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'It's one of those scary areas': Leadership and management of music in primary schools

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The role of the subject leader, or co-ordinator, in the primary school has evolved considerably over recent years. Ultimately, responsibility for individual subjects remains with the headteacher and governors, but much work has been increasingly devolved, at least theoretically, to subject leaders. In this role they need to demonstrate the ability to be both leaders and managers. Whilst some aspects of leadership and management are generic, others may be specific to the subject and type of school. Through interviews with three subject leaders in schools where music is judged to be successful, this article examines their roles from a leadership and management perspective within the context of the existing primary school (3–11 years) structure. The tentative conclusion is that music is different and may need special considerations in equipping subject leaders to work effectively within this type of school.

The role of the subject leader, or co-ordinator, in the primary school has evolved considerably since the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Order of 1987 required teachers to take on responsibility, with no extra pay, beyond that of a class teacher. One implication of this was that part of the leadership of primary schools was, in theory, extended beyond the headteacher (Hoult, 2002; Lunn & Bishop, 2002) although the devolution of real power may depend on the headteacher's willingness to delegate power and the desire of the subject leader to accept it if offered. The Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 introduced a National Curriculum (for England and Wales), which further complicated matters by

> increasing curricular demand and accountability and shifting the emphasis towards subject learning rather than the more general cross curricula work such as topics (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2002: 407).

Ultimately, responsibility for individual subjects remains with the Headteacher and Governors, but since 1988 much work has increasingly devolved, at least theoretically, to subject leaders. By 1998, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) had set standards for subject leaders and summarised the role thus:

> To provide professional leadership and management for a subject to secure high quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of learning and achievement for all pupils (Teacher Training Agency (TTA), 1998: 4).

The importance of leadership and management is acknowledged in school inspections and Gadsby & Harrison (1999: 18) warn co-ordinators that their role

> will be regarded to a significant extent as a management and leadership one. . . . You will be expected to be clear about your responsibilities and how you carry them out.

However, in carrying out these responsibilities the TTA acknowledged that 'while some aspects of leadership and management are generic, others are specific to the subject and type of school' (TTA, 1998: 4). This article tries to identify features of subject leadership which may be particular to music at the primary school stage of education (3–11 years).

Any examination of the role of subject leader is complicated by 'the variety of terms [which] have been used over the years, such as: specialist (Morrison, 1986), consultant (Central Advisory Council for Education (CACE), 1967), post of responsibility (Association of Science Education (ASE), 1981), post-holder (Campbell 1985), co-ordinator (DES, 1975, 1982; Blenkinsop, 1991), subject manager (Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), 1994; West 1995) and subject leader (TTA, 1998)' (Bell & Ritchie, 1999: 9–10). To avoid confusion, the term 'subject leader' will subsequently be used here to represent all these terms, whatever they have been called in the original literature. The multiplicity of labels for the subject leader perhaps reflects the continually evolving expectations and demands of this role. The nebulous nature of expectation and practice implicit in such a changing taxonomy implies that any attempt at analysis should be similarly multi-faceted.

The role of the music subject leader has largely been examined from within the music education field. However, 'in the same way that using a 'musical lens' to scrutinise leading and managing in education [in general] opens up new directions for looking at the relationship between expert professionals' (Hall, 2001: 328), we suggest here that using a 'leadership and management lens' to examine the role of the music expert professional (the subject leader) may provide a starting point for further analysis from other perspectives. This article examines the role of music subject leaders in three primary schools from a leadership and management perspective by gathering music subject leaders' self-perceptions of their work as leaders and managers and any aspects of their work which are particular to music.

