

# Do Leaders Matter?

BERNARD BARKER, *School of Education, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK*

**ABSTRACT** *Based on field research at a number of comprehensive schools, this paper explores how secondary headteachers contribute to the effectiveness of their schools. Although recent studies indicate that heads exercise only a small, indirect effect on performance, there is a widespread belief, shared by the government, OfSTED, governors and parents that leadership is a vital ingredient for success. Evidence about leadership is used to compare and contrast successful and less successful headteachers. Despite the complications of social context, internal politics and external pressure, strong heads seem to adopt similar, well-balanced leadership styles and strategies that correlate with well-motivated students and staff. In contrast, poor performers operate a limited range of styles and strategies and elicit a negative response from their colleagues. These findings match predictions arising from a classic experiment at Harvard Business School (Litwin & Stringer, 1966), on which the DfEE's Leadership Programme for Serving Heads is based. The paper describes how effective leaders motivate staff and students and indicates problematic influences limiting or constraining the performance of headteachers.*

## Introduction

Politicians, administrators and researchers have increasingly directed their attention towards 'self-managing schools' that 'make a difference' in the lives of their students and communities. The work of headteachers and teachers has been scrutinised to explain the notable variation in the performance of apparently comparable schools and to identify factors that contribute to success. What are the characteristics of effective leaders and teachers? What should heads do to improve their schools and ensure their effectiveness?

The belief that leadership and management are important permeates the literature of school effectiveness, especially in relation to schools in special measures, where new leaders are expected to transform the prospects of previously doomed staff and students. Hall *et al.* (1986, p. 5) describe the development of a new policy paradigm asserting the 'link between the quality of headship and school "success"' and quote Her Majesty's Inspectors' opinion in 1977 that the most important single factor in the success of their 'ten good schools' was 'the quality of leadership of the head'. Sammons *et al.* (1995, p. 8) report: 'Almost every single study of school effectiveness has shown both primary and secondary leadership to be a key factor' and quote Gray's opinion (of 1990) that 'the importance of the headteacher's leadership is one of the clearest of the messages from school effectiveness research.' The School Management Task Force's Report (1990, pp. 5–6) concludes that effective organisa-

tions have 'visionary leadership able to motivate others'. There is a tautological quality to the discovery that good schools have good heads, but Mortimore acknowledges that most of the studies have been completed in atypical circumstances. The literature nevertheless confirms the popular belief that the headteacher is a decisive influence on the success of a school.

*Do Leaders Matter?* examines a behavioural model of how heads impact on their schools. What difference can leaders make? The paper explores contrasting schools to test Litwin & Stringer's model (Litwin & Stringer, 1966; Litwin, 1968) and to discover how far schools are susceptible to the influence of key individuals.

The paper is based on the schools and sources listed in Table I.

Mainly qualitative in nature, the evidence is drawn from a range of roles that have given me privileged access to schools and a practitioner's perspective on how their leaders think and behave. The data presented mainly concerns male headteachers, broadly reflecting the gender balance in secondary school leadership. This was not an intended design but a consequence of the circumstances that brought me to the schools studied. I am unable to consider whether there are contrasting or similar patterns in male and female behaviour, although McClelland and Burnham (1995, p. 10) report that leadership motives and styles are not gender specific.

The data varies by type and weight (from brief records of observations and conversations to full documentary evidence running into many hundreds of pages) and raises complex ethical issues. I have been an action researcher in some schools, a confidante and adviser in others. My perspective, obligations and responsibilities have varied; I have collected a considerable number of stories and even more evidence.

Some of these stories may be seen as discreditable to the schools or individuals concerned and this account often covers disputed territory, where my version may be no more valid or reliable than those of others involved. I have played a part in some of the events described and acknowledge the pitfalls available for participant researchers. My conclusions confirm other reports, however, including the Hay/TTA study of highly effective headteachers [1]. All the information presented here, including dates and the sequence of events, has been adapted to ensure confidentiality for the institutions and individuals concerned.

As a significant proportion of the evidence presented was gathered at schools subject to special measures, there is an element of doubt about whether their experience of leadership and improvement is representative or typical. 'Failing' schools appear to be in a crucible, where an accelerated experiment is performed, with all the variables subjected to intense external pressures. On the other hand, the emerging picture seems to be confirmed by a range of studies. The human response to leadership seems to be consistent.

