Developing distributed leadership for equity and learning

A toolset for policy-makers and school leaders

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Contents

1. Introducing the toolset

Who is the toolset for?

- those involved in educational policy who are responsible for or influence leadership development and school improvement in school education
- those leading change in schools, including headteachers, principals and others in leadership positions within schools

What is the toolset for?

- to help you learn about distributed leadership for equity and learning (DLE)
- to stimulate reflection leading to practical ideas for supporting and developing DLE in schools, in ways relevant to your context

What's in it?

- an explanation of what DLE is and why it is important
- ideas on how DLE can be developed, sustained and evaluated

How might it be used?

- Read the toolset to learn about:
  - distributed leadership for equity and learning (DLE)
  - how DLE can support leadership development and student learning in schools
  - how you might support the development of DLE in a school, a number of schools or across a school system

- Use it to kick-start dialogue, as a resource with colleagues to develop ideas together about:
  - your understandings of DLE
  - practical changes you can make to support the development of DLE in a school, a number of schools or across a school system

- Select part of the toolset most relevant to your concerns and context to stimulate ideas on:
  - how DLE might be of help
  - how in your context DLE can be developed and supported

The toolset builds on what was learnt about distributed leadership in the first two phases of the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL).

It has been designed to support the development of school cultures which are underpinned by the belief that everyone is capable of learning. Such a culture means that each person in the school is treated as a valued person with skills, expertise and experience that they can contribute to the development of the organisation and of the individuals within it. It is a culture in which deep and holistic learning is valued, new ideas are liberated and collaboration is actively encouraged.

One way of helping to create this culture is through the development of DLE. Developing distributed leadership in itself does not automatically put the values of social justice and democratic citizenship at its core, which are essential to this kind of school culture. Equity, which includes these values, needs to be made an explicit part of the purpose of distributed leadership. DLE does this, and hence it is DLE which is the topic of this toolset.

Hyperlinks to Videoscribes which users of the toolset may find helpful are given in the text.

We are very interested to learn how this toolset is used and adapted so we can continue to improve it. Please let us know if it has been useful to you and in what ways it could be improved by e-mailing **p.a.woods@herts.ac.uk** or **a.roberts2@herts.ac.uk**

2. What do we mean by leadership?

Leadership is the process of mobilising people and resources in order to bring about change directed towards achieving a goal or purpose.

This process involves creativity, initiative and action, but (as will be clear from the discussion of DLE below) it is not necessarily undertaken by one individual: leadership is shaped and influenced by numerous people (including students and staff who are not in formal leadership positions) and by the context (such as organisational structures and cultural factors) in which it takes place.

Leadership differs from management, though the distinction is not a sharp, 'black and white' one. Management is often associated with ensuring an organisation is run efficiently, has predictable and trusted procedures, uses its resources effectively and systematically evaluates its effectiveness. In practice, leadership often involves some management, and management requires some degree of leadership.

The focus of this toolset is leadership, specifically leadership which is distributed for the purpose of advancing equity and learning. We chose this focus because it is particularly relevant to the challenges of changing and improving schools. The leadership role of others, such as parents , whilst important, is not the subject of this toolset.

3. What is distributed leadership for equity and learning?

Distributed leadership for equity and learning is leadership which is enacted by everyone in the school, emerges from a supportive set of organisational features and works for inclusive, holistic learning.

Supportive organisational features

Leadership is a characteristic of an organisation as a whole, not just the individual actions of the few who are labelled 'leaders'. Distributed leadership is based on the proposition that whatever we may think, the reality of life in organisations is that leadership is the outcome of lots of people's actions and interactions. The power of senior leaders is mediated by what people do, or do not do, across the organisation. A videoscribe – Leadership is… distributed - has been produced to explain this point of view.

