



University of HUDDERSFIELD

University of Huddersfield Repository

Miller, Paul

The Nature of School Leadership: Global Practice Perspectives

Original Citation

Miller, Paul (2017) The Nature of School Leadership: Global Practice Perspectives. In: Inaugural Professorial Lecture, 17 October 2017, University of Huddersfield. (Unpublished)

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/33759/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

The Nature of School Leadership

Inaugural Professorial Lecture, Paul Miller

Introduction

Thank you, Professor Tim Thornton for that kind introduction.

I am pleased to be able to deliver this lecture, which I dedicate to all BME staff and students in educational institutions across the UK. It is of huge importance that the continuing struggles of BME staff and students in UK educational institutions is acknowledged, as well as the actuality and symbolism of my appointment to a chair and what it means for them. But, more on that in another lecture.

I would like to thank Professor James Avis, Carolyn Newton and Danielle Butler and other colleagues in the School's Marketing & Research Office, for planning and organising this lecture. I know you have worked hard behind the scenes to organise and deliver a successful event. Thank you.

It is wonderful that you all have turned up this evening, to engage with me in debate on the topic, "The Nature of School Leadership: Global Practice Perspectives".

School leadership is in a state of continued flux, and I am inviting school leaders present this evening, to continue to forge and strengthen partnerships with academics and Universities to research and co-produce knowledge of practice, so others can have a better, more informed account of your work. Together we are stronger than standing alone.

As many of you know, over the past decade, I have been involved in cross-cultural and comparative research on school leadership, working directly with school leaders – primarily, as an attempt to bring to surface many similarities of the practice of school leadership in educational systems all over the world.

Because “we write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture, which is specific” (Hall, 1993, p.222), “...the challenge for any transnational dialogue is understanding the new global terrain beyond national borders” (Blackmore, 2009, p.4).

Thus, my research approach is a conscious attempt to diversify the field of educational leadership & management by giving voice to school leaders in small countries and developing countries in particular, and to broaden and deepen our understanding of the practice school leadership through “descriptions of leaders in action...and detailed descriptions of them at work” (Southworth, 1993, p.79), and by providing evidence and insights into the “little stuff of

everyday life” (Blasé & Anderson, 1995, p. 25) related to “the nitty gritty” (Miller, 2016, p.1) and “street realities” (Ball, 1987, p. 8) of their work.

I very much believe that, this kind of research allows us to provide guidance to students, practitioners and policy makers in ways that are more informed; thus being able to make more authoritative judgments about events in our field; and also to make more substantial contributions to the research field itself.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is always a risk associated with presenting ones ideas in such exalted company.

It is not unusual that, in events like these, ideas with which I have been wrestling are sometimes presented without the clarity and precision I intend.

This is especially the case when one is presenting to, for example, headteachers, research students, members of community and professional organisations, teachers, neighbours, fellow academics, my current and previous line managers, a Pro-Vice-Chancellor, a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, , family members, including my auntie and mom who have travelled from Florida to be here. So do bear with me.

On the plus side however, it does indicate that the conversations we are having tonight is important enough for you all to be here and is supported from the top.

Some of you have asked me why I have chosen this topic “The Nature of School Leadership: Global Practice Perspectives” for this talk. That’s a very good question!

Over the past number of years I have had the opportunity to visit, undertake consultancy and observe school leaders in diverse cultural settings in different countries across the world. I have visited or provided advice to school leaders in communities located in, for example, from the relative quiet of Canada, The Cayman Islands, Barbados and New Zealand, to the wealth of Dubai; and Azerbaijan, to the bustle and liveliness of Maputo, Mozambique, Johannesburg, South Africa and Kingston, Jamaica; and to the soulfulness of such cities as: New York, Paris, Barcelona and The Hague. I have also spent time in many other places in between, and also in several schools in England and Scotland.

In all of these places, both inside and outside the United Kingdom, I have had the pleasure of visiting schools, where I have interacted with pupils, teachers and school leaders.

