in Romania. It is common for colleges to pay more than £50k per annum (including porting, maintenance and upgrades) to its MIS software. This partnership provides the software for half that figure. However the partnership is small in terms of financial and staffing resources. It is therefore essential that the risk of the partnership is balanced against the financial and quality gains made on an ongoing basis.

“I wasn’t sure that we would be able to afford someone with the skills set that is required to do this job properly so therefore the possibility of the partnership, and being a member of that partnership, for us, was a salvation really.” (Principal)

“I suppose it led to a realisation by us all that there was still some risk there as a partnership, in that if we didn’t work openly together, having absolute trust that the other partners value the partnership, then the partnership would fail.” (Vice Principal)

“There’s always a bit of a risk, always a bit of a concern. As the smallest partner, the smallest college in the partnership, we probably get the biggest net benefit, I’m always nervous that the other partners don’t need it as much as we do.” (Principal)

“It was very clear from the beginning that this solution provided good value for money for us.” (Deputy Principal)
Conclusion

To summarise, the research found a widespread perception that these partnership projects were successful. The percentage of positive to negative marks supports this conclusion, as do the following comments:

"We knew everybody, we were already working together really closely and it had gone really well." (Project Worker)

"I’m struggling here to find something negative to say and that is genuine because I don’t want to be gushing and say everything is all great and all singing and dancing when you know I was trying to find something positively critical if that makes sense, but I can’t find anything." (Manager)

"Even though we were falling short of learner numbers at this stage, the others were exceeding their targets which made up for the shortfall...it makes you realise that, ‘hey we’re not alone, this partnership is working!’" (Manager)

In relation to the analysis of word usage and having applied the ‘pre partnership emotion filter’, the following words were found to be residual: enthusiastic (band one, trans-European, band three, national and band two, local) and optimistic (band three, trans-European, band two, national and band two, local). The research suggests that these two elements are essential for a successful project. Two further words emerged in two of the three streams commitment (Out of scope, trans-European, band one, national and band two, local) and interested (band two, trans-European, band two, national and Out of scope, local). The research suggests that these two elements are desirable for a successful project.

Acknowledgments

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References


Appendix A: Word Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interested</th>
<th>Valued (Fo)</th>
<th>Confident (Fo)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>Supported (Fo)</td>
<td>Bored (Fo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious (Fo)</td>
<td>Inflated (Fo)</td>
<td>Stimulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynical</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Disappointed (Fo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied (Fo)</td>
<td>Pleased (Fo)</td>
<td>Comfortable (Fo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhilarated</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated (Fo)</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Pressurised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Fo) – indicated ‘Filtered out’
Curriculum Development for Adult Learning through Collaborative Leadership

Katie Clarricoates, Sharon Cope and Peter Sapsford, Leicestershire Adult Learning Services

Executive Summary
In a rapidly changing adult learning environment with decreasing funding and re-focusing of funding priorities, collaborative leadership has arguably become an essential strategy rather than an option. This research project explores how adult learning can construct organisational strategies which promote collaborative leadership through effective teams. The research found that strong teams can be built on shared vision and principles communicated through clear target-setting and monitoring and delivered through processes that support those values. The main factors identified in successfully moving forward with curriculum development through collaborative leadership include: effective meetings; efficient communication with clear definitions of its purpose; reconstruction of data to meet the needs of curriculum planning teams and external organizations; interaction between collaborative teams; embedding Performance and Development Review and Continuous Professional Development processes across all staff groupings; valuing excellence in the provision of adult learning for its own sake as well as in relation to achieving funding or inspection targets; target-setting linked directly to service priorities; placing learners at the heart of what we do and public celebration of excellence and achievement by learners and staff.

Introduction
This research project explores how adult learning can construct organisational strategies which promote collaborative leadership. The “mutually accountable” approach to leadership requires empowerment of middle managers so that they lead and support curriculum teams and other groupings such as community learning development workers engaged in widening participation and subject coordinators on substantial contracts as well as large numbers of part-time, geographically dispersed tutors.

Leicestershire Adult Learning Service (LALS) was judged in its most recent ALI Inspection Report to have implemented very effective change management and to have evidenced the capacity to improve still further. At re-inspection in September 2005, leadership and management was awarded a Grade 2. A major restructuring of staffing and procedures was launched in 2005 following an earlier inspection (resulting in Grade 5 for leadership and management). Inspections of adult learning providers in the first cycle up to 2003 suggested that leadership and management, including curriculum management, was not well developed.

The restructure was designed to move from a locally managed and generic community education service, where curriculum leadership was not well developed in most curriculum areas, to a centrally managed specialist adult service with local delivery. This new, learner-focused structure was the result of a lengthy review with the aim of better ensuring a responsive curriculum design, consistent high quality of delivery and access for new and different learners. The lead inspector praised the Service in September 2005 for adopting an approach to “pull” rather than “push” staff through the change process. Much progress was made over a short period and the project focussed on the best practice in strategies for bringing about this capacity to improve. An example of the extent of change management was the successful introduction of new staffing structures in response to funding cuts, there being three different management structures in place between 2004 and 2007.

The Service provides a broad curriculum across a wide rural area with some urban centres. In 2005, the curriculum was divided into 8 consolidated curriculum areas in order to facilitate more effective curriculum management:

● Skills for Life (including ESOL and English and Maths GCSE),
● ICT,
● Languages (including English to A Level, British Sign Language and Makaton),
● Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (including provision for mental health service users),
● Sports and Hospitality,
● Arts and Crafts.