*Do Leaders Matter?* uses evidence from a variety of sources to test and triangulate hypotheses and compares conclusions with findings from other studies. The paper forms part of a longer, continuing investigation of school leadership in the context of a wider debate about effectiveness and improvement.

### **Motivation, Styles and Climate**

The concept of effective leadership is derived from business, where there is a long-standing and well-developed belief in the power of leaders to transform the character, performance and profitability of their companies. Since the days of

TABLE I. Schools and sources used in this study

School	Age range, NOR	Head(s)	Sources
Hillside <sup>a</sup>	11-16, 600	Mr Wake, Mr Hogg, Mr Moore	School documentation, interview transcripts over 2 years, Mr Moore's diary, OFSTED & HMI reports, LEA documents, monitoring & correspondence files, student & staff data
Westfield <sup>b</sup>	11-16, 550	Mrs Wyatt	Contemporary typescript report, OFSTED reports
Saltwood <sup>a</sup>	11-16, 360	Mr Southern	Contemporary typescript report, interviews with staff, OFSTED reports
Stonebridge	11-18, 1250	Mr Mole	Typescript narrative describing leadership in the 1980s
Longhurst	11-16, 540	Mr Anderson	Contemporary typescript report

<sup>a</sup> Special measures.

<sup>b</sup> Serious weaknesses.

Frederick Taylor's 'scientific management' [2] American business schools and consultancy firms have studied companies in search of a timeless theory of organisation and leadership that will enhance performance in any sector or circumstances. Consultants have a considerable incentive to develop transferable models and strategies because specialist, context-related solutions for fast food, advertising, steel, electronics or education would demand expertise beyond the scope of a general practitioner.

McClelland and Burnham (1995, p. 11) describe the characteristic motivation and behaviour of successful leaders. The decisive factor for job performance is not intellectual ability, but the top manager's need for power and influence. The best managers are interested in using 'socialised' power to benefit the organisation as a whole and are not concerned to be liked by people. These leaders are emotionally mature, displaying few signs of egotism and adopting a democratic, coaching management style. McClelland and Burnham (1995, p. 6) explain that power motivated managers empower their subordinates, whose own motives are aroused by the workplace climate. Authoritarian, bullying behaviour has the opposite effect, stimulating compliance and submission. Machiavellian ideas have discredited power so that its importance in successful leadership has been underestimated.

Litwin and Stringer's (1966) research into leadership behaviour and workplace motivation suggests that leaders are prompted to adopt certain styles by their underlying characteristics and workplace motives. These styles have stable, consistent and predictable repercussions for the workplace 'climate' for employees, strongly influencing their ability to perform well. To improve organisational climate and performance, leaders must learn how to manage their own motives and select an appropriate combination of styles to motivate the workforce.

Litwin and Stringer's (1966) business experiment tested the relationship between leadership styles and the work environment or 'climate'. Climate is measured by asking employees to rate their perceptions of how they are treated on six dimensions. These are: (1) how much compliance with rules is expected; (2) the amount of responsibility given; (3) the emphasis on quality and standards; (4) how far rewards exceed criticism for mistakes; (5) how clear are goals and objectives; and (6) how warm and supportive the organisation feels, team spirit.

Litwin and Stringer (1966) and Litwin (1968) investigated how leadership styles impact on these climate dimensions and influence employee performance. Three different simulated working environments were designed to create a particular climate and discover its consequences. The director of each organisation adopted a distinctive leadership style, intended to arouse *one* of the three core motives believed to influence everyone's behaviour at work. Organisation A was led to arouse the need for power, defined as the need to control or influence others and to control the means of influencing others; Organisation B was directed to arouse the need for affiliation, defined as the need for close interpersonal relationships and friendships with other people; Organisation C aimed to arouse the need for achievement, defined as the need for success in relation to an internalised standard of excellence.

Invited to participate in a business game scenario, Harvard students were asked to construct radar sets, working within regimes that emphasised, respectively: (A) rules, control, order, standards and criticism of poor performance; (B) informality, positive rewards, relaxed atmosphere, cooperation and warm personal relationships; and (C) informality, high standards for individuals and the organisation, rewards for excellent performance, cooperation, stress and challenge (Table II). After 2 weeks Litwin

TABLE II. How leadership styles impact on climate (based on Litwin & Stringer, 1966, 1968)

	Style		
Climate	(A) Control, rules, order; emphasis on standards; criticism of poor performance	(B) Informality, relaxed; emphasis on friendly relations; widespread rewards and cooperation	(C) Informality; rewards for excellent performance; high standards for individuals and organisation; cooperation, stress and challenge
Rules	↓	↑	↑
Responsibility	↓	↑	↑
Standards	↑	↓	↑
Rewards outweigh criticism	↓	↑	↑
Organisational clarity	↑	↓	↑
Team spirit	↓	↑	↑

↑, the style has a positive effect on climate.