I have discovered that there are vast differences between developed and developing countries; religious and secular countries; small and large countries; but I have also discovered there are very many similarities.

In all these countries, and national education context, what emerges is a consistent commitment among policy makers, school leaders and teachers to build an education system that reflects a nation's values, history and aspirations....

Put differently, what I have witnessed is that globally, schooling is more alike than is different, regardless of national education context.

Let us consider these issues in the context of the topic with some evidence from research I have undertaken between 2015 - 2017.

School Leadership

Within the past two decades, globally, school leadership has become an area of renewed focus in international and national education policy agendas. There are many reasons for this, including:

- **competition between and within national education systems,**
- **the deepening of performativity cultures,**
- **the introduction or strengthening of education accountability mechanisms,**
- **the introduction of leadership preparation and development agencies and**
- **the increased recognition of the role played by school leaders and schools in connecting schools and students to the 'real world' have all contributed to this renewed focus.**

School leadership is arguably the second most important element in the success or failure of schools. As a fundamental link between the classroom, a school and a nation's education system, school leaders and school leadership have a vital role in improving school level efficiency and in transforming the fortunes of national education systems through schooling.

School leaders do not work in fixed educational policy contexts. They operate in dynamic educational environments that require them to lead change at school level and to connect their schools with opportunities in the wider environment within which they are located and operate.

For example, school leaders and schooling are positioned as custodians and drivers of social and economic change in society through education.

School leaders are working in an evolving context of simultaneous and significant life changing events, many of which are outside their control and many of which have the potential to shape or determine their own performance as well as the performance of their schools.

For example, the changing external environment of schools is characterised by:

- **increased global competition among educational systems**
- **social, political and civil unrest**
- **multiple and competing policies requiring simultaneous implementation**
- **frameworks for increased accountability**
- **frameworks for and increased and improved performance**
- **the quality and adequacy of infrastructure and resources**
- **the threat and impact of natural disasters**
- **growing national/ international economic uncertainty**

Added to this are changes associated with the internal environment of schooling. **For example:**

- **the quality and availability of teachers and aspiring school leaders,**
- **the quality teaching and learning,**
- **the behaviour of students,**
- **the quality of support received from and by parents,**
- **the location and size of a school,**
- **the size and gender make-up of staff and student bodies, as well as**
- **the degree of support/challenge received from the school board.**

School leadership therefore “... is not simply putting prescribed solutions into action, but a constant encounter with quandaries that demand thinking and problem solving, responding, and adjusting to the situations...” (Acker-Hocevar et al, 2015, p.5).

As DeVita (2005) notes,

More than ever, in today’s climate of heightened expectations, principals are in the hot seat to improve teaching and learning. They need to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. They are expected to broker the often-conflicting interests of parents, teachers, students, district office officials, unions, and state and federal agencies, and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs (p.1).

Thus national governments continue to seek out and pursue ways to develop their education systems, and to make education more responsive to the needs of citizens

and to the demands of society, expectations for schools, school leaders, school leadership have also intensified.

The accounts of the sixty-four school leaders presented in this talk are from sixteen different countries located on five continents across the world.

Themes

The seven themes around which this talk is based are that “School leadership is”:

- **Personal and internally motivated**
- **Policy driven and mediated**
- **Change oriented**
- **Teacher dependent**
- **Enterprising and entrepreneurial**
- **Context dependent**
- **Partnership dependent**

Theme 1: School leadership is personal & internally motivated

The quality of leadership provided by school leaders is a personal activity, very much dependent on their ability to tackle events and factors in a school’s internal and external environments.

Although a school leader’s work cannot be divorced from the internal and external contexts within which they work, how factors in these environments are tackled is very much a personal activity related to personal factors which are integral to an integral to their approach to leadership.

From their study of Jamaican and English headteachers, Miller & Hutton (2014) found that personal factors, such as, a “competitive spirit”, “passion”, “determination”, “decisiveness”, “motivation” and “personal drive”, are central to how school leaders enacted their leadership.