DLE is leadership which is aware of this emergent process across the school and creates an environment that helps to make it work in the best ways for learning. It takes place within an organisational hierarchy which is as flat as possible, is not limited to staff in formal leadership positions and as a matter of policy disperses across the organisation power to initiate change. Trust, inclusive dialogue and collaboration across organisational boundaries are encouraged. DLE is enacted by everyone, including students, teachers and support staff, each of whom brings their unique skills, ideas and experience, and emerges from a particular combination of supportive organisational features:

Supportive organisational features

- a **participatory culture**: a culture that views leadership as emergent, values participation and has an explicit commitment to core equity and democratic values of inclusive participation and holistic growth and well-being

- an **enabling institutional structure**: an institutional structure that facilitates and supports leadership from across all parts of the organisation

- an **open social environment:** a social environment in which people are valued for what they each individually bring to the work of the organisation, and positive relationships between people across status and other organisational boundaries are readily established to initiate and develop change

Core values of equity, democratic citizenship and holistic learning

DLE involves an explicit commitments to core values of equity and democratic citizenship, which includes the development of deep and holistic learning. This is a defining characteristic of DLE. For DLE to work fully, the importance of these core values should be recognised and shared widely in the school.

Core values

inclusive participation, so that the voice of all is heard and valued, and critical questions are asked systematically and continually about who has fewer opportunities, whether based on racial, sexual, cultural or other forms of discrimination that work against equity

holistic growth & well-being for all, anchoring distributed leadership in a deep and holistic understanding of human growth that frames learning

Equity

The absence of discrimination and unfair power differences that mean that some people are unable to participate and be heard, are not given respect, are economically deprived and are blocked from developing their full capabilities. The absence of these kinds of discrimination and inequalities promotes inclusive, holistic learning.

Deep and holistic learning

Learning that develops cognitive and emotional abilities, skills for employment, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual capabilities, an understanding of democratic citizenship and appreciation of values such as justice and tolerance, and fosters the ability to reflect and learn continually throughout life.

A Videoscribe – What is DLE? – is available to stimulate further thinking.

4. Degrees of DLE

Distributed leadership can exist side by side with formal hierarchical relationships. DLE is not a feature an organisation either possesses or does not possess, but is a characteristic that can be present to a greater or lesser extent: in other words, there can be degrees of DLE.

It is helpful to see these degrees of DLE as stretching along a continuum. At one end, DLE is fully developed and in its most democratic form: this is the same as democratic leadership based on a model of holistic democracy. At the other end, the opposite of DLE is what we call rigid hierarchical leadership (RHL). The characteristics of RHL are described below.

Rigid hierarchical leadership (RHL)

This is an inflexible model of leadership which concentrates power and influence in one person or a small elite at the head of a steep hierarchy, relies on control, fear and top-down communication (mainly one-way transmission of ideas, information and instructions) to make things happen, and defines learning as success in narrow, standardised tests.

Some schools may have leadership which is exactly like the RHL described in the box above. Many schools will have some but not all of the characteristics of RHL. Some may have begun to develop a more distributed approach to leadership. Most schools will have scope to introduce or to develop further distributed leadership. Few schools will have introduced DLE.

5. Why do we need distributed leadership for equity and learning?

Successful organisations recognise the wealth of leadership capacity across the organisation and make sure to tap into this. DLE can help schools respond to major policy challenges they face - being accountable for learning, enabling innovation and promoting democratic citizenship.

Much research challenges the idea that organisations can rely on the 'one great leader' to solve problems. For sustained success, organisations cannot depend on one person, or even a small group of people, to provide ideas, inspiration, a sense of direction and innovation for improvement.

Research on private companies and other organisations globally finds that when 'we grow and develop, and we become innovative, energized and stimulated' and work co-operatively, 'we are able to create the positive energy that gives us joy and adds values to our companies'. This research directly challenges the idea that commanding and controlling others is the best way to run an organisation. Where organisations are creative and working well, 'rather than be commanded, employees choose to develop important relationships with others, and rather than be controlled, they actively choose to make their time available to [a] collective sense of purpose' (Gratton, 2007:46).

Distributed leadership is therefore a model of leadership that attracts a great deal of interest, for all kinds of organisations including schools. There are good reasons for policy-makers in education to commit themselves to developing or enhancing DLE in schools.

Research studies have been carried out in recent years that throw light on the benefits of distributed leadership and what helps it to work well. It is difficult to identify the effects of a complex process like distributed leadership in organisations that are affected by a variety of factors and changes. It is possible, nevertheless, to conclude from research findings that distributed leadership, in the right conditions, can help in meeting the challenges of learning, innovation and citizenship.

A Videoscribe discussing the value of DLE is available – Why DLE?

Challenge 1: learning

The most fundamental challenge for schools is to be as effective as possible in terms of supporting students' learning. Integral to DLE is a commitment to facilitating deep and holistic learning.