There are also 3 main developmental strands cutting across all curriculum areas:

● Family Learning (FLLN and wider Family Learning),
● Community Learning,
● Learning Support.

Managers in all curriculum areas had responsibility for strategic management and for driving quality improvement through accurate pre-course information, initial and formative assessment, recruitment and supervision of tutors and continuous monitoring of teaching and learning. All areas of learning were judged to be satisfactory or better at re-inspection and continued to show improvements.

Each subject sector or developmental area was led by an officer, working with a team of 3 managers to ensure a consistent approach to curriculum planning and delivery across the county. These managers were based in one of the three geographical areas – North, South, West and had a locality responsibility within their role. The large number of part time tutors (approximately 534 in 2005-6) employed by the Service...
were line managed through the curriculum route and present a particular challenge in relation to effective communication. The central team included officers with specific responsibilities for curriculum, community regeneration, quality and equality, staff development and training, learning support, health and safety and financial administration.

Regular meetings have been held to brief and support managers throughout the change process. Communications generally have been good, the Learning Platform offering an efficient means of making contact with administrative, support and teaching staff. There was, however, a risk of information overload developing as new processes and procedures were introduced and implemented.

A review of the new structure was carried out in February 2006 by the whole management team. This review indicated that there were some elements of the structure working particularly well:

- Improved communication and support for all staff, especially tutors and administrative staff,
- Clear curriculum management, planning and focus on the learner,
- Improved quality assurance and monitoring, including RARPA implementation,
- Responsiveness to targets and addressing weaknesses,
- Tutor Handbook as a benchmark for tutors,
- Stronger overall leadership with clear priorities.

The review also identified areas for further and continuing improvement:

- Clarity in regard to locality and curriculum roles and operational responsibilities,
- Workloads and resourcing in curriculum areas and administrative teams,
- Data systems,
- IAG arrangements,
- Accommodation review,
- Cross-curricular working,
- Marketing,
- Tutor substantive posts/contracts.

Particular issues to be addressed in relation to the Service's development of its goals include managing reduced capacity at a time of reductions in staffing and training for new roles. There is also a recognition that targets are constantly changing in relation to external forces. Performance and Development Review (PDR) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) are some of the tools for ensuring a common understanding and direction, at times when there are many uncertainties about funding and the need for flexibility and responsibility. A further realignment in response to national and local priorities and to improve effectiveness and efficiency by reducing the workforce and redirecting management was planned for 2006-7. The curriculum leadership and management structure was rationalised, administrative bases realigned and a new strand of district teams established.

By 2008, all managers and officers will have attended the CEL-sponsored "Leading and Managing Better" programmes. Attendees are returning enthused by the experience which has also informed their responses in this research. In this rapidly changing adult learning environment with decreasing funding and re-focussing of funding priorities, collaborative leadership has arguably become an essential strategy rather than an option.

The Common Inspection Framework recognises the role of distributed leadership with Leadership and Management directly impacting on learner experience and success. The project aligns good leadership and management with good teaching and learning and there is an assumption implicit in the questions used that teams and team values are developed and embedded to the benefit of learners. A Continuing Professional Development Ethos has been proposed and reinforces this assumption, underpinning the research framework (Petty 2006). This draft document has been shared with all managers and feedback invited. The principles include:

- Learning not blaming,
- We improve for our learners and the learning,
- High regard for all staff and high expectations,
- Low expectations are challenged,
- Challenge with support: team work,
- Accountability that is face-to-face not file to file,
- Positive thinking: responsiveness to difficulties,
- Open and honest communication,
- No defensiveness: open to constructive criticism,
- If I delegate, you have control, and so we both have responsibility.

The ethos embodied in this draft document underpins our aim to develop a culture of collaboration for continuous improvement, responsiveness to change and continuing to value the experience of each and every learner.
Against this background, the main research questions are:

1. How can middle managers (LALS curriculum and district managers, co-ordinators and tutors) contribute to leadership and strategic thinking in adult learning?

2. How effective can this be?

3. How can the organisation develop a culture of collaboration for improvement, which enables it to respond effectively to constant change, and without detriment to the quality of the experience of the adult learners? Formal leadership is assumed not to be the sole prerogative of any particular role within the Service, however the style of formal leadership will clearly impact on the whole organisation.

In order to answer these three main questions, the project explored the eight characteristics of effective teams identified by Larson and Festo (cited in French and Bell 1995) and how these apply to adult learning teams, including curriculum and other developmental groupings within adult learning services. The eight characteristics of effective teams are:

- A clear and elevating goal,
- A results driven structure,
- Competent team members,
- Unified commitment,
- A collaborative climate,
- Standards of excellence,
- External support and recognition,
- Principled leadership.

**Research Methods**

The project involved a range of staff across a wide geographical area and in a variety of leadership and management roles. To maximise the involvement of staff in the project, use was made of ILT, specifically our nationally recognised Learning Platform, a newly developed staff forum and resource centre. The Learning Platform provided an environment for ongoing discussion to inform the development of the project. Research interviews and discussion groups were held to address key questions relating to collaborative leadership, including the exploration of embedding a collaborative culture across a large and diverse organisation. Some informal external consultation with members of leadership teams in similar local authority adult learning providers was carried out to extend the research informing the project beyond Leicestershire.

Research methods were planned by a small team of three officers and were reviewed by colleagues midway through the project. Desk research into existing documentation included:

- Reflection on the minutes of discussions around the future direction of the Service.
- Review of the process for producing self-assessment reports (SAR) for the 3 years and the reports themselves with particular reference to Common Inspection Framework Question 5.
- The SAR was reviewed by colleagues.
- The updated three-year development plan was reviewed.
- Leadership and management standards questionnaires were introduced to all relevant staff as part of the induction to roles in the realigned Service to be launched in January 2007. The questionnaire was based on the key areas for management skills as identified by Lifelong Learning UK (2005).