In this study, school leaders said:

Leadership is heavily dependent on the individual: outlook, talent, goals, influence. The successful principal must have a strong belief in self and in her ability to achieve organizational goals, despite the odds (Jamaica, 1F).

There is no doubt that effective and successful school's leadership begins with an individual's internal motivation. A Principal has to inspire others whether they were teachers or students, thus to inspire others requires him to have an individual motivation. In this way he can lead teachers and all those surrounding him to success and effectiveness. Internal motivation leads to an investment in the in the work and effort in order to satisfy this inner need. This way the school not only achieves good results and success but also this motivation has to influence and inspire others (Israel, 3F).

Linked to notions of leadership being a personal activity is the matter of values.

Values, according to Raths et al (1966) are “beliefs, attitudes or feelings that an individual is proud of, is willing to publicly affirm, has [sic] been chosen thoughtfully from alternatives without persuasion, and is [sic] acted on repeatedly (p.28).

Each school leader has his/her own unique experiences and personal values that contribute significantly to how they engage and interpret events in a school external and/or internal environments.

Miller & Hutton (2014) argue:

[O]ne person’s interpretation of the strictures, structures and processes may be very different to someone else’s given, for example, their background and current social class, understanding of and engagement with educational policies, size and location of a school and philosophy of education. Due to the personal nature of values, we also propose that values are contested, recognising that the practice of leadership, although influenced by several factors, is equally a deeply personal enterprise, situated within the sum or parts of a series of critical incidents or individual’s experiences (p. 71).

Evidence summary

In respect of school leadership is “personal and internally motivated”:

- Both female and male school leaders regarded school leadership as a uniquely personal activity;
- Female school leaders appear more internally motivated than male school leaders (**men appeared more motivated by the prospect of winning; women appeared motivated by the prospect of serving**),
- School leaders faced with resource constraints showed greater signs of internal motivation; suggesting they are motivated by their desire to improve or change things as well as by challenges in their environment. This was especially noticeable among school leaders in Pakistan, Turkey, South Africa, Mozambique and the Caribbean.
- There were no discernible differences in patterns of motivation among school leaders based school factors such as size, school type and school location in a country.

Theme 2: School leadership is Policy driven and mediated

A policy is a statement of intent concerning an activity that aims to provide standardisation, uniformity and confidence to stakeholders. Educational policies establish frameworks and constraints in several areas such as staffing, curriculum, safeguarding and the protection of students and the welfare of staff.

More specifically, educational policies guide and shape the work of school leaders, and more generally, what goes on in schools, and provide an essential framework through which the leadership of school leaders can be emancipated and/or restricted.

Although Miller (2016) describes educational policies as “...the fuel on which education/ schooling is run”, he also notes that, “**Educational policies give shape and structure to an education system and can lead to both coherence and mayhem for those who must enforce, deliver or otherwise experience them**” (ibid).

This tension was further highlighted by former UK Schools Minister Ed Miliband who suggested, “... **the government and school leaders can be described at some point in time as either the motor of progress or its handbrake**” (Miliband, 2003).

Nevertheless, as national educational policies continue to focus less on social renewal and more on national economic imperatives,

...education is being positioned as a golden ticket to individual and national prosperity and a hedge against social displacement, since through education, students should be in a better position to assess and develop their talents and to produce goods and services that are more highly valued and more useful to society. A further consequence of this policy shift is that schools and school leaders are finding themselves in cross fires between differing political interests and dictates as they try to deliver on their primary commitment to students and their secondary commitment to the national state (Miller, forthcoming).

In this study, school leaders provide:

Without organisation policies and procedures, a school can be like a rudderless ship. It is important to have these guidelines, union collective agreements etc. to help unite us as an organization. At the school level, it is important to have clarity, which leads to consistency – allowing staff to do their jobs without ambiguity. However, “Policy” needs to be tempered with common sense (Canada, 1F).