Much of the pressure on schools is due to the accountability agenda which focuses on improving measurable achievement.

Accountability pressures

Schools systems are being held more accountable than ever before. As a result, intense pressure is placed on those who make, implement and interpret policy at all levels of these systems. The politicians and civil servants in national ministries are under pressure, because of international assessments such as PISA, and feel the need to make sure that schools are held accountable for students' learning and achievement. Those at regional and the middle levels of national education systems experience the pressures of being held to account and being responsible for the success of their schools. School leaders, teachers and other staff - as well as students and parents - feel the force of national and regional expectations and interpret policy on the ground, translating it into everyday practice.

The real challenge for schools in relation to learning is more complex than the accountability agenda, however. Learning is not equivalent to measurable achievement through tests and examinations. The challenge for schools is to enable learning that is deep and promotes the growth of the whole person.

Deep and holistic learning is about developing cognitive and emotional capabilities and skills required for employment, and about nurturing people's ethical, aesthetic and spiritual capabilities: that is, their sense of what is right morally and those things in life that nourish the senses and give a sense of purpose and inspiration. It includes developing an understanding of democratic citizenship and appreciation of values such as justice, democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, mutual understanding and a concern for the welfare of others. It is also about fostering the ability to reflect on and understand how one learns so that people continue to learn throughout their lives.

Deep and holistic learning

Learning that develops cognitive and emotional abilities, skills for employment, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual capabilities, an understanding of democratic citizenship and appreciation of values such as justice and tolerance, and fosters the ability to reflect and learn continually throughout life.

This type of learning can take place at the level of students, of staff, the school and the system. In other words, it is helpful to see it as multi-level learning.

DLE can promote multi-level learning, at the student, staff, school and system levels. Where DLE works well, it increases:

capacity - mobilising knowledge, expertise and energy

Capacity is increased, i.e. more people at all levels are actively engaged in improving learning and more people are involved in improving their skills. Distributed leadership means that the leadership capabilities of staff and students not in senior leadership positions are recognised and developed and can be harnessed to improve learning. Distributed leadership also helps develop the senior leaders of tomorrow: teachers and other staff can learn about leadership and develop their leadership skills, increasing the pool of potential senior leaders.

co-operative learning

People are enabled to work together and to share experience and ideas. Research finds that co-operative learning, where it is organised well, is a highly effective form of learning.

motivation and commitment

Staff and students are more enthusiastic and committed to the school and the activities undertaken to achieve its core purpose.

Challenge 2: innovation

People are more likely to be innovative where there is DLE, sharing new ideas and working together to test and learn from new practices.

Schools are expected to be innovative as organisations and to educate students so they will become the creators and innovators of the future. Promoting creativity and innovation is a driving aim on the policy agendas of nations, the European Union and global bodies. This results in the second challenge for schools, that is, high expectations to innovate.

Research suggests that staff and students are more likely to be innovative where distributed leadership operates. This is because in a distributed leadership culture, people are encouraged to:

- **share and develop new ideas and knowledge**

- **try out new practices and learn from these**

- **involve a range of people in developing and evaluating new practices**

Collaboration and the involvement of people from different organisational levels and contexts (in the case of a school - students, teachers, support staff, senior leaders, etc.) are integral to creating innovative cultures in all kinds of organisations. New ideas and practices are evaluated from differing perspectives and therefore have a better chance of being improved and working well.

Challenge 3: democratic citizenship

DLE gives experience of living in a way that advances equity and puts into practice the values of democratic citizenship.

A third challenge for schools is to promote democratic citizenship and an appreciation of values such as justice, democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, mutual understanding and a concern for the welfare of others.

This is especially important as communities change and become more diverse, as people's expectations rise about participation and transparency in decision-making and as they become more prepared to challenge injustices and the decisions of the powerful.

DLE provides opportunities for active learning about democratic citizenship. It can make practices such as collaboration, participation, discussion and learning from others' viewpoints part of the everyday life of the school for staff and students.

Hence, where it works well, DLE encourages democratic citizenship through

experiential learning about social justice and democracy

DLE allows students to experience in practice what democratic citizenship is like. Through this, students can learn is what it means to respect in day-to-day life values such as justice, tolerance, mutual understanding and a concern for the welfare of others, and to ensure that no-one is excluded from opportunities to participate and learn.