Managers across the Service were introduced to the project aims during meetings and had the opportunity to attend an initial discussion group as well as optional focus groups.

A survey was devised to cover each of the eight characteristics of effective teams in relation to perceptions of the current and proposed management structures for the Service. The design of the survey was informed by Service-wide discussions around management in the realigned structure. This qualitative survey was trialled with officers initially and disseminated to all managers who were invited to share the document more widely with co-ordinators and tutors, both one-to-one and in focus groups. The detailed survey questions were:

1. Briefly describe the goal of the Service and how you contribute to that goal.

2. How does the Service ensure that targets are clear, agreed and monitored? Indicate up to 3 methods that you experience in your work.

3. Give an example of how you have been supported in your continuous professional development and how this impacted on your own or Service development.

4. Describe how a unified commitment to Service goals can be or is achieved and reinforced.

5. Give an example of a collaborative approach to working in your curriculum or area.

6. Does the Service define and recognise excellence, and if so, how?

7. What external support and recognition do we have to recognise our effectiveness as a Service team? What impact does this have on your work?
Research Findings

Service Goals

Evidence from surveys shows a strong common understanding of Service goals, with, as one would expect, variations according to the specific context of the individual’s work, e.g., family learning, basic skills or staff development. There is an implicit, and in some cases explicit, ownership in survey responses of the Service mission statement:

“The Service aims to contribute to the LSC vision of Leicestershire becoming a place where everyone wants to learn and has the chance to do so. We seek to do this by contributing to the following...”

The successful delivery of learning to individual learners, their families and communities with achievement as the product is at the core of the Common Inspection Framework and is the commonly agreed... the effectiveness of leadership and management across the Service depend on progress towards this overarching goal.

Particularly valued is a “non-autocratic” approach with leaders and managers taking account of negotiation with learners replicated in negotiations with staff and work with partners to raise standards and meet needs. A culture of willingness to review flexibility and responsiveness... will strive for continuous quality improvement. In doing this, we aim to play a part in equalising access to learning, achievement and progression for residents.”

8. How does the organisational culture, including values and beliefs, help and/or hinder collaborative leadership?

Three face-to-face interviews took place with staff focusing on the effectiveness or otherwise of the survey questions as well as on the responses to the themes themselves. As a result, the survey questions were adapted and clarified and a quantitative measure was added for each question. An extra question about issues and barriers to be addressed for the future was also added to each topic. The survey included the option of evaluating the questions quantitatively on a scale of one to ten. An electronic voting system was used, with twelve managers and officers responding to the survey questions to provide statistical responses.

Thirty-five managers were emailed the survey, of which 14 replied. There were also 3 focus groups (for curriculum and district managers, co-ordinators and tutors) which were offered in Spring 2007 (attended by twenty-three staff), and in-depth semi-structured interviews with a small sample from officers, managers, co-ordinators and tutors (four interviews in all). The survey, which took approximately half an hour to complete with up to 100 words requested for each response, was also made available electronically to all staff on the Learning Platform. The twenty-three members of staff who took part in focus groups included officers and managers from a wide range of roles, employed for between two and more than twenty years. The survey was adapted for exploration in focus groups and one-to-one interviews with tutors and included the following questions:

1. What do you understand by the term “collaborative leadership”?
2. What features of good practice distinguish effective leadership?
3. Of these, what features would you prioritise in the context of your own role and working practice?
4. To what extent do you feel empowered to make improvements and changes? Can you give examples?
5. What changes or improvements would you recommend?

Comparisons were made between findings from the various face-to-face interviews including focus groups and the survey and electronic results.
Target-Setting

Managers recognised that, for collaborative leadership and management to be effective, targets need to be constantly reviewed and achievement monitored but that the changing national context for services in relation to underperformance is extremely challenging. The need for closer monitoring of specific evidence was recognised in the survey responses. This perception is not necessarily shared by tutors but there is a need to involve this part-time workforce in producing and considering the impact of accurate data. Awareness amongst adult learning staff of the need for reliable and “reconstructed” data has been raised by the LSC’s “Managing Under-Performance” strategy. Continuing improvement to accuracy of data is crucial to support quality improvement in relation to teaching and learning.

Events to clarify direction for the whole Service and for individuals’ contributions such as induction/realignment sessions to explore changes were valued by the survey respondents. Effective meetings are generally seen as the essence of collaboration in a Service of this size. Collaborative approaches were summarised by one contributor as “Whole team involved in discussion and decision making. Whole team recognises team values, support each other as a team, plan together, cover each other if required, values various strengths, divides up workload, consultative style of management.”

Teams should be proactive as well as reactive, not just responding to weaknesses but identifying and reinforcing strengths. Informal working with colleagues was seen as valuable in promoting trust and collaboration. Senior managers who are accessible and approachable were seen as positive role models for collaborative leadership. Team-building was recognised as a crucial factor in ensuring effective target setting and review, establishing a common understanding of core values and beliefs, informing their development. These shared “positive beliefs” underpin the concept of learner benefit as the purpose of collaborative leadership. Successful target-setting and achievement depends on:

- performance review at all levels feeding into staff development and CPD,
- effective supervision,
- specific definition of actions in action plans,
- timely and time managed, focussed meetings (“no chat”),
- data validation and monitoring,
- shared values and beliefs- “positivity”,
- information sharing, including data we can trust,
- tight processes with constructive feedback (not generalised praise and encouragement),
- communication,
- concentrating resources where they are most needed,
- shared responsibility and accountability, but “no blame.”