The school does not exist in a vacuum or in an empty space. It is affected and driven by many factors, and one of these factors is education policy. Usually it is a general education policy that allows some flexibility. Principals can take advantage of this flexibility to be somewhat autonomous. This need for autonomy is highlighted especially when education policy ignores the uniqueness of minorities (nationality, culture, history, traditions) and does not respond to their needs (Israel, 3F).

Gunter (2012) argues that school leaders are caught in a game “**where those outside of schools are in control of school leaders**” (p. 18) and where school leaders almost always struggle to assert their leadership against the structures that enable and prevent their agency (Gunter, 2005).

Eacott (2011) also notes the current educational policy context is steadily leading to “**the cultural re- engineering of school leadership and the embedding of performativity in the leaders’ soul**” (p. 47).

Furthermore, “**The policy context changes not only what is done in schools, teaching and learning, but also the relationships between staff and children, between staff, and between staff and parents. The pressures of performativity,**

that is, constant scrutiny by means of league tables or inspection, accompanied by fear of potential public exposure, are particularly corrosive” (Lumby & Coleman, 2017, p. 20).

As schools do not exist independent of an educational policy context, school leaders have an obligation to implement national policies at school level. This, in national educational and school contexts where, according to **Lewis & Murphy (2008)**, “...in some respects, many headteachers are more like branch managers... handed down expectations, targets, new initiatives... all of which may or may not be manageable in their context” (pp. 135–6).

Evidence summary

- School leaders felt, at times, they were being “driven” instead of being “led” by policies, where being “driven” by policies is about having to implement several, often conflictful, policies simultaneously.
- Although all school leaders, at times, challenged the content and implementation of policies, male school leaders were more likely to challenge;
- Female school leaders were more likely to implement policies without challenge as they saw that as important to building or nurturing relationships (which confirms earlier research by Eagly & Koenig’s (2006) female school leaders tend to exemplify more communal qualities).
- School leaders in Europe, especially in Cyprus showed a greater degree of agency (resistance) in mediating policies and school leaders in England showed the highest degree of frustration with educational policies (perhaps due to ongoing events in the national economic and political environments).
- School leaders in developing countries were more likely to adopt a filtered approach to policy implementation

Theme 3: School leadership is Change oriented

Education is about change and transformation, for individuals and society. Individuals cannot survive without society and nor can society thrive without individuals. The relationship between the individual and society is characterised by a high degree of interdependence, although the terms of this relationship are controlled by a national state.

That is, a national state determines the content of teacher education, which subjects make up a national or an agreed curriculum, the context for schooling in a country, the context for business and industry and therefore what skills are to be acquired by students.

The actions of national governments are therefore very much related to the role they perceive education plays and can play, to individuals and national societies, and in particular for helping national societies to economically competitive in an increasingly globalised space.

Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, provides that States Parties agree that education shall be directed towards the:

- **development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;**
- **development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;**
- **development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own;**
- **preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;**
- **development of respect for the natural environment.**

Although securing national economic from education has become a major pre-occupation for many national governments, I draw attention to the fact that schools “**should orient themselves to the needs of the children who will have to deal with the economy, and not to the needs of the economy itself**” (Brighthouse 2006, p. 28).

Nevertheless, we can perhaps agree that:

Education, schooling and school leadership are about change. And never before in the modern history of humanity has the responsibility for individual, community and societal change been more firmly placed in the hands of so few: school leaders. Put differently, school leaders are important in assisting and supporting governments and nation states in achieving change agendas within and outside education. As a result, schools have become sites of change for the individual learner, communities and national societies (Miller, forthcoming).

School leaders said:

The purpose of education is to educate people to be better, and in this way the community and the whole society gets better. Education which doesn’t have its impact on people and changes in society as a whole is not a successful one. WE always have to move on, to make a difference at school and at the community we belong to. The change starts with the first circle, as an individual then heads to the second level, as a community and then the whole society. School leadership dictates which kind of influence and difference it will be (Israel, 3F).