↓, the style has a negative effect on climate.

(1968, pp. 189–190) concluded that distinct organisational climates could be created by varying leadership styles: ‘Such climates can be created in a short period of time, and their characteristics are quite stable. ... Once created, these climates seem to have significant ... effects on motivation, and correspondingly on performance and job satisfaction ...’. Organisation C proved easily the most successful.

Litwin and Stringer’s model implies that the *how* of leadership is the neglected dimension influencing organisational performance. If leadership styles directly correlate with workplace motivation, then there is a great opportunity for effective heads to improve their schools. The experiment seems to confirm the common sense perception that a leader’s personal qualities and actions have a decisive impact on others.

### Poor Performers

Hillside School’s OfSTED Report identified serious weaknesses in leadership and management and the establishment was placed on special measures. Mr Wake, the head teacher, seemed to have a misanthropic view of human nature. A year head reported that if you greeted him ‘... he would often ignore you. It was quite rude. It had an influence on the rest of the work of the school’ [Interview Transcript, Head of Year, 10th December, Year 2, abbreviated hereafter as IT (HOY10.xii.2)]; all dates at Hillside have been disguised by referring to the first academic year of the study as Y1, the second year as Y2 and the final year as Y3]. A female informant was one of several who remembered ‘how he used to tell her to f-off or p-off’ [Mr Moore’s Diary, abbreviated hereafter as MD, p. 449; diary entries are referenced by page rather than date to ensure that real individuals and events cannot be identified] and a teacher governor said ‘you’d get humiliated in front of everyone’ (MD, p. 449) if you asked a question or caused a problem at a staff meeting. The pupils ‘did not like him’, while the ‘parents found him very rude and also I think a lot saw through him’ [IT (HOY10.xii.2)]. A senior teacher claimed that the problems began with union action in the mid 1980s: ‘He took everything personally, the industrial action he saw as against him’. Following a personal crisis, Mr Wake had ‘lost his faith in human nature’ and after that ‘everything was too much trouble’ and he would not allow ‘things that would involve effort’ [MD, p. 592].

He expressed contempt for other headteachers and refused to attend their meetings. Innovations, including OfSTED, were dismissed as worthless. A young teacher said: ‘He expected to treat the inspectors the way he treated us, waffle through’ (MD, p. 449). In-service training and attendance at meetings at other schools were discouraged (MD, p. 25). In contrast, he believed in delegation, telling his deputy and the heads of department that he would not interfere unless there was cause for concern: ‘You don’t hire a dog and bark yourself’ (interview with Mr Wake, MD, p. 25). A secretary observed that the deputy ‘almost ran the school’ [IT (PA4.xii.2)]. Teachers were expected to know what to do without further direction. Mr Wake discouraged clubs, visits and trips because they disrupted the daily organisation, especially at lunchtime [IT (HOY10.xii.2)]. Although terse and abrupt in his daily conduct, he could be kind and considerate when individuals suffered from personal or family problems (MD, p. 25).

Mr Wake’s well-defined, unambiguous behaviour illustrates how underlying characteristics may colour every aspect of an individual’s approach to leadership and management. Hard, competitive and intolerant by nature, he acknowledged that: ‘I

don't suffer fools gladly' (MD, p. 25). Apparently insecure, he maintained his personal power by dismissing people, criticism and alternatives. This is an example of McClelland's true authoritarian in action, adopting a short-term, coercive style that makes his colleagues feel weak rather than strong. Under his leadership the climate at Hillside corresponded with that in Litwin and Stringer's Organisation A.

At Westfield, Mrs Wyatt's personality influenced every aspect of her approach to leadership and management. She found it difficult to talk about uncomfortable subjects, so her responses usually increased or complicated the emotions with which she had to deal. Her deputy said she encouraged a 'culture of blame' without tackling the people or issues that undermined the school's effectiveness. Teachers complained that 'you get stabbed in the back here, there's no leadership'.