Identifying, sharing and celebrating good practice, however, were seen as less effective areas. There is difficulty with the notion that “only work that can be measured is valued.” If “public perception of the Service needs to be in line with our own service values”, then we need to find ways to widen the perception of learning and its benefits in a way that balances the need for success in achieving targets and success at inspection.

Continuous Professional Development

CPD was recognised by managers and tutors as the force or glue that enables staff to actively contribute to the goals of the Service. CPD processes including one-to-one supervision and PDR were seen, at their best, as enabling the prioritisation of targeted work and the development of new areas of work, helping staff to differentiate between the important and the urgent. The culture change in relation to CPD needs to embed responsiveness into Service targets. Particularly in relation to part-time tutors, CPD is a challenging task. The links from CPD to appropriate teaching qualifications and management occupational standards were especially welcomed and valued, in ensuring clarity of purpose and direction.

- Factors referred to as affecting the impact of CPD on Service development included:
  - celebration of staff achievement especially in a climate of change and diminishing funding,
  - impact evaluation of processes to evidence that CPD is used to promote Service goals,
  - a continuing focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning as the product,
  - confidence building through staff development,
  - time for feedback on experience,
  - use of communication, the Learning Platform and newsletters to promote the value of staff development activity.

Commitment to Service Goals

Responses say that motivation of staff through public celebration of success and affirmation of “good will” is crucial to combat cynicism and low morale in a climate of constant change. Recognition of the contribution of each role to service goals by managers at all levels ensures that “maverick” actions are minimised or eradicated completely. Clarity about service goals has become increasingly difficult to achieve and there is a danger that uncertainty leads to “talk rather than action.”
Focus in meetings, and work prioritisation on service goals enables purposeful leadership to be developed at all levels. The review of meetings was valued as a strategy to ensure that aims and outcomes were clear. Support for geographically isolated, widely dispersed, part-time staff is provided through the range of events; structured, minuted meetings, conferences, staff development and briefings. These interactions have helped to maintain clarity about changing roles in the transitional stages between different management structures.

There is an increasing risk of “information overload” which can be countered by continuous and rigorous filtering and cascading of the most valuable information through the management structure. ALI recognised this communication strategy as effective and it continues to be seen as a strength in enabling curriculum management to interact with other areas of management within the Service. Survey responses emphasised staff perceptions of the usefulness, relevance, and importance of the SAR process and report, particularly from tutors who valued involvement whilst recognising that not all of their colleagues engaged as fully with self-assessment. Involvement of all staff in the process was seen as vital for successful collaborative leadership leading to the agreement of common goals and the setting of appropriate targets for collaborative working.

Collaborative Approaches to Working
A consultative style of management was seen as the way to cut across curriculum silos and to ensure workloads are shared equitably and effectively. Mutual respect and valuing of each others’ strengths, “sharing values, support, collaborative development, planning” were the main elements for collaborative working across and between curriculum groups. Open and honest communication is referred to as a major factor in collaborative working but also a major challenge. Budgets and targets could potentially be divisive but difficulties can be addressed by collective endeavour and careful, responsible communication without over-reliance on email and the Learning Platform.

Revising Excellence
Excellence is recognised and achieved by action planning across the Service with a clear, corporate statement of intent within the context of national agendas, benchmarks and standards. The starting point is to “agree what matters” and then to be proactive rather than reactive, striving to achieve defined and agreed best practice. There is recognition that “we cannot do everything” but how difficult it is to relinquish activities as priorities change. The Service and curriculum quality improvement plans focus on priorities for development towards excellence and there is a need for regular review to keep work on track.

Curriculum teams define excellence in teaching and learning through the observation of these practices. There is a general issue about lack of opportunities for sharing and celebrating achievement to encourage further striving for excellence and to support morale. What is valued is specific advice and guidance about direct improvement, for example through PDR processes focussing on development rather than supervision. A tutor said “I’ve received feedback when observed and this ensures that I make changes and that I am achieving more but I need to work to prove this!”

External Support and Recognition of Service Effectiveness
In the context of constant change, there is a need to promote the “new” Service to stakeholders and customers. Successful projects that have led to external recognition include:

- Collaborative work with libraries, e.g., Adult Learners Week promotion of opportunities for new learners in library premises,
- High profile Local Area Agreement project- Learn2earn- “help into learning and work for adults on Incapacity Benefits”,
- Regional CETT involving cross-sector partners including FE and HE,
- Community learning working with many and varied partners across the County and in targeted communities,
- Family Language Literacy and Numeracy in schools,
- Skills for Health pilot (Skills for Life and health/fitness specialists working with PCTs),
- Transitions Learning Project for young adult learners, with multiple and complex disabilities, who would otherwise have moved to residential education outside their communities,
- Peer review pilot for ACL in the East Midlands, funded by the QIA,
- Nationally recognised Learning Platform for sharing staff development information and resources,
- Contribution by the languages team to the development of the national languages strategy, recognised in an ALI specialist subject report.

These projects gain regional and sometimes national recognition for achievement and maintain a positive profile for the Service. However, external recognition is seen as poorly represented according to survey statistics. Recognition has been achieved externally through past Inspection with clear and constructive feedback; however there is a “danger that there is only value in that which can be measured” particularly with the introduction of self-regulation and the Framework for Excellence in 2009. A narrow view of learning and its benefits as measured through performance targets can undermine recognition of the public value of adult learning (Grigg and Mager 2005). One survey response said: “Public value needs to be in line with our own mission, not just to meet funding or Inspection requirements.”