6. How can DLE be developed and supported?

Having discussed **what** DLE is and **why** we should develop DLE in schools, in this section, we move on to discuss **how** DLE can be developed and how its progress and impact can be evaluated.

The development of DLE is a social process that involves facilitating a shared understanding of what DLE means, developing a culture, institutional structures, and social environment that enable DLE to become an active part of school life, and evaluating how DLE is working so that it can be continually improved. This section is structured around five key levers which we see as working together to support the development of DLE in action. These are:

Key Lever 1: Facilitating the development of a shared understanding of DLE

Key Lever 2: Developing a participatory culture for DLE

Key Lever 3: Developing enabling institutional structures for DLE

Key Lever 4: Developing an open social environment which supports DLE activity

Key Lever 5: Developing appropriate ways to evaluate and share the impact of DLE

The metaphor of a tree is used in this section to illustrate the complex interaction and mutuality of the five key levers in supporting the development of DLE. The image reminds us that new initiatives need to be rooted in well-prepared ground. Equally, in order to bear fruit, developments need to be nurtured. They may not always flourish immediately but, with time and attention, can grow strong.

Each of the five key levers links to a tool which s a possible starting point for policy-makers and school leaders to begin or continue dialogue around DLE and to translate this dialogue into action which transforms leadership and learning in schools.

A Videoscribe discussing how DLE can be developed is available – How DLE?

The DLE tree

Key Lever 4
open social environment

Key Lever 3
enabling institutional structures

Key Lever
5 **evaluate**
and share the
impact of DLE

Key Lever 2
a participatory culture

Key Lever
1
shared understanding of DLE

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Research shows that there is a number of factors which are
important for distributed leadership to work well.

To make DLE work well requires:

a strong degree of co-ordination and planning of roles, expectations and modes of working

a cohesive culture which has shared goals and values

a focus on the core purpose (learning for all) so that a strong link is created between leadership and learning

capacity building for DLE, which involves developing the capabilities of staff and students to be involved in leadership and the capacity of senior leaders who need the capabilities to develop and support DLE

effective internal accountability, so that staff and students feel committed to making changes work, and senior leaders are open and transparent about decisions and in that way are accountable to others in the organisation.

Key Lever 1:
Facilitating the development of a shared understanding of DLE

The first key lever in the development of DLE is the facilitation of a clear and shared understanding of the concept of DLE itself. This means giving all involved a chance to consider and discuss how they react to the idea of DLE and to explore its meaning together.

DLE is leadership which is enacted by everyone in the school and which emerges from a particular combination of organisational features, namely:

- a **participatory culture**: a culture that views leadership as emergent, values participation and has an explicit commitment to core equity and democratic values of inclusive participation and holistic growth and well-being
- an **enabling institutional structure**: an institutional structure that facilitates and supports leadership from across all parts of the organisation
- an **open social environment** in which people are valued for what they each individually bring to the work of the organisation, and positive relationships between people across status and other organisational boundaries are readily established to initiate and develop change

For DLE to work well, leadership needs to be seen differently. DLE is not a feature which an organisation either possesses or does not posses. Instead it is an organisational characteristic which can be present to a greater or lesser extent. This has been described in this toolset as 'degrees of DLE'.

Policy makers have a key role to play in facilitating a shared understanding of DLE. This understanding could arise from a briefing session, where headteachers and other senior leaders are told what DLE is.

However, it is more effective if senior leaders and others are enabled to develop their own understanding of DLE through discourse and debate. The initiation and facilitation of such a forum is itself an example of DLE practice, where professionals are given the opportunity, space and guidance to collaborate to extend their professional understanding of DLE.

Using Tool 1: How near to DLE?

Purpose

Tool 1 provides a way of exploring what DLE means through the process of discussing and deciding which descriptions of fictitious schools come nearest to the idea of DLE. Here is a reminder of how DLE is defined:

Leadership which is enacted by everyone in the school, emerges from a supportive set of organisational features and works for inclusive, holistic learning.

Ways to use this tool

The tool gives short descriptions of leadership in three fictitious schools: A, B and C. Users of the tool are asked to consider:

- Which of these school descriptions comes nearest to the idea of DLE?
- What elements of DLE are present and absent in each of the descriptions? The descriptions are not exhaustive, so you will need to consider what else you would need to know about the schools to answer this.