Although Field (2002: 460) argued that 'in the reality of the day-to-day work of subject leaders in English schools, it is spurious to separate the two concepts of leadership and management', we contend that there *is* a need for teachers, and more particularly headteachers and other senior leaders, to recognise both the distinction between leadership and management roles and the requirements and influence of the subject. For the purposes of this article a simple delineation can be made, where 'leadership' is identifying what it takes to be doing the right job and 'management' is doing that job right. This distinction between strategic and operational tasks/skills forms the basis of subsequent discussion. The fact that one person can be both a leader and a manager (and in primary schools in England and Wales subject leadership is normally assumed by one person) does not mean that each role has only generic needs. We argue that if schools are to help develop the role of the subject leader, and fully engage with the agenda for raising standards required of that position by the TTA (1998), all parties must begin to recognise not only that both leadership and management generate distinctive needs, but also that some of these needs may be specific to individual areas of the curriculum.

The importance of this agenda to schools in a broader context (both geographical and political) is based on the assumption that successful leadership and management of music is an essential foundation for successful musical achievement by pupils. Moreover, in primary schools the subject leader will often be addressing an acknowledged lack of confidence in teaching music by others whom they will support. These will not only be generalist teachers (that is, those led by the subject leaders) in primary schools in England (Mills, 1989; Lawson *et al.*, 1994) and beyond (Fahnoe, 1987; Gifford, 1993) but also students training to be primary teachers (Mills, 1995/6; Hennessy, 2000).

There is currently a paucity of literature, both about subject leadership in general and relating to individual subjects. Existing literature specific to music in the primary school has assumed a pragmatic viewpoint. It has tried to provide guidance for primary school music subject leaders from a purely music education perspective (Wheway, 1996; Hennessy, 1998; Potter & Button, 1999) or to advocate a particular methodology, such as music consultancy (Allen, 1988). Whilst such approaches are grounded in the reality imposed by a National Curriculum, they have not necessarily led to examination of the role of the music subject leader in a broader epistemological context.

Leadership and management context

As we have asserted elsewhere (Harvey & Beauchamp, 2005), schools around the world are being held ever more accountable. Site-based management has firmly shifted responsibility for higher standards to individual schools (Gunter, 2001) and within these the introduction of the 'subject leader' has brought a middle layer of management to primary schools (Fleming & Amesbury, 2001). This lends added weight to Huberman's (1993) and Bennett's (1999) views that middle managers thus become critical agents for school improvement. Although Huberman was talking about achieving consistency of subject standards in secondary schools, his argument could also apply to primary schools.

In England an increasing shift towards Huberman's point of view has coincided with wider thinking about the nature and importance of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002; Bennett *et al.*, 2003). Although the meaning of this term is contested, there is some agreement on three elements: leadership as conjoint activity; openness to boundaries i.e. that leadership is extended to a wide range of participants; and leadership as concerted expertise (Woods *et al.*, 2004). While these elements may not all be fully present in schools there is evidence that senior school leaders have at least delegated many responsibilities downwards (Glover *et al.*, 1998). Moreover, possibly to prepare them for such delegation, subject leaders in both primary and secondary schools have been offered increasing quantities of advice about leadership and management (e.g. Field *et al.*, 2000; Fleming & Amesbury, 2001), including the National College for School Leadership *Leading from the Middle* programme, launched in 2003. As Turner (2003) indicated, however, our evidence base about subject leadership still has notable gaps. Turner was talking specifically about secondary schools, but there is also 'a relative dearth of evidence about the role of middle level leaders in primary schools' (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2004: 2). Moreover, and more specifically to the topic under review here, Lawson *et al.* (1994: 9) asserted that in primary music 'how far co-ordinators are effective is not known'. Furthermore, although inspection evidence from OFSTED (in England) and ESTYN (in Wales) in more recent years shows that

music is being taught effectively, this is not a reliable indicator of how directly the teaching is linked to the quality of the leadership and management of the subject leader.

The study

It may seem obvious to suggest that to be successful leaders and managers, teachers need to see themselves as such, and have clear expectations about their subsequent roles and responsibilities, but the evidence base on this is thin. In an attempt to assess the current reality of the roles of subject leaders of arts, the ARTSLAMP (arts leadership and management project – 'illuminating arts leadership and management in schools') project was established. The pilot study for ARTSLAMP was undertaken in music in primary and secondary schools in England. This article draws on data from the pilot interviews of subject leaders of music in primary schools. For the findings from the secondary school interviews, see Harvey & Beauchamp (2005).