Organisational Culture, Values and Beliefs
In the Re-Inspection Report (2005), ALI commented upon a developing strong culture of quality improvement. Survey responses emphasised that teaching and learning are
Based on the best practice identified through focus groups, interviews and surveys, factors in successfully moving forward with curriculum development through collaborative leadership, include:

- Effective, regular meetings with clarity regarding actions and responsibilities ensuring that curriculum planning is efficient and timely. In order to focus on the agreed Service goal (i.e. benefit to learners), teaching and learning should be at the core of each and every agenda item.
- Efficient communication with clear definitions of its purpose.
- Reconstruction of data to meet the needs of curriculum planning teams and external organisations. Ownership of data throughout the Service based on a common understanding of its value and impact.
- Interaction between collaborative teams. e.g. curriculum and community learning. These teams in particular communicate, interact and influence each other’s work with collaborative and reflective dialogue at the core of their interaction. A degree of conflict and challenge is needed to ensure an ongoing dialogue in meetings, networks, training and development activities about collaborative and active learning.
- Embedding PDR and CPD across all staff groupings. (This is a particular challenge due to the large numbers of part-time staff in ACL across geographically dispersed work bases). PDR will link directly to management competencies review, giving greater clarity and focus to the process.
- Valuing excellence in the provision of adult learning for its own sake as well as in relation to achieving funding or inspection targets. Encouraging creativity for the development of excellence in a “no blame” culture.
- Target-setting linked directly to service priorities defined in action plans with achievement monitored through supervision, PDR and review of quality improvement planning. Problem-solving to overcome the barriers.
- Placing learners at the heart of what we do and ensuring that they achieve the greatest possible benefit from their learning experience.
- Public celebration of excellence and achievement by learners and staff through publicity, marketing and promotion, newsletters and events to improve external recognition and encourage more external support.
- A succession strategy to ensure that leadership and management experience, skills and knowledge expertise is not lost.
- An organisation is more likely to transform itself from within through reflection on purpose and by agreeing rationale for action and processes.

As an organisation there are high expectations of staff supported by CPD and work planning. Staff commented on a supportive culture of “feeling valued, managers listen, back decisions and choices and recognise expertise and problem-solving skills.” Whilst changes have been achieved by focussing on improving weaknesses, we need to continue to “move from a deficit model to refocusing on values, beliefs, mission where teaching and learning are our first priority.”

Survey results: 20 staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Percentage of positive answers*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How clear are the service goals?</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How effective is planning and monitoring of goals?</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the impact of CPD?</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a unified commitment to Service goals?</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the impact of collaborative working?</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the Service define and recognise excellence?</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the Service have external support and recogniti?</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the organisational culture help or hinder collaborative leadership?</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A positive answer is defined as being in the higher 3 of the possible categories.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has summarised the research findings from a small scale, internal study of a wide range of staff working in varied settings. Despite the complexity of the organisational structure and enormous challenges and threats to the delivery of adult learning, the research has found a common understanding of direction and purpose. The research illustrates how collaborative leadership can be built around shared visions and principles with individual competencies supported by strategic planning, leadership, including structures and systems. Effort needs to be focussed on reviving the core belief system to further support collaborative curriculum leadership.
Exploring a Consortium Model for Adult Learning Provision

Rose-Marie Best, Croydon Adult Learning and Training (Calat), Rosemary Sloman, Calat, Neville Hayles, Hayles and Quin Ltd., and Sandy Hathaway, Hayles and Quin Ltd.

Executive Summary

This research project explores the potential for establishing a consortium for the delivery of adult learning provision across three London boroughs. The forthcoming funding pressures for adult learning means that there will be a need for providers to rationalise their provision, be cost effective and maximise resources to seek an additional and alternative funding base if the current breadth and range of provision is to be maintained. Croydon is seeking opportunities for collaborative working with neighbouring boroughs in a sub-region where there are effective transport links, similar priorities and local resident needs, and with three providers who have achieved similar quality standards to date. The project looks at comparative models of leadership and management with other public sector organisations and educational institutions including those currently adopted in the health authorities and PCTs. An assessment is made and examples of good practice and effective leadership identified that could be adapted to maximise the opportunities for adult learning providers in addressing the forthcoming changes in the funding policy and framework.

Introduction

This project explores the potential and opportunities of a consortium model of delivery across a number of different adult learning providers in the London south sub-region. Funding arrangements for adult learning 2007-2010 mean that there is a stated prioritisation of government subsidy for 16-19 year olds; reduction in funding levels for adult learning, i.e. 19 years plus outside Train to Gain initiative. In addition, the government subsidy for adult learning prioritised to support Skills for Life qualifications (literacy, numeracy and ESOL), achievement of full level 2 qualifications (equivalent to GCSE) and to improve the skills attained within the workforce (up-skilling and re-skilling).

For the academic year 2006-07, Croydon Adult Learning Service (CALS) received a 9% reduction in funding allocated by the LSC. In December 2006, the regional director for London LSC announced the planning and funding arrangements for 2007/08. The final announcement has yet to be made but it is anticipated that the young people’s budget (16-19 years) will be increased in line with inflation; the adult budget (19 years plus) will be reduced by an anticipated 3% across London and that subsidised funding will remain within the priority areas stated for 2006-07. London South LSC (LLS/LSC) will announce the provisional allocation for Croydon in March 2007 and final allocation in May 2007. In addition, the government has announced that asylum seekers will no longer be eligible for free ESOL tuition. Currently, 11% of Croydon’s
The listed organisations and managers were interviewed because of their seniority and their active participation in the change management process and because they were considered to be pioneers in the field.