Leadership is change. I have spoken to our staff about this point. In the constant search for excellence we use the research and good practice we find locally and internationally to help shape our practice in school. Even when we have things running smoothly, we challenge ourselves to see what can be changed to make it even better. Of course in school we also have the demands of the changing cohorts of children – what works for one year / period of time, may not work in

a similar way due to the change of pupils. In inner city schools, where the makeup of the students can change quickly, there is a requirement to be agile and responsive to the community (England, 3M).

Linking the power of education to bring about change, former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown suggested, **“It is education which provides the rungs on the ladder of social mobility”** (Brown, 2010).

Additionally, then Leader of the Opposition (and former British Prime Minister) David Cameron also suggested, **“Without good education there can be no social justice”** (Cameron, 2007).

Miller (2016) also notes that, **“... the road to national economic development starts at the gate of a school”** (p.147).

Evidence summary

- All school leaders very much valued and treated education/ schooling as a tool for change;
- Both male and female school leaders also showed a strong degree of personal and internal motivation towards change;
- Female school leaders focused more on change to individuals, and institutions whereas male school leaders appear to focus more on changes at system-level;
- School leaders in England, Jamaica and Israel expressed frustration with the speed of policy-making and implementation, which they felt, was having a negative effect on their work and the ambitions they have for their schools.

Theme 4: School leadership is Teacher dependent

As Seashore Louis et al (2004), reported, **“Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school”** (p. 65).

Put differently, teachers are the single most important school factor influencing student learning.

School leaders, no matter who they are, no matter their experience, motivation or skill level, cannot deliver the national or a school’s objectives for education without teachers.

Teachers are the lifeblood of an education system, without whom, all the educational aims and objectives for society and for individuals may not be realised (Miller, forthcoming).

The work of teachers

Although leadership practices differ significantly between cultures and national education systems, there is increased recognition that school leadership, as a shared activity or collective endeavour, is a necessary response to external pressures and internal organisational needs.

Described by Miller (2016) as “mechanics” whose duty it is to prepare students to flourish in society through providing them an education, Lipsky (1980) also describe teachers as “**street-level bureaucrats who establish and invent devices, decisions and routines to cope with uncertainties and work pressure that effectively become the public policies they carry out**” (Dahl, 2017, p. 37).

What school leaders said:

Teachers are the wheel of a school. Without help from teachers, it is not possible to run a school (Pakistan, 4F)

The dynamic nature of schools today makes it difficult or even discourages school leaders to operate as ‘heroes’. It is important for me as a leader to identify the skills of teachers and harness their energies so as to positively engage the whole school in learning (Montserrat, 1M)

Teachers are the most valuable resource we have. What they do in the classroom, day after day, is to be marvelled at and respected. The best teachers are again those with strong moral purpose – fortunately this is most (England, 7F).

Evidence summary

- Both male and female school leaders believe school leadership is teacher dependent, although female school leaders show a greater orientation towards this.
- Female school leaders constructed their partnership with teachers as an essential partnership that needed to be nurtured and protected.
- Male school leaders, although recognising teachers are important to their work, tended to see teachers as doing a job for which they are being paid and as such they did not necessarily have to “depend” on them
- School leaders in developed countries tended to view teachers as simply “doing their jobs”, whereas school leaders in developing countries tended to view teachers as important partners without whom their jobs would be impossible.

Theme 5: School leadership is enterprising and entrepreneurial

An enterprising individual is a person who shows creativity, imagination and resourcefulness, and entrepreneur is a person who organises and manages an enterprise, usually with considerable initiative and risk (*Webster’s Dictionary*, in Leisey & Lavaroni, 2000).

From these definitions, one surmises that although there is a huge degree of overlap between what counts as enterprising and entrepreneurial, an individual who is enterprising may not be necessarily be entrepreneurial.

It is perhaps safe to assume that all school leaders are enterprising, and enterprising school leaders engage resources and strategies that are aimed at ensuring the internal operations of a school are not compromised.

Although the distinction between an enterprising and an entrepreneurial school leader is not a binary one, Hentschke (2009) made two important observations.

First, until recently, entrepreneurial attributes were not featured in school leadership debates or preparation.