Tool 1 is intended to help policy-makers and school leaders develop an understanding of DLE by stimulating discussion around the meaning of DLE.

There are many ways in which Tool 1 may be used. Here are two suggestions:

policy-makers

Policy-makers could use Tool 1 in joint discussions or group work with school leaders in which policy-makers and school leaders together work collaboratively to develop an understanding of DLE.

school leaders

School leaders could use Tool 1 to facilitate discussion with colleagues in their school about DLE and develop together a shared understanding of its meaning for them and the school.

Tool 1:
How near to DLE?

- Which of these school descriptions comes nearest to the idea of DLE?
- What elements of DLE are present and absent in each of the descriptions? The descriptions are not exhaustive, so what else you would need to know about the schools to answer this?
- Where would you place Schools A, B and C on a continuum from 'rigid hierarchical leadership' to 'fully developed DLE'?

School A

In my school, leadership is viewed as the responsibility of the headteacher and senior leadership team. These colleagues have all of the power and influence in the school. Other staff can give their views but these are sought in formal settings such as staff meetings. Suggestions may then be acted on or not by the Senior Leadership Team. Students are not included in any leadership activity within the school. Instead, we focus on getting them to achieve at the highest possible level in our national standard tests.

School B

In my school, the way we view leadership is changing. In the past we have looked to our headteacher to take all the decisions. Now we are beginning to explore ideas of distributed leadership. This is already beginning to have an effect on the school. More people are giving their ideas and acting on these ideas to improve the school. These still tend to be people who have formal roles such as subject leaders but we are trying to move away from this to involve ordinary teachers. Students do not yet have a leadership role in our school.

School C

In my school, leadership is viewed as the responsibility of all. All members of the community are invited not only to share their ideas but also to put these ideas into practice. Because of this, changes to the school are often led by teams comprising students, teachers and support staff. The culture of the school supports the potential success of this kind of improvement process. We value everyone equally. Those who have named leadership roles have a clear strategic job to do and so does everyone else. Together we work to make the school the best it can be for our students and ourselves to grow and learn as whole people.

rigid hierarchical leadership ⟵————————⟶ **fully developed DLE**

Key Lever 2:
A participatory culture for DLE

The second key lever in the development of DLE builds on the first and focuses on the development of a participatory culture. Culture is about the ideas and values that people share in an organisation and which influence everyday behaviour. The second key lever involves taking steps to build a set of shared ideas and values that support DLE. These ideas and values include valuing leadership from all parts and levels of the school and an explicit commitment to inclusive participation and holistic learning.

Some people might think that DLE is wholly about changing structures, such as reducing hierarchy and implementing systems that spread responsibility. If DLE is understood solely like this, however, the extent to which leadership can be distributed is limited.

DLE needs to be continually cultivated and nurtured in supportive ideas and values that people genuinely share and are committed to. Looking at it in this way, developing, DLE is rooted in a greater understanding of how things get done, how the various interactions between people bring about an end result and what values are most important in distributing leadership in inclusive ways that benefit learning.

In a participatory culture for DLE:

- people **view leadership as emergent**: they view leadership as arising from ongoing flows of interactions across the organisation and its hierarchy, not simply the actions of the single leader or small leadership elite.
- **participation is valued** through leadership from all parts and levels of the school, and its power in effecting school improvement acknowledged. As part of this, questioning is valued and encouraged and innovation is seen as central to personal and professional growth.
- aspirations to **core values of equity and democratic citizenship are explicit commitments** and their importance is recognised and shared by all. This means a commitment to inclusive participation, so that the voice of all is heard and valued and critical questions are asked systematically and continually about who has fewer opportunities, whether based on racial, sexual, cultural or other forms of discrimination that work against equity. It also means holistic growth and well-being for all, anchoring distributed leadership in a deep and holistic understanding of human growth that frames learning.

To summarise:

DLE is fostered in a school culture that views leadership as emergent and participatory, and is explicitly committed to core values of equity and democratic citizenship.

Grounded in a participatory culture, DLE practice becomes the natural core of a school's activity. The development of such a culture relies on the collaborative development of shared goals based on the essential ideas and values of DLE.

Policy-makers can support the emergence of participatory school cultures through encouraging the development of shared values and goals that support DLE. This might be done through a top-down approach. But it has its limitations.