A sample of the interview questions:

1. The history of the organisation including the previous organisational structure?
2. The new organisation structure?
3. The benefits and disadvantages of the new structure?
4. The number of organisation/restructurings in order to get to where they are?
5. How long the process took?
6. Are they using common financial systems, and examples where appropriate?
7. Was it done for financial savings?
8. Were there any significant financial savings?
9. Are they using common MIS systems, and examples where appropriate?
10. Had they managed to integrate the MIS/data collection functions?
11. Where there had not been full integration, what services did they manage to integrate?
12. Issues related to governance, e.g. the view of Council members towards any form of federated approach?
13. Are they using common HR systems, and examples where appropriate?
14. Impact on staff?
15. Staffing models used and their implications e.g. TUPE?
16. Training implications?
17. Examples of successful joint working?
18. Processes involved in embedding culture?
19. Use of common terminology?
20. What, if any was the impact on fees and how was this dealt with?
21. Are common planning systems used, and examples where appropriate?
22. Impact on curriculum planning and delivery?

ESOL learners are asylum seekers and CALS could face an additional reduction of £200K from the LSC allocation in 2007-08.

All adult learning services are facing the same significant reduction in funding and economies of scale could be achieved through increasing partnerships with other delivery organisations, including adult learning services in neighbouring boroughs. The LSC is currently modelling consortia arrangements for groups of adult providers to work collaboratively in the new framework and Croydon would be well positioned to engage in any similar approach that may be adopted in the future by the regional LSC. CALS has been working with adult services in developing a programme of complementary non-subsidised work, a fee policy and pricing scheme that is non-competitive and shared approaches to some aspects of a marketing strategy for adult learning in three boroughs.

This project seeks to explore the further development of working in partnership with our sub regional neighbours and to identify models of good practice nationally which could improve any future planning and delivery model for adult learning in Croydon.

The key questions shaping this research project were:

1. How will leadership and management need to change to reflect the forthcoming changes to the funding and policy framework for adult learning?
2. How does leadership and management work within the health authorities and PCTs and is there a model of good practice which could be considered for adult learning providers in the future?
3. How would a consortium model of delivery across a number of different providers/partners for ACL be effectively managed in the future?
4. What are the benefits to learners of an alternative leadership and management model in the delivery of the provision?

Research Methods

Interviews were conducted with the following key managers during January to March 2007:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation and Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Winn</td>
<td>Programme Director (implementing integrated services for adults and old people) Southwark Council - Health &amp; Social Care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Garrod</td>
<td>Lancashire Head of Adult and Community Learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynsi Hayward-Smith</td>
<td>ACL Director Quality and Curriculum Essex County Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene Tracey</td>
<td>ACL Director Planning and Resources in Essex County Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Ashman</td>
<td>Principal, Hackney Community College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are also models where organisations have opted against TUPE but preferred to develop parallel HR and performance protocols, processes and practices. There are also models where all staff have been transferred into a single organisation under TUPE but this may be perceived as a merger rather than consortium or federated model.

Under any reorganisation or federative approach to management, the research team found that organisations implemented a system of regular team meetings focused on fostering joint practices and keeping staff regularly updated through a variety of means, e.g. meetings, newsletters, conferences. All the organisations identified a need to ensure that communication at practitioner level focused on the benefits of change and some organisations established forums to raise issues about practice. Following standardisation of the course offer, many organisations rationalised staffing and established minimum standards for CPD.

The health service had identified the need to train, guide and support its managers. They felt that it was particularly important here because managers are from different professional backgrounds. The Health Service had in place a programme for training and meetings to encourage joint working but recognised a need for other strategies to embed joint working practices. They felt the need to focus on practitioners working jointly. There was evidence in some areas this was happening, whilst in other areas this was not happening at all, even some time after the re-organisation. The Health Service had reported that, as a result of joint working, there was greater information sharing and less duplication of assessment of clients.

Management, Organisation and Planning

Irrespective of the management team structure, there are managers for corporate services, quality assurance and improvement, curriculum development, planning and learner services. Different organisations combined different management functions. In some cases SMT members carried additional cross-organisational responsibilities e.g. external affairs such as developing the Thames Gateway work.

Under federative arrangements, the tendency has been to widen the scope of senior management responsibilities. In education, a number of models were used, from: a) full integration which may involve a merger; b) transfer of some responsibilities/functions (e.g. HR, quality, finance); c) a federative structure where organisations operate as autonomous units under a single body (e.g. the University of London with its constituent colleges and more recently the London Institute and its constituent art colleges). The research found little evidence of the federative structure being adapted with the majority pursuing transference of some responsibilities/functions. It is in this area where a wide variety of models can be used, ranging from highly centralised, where all management functions (budgets, accommodation, HR, planning, MIS and quality) are managed centrally (e.g. by the local authority), to a high degree of autonomy but not operating as autonomous units. It seems that, however centralised the service becomes, there still appears to be a need for some local support functions e.g. finance, accommodation, enrolment, MIS and student services. These functions need to be centrally co-ordinated particularly in the case of MIS because of returns to funding bodies.
Education reorganisations reported that recognising the needs of the local community is paramount and therefore running courses to meet local needs was essential. In some cases this meant the duplication of courses. The Health Service reorganisation had opted for a system of team leaders who managed teams of staff, professional leaders managed services or activities (e.g. nursing, learning). This could be likened to an FE matrix structure popular in the 1980s. The Health Service established a system of multi-disciplinary teams and the consequences of this involved extensive training and other HR related issues. Managers expressed strongly that a good professional structure was needed. However, within the Health Service, front line practitioners reported that it was easier to get things done for the client because of the improved information sharing.