Second, school leaders, in particular those in developed countries tended to focus more attention on procedural compliance, inclusiveness, discharge of system responsibilities, management of competing political demands, upholding professional norms and stewardship of public resources.

The combination of a range of mostly external factors, however, by necessity, now require school leaders in both developed and developing countries to develop and show what Miller (2016) described as “corporate mindset” (Miller, 2016.).

Having a corporate mindset means being aware of events in a school's external environment and how these could impact schools and being able to combine data from within a school's internal and external environments to make decisions, pursue opportunities, and build alliances that align to provide their school an advantage in the marketplace for schools for the foreseeable future (Miller, forthcoming).

Drivers of entrepreneurial school leadership

According to Coffey (2001), “schools are supplied and consumed” (p.21).

Hentschke & Caldwell (2007) provide that,

conditions of compulsory schooling have changed in ways that are encouraging more entrepreneurs to enter the field and to behave entrepreneurially (p. 146).

Furthermore,

increased focus on school performance; marketisation and choice for parents and students; decentralisation; reduced national spending on education; reduced budgetary allocations to schools; and increased competition within and between education systems are among the primary policy issues influencing the degree to which school leaders engage in entrepreneurial school leadership (Miller, forthcoming).

School leaders said:

As a Headteacher I have certainly embarked on projects I didn't think at the start I would be able to achieve, and I have, at times, acted on instinct, very much flying by the seat of my pants! I suspect this aspect of school leadership will grow...but I wonder if sometimes it will take Headteachers away from their central role of ensuring children's learning is supported as well as it can be (England, 10F).

To a large extent school leadership is entrepreneurial, but this area of leadership should not become a substitute to compensate for reduced central funding. Some aspect of educational policy in England may be breeding an unhealthy set of enterprising and entrepreneurial school leaders (England, 10F)

Schools today are affected by the global and more specifically the economic environment in which they operate..... As a result, a school must be innovative, resourceful, creative, adventurous, business-like and willing to take risks as it attempt to address the challenges that emerge daily. When the leader incorporates these elements into the school's operation it gradually establishes an enterprising and entrepreneurial culture (Montserrat, 1M).

When I became part of a team/school that has poor support and negative feedback in the community, I decided to "sell" all the positive aspects regarding the students and believed that the rest would eventually follow. It began with social media and the community started to state they never knew all this good came out of the school. The positive aspects did not begin as I walked through the gates. It began before, but, no one "sold" it before. No one placed a price tag on the students' crafts and the students could never recognize the value of their work (St Maarten, 1F).

Blasé & Blasé (2004) note that changes in the environment of schooling have encouraged **"the kinds of leadership that seriously damage teachers, teaching and student learning"** (p. 245).

Evidence summary

- Female school leaders are more likely to be engaged in activities considered enterprising (to do with the curriculum and teaching and learning) and less external facing entrepreneurial (to do with the school's image and networking), which was the opposite for male school leaders.
- Although school leaders in both developed and developing countries were engaged in various fundraising activities, school leaders from Brazil, Cyprus, Jamaica, Mozambique and South Africa were far more engaged in fundraising efforts
- School leaders in smaller countries, in particular Guyana, Anguilla, Antigua and Montserrat, were most likely to be engaged in directly marketing school activities, not necessarily to increase student numbers but as a means of showcasing what was happening at school.
- English school leaders saw entrepreneurial activities as a major distraction and viewed being able to navigate the fast changing UK educational policy environment itself an act in enterprising and entrepreneurial leadership.
- English school leaders appear to prefer inward facing enterprising strategies
- All school leaders appeared internally motivated towards entrepreneurial school leadership - although some by economic necessity associated with context and others by their natural inclination.

Theme 6: School leadership is Context dependent

School context is a complex and important issue to be considered when making judgments about the performance of schools/ school leadership. Leaders shape context, but context shapes leadership!