This approach assumes that values and goals can be derived wholly from the external policy environment or from the views of the senior leader within the school. Members of the policy community or a school's community are unlikely to fully subscribe to ideas and values that they are told to follow. A top-down approach to developing shared values can therefore be only partially effective.

Using Tool 2: How do we need to think differently about leadership?

Purpose
Tool 2 provides a stimulus for discussion around the importance of shared ideas and values in a participatory culture that best supports DLE and what developments in school culture might be desirable.

Ways to use this tool
The tool invites people to think of a school they know and consider what the dominant ideas and values are about leadership in the school. Like Tool 1, it incorporates a continuum as a way of exploring the different views and assumptions relating to leadership and how these relate to DLE. The intention of Tool 2 is to facilitates genuine dialogue, rather than a top-down approach. Policy-makers may use the tool to stimulate discussion, amongst themselves and amongst school leaders, of values which support inclusive participation and learning that is wider than achievement measured by narrow accountability tools.

There are many ways in which Tool 2 may be used. Here are two suggestions:

policy-makers
Policy-makers could use Tool 2 in a similar sway to Tool 1. That is, it could be used in joint discussions or group work with school leaders in which policy-makers and school leaders together work collaboratively to develop an understanding of participatory culture and what changes in school cultures might be desirable.

school leaders
School leaders could use Tool 2 to facilitate discussion with colleagues in their school about the ideas and values that are important in a DLE culture and what implications this could have for the culture of their school.

Tool 2:
How do we need to think differently about leadership?

Users of the tool are asked to reflect on the two sets of statements. Think of a school you know and what the dominant ideas and values about leadership in the school are.

Leadership is seen as what the senior people in the school do.

Anyone not a senior leader who tries to exercise initiative or have a say in decisions, is overstepping the mark and trying to have an influence that they should not.

By far the most important value is getting as many high grades as possible in national tests and examinations.

Leadership is seen as coming from people across the school, whatever their formal position.

The participation and views of everyone in the school are valued and recognised as important contributions to school improvement.

A commitment to advancing equity, democratic citizenship and holistic learning is an explicit, shared part of the school's values.

hierarchical culture ←————————————————→ **participatory culture**

In the school you are thinking of:

- Which set of statements best describes the culture of the school, or, if neither, what statements about leadership and values would better describe the ideas and values about leadership that are most influential in the school?
- Where would you place the school on the culture continuum?
- Does this lead you to think that the culture of the school needs to change to make it more participatory? if so, in what ways would you like to see it change?

Key Lever 3:
Enabling institutional structures for DLE

The view of DLE offered in Key lever 2 highlights the importance of cultivating cultural conditions which allow leadership practice to grow. Structural changes can work in tandem with such cultural changes to support this development. The third key lever focuses on the development of institutional structures that support leadership from across all parts of the organisation. This means taking steps to make changes that help to create enabling institutional structures.

Institutional structures include roles, procedures and working arrangements (such as teams and committees), as well as allocation of resources and the opportunities offered for professional development and training. These can have a powerful impact on how people connect and work with one another.

Institutional structures that enable DLE need to encourage inclusive involvement and maximum communication of ideas from all, by:

- spreading leadership opportunities beyond formal senior roles to enable different sources of expertise and perspectives to influence the organisation's work, development and innovative change
- facilitating flexible, collaborative working relationships across traditional boundaries and hierarchies
- tending towards the creation of flatter hierarchies

Examples of change that helps create enabling institutional structures include:

- **widening membership of committees, teams and working groups**: this includes enabling ad hoc working groups to be set up easily by staff and/or students that bring together different people relevant to an initiative, and creating forums through which ideas, research and learning can be shared

- **allocating resources in ways that support DLE**: this includes allocating resources that help staff and students to develop capabilities in leadership, collaborative working and innovation and to try out innovative ideas

- **supporting formal and informal teacher and student leadership roles**: this includes giving more responsibilities and scope for initiative to middle leaders, and developing and recognising the role of teacher leaders and student leaders.

Using Tool 3: Who has access to enabling structures?

Purpose

Tool 3 provides a way to reflect on the institutional structures that are available to enable leadership, compare their availability between groups and consider how these institutional structures and their availability might be improved.

Ways to use this tool

There are many ways in which Tool 3 may be used. Here are two suggestions:

policy-makers

Policy makers may use the tool to explore ways in which they can support the development of enabling institutional structures in schools - that is, structures that are more open and less rigidly hierarchical, and so spread leadership opportunities and facilitate flexible, collaborative working relationships across traditional boundaries and hierarchies.