When a new deputy head appeared to lack the administrative expertise to complete official Department for Education and Employment returns, Mrs Wyatt relieved him of the responsibility and did the job herself. Mistakes were made in presenting budget figures for the governors' annual report, so she typed a revised version herself. Staff felt the head was not interested in teachers or children. 'She's locked in that office and never comes out to see what's happening' they reported. Even members of senior management were fearful about taking initiatives. Mrs Wyatt talked endlessly at meetings without achieving agreement about necessary decisions. The senior management team was divided into rival camps and individual members expressed their lack of confidence in one another (these details are derived from an unpublished report based on interviews at the school).

Mr Anderson, the long serving principal of Longhurst Community College, was invariably formal and addressed visitors and teachers across a large boardroom desk. Mr Anderson's Olympian but defensive style permeated life at the college. Twenty staff members completed a structured questionnaire designed to assess school culture (returns and analysis are included in an unpublished report). The resulting profile, compared with other 11–16 schools involved in the same research, 'strongly suggests a hierarchical, autocratic, non-consultative style which creates a significant degree of teacher dissatisfaction' (unpublished report). Seventeen respondents rated the management structure as 'hierarchical', while only one considered Mr Anderson a collegial leader. Staff members regularly commented that Mr Anderson blocked initiatives and avoided discussion of school policy and decisions.

At Saltwood Mr Southern's personal charm and good nature permeated the school. He spent time in the common room and canteen ensuring that a good atmosphere prevailed and chatted happily with students and staff, whose company he enjoyed. Mr Southern paid careful attention to individual needs, relaxing rules to make life easier for his hard pressed colleagues. He discounted criticism from Ofsted and the local authority. He believed that Saltwood was doing a good job in difficult circumstances (information from interviews with staff members). Mr Southern's affable style seems to have created a climate similar to that in Litwin and Stringer's Organisation B, with a firm emphasis on warm, friendly relationships and teamwork.

Saltwood was placed on special measures but Mr Southern did not alter his behaviour. According to the staff, he did not challenge poor performance and often failed to follow through on agreed strategies for improvement. He believed weaker members of staff should be supported and refused to initiate competency proceedings. He was equally reluctant to exclude unruly students and expressed sympathy with their disturbed family lives. Mr Southern did not sustain or enforce initiatives,

while staff complained about his lack of consistency. He emphasised social rather than academic values and goals.

These studies in failure show the pervasive influence of poor leaders and their impact on the behaviour of staff and students. Mr Wake, Mrs Wyatt, Mr Anderson and Mr Southern seemed unable to analyse their impact or to change their natural instincts in dealing with people. They were unable to respond positively to criticism or adopt new strategies. Hillside, Westfield and Longhurst were unhealthy, unhappy organisations, lacking direction and purpose. Teachers and children felt that problems were unresolved and that their needs were neglected. In each case OfSTED inspection reports and interview evidence confirmed the judgement that weak leadership was responsible for the school's problems. At Saltwood Mr Southern's quite different emphasis on congenial working relationships failed to motivate his colleagues towards revised, improved strategies.

The examples of Mr Wake, Mrs Wyatt, Mr Anderson and Mr Southern illustrate a common pattern in which underlying limitations shape behaviour and choice. Their personal resources prove insufficient to cope with micro- and macropolitical issues, especially in the complex environment of modern education. A leader's restricted range of response to other people seems to be associated, and perhaps interrelated, with a parallel, limited understanding of his or her organisation and its operations. The heads described above appeared to be unaware of their own influence on others and were inclined to blame failure on forces or circumstances beyond their control. Alternative, more strategic approaches were discounted because they were concerned to maintain their own values, position and control. They felt threatened by a paralysing external agenda. Those heads who lack the flexibility to adapt to change risk losing control, even within their institutions. A short-term, over-regulating style may result, contributing to a school's downward spiral of expectations.

These conclusions are consistent with previous studies. Anne Jones (1987, p. 67) surveyed head teachers to identify the qualities required for effective leadership. 'The top three, motivating, conflict resolution and negotiating are clearly perceived as key skills in Headship.' Leaders with limited political skills and a melancholy view of the world are unlikely to motivate others. I found a similar pattern amongst less capable heads in Cambridgeshire (Barker 1990, p. 1): 'Poor decisions and negative attitudes seep into the fabric of an organisation, discouraging initiative, lowering expectations and eroding confidence. Neglected faults and unattended needs multiply themselves'. Hall *et al.* (1986, p. 190) also sketch the common characteristics of weak headship. 'There's a lack of clarity about aims, a general wooliness, staff not knowing where they are and no means for working out aims ... there's a lack of consistency, unexplained changes ...'.