All organisations stressed that sufficient time should be allocated to enable senior managers to meet regularly to plan and monitor developments. All organisations placed an emphasis on pacing: sufficient planning and adequate transition time. They felt that planning should be done in a number of stages with time given for different teams to embed new culture. In all cases any re-modelling seemed to involve between two and three re-organisations in each case over a period no less than seven years. Organisations often opted for the pooling of resources (accommodation, financial and staffing), but this rarely involves integration at practitioner level, which often follows much later or in some cases rarely. At the initial stages of reorganisation some authorities expressed concern over a lack of harmonisation of regional and local priorities. Developing strategies to overcome this seem to be a cause for concern.

**Curriculum**

There appears to be a clear advantage of service-wide targets across a larger area with benefits for economies of scale. There is a benefit of combining expertise of former organisations particularly where there are different specialisms. Also reported is the benefit of rationalisation of the course offer and the standardisation of course names, length, hours and certification.

**Management Information Systems/Data**

A number of different systems are being employed in the education sector. MIS is gathered locally at individual centres, all using the same software, then one central return is made. There are different views about the extent to which it should be centralised. In some cases, the development of joint MIS systems can be delayed because of the restructuring in the different organisations.

The Health Service currently has 12 models of information sharing protocol and, in this sector, data collection is a big issue because of confidentiality and sensitivity of information. Much of the information is still jealously guarded for a variety of reasons and often protected under protocols.

**Governance**

Where adult learning organisations remained as legal entities with a high degree of autonomy, those with governing bodies had varying forms of representation, e.g. the boards comprised politicians and members of the public. In the county councils where there was more than one adult learning provider each with an existing governing body, there was a need to devise a strategy that could integrate those bodies. The aim in one council is to have a single overarching governing body with advisory councils or groups reporting to it.

In one example where re-organisation did not occur, the complexity of long standing legal arrangements, such as trusts, proved to be the obstacle. In many areas, the councillors were content with the existing structure and governance arrangements and for a variety of reasons were unwilling to alter the status quo. Councillors, representing members of the local community sought to implement policies that met the needs of local people. Some organisations reported that the county council bureaucracy inhibited organisational developments.

**Finance**

All organisations said that any remodelling of services should not be implemented as a drive to save money, and in all cases, the local authority owned most of the buildings used for the delivery of ACL and therefore disposal of premises is not a means of making savings. Depending on the nature of the consortia, senior staff often remain in place on their existing salaries and therefore no budget savings were made in this area.

There are variable practices regarding top slicing of ACL monies. In any federative remodelling the practice for top slicing could affect any one of the former organisations. In some cases this could be further complicated by differences in funding rules with regard to end of year balances. For example, some authorities held funds in reserve at the end of year.

There are varying practices of allocated delegated budgets. For example some organisations operated a formula funding structure, some organisations operated a complex financial structure where the budget allocation formula would be different and complex financial rules would be different. A particular case given was budget reallocation across different cost centres.

There were some problems related to fee structures, namely, whether to have a single integrated structure or whether individual organisations continue to use their existing fee structures. Guiding factors could be demographics, local authority policy, housing or local economic context.

**Accommodation**

Often the greatest financial savings have been made through sale of premises. However, educational services could not downsizethe accommodation, as the premises were often owned by the local authority. In each county council varying arrangements existed regarding buildings, maintenance and the cost thereof. In some cases the buildings were maintained by the Council and rent free to colleges.
increasing competition from private providers, cuts to funding, a requirement to be more economically focussed and a constant pressure to meet performance targets. This changing landscape requires providers to adapt and change to maximise their potential, in a situation where the LSC and competition have become the key drivers. Some are starting to consider the implications of strength in numbers and the opportunities associated with collaborating more closely with other institutions.

The LSC will have an overview of the whole geographical area and can more easily negotiate the future offer with one provider ensuring the needs of the learners are met. As a consequence, this would force providers to rationalise the course offer and minimise duplication. In order to deliver this, the LSC has provided guidance on provider reorganisation. This has been developed to enable local solutions which meet the needs of local institutions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In most of the organisational remodelling we examined, there was an effort to develop, at the very least, some common language. However, in some cases, this only served to find that terms they had previously abandoned were being used by organisations they were now remodelled with.

For all organisations researched, the most significant issues were those related to employment (e.g. TUPE in some cases), grading, culture, terminology and training and development. Following the reorganisation, in addition, at practitioner level, different organisations used different terms to refer to the same levels of staff.

All organisations expressed the need for relevant and comprehensive staff development for all practitioners and managers. This served a number of purposes including communication of mission, purpose and direction; clarity of roles, responsibilities and function and embedding culture. Evidence suggested that most organisations had not made as much progress in this area as they might have wished. It was clear that there was a need to keep staff updated regarding developments; however the level to which this was carried out varied from organisation to organisation.

In education models, regular meetings take place of subject co-ordinators and team leaders of the federated organisations to look at key quality issues such as SAR, monitoring and curriculum development.

Partnerships

The education services reported increased partnership working across the County Council and the region. In the health service and in order to increase “joined-up” working for the benefit of the client, there has been greater emphasis on linking with external agencies/organisations, e.g. younger disabled, Connexions, Housing Advice and adult learning.

Other Research Findings

In a post-Foster, Leitch and White Paper world, providers in the 16+ sector may find themselves in an ever more challenging operating environment particularly with producing a large financial and management burden. The individual arrangements that any borough/council might have would affect any future developments, particularly because of the financial obligations.