The tool could be used by policy-makers in discussions or group work with school leaders to facilitate shared reflection on the institutional structures that are available in different schools to enable distributed leadership, how their availability and usefulness compare between different groups in schools and how these institutional structures and their availability might be improved.

school leaders

School leaders may use the tool to facilitate reflection on the institutional structures that are available to enable distributed leadership in their school, how their availability and usefulness compare between different groups in the school and how these institutional structures and their availability might be improved. This could be done with staff and students so that their perspectives could be included to see where it coincided with and differed from those of senior school leaders.

Tool 3:
Who has access to enabling structures?

The table below offers a framework to consider what institutional structures in the school are available to different groups to help them to contribute to leadership. Users of the tool are invited to reflect on the availability of the institutional structures (on the left hand side of the table) for each group (along the top of the table) and how well they work for that group. Each institutional structure for each group can be rated by putting 1, 2 or 3 in each cell.

1 = available and works well
2 = available and needs improving
3 = not available

The table can be filled in by a small group who discuss their ratings before making them. In this case, the dialogue about the reasons for ratings is ultimately more important than the ratings themselves. Like all of these tools, they are stimulants for shared reflection and discussion which advances understanding and stimulates ideas for action. The completed table provides a way of comparing the availability and enabling value of institutional structures between groups and considering how these institutional structures and their availability might be improved.

	students	support staff	teachers	middle leaders	senior leaders	headteacher / principal
formal committees						
informal working groups						
professional development opportunities						
procedures through which new ideas can be developed						
chances to lead or co-lead projects						
resources to try out and research innovations						
procedures/meetings to share ideas and projects with the rest of the school						
procedures/working groups that enable collaboration across departments						

Key Lever 4:
An open social environment which supports DLE

The types of relationship which characterise a school are a key factor in how well DLE works in practice. The fourth key lever is the development of an open social environment which supports DLE. This means being open in how you relate to people, recognising and valuing the contributions which everyone makes to achieving the purpose of the school and showing through your actions that the boundaries within the school (of hierarchy, departments and formal roles) are not rigid.

A social environment with fluid relationships helps to create the conditions in which people at different levels in the formal hierarchy can share ideas, give feedback to each other and take initiatives. In this way, leadership can arise from all parts of the organisation. An open social environment is one in which people are valued for what they individually bring to the work of the organisation, and in which positive relationships between people across status and other organisational boundaries are readily established to initiate and develop change. This is nourished and sustained by the culture and institutional structures in Key Levers 2 and 3, and creates the conditions for DLE activity.

An open social environment:

- fosters respect for all, as people and for what each person uniquely brings, with people supporting each other in their learning and professional development
- develops a sense of trust and belonging
- fosters co-creative and co-operative attitudes, as well as confidence, independent-mindedness, autonomy and openness within agreed principles and shared goals
- has flexible and open ways of working that involve 'boundary spanning' across groups, functional divisions and departments

Using Tool 4: What kinds of relationships do we experience and want?

Purpose

Tool 4 is intended to stimulate discussion about the creation in schools of an open social environment - that is, one in which people are valued for what they each individually bring to the work of the organisation, and where positive relationships between people across status and other organisational boundaries are readily established to initiate and develop change.

Ways to use this tool

The tool gives a number of representations of relationships within an organisation which users of the tool are invited to reflect upon and consider what they mean for them, which are apparent in their school and which would be best for distributing leadership and benefiting learning and inclusion.

As with the other tools, there are many ways in which Tool 4 may be used. Here are two suggestions:

policy-makers

Policy makers may use the tool in discussions or group work with school leaders to facilitate shared reflection on patterns of relationships that presently characterise schools, and in what ways they may be developed to support DLE.

school leaders

School leaders may use the tool to facilitate shared reflection on patterns of relationships that presently characterise their school, and in what ways they may be developed to support DLE. This could be done with staff and students so that their perspectives could be included to see where it coincided with and differed from those of senior school leaders.
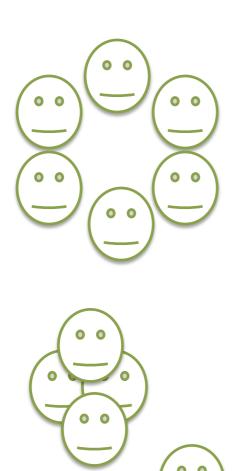
Tool 4:
What kinds of relationships do we experience and want?