Interviews with staff members at the schools enable the climates created by Mr Wake, Mrs Wyatt and Mr Southern to be assessed against Litwin and Stringer's criteria. Recorded comments indicate that Mr Wake, Mrs Wyatt and Mr Southern created chronically unproductive environments. Over many years their leadership failed to create the organisational climate necessary to arouse the potential motivation of staff and students. Preoccupied with status, position and dominance, Mr Wake and Mrs Wyatt lacked the socialised power identified by McClelland and Burnham (1995) as the dynamic of effective leadership. Instead they emphasised rules, regulations and criticism.

Mr Southern's congenial style, apparently driven by a need for close interpersonal relationships, illustrates another aspect of McClelland and Burnham's argument. A

strong people orientation may cause a leader to attend to individuals and their needs when the priority should be to apply rules without exception. A leader who wants to be liked can be easily swayed. Unless a manager is primarily concerned to use power to influence events, the organisational climate is likely to be low in terms of direction, objectives and quality.

### **Effective Performers**

Events at Hillside illustrate how quickly an effective leader can transform the organisational climate. When Mr Wake resigned, the local authority seconded an experienced head from a neighbouring town to lead the school for a term. Mr Hogg's positive, self-confident approach enabled him to make an immediate, dramatic impact. A parent noticed that he was: '... a very loveable man ... incredibly open, excitable, boyish, lots of humour, loads of energy and joie de vivre' [IT (PG4.xii.2)]. His aim was to convince students, staff and parents that the school had changed and had a future. He involved 'core groups of staff' to bring about 'amazing changes' [IT (PG4.xii.2)]. He spent the school's accumulated budget reserve on a new entrance foyer and office, purchased a suite of computers for the library, installed lockers for every student, promoted 20 teachers, making them responsible for implementing the OfSTED action plan, and established a regular pattern of meetings. A year head noticed that 'Staff morale rose because he made people feel valued', while 'pupils were swept along' [IT (HOY10.xii.2)] by his enthusiasm. Mr Hogg communicated intensively with staff and students through morning briefings and assemblies. A new, can-do climate was created within 10 weeks. Although he was 'a fantastic motivator' [IT (PG4.xii.2)] whose 'catchphrase was "brilliant"' [IT (PA4.xii.2)], Mr Hogg was also ruthless with poor performance. A secretary suggested that: 'People who he felt were not capable of doing the job were pushed aside' [IT (PA4.xii.2)].

When Mr Hogg's secondment concluded, Mr Moore, another experienced head-teacher, was appointed to lead Hillside out of special measures. Mr Moore's plan was to: 'consolidate Mr Hogg's changes and to focus on methodology and making sure what is agreed happens. I need to work a lot with the staff and the meetings schedule is not able to take the strain' (MD, hand written entry, September, Y2).

Mr Moore was seen as a 'political operator' [IT (PG4.xii.2)] who wants 'to shift staff culture from blaming staff to a supportive/collaborative one' [IT (PG6.ii.2)]. Teachers were involved in an intensive series of meetings to develop guidelines for schemes of work, lesson planning and teaching. Working groups were given authority to redesign many of the school's basic procedures, including the curriculum, the behaviour code and the policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Mr Moore delegated tasks to senior and middle managers and regularly checked progress. When work was completed he 'writes a note of appreciation, he is very willing to say it too' [IT (PA15.vi.2)].

Mr Moore also emphasised a collaborative approach, making his deputies, year heads and subject leaders responsible for the successful work of a variety of staff groups. A year head felt that he had 'a very open door policy to staff and pupils and I think they are beginning to respect the man' [IT (HOY10.xii.2)]. After the exciting roller-coaster ride with Mr Hogg, the students were at first reserved, but soon they were 'warming to him. He is seen as a firm headteacher who is consistent. He is seen to be fair' [IT (HOY10.xii.2)].

Mr Moore met with the two deputies every morning and evening to coordinate the

complex developments required by the action plan. The deputies were encouraged to take initiatives of their own without checking back with the head. The calendar was rescheduled to allow sufficient time for the necessary meetings. After-school workshops were followed by social events, calculated to enhance group identity and feelings of pride and self-esteem. Staff welcomed 'the idea that we celebrate things and celebrate people's cultures and celebrate success' [IT (HOY10.xii.2)]. Although Mr Moore did not limit discussion or prescribe particular solutions, teachers were aware of an urgent, driving agenda and close scrutiny of outcomes. One witness remarked: 'He creates so much work and expects so much of people' [IT (PA26.iii.2)].

Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) noted the staff opinion that Mr Moore was a 'hard task master' and reported:

The headteacher has been resolute in his endeavour to improve teaching. Support in order to address weaknesses in teaching, and staff changes, have proved beneficial for continual overall improvement. (HMI monitoring report, February, Y2)

Mr Moore's insistence on improved standards of teaching, however, did not have as negative an impact on staff perceptions as he feared. A member of the office staff noticed: 'I think all the other teachers realise that the ones who are being squeezed out are weak anyway and we do need some new young blood' [IT (PA 15.vi.2)].

According to HMI, 'staff morale has steadied, is resilient and continues to improve' [HMI monitoring report, June, Y2]. Mr Moore led training events and coached groups and individuals as necessary, a process that included lesson observation and an unrelenting analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Although the special measures regime itself was experienced negatively, staff perceived few unnecessary rules and regulations at Hillside under Mr Moore. To some extent they accepted the urgency of the school's dilemma. They appreciated the consistent systems and procedures adopted, for example, the behaviour code and the standard format for schemes of work.

Mr Mole's impact at Stonebridge, where he followed a long-serving head who had lost touch with staff and students and was apprehensive about the prospect of a major renovation project, was equally rapid. Mr Mole's enthusiasm proved infectious as he challenged the local authority's neglect and tackled outstanding behaviour problems. Some staff were dismayed when he encouraged informality, including the use of first names. 'No more sheep and goats' he added as he announced the end of the school's upper and lower bands at an early staff meeting. Mr Mole appointed two deputy heads in the first term and created a senior management team with clearly designated responsibilities. Staff working groups were established with the promise that their recommendations would be implemented quickly (information from an unpublished narrative of events at Stonebridge).

During the induction phase Mr Hogg, Mr Moore and Mr Mole were intensely active, generating a wave of initiatives to resolve long-standing problems. They identified strongly with their staff and blamed the local authorities for neglect, implying that underlying weaknesses should have been dealt with long ago. They were concerned to work with teachers and children to identify clear objectives and deliver visible results. Their explicit strategy was to dismantle established power hierarchies and replace them with legitimate, collaborative structures.

These successful leaders displayed 'a high need for power and an interest in

influencing others' (McClelland & Burnham, 1995, p. 11) as well as considerable drive and determination as they embarked on change programmes. Despite acute difficulties, they did not adopt negative or defensive attitudes. Unlike Mr Wake and Mrs Wyatt, they were consistently positive and optimistic in their behaviour and encouraged their colleagues to take initiatives. They also fulfilled McClelland and Burnham's (1995, p. 11) requirement for 'emotional maturity ... and a democratic coaching style'.

Both Mr Hogg and Mr Moore self-consciously adopted a wide range of influencing strategies, acutely conscious of the need to raise morale and improve motivation. Student comments confirm that Mr Hogg's impact was positive [3]. Unfortunately, his single term at Hillside was too brief to permit a full analysis of the climate at that time. A questionnaire was used during Mr Moore's fifth term to check the staff rating of workplace climate, according to Litwin and Stringer's criteria (see Table II). The aim was to measure the effect of Mr Moore's leadership behaviour on motivational climate at Hillside. The five respondents considered: that there were few unnecessary rules and constraints; that they had a high level of responsibility for their work; that standards were emphasised; that rewards outweighed criticism; that school goals were clear; that team spirit was improving from a low base.

Mr Moore's communication strategy and leadership behaviour were calculated explicitly to improve morale and motivation. After one year, staff perceptions and behaviour were transformed. A visitor commented:

What I pick up in the staff room is a tremendous buzz of people wanting new ideas and wanting development and wanting things to happen; how on earth was Hillside in special measures? [IT (Mr Moore, 11.xii.3)]

The rapid change in perceived climate at Hillside (from Mr Wake to Mr Hogg then Mr Moore) confirms Litwin and Stringer's conviction that motivation and behaviour in the workplace are highly susceptible to influence by leaders and their conscious and unconscious behaviour. Litwin's (1968, p. 190) conclusion is particularly apt in relation to Hillside: 'If significant changes in relatively stable personality factors can be created in *less than two weeks*, then we can imagine how living in a given climate for a *period of years* could dramatically affect many aspects of personal functioning ...'.

These examples confirm that a head's prime role is to lead and motivate others and demonstrate that leadership styles adopted during the processes of decision making and change are pervasive and have a marked influence on organisational climate. This is tangible, specific evidence that an effective leader can renew the optimism and harness the relatively untapped potential of staff and students alike.

Motives, styles and the concept of organisational climate help us to understand how leaders influence their schools. Until the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads (LPSH), [4] began to train heads to examine and develop their leadership styles, too little attention had been paid to the paradox that while leaders need to be interested in power and influence, authoritarian styles may reduce motivation and effectiveness. The idea of a climate that motivates or discourages teachers and children enables us to explain why heads are perceived to be important and how schools in unpromising circumstances are sometimes 'turned round' so quickly.

## Limitations

The limitations of this model remain to be explored. How do heads blend the positive climate they create with the vision, systems and procedures that bring about improvement? What external (e.g. OfSTED, school intake) and internal (e.g. organisational culture, micro-politics) contexts constrain and limit their achievement? Can highly effective heads sustain exceptional performance over time? Is it easier for new heads to succeed? Will LPSH improve the climate in our schools? Are there dangers in driving systems too hard? Blackmore, (1999, quoted in Gunter, 2000, p. 10), is concerned about how these new leadership models may be used to exploit the professional workforce: ‘... the new performativities of post modern “greedy” organisations exploit the pleasure of the win and getting the job done, as well as the intimacy of social relations to achieve organisational goals.’

These questions are explored in my forthcoming book on school leadership.

## NOTES

- [1] In preparation for the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads (LPSH), the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) commissioned Hay McBer to study 40 primary and secondary heads to identify the characteristics of highly effective performers.
- [2] Scientific management had a powerful impact on education in its own day: ‘Before the mania ran its course various “efficiency” procedures were applied to classroom learning and to teachers, to the program of studies, to the organisation of schools, to administrative functions, and to entire school systems. Most of the actions before 1916 were connected in some way by educators to the magic words “scientific management”.’ (Callahan, 1962, p. 95).
- [3] ‘When Mr Hogg came in, everything was happening, the teachers seemed to be more enthusiastic when they taught.’
- [4] The TTA introduced the programme in 1998.

*Correspondence:* Bernard Barker, School of Education, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RF, UK.

## REFERENCES

- BARKER, B. (1990) *The Cambridgeshire Management Workshop* (Dereham, Norfolk, Peter Francis Publishers).
- BLACKMORE, J. (1999) *Troubling Women*, pp. 37–38 (Buckingham, Open University Press). Quoted in: H. GUNTER (2000) Reviewing the literature on leadership in education: taking a critical approach, Paper presented at the *Sixth International Educational Management and Administration Research Conference*, March 29–31, 2000, Robinson College, Cambridge.
- CALLAHAN, R. (1962) *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- HALL, V., MACKAY, H. & MORGAN, C. (1986) *Head Teachers at Work* (Milton Keynes, Open University Press).
- JONES, A. (1987) *Leadership for Tomorrow's Schools* (Oxford, Blackwell).
- LITWIN, G.H. (1968) Motivation and organizational climate, in: R. TAGIURI & G.H. LITWIN (Eds) *Organizational Climate: explorations of a concept*, pp. 169–170 (Boston, MA, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University).
- LITWIN, G.H. & STRINGER, R.A. (1966) *Motivation and Organizational Climate* (Boston, MA, Division of Research, Harvard Business School).
- MCCLELLAND, D.C. & BURNHAM, D.H. (1995) Power is the great motivator, *Harvard Business Review*, January/February 1995, Classic Reprint 95108 [originally published March/April 1976].
- SAMMONS, P., HILLMAN, J. & MORTIMORE, P. (1995) *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools: a review of school effectiveness research* (London, Institute of Education).
- SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE (1990) *Developing School Management* (London, HMSO).

Copyright of Educational Review is the property of Educational Review and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.