Learner/User impact

Generally across the education sector there are reports of a significant reduction in learner numbers but these cannot be attributed directly to reorganisation, such changes have apparently not had a deleterious affect on learners. When questioned, some learners said that they were not aware that any structural changes had occurred.

The new multi disciplinary teams now responsible for working with clients in the health service had resulted in a reduction of repeat assessments and collection of the same client data. Health service respondents argued that the use of the multi-disciplinary teams and collaborative working had streamlined the process, enabling clients to access services more speedily and thereby increasing the independence of the elderly. Informal feedback from clients is that accessing the service was easier, with many clients nevertheless reporting that they felt better.

Quality and Monitoring

In many organizations, quality was often the first of many integrated functions involving establishment of joint procedures. Essex had chosen the development of single curriculum and quality groups with representatives from all geographical areas. In education models, the functions of quality groups incorporated: SAR, the Development Plan and identification of quality related priorities; and dealing with learning cycle events. Other quality developments were the sharing good practice, for example, staff expertise and training, the implementation of lesson observation across the federated structure, and the use of benchmarking (against other councils). In addition, the meeting of targets has improved since the new structure has been in place but there is no evidence to suggest that this is the result of restructuring. There has also been a concerted attempt to ensure consistency and uniformity in interpretation, practice and implementation of policies.

In education models, regular meetings take place of subject co-ordinators and team leaders of the federated organisations to look at key quality issues such as SAR, monitoring and curriculum development.
reorganisation had occurred. It is worth noting that a federated structure could incur higher management costs if a new appointment as head of the federated organisation is made.

Education providers reported a decrease in learner numbers following reorganisation. However it is difficult to attribute any decrease in learner numbers directly to the reorganisations, particularly as many other providers who had not had reorganisation had reported a decline in learner numbers. No firm evidence was provided to associate remodelling with learner numbers. All organisations had issues relating to the integration and development of uniform data/information systems and all organisations reported that any change in MIS/data lagged behind other management changes.

A significant benefit of remodelling was in the area of “sharing good practice.” This was made easier across organisations and they all reported that this was happening frequently. However we had not managed to establish that sharing good practice had necessarily led to an improvement in service delivery. All information from interviewees was anecdotal. Few organisations were able to draw on firm data to support many of their findings. In education the restructuring often led to a review of the curriculum offer and the development of some form of standardisation of provision, though with mixed results in some cases. From the interviews, it was difficult to establish any common themes relating to finance. Many had different issues and consequently different solutions, although all organisations sought to adopt some commonality of procedures and practice in financial management. It was a concern that few organisations were able to identify, with any conviction, in what ways remodelling of services had directly impacted on the learner.

Against this background, if there is to be any remodelling of services, it must be clear what services are being affected and how. It is essential to make the appropriate governing bodies and council members aware of the processes and informed of the benefits and the ways in which it affects them. It should be tried where possible to ensure that governance/governing bodies remain as broad and representative as possible.

Senior staff from all affected institutions should be brought together to work on planning on a regular basis. They should have a clear idea of the strategy and its direction, including a risk assessment and sufficient time should be allocated to the remodelling processes, enabling time for managers to meet to plan to and monitor developments. But also to give time to embed parts of the process. It is essential that the pace of change is realistic, manageable and not forced through and also that planning is done in a number of stages with time for different teams to embed the new culture.

Extreme care should be taken with regard to the terminology used with regard to both staff posts and services delivered. Having senior managers from across the organisations working together on terminology might help to provide some consistency from old to new in any transition. Changes should be for the long term improvement and greater quality and therefore restructuring procedures should ensure it embraces what is good about the institutions involved, e.g. specialisms, best practice, diversity, inclusion, centre of excellence and accommodation.

Any changes proposed need to be incorporated into development and team plans and management need to ensure that these are monitored and implemented, e.g. setting up meeting schedules to ensure teams communicate with each other. Concerted attempts must be made to ensure that communication at practitioner level is regular and focuses on the benefits of change. This should occur before, during and after the remodelling process.

All managers and practitioners need training, guidance and support; this is particularly for those who are managing unfamiliar teams and may be from different backgrounds. Organisation should use the restructuring as a vehicle for encouraging staff to work in a more “joined up” way (as exists within health and children’s services).

It is essential that MIS information should be gathered locally (at main centres) but with all centres using the same software which links into the central system to allow one central return (to LSC) to be made. The strategy for dealing with MIS and data protocols should be considered from the outset with all other planning issues and not be regarded as a “bolt on.”

Finally, the strategic principle of quality as a starting point, meeting with and fulfilling the needs of the learners, should establish formally and informally the impact of any change on the learner. This will in turn inform future planning and development and allow a better transition to a remodelled service.

Acknowledgments
Thanks to all those who were interviewed for this project.

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Further information and Contact Details

Research and development are central to CEL’s organisational mission and we seek to encourage mutually-beneficial interrelations between theory, development, policy and practice. We recognise that there are many innovative and effective leaders and leadership practices in the Sector that warrant investigation, analysis and wider dissemination of best practice. A particularly distinctive feature of the CEL practitioner programme is that it enables staff working in the sector to participate in the setting of the research agendas, to define highly relevant issues for leadership and undertake to investigate and research these key themes.

We would like to engage with existing networks within the Sector and develop a wider practice-led research community contributing to current debates on leadership and other related issues.

If you would like to receive further information on the Research Programme, please contact:

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Further information is also available at the following websites:
http://www.centreforexcellence.org.uk
http://www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/leadership/cel/