Methodology

Verma & Mallick (1999) recommended that methods selected should be appropriate for both the problem and the resources available. Arguably, to establish the widest possible parameters for future research on the basis of this pilot, it would have been beneficial to conduct in-depth, multiple interviews, structured as loosely as possible to capture all the potential data. However, being realistic, neither researchers nor respondents were likely to have sufficient time available. Moreover, as there were two researchers involved in interviewing, to ensure appropriate comparability for the data a tight focus was required, asking similar questions and agreeing areas of particular interest for follow-up as necessary. Care was taken to formulate questions which avoided possible bias. Both researchers had a strong musical background, fortuitously one in primary schools and one in secondary, and both interviewers were able to work within their specialist age range. This provided them with broad understanding of musicians' language, contexts and the kinds of tasks they were likely to discuss.

A list of questions was formulated and revised between the researchers, with the intention that any interview would not exceed an hour, including preliminary and concluding conversations. The questions covered:

- professional history,
- differences between leading a subject and simply teaching it,
- leadership and management tasks,
- any similarities/differences perceived between leading/managing music and other subjects,
- professional development, and
- contacts with others outside the department.

Questions were the same for both primary and secondary teachers, with a single exception reflecting the different contexts. Primary teachers were asked an additional question about their Initial Teacher Training (ITT) to see how far this had included music. All interviewees were sent in advance copies of the questions and the ARTSLAMP focus outline.

Three schools were chosen from within one English county. Account was taken of the quality of a school's provision for music, assessed by fairly recent OFSTED inspection reports, which suggested that curriculum music was of a good standard. Interviews were conducted to suit the convenience of the respondents. Funding constraints meant that schools could not be offered supply costs to release teachers from their full-time commitment to their classes, but given sufficient advance notice all the headteachers were able to accommodate interviews during school hours. To protect the confidentiality of individuals, schools and interviewees have been given pseudonyms. The interviewees in this article are named after 18th century musicians and schools are named after writers from the same era. All interviews were taped (with permission) and subsequently transcribed to allow further analysis.

The primary schools

Austen primary school is in a rural setting with the children coming from the small village itself and the surrounding area. In contrast, both Blake and Defoe primary schools are distinctly urban in location. Whilst none of the schools can be regarded as particularly small, Defoe primary school is slightly larger and provides a degree of contrast. It is also worth noting the high proportion of staff involved in a school management role; nearly half the Defoe staff were members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), including the music subject leader, Ms Gambarini, compared to under a quarter in the others (see Table 1). It may be argued that these circumstances could influence teachers' perception of themselves as leaders/managers though, as the data show, they rarely describe themselves as such.

Table 1 *Sizes and staff of the schools under study*

School	No. of children	Classroom music teachers	Visiting instrumental teachers	Senior Management Team (SMT)	Staff (full time)
Austen	220	All staff	2 (brass and clarinet) – 2½ hours	2 – Head and Deputy	9
Blake	190	All staff	2 (brass and strings) – 2 hours	2 – Head and Deputy	9
Defoe	350	All staff	3 (guitar, clarinet, brass) – 5 hours per week	6 – including Head and Deputy	15

The primary interviewees

In all three schools there was a designated subject leader for music. All three of them had taken a general primary training course, but only two, Ms Hardin and Ms Weichsell, had studied music as part of this initial training, and only Ms Weichsell had taken music as a sole option. The remaining two had either combined music with another subject (Ms Hardin – Performance Arts and RE) or had trained with a specialism in another area of the

Table 2 *Experience of the teachers in the study*

Teacher	Years teaching	Years as subject leader	Other areas of responsibility
Ms Weichsell	15+	14	Equal opportunities subject leader and SCITT course subject leader
Ms Hardin	8	5	Religious Education
Ms Gambarini	10+	3	Senior Management Team

curriculum (Ms Gambarini – Art). Fortuitously they also had a range of teaching experience upon which to draw when responding to our questions (see Table 2).