Put differently, **each education system has its own peculiarities, and each school within an education system has its own peculiarities, and school leaders, despite years of teaching or leadership experience cannot simply transfer what worked in one school to another one, no matter how well these may have worked elsewhere (or in the past).**

For, in-as-much as the practice of school leadership is heavily influenced by external, internal and personal factors, school leadership is also heavily influenced by time, place and space.

Put differently, the practice of school leadership is heavily influenced by context; within which are also layers of contexts or multiple contexts.

For example, a school's context is compromised of:

- **Institutional Context**
- **Community Context**
- **National cultural context**
- **Economic Context**
- **Political Context**

School leaders said:

We cannot separate the school from the cultural, social and moral context which surrounds it. A school is not an isolated island. The school influences and influenced by the context that surrounds it. School leadership must adapt itself to this context in order to be efficient and effective leadership. Each school has unique characteristics so the school principal must take this into consideration when he chooses the appropriate leadership style (Israel, 3F).

Context defines everything. Each school has its own specific context which determines every course of action. This is made very clear when school leaders move from one context to another. When trying to implement tried and tested policies, they can only work if tweaked to reflect the context of the current school. Context is not only important between schools, but within schools themselves. As a school culture changes, so the context changes – what served a purpose once needs to be redefined in order for school improvement to continue and to avoid stagnation (England, 1F).

Evidence summary

- Both male and female school leaders regard context as an important element in the success or failure of leadership, although female school leaders scored more highly. This suggests female school leaders believe more strongly that leadership effectiveness is context dependent.
- Female leaders showed a stronger correlation between “entrepreneurial and enterprising leadership” and “context dependent leadership”.
- “Personal and internally motivated leadership” strongly correlated to “context dependent leadership”. This suggests a strong relationship exists between a

leader's personal agency, the quality of their leadership and the context in which they work.

- There were significant correlations between “teacher dependent leadership” and “context dependent leadership” among both female and male school leaders.
- All school leaders were affected by a combination of events in their national social, cultural, political and economic environments, although some more than others. In Pakistan, school leadership is more likely to be influenced by events in the cultural and social environments. In Jamaica, Mozambique, South Africa, Cyprus and Turkey, school leadership is more likely to be influenced by events in the economic and social environments. In the USA, Canada and England, school leadership is more likely to be influenced by events in the economic and political environments.

Theme 7: School leadership is Partnership dependent

Schools cannot and do not operate in silos, and nor can or do school leaders. Schools rely heavily on a range of partners/ partnerships in order to carry out their functions and to be successful. Partnerships, whether with parents, other schools, or industry; and whether industry local or international are especially important to schools and to their ability to provide students with a “qualitatively different educational experience” (Miller, 2016, p.106).

The UK's former schools minister, **David Miliband (2003)**, suggested they “**expand the horizons of young people, and ensures that their progress inside the classroom is supported outside it**”.

He also noted, “Partnerships are challenging but they are also exciting. They require brokerage, planning and critical review” (p. 3).

More broadly, he suggested **partnerships could contribute to teaching that is more effective, and lead teachers and learners to become more knowledgeable and more aware.**

Partnership drivers

Changes in a school's environment continue to lead national governments and school leaders to “do education differently” (Miller, 2012, p.9).

In particular, changes in the international and national environments have meant, increasingly, schools are under pressure to produce different kinds of results, to show innovation and to stand out.

Thus, Miller (2016) warns, “**as the policy landscape continues to experience rapid changes, nationally and internationally, schools will become (more) involved in partnership working rather than attempting to go it alone**” (p.14).

School leaders said:

Community partnerships allow for additional resources – e.g.: role models, apprenticeship, career exploration opportunities, financial support (Canada, 1F).

School community relationship is critical in today's society and it is imperative that as a school leader I try to forge meaningful partnerships with the community in an effort to aid student learning and help in the realisation of the vision of the school (Antigua, 2F).

Educational Leadership depends on partnership cooperation between the school principal and teachers, also between the school and the community outside. Students are customers of the school and it is better to manage positive relationships with them and with their parents. The school's success depends on partnership with various factors, but teachers and the community are the most important one. Partnership with them will lead to success. School Partnership makes a school stronger by providing support and new resources to exploit (Israel, 3F).