Users of Tool 4 are invited to look at the different ways of representing relationships below and consider what kind of relationships they illustrate. Then consider these questions:

- Which of these do you recognise as representing relationships in your school?
- What do you feel about these relationships in your school? Positive, negative or indifferent - and why?
- How do you feel they could be changed for the better in your school?
- How would any changes in relationships help to distribute learning and promote equity and holistic learning in the school?

You may like to suggest additional groupings which you believe merit discussion and draw these below or on a separate sheet.

Key lever 5:
Evaluating and sharing the impact of DLE

The final key lever in the development of DLE is the development of appropriate ways to evaluate and share the impact of DLE. Evaluation often focuses on the collation of numeric attainment results and the attempt to attribute such results to particular interventions. It is important that we do things in schools which impact positively on students' learning. However, it is not always easy to know which of the many things we do has had this positive impact. Numerical indicators are not the only nor necessarily always the best indicators for evaluation.

To understand the impact of DLE we need to consider how we conceptualise the term 'evaluate'. This term needs to describe a process in which we:

- clarify what we are trying to achieve e.g. a participatory culture, enabling institutional structures and an open social environment to support DLE
- identify success indicators which will help us to see if these things are happening
- use these indicators to support the development of illuminative data gathering and ways of analysing these data
- interpret what is learned from these data to judge the degree to which we have achieved our stated aims
- develop ways of sharing what we have learned with all stakeholders

Evaluation of DLE needs to:

- be participatory, involving staff and students in the above processes
- monitor how far DLE in practice is inclusive, so that inequalities can be tackled
- monitor the learning DLE promotes, to make sure that DLE is fostering learning that is deep and holistic
- recognise that developing DLE is a journey and that schools will have both hierarchy and open social relationships, so evaluation examines the *degrees* of DLE and hierarchy in a school

Using Tool 5: An evaluation framework

Purpose
Tool 5 is a simple evaluation framework that may be used as a starting point for evaluation of the extent to which development of DLE has progressed. It is a way of considering each of the previous Key Levers in turn.

Ways to use this tool
Like all the tools, Tool 5 can be adapted to local needs and contexts. These are two suggestions:

policy-makers
Policy makers may use the tool with school leaders to consider how DLE is progressing in schools and what kinds of support schools might find useful.

The tool could provide a basis for discussions between school leaders to compare their experiences and share practices that have helped. Schools working together can support and challenge each other, providing an external perspective to help evaluation.

school leaders
School leaders may use the tool as a starting point for evaluation in their school of the development of DLE. Different people or groups in the school could take responsibility for different aspects of the evaluation, with results and reflections being brought together for wider discussion.

Schools may also work with a partner school or schools to support and challenge each other and bring an external perspective on each school's evaluation.

Tool 5:
An evaluation framework

Key Levers	What are we trying to achieve?	What are the indicators of progress and success?	What data help to tell us where we are on these indicators?	How much progress have we made?	What should we do now to make further progress?	Who will take the action needed?
1 Shared understanding of DLE						
2 Participatory culture						
3 Enabling institutional structures						
4 Open social environment						

Further reading

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Woods, P. A. & Woods, G. J. (2013) 'Deepening Distributed Leadership: A democratic perspective on power, purpose and the concept of the self', *Leadership in Education* (*Vodenje v vzgoji in izobraževanju*), 2: 17-40. An English language version is available to download under 'Papers' at https://herts.academia.edu/PhilipWoods.

Woods, P. A., Roberts, A. & Woods, G. J. (forthcoming) Newness Against the Grain: Democratic emergence in organisational and professional practice, in S. Weber (ed) *Organization and the New: Discourses, Agents, Ecologies of Innovation*, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Information sheets are available at http://herts.academia.edu/PhilipWoods (under 'Teaching Documents'), on

- a typology of social justice (A Four-fold Approach to Social Justice)
- holistic democracy

This toolset has been prepared by the University of Hertfordshire Team, Philip Woods and Amanda Roberts, for the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL).

This toolset can be downloaded from https://herts.academia.edu/PhilipWoods under 'Toolset for Change'.

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