Relationships with senior management

The teachers' perceptions of their roles seemed to be largely shaped by, and a response to, their relationships with their schools' senior leaders. Given the sizes of the schools, it is not surprising that these senior leaders were well known to all interviewees. All three subject leaders described a close working relationship with senior leaders, in which they felt confident to approach the headteacher at any time, both in a personal and professional capacity. However, they also indicated that any decisions regarding their area of responsibility would be taken by the headteacher and not by themselves. This seems to go beyond brokering (Busher & Harris, 1999) with senior management to a situation summed up by Ms Gambarini as 'the management team take more of a leading role than the co-ordinator'.

It appeared that in all three schools there existed a benign centralised assertive leadership by the headteacher, although the dynamics in each case were slightly different. Ms Weichsell perceived her headteacher as very supportive, but also very 'hands-on'. The relationship was very open (established over many years of working together), in that when Ms Weichsell was making decisions she felt able to 'share them with the head', but also that there were areas of music where she stated 'I wouldn't presume to make a decision there'. However, Ms Weichsell also named the headteacher as the person from whom she had learned the most about leadership:

> She, you know, she's very much a really good friend. But I always value what she has to say, yes. And if I need any advice at all, I will go to her. . . . Well, probably if I am going to do something new, I will have made up my mind first, but I would always run it by her and say 'what do you think'?

Ms Hardin also reflected on the openness of the SMT to new ideas, affirming 'if you come up with a good idea they will always listen' but much of her language – 'I was *sent* on a course', 'we can make *requests* as to which course we would like to go on' – reflected her view that 'the final decision is left to the head'. Whilst this would be expected in most management structures, the question raised by the interviews is the level of decision-making at which this final arbitration takes place.

None of the teachers adopted a negative attitude to these circumstances. They reported it as the reality of their working lives, rather than resenting it. It may be that Ms Weichsell and Ms Hardin are 'in reality rather attached to the relative comfort and lack of exposure that may derive from operating under the dominant leader model' (Story, 2003: 6). The situation was slightly different for Ms Gambarini, who was part of the senior management team, but even she still admitted that 'we [staff and SMT] don't rock the boat too much'.

This situation may perhaps be explained in part by the perception by all interviewees that the senior leaders of all three schools were very supportive of major musical events, such as concerts and musical shows. However, given the potential for such events to raise the school profile with parents and other stakeholders, this may not necessarily equate to support for music as a subject in the curriculum.

Perception of roles

The most revealing facet of the interviews, with resultant impact on everything else discussed, was the teachers' apparent difficulty in conceptualising their own leadership and management roles. Harris *et al.* (2003: 70–71) found that headteachers' leadership was largely defined by teachers as being visionary and providing direction, whilst management was more pragmatic and concerned 'setting up and maintaining systems'. However, although Harris *et al.* contended that teachers are able to 'make a distinction between the leadership and management aspects of the headteacher's role' (op. cit.: 70), our interviewees found making this conceptual distinction in their own work very difficult. Leithwood *et al.* (1999) give a plausible explanation of this by highlighting the complex dynamics of practice, but the interviews suggested that while these teachers *were* able to see beyond this complexity, their interpretations of leadership and management differ from those attributed to headteachers in Harris *et al.*'s (2003) study.

These music subject leaders perceived themselves to be functioning as part of the headteacher's machinery of management. They were implementing rather than inventing. This indicated strongly that there was a very low 'ceiling' at which management decisions became the responsibility of the headteacher and/or the SMT. When asked about management tasks, Ms Weichsell (who had made copious notes on the information she had received prior to the interviews) commented that 'I've actually crossed out part B [of the questions] because I thought, I lead people, not manage them'. However, Ms Weichsell then gave specific examples of activities she undertook which were actually examples of management tasks.

All three teachers explained their management roles predominantly in terms of resourcing their subject. However, even in this, their role seemed largely advisory, working within imposed budgetary constraints, although all three felt able to ask for more resources because their subject was valued by the headteacher. Ms Weichsell was typical in her explanation that 'I know there's a budget. I don't actually control it but if I see a need for something . . . I put together my order and then the head will sign and approve it'. She added that

> I make the initial suggestions for all the resources that we might need and the staff might need, and I put the order in, but the head reads it through and will decide. And

I work within an agreed budget, I will be told 'well there's that much and we can't finance more'. Generally, we nearly always agree in the end.

In contrast, Ms Gambarini's budget for music in the preceding year was £40, which must have affected her ability to implement significant change in either curriculum or pupils' standards of achievement.

This is not to say that music subject leaders were ignored. There were occasions when their advice was sought. Two of the interviewees (Ms Hardin and Ms Gambarini) had been able to purchase a new music scheme for the whole school in recent years (costing up to £1000) but this was dictated by the school development plan, where music had reached its turn in the cycle, rather than as part their normal annual budget. It was apparent from both these interviews that the position of music in the cycle of the school development plan was more important than the decision of the music subject leader that a new scheme was needed. In this context, the subject leaders were acting in 'the role of consultant as distinct from that of co-ordinator' noted by Hennessy (1998: 22). Whilst this role may be used to bring about change, it is more detached from day-to-day school leadership and management roles and uses a distinct and separate body of knowledge and skills in a consultant and client relationship. Such decisions, whilst benefiting from knowledge of the individual school's strengths and weaknesses, reflect wider curricular demands and could equally be made by other 'consultants', such as Local Education Authority (LEA) advisors.

The teachers' concept of leadership thus seemed to be limited by their inability to move beyond an informal leadership role, that is

> . . . classroom-related functions such as planning, communicating goals, regulating activities, creating a pleasant workplace environment, supervising, motivating those supervised, and evaluating the performance of those supervised (Harris, 2003: 314).

to the formal leadership role which should 'encompass responsibilities such as subject co-ordinator' (*ibid*.). Such a finding also supports the views of Baker (1989: 269), who described leading a music project in a primary school ' . . . with the Head's blessing, yet without any authority formally being given to me'. The interviews suggest that, for those formally recognised as 'music subject leader', there is nevertheless no associated authority, as this is largely retained by the SMT and headteacher.

Management responsibilities for music

The interviewees identified six specific management responsibilities associated with the role of music subject leader:

- Resources – ordering, maintaining and organising
- Accountability (monitoring/schemes of work)
- Supporting staff/INSET
- Involvement of peripatetic staff
- Extra-curricular groups – choir, orchestra . . .
- Organising concerts

Resources

Providing and maintaining resources were regarded as the main management tasks of the subject leaders. Ms Hardin typically identified that 'my job was really going round and making sure everyone had enough instruments'. Ms Gambarini also identified an important part of her role as

> making sure you have enough [resources], making sure that they are in good repair, making sure you've got the right resources connected to the right tasks that are going on.

Accountability and supporting staff/INSET

Accountability and staff support activities were mentioned in all three interviews and were interlinked. Accountability issues emerged through the need to monitor subject provision, which was mentioned by all three subject leaders, though in slightly different ways. Ms Hardin stated she was 'verifying that everything that was supposed to be covered was being covered', whilst Ms Weichsell had to 'check that the schemes have been planned properly' and Ms Gambarini was involved in 'monitoring other members of staff'. However, this work was done by all other subject leaders and hence was not specific to music. What *was* unique to music was the perceived need for a high level of support to those colleagues who were struggling to cope with a subject which 'can be a bit intimidating for some people' (Ms Gambarini). Ms Hardin supported this: 'Music is one of those subjects where teachers don't always feel as confident as they do in other subjects, because of the practical aspect of doing music'. Ms Gambarini summed it up as 'it's one of those scary areas'. As a result of such feelings, all three teachers indicated that an important part of their management style was that staff 'felt very comfortable to come and ask advice, or, you know, specialist input' (Ms Weichsell).

All subject leaders were required to provide In-service Education and Training (INSET) for colleagues as part of their role as subject leader, but they also implied that staff often approached them outside this context. Normally, these requests were not for help with musical terms or concepts but much more pragmatic, such as, 'do you know a song that could go in there?' (Ms Weichsell).

Peripatetic staff

All three schools had weekly visits from peripatetic instrumental teachers, a feature of provision which sets music apart from other subjects. As such visits can make an important contribution to the music curriculum, it is interesting that only Ms Weichsell identified that 'probably the only one [task] that is specific to my subject is the overall peripatetic teaching'. She continued that

> I work with very closely with them [peripatetic teachers]. I think it's really important when they come into school, that they feel part of the school, they know me and they are part of it, rather than just coming in for their hour and doing their bit.

This was in marked contrast to Ms Hardin who, when asked if she managed the peripatetic visits, argued that

> it is a separate thing, because it's almost like a private contract between the child's parents and the [peripatetic] teacher, and the LEA, because everything is paid for, you know, and it's private lessons really, but in school.

Ms Gambarini seemed to fit somewhere between these two extremes, as, although 'we're on sort of first name terms, often I don't see them until the junior concert, and they are involved with that, because they will play for their groups of children'. Further discussion revealed that this was the limit of the involvement of peripatetic teachers and they were not integrated into the music curriculum of the school. It seems unlikely therefore that Ms Hardin or Ms Gambarini were able to develop any leadership or management relationship role with peripatetic staff beyond organising concert programmes and arranging for accompanists.

Ms Weichsell, however, was much more involved and in this area she was actually exerting a degree of both management and leadership. She did not state this explicitly but it was clear from her description of her actions:

> I pop in maybe once a fortnight, to a particular lesson. . . . I ask if any children need encouragement or help, if there's somebody lagging behind who just needs a push, I would do that. I ask about the progress they're making, just in case I need to see one of the parents about what they're practising. I suggest the groupings for the children at the beginning. . . . I ask the peripatetic teachers to practise the orchestral parts that I've written or that I've got for the children. And I'm really good now at asking what range of notes they want to play at the moment and if we're coming up to a concert, then the peripatetic teachers will practise their parts. So I think there's a really good relationship there.

Ms Weichsell was thus leading and managing both adults and children, although the adults were not permanent members of staff. In relation to earlier definitions of leadership and management roles, she was both doing the right job and doing the job right. This potential area of autonomy within a subject like music sets its leadership and management apart from other subjects, and therefore the subject leader can hold a degree of real power here. This perhaps reflects the greater freedom from top-down control inherent in such activity. However, relatively little benefit may be felt within the school because these roles are fulfilled in an extra-curricular context. Any impact on standards within the curriculum, for example, cannot be felt equally by every child since all children are not involved.

Extra-curricular groups

Extra-curricular groups also provided a context for subject leaders to demonstrate leadership and management, although again this was of children and not adults. This may also be true of other subjects involving teams, such as physical education. However, although all three subject leaders outlined a heavy involvement with extra-curricular music groups, none articulated their roles in terms of leadership or management, defining them more as facilitation. Ms Weichsell, for example, stated

> I run … lots of extra-curricular activities. I have recorder groups, the orchestra, we have junior singing, so running those, I think I'm probably, possibly the only teacher that does things in my lunch hour.

All the schools had a variety of extra-curricular activities, and the time commitment required by music set subject leaders apart from colleagues leading other subjects, but this had no apparent impact on their self-perception as leaders or managers.

Organising concerts and playing for school assemblies

Another substantial time commitment associated with music subject leadership in the primary school appears to be the requirement to play the piano for, and/or organise, whole school musical events. On a daily, or at