Evidence summary

- Both male and female school leaders scored highly for partnership dependent leadership, although female school leaders are more likely to enact leadership through partnerships.
- “Personal and internally motivated leadership” correlates strongly with “partnership dependent leadership”, confirming earlier findings that although school leadership personal activity it is also a collective endeavour.
- There was also significant correlation between “partnership dependent leadership” and leadership that is “policy driven and mediated”, leadership is “change oriented” and “enterprising and entrepreneurial leadership”, confirming earlier findings that school leaders engage in partnership working, policy filtering and business thinking to effect change for students/ schools.
- School leaders in both developing countries entered into partnerships for pragmatic and strategic reasons. For example, school leaders in developing countries are more likely to enter in partnership arrangements for practical and mostly short term reasons such as to raise funds for a specific venture, whereas school leaders in developed countries were more likely to enter into both strategic and pragmatic reasons.

The Nature of School Leadership

The various roles and functions performed by school leaders help us to [better] understand and appreciate the evolving and nature of school leadership, described by Dinham (2011) as “... **a more contentious, complex, situated and dynamic phenomenon than previously thought**” (p. 4).

Based on the school leaders' responses to the question, “What is school leadership?” I assert that the practice of school leadership has four dimensions.

Personal

Although taking into account environmental factors, school leaders chart their own path and shape their practice. As noted by Hutton (2013), **“the complexities related to running schools have forced principals to develop their unique approach to effective leadership” (p.90)**. Furthermore, Ashby & King (1988) also note, **“Make no mistake: your personal philosophy shapes your educational philosophy and influences the decisions you make on the job...” (p.55)**. As also noted by Larsen & Derrington (2012), the **“most reliable guide at the principal’s disposal may be the ‘moral compass’ upon which the individual has learned to rely” (p. 2)**.

Social (socially focused)

The primary work of schooling is change, and education is one of the main guarantors of social freedom for individuals and a national society.

The United Nations and other supranational agencies have described education as a passport to human development, and as a key to reducing poverty, opening doors and expanding opportunities and freedom.

As noted by Sidhu & Fook (2009), **“...educational leaders must recognize and assume a shared responsibility not only for students’ intellectual and educational development, but also for their personal, social, emotional, and physical development” (pp. 106- 107)**.

Relational

As discussed previously, although a uniquely personal activity, by necessity, the practice of school leadership is also a collaborative endeavour built on and delivered through partnership working. That is, for school leadership to be effective, school leaders cannot lead in isolation of others. Dinh et al (2014) invite us to **“consider how processes change and evolve as they are influenced by context as well as by leadership occurring from multiple sources within organizations...” (p. 55)**. The inclusion of students, parents, the community, industry, labour unions and others in school leadership is therefore a fundamental component of successful school leadership.

Environmental

Context matters and context matters in school leadership. Context influences leadership and leadership influences context.

Gorard (1997) points out, **“An education market is a zero-sum game. As one school wins, another loses, and so schools put more and more into marketing, they may, like Alice in Wonderland, find themselves running faster and faster just to keep up” (p.254)**. Lumby & Coleman (2017) also argue **“School leaders and teachers are at the centre of this messy process” (p.17)**, where, according to Sidhu & Fook (2009), **“the evolving nature of school environments has placed high demands on educational leaders... where knowledge of school management, finance, legal issues, and state mandates... the primary focus...of school leaders....” (pp.106-107)**.

Suffice to say however, **“demands placed on principals and their leadership comes at a time when, more and more, school leaders are being called upon to carefully balance intuition against logic; the intrinsic against the external; the legal against the moral; the natural against the supernatural – in order to negotiate and secure best outcomes for all who study and work in their schools (Miller, 2016, p.16).**

Citation: Miller, P. (2017) *The Nature of School Leadership: Global Practice Perspectives*, Inaugural Professorial Lecture, University of Huddersfield, 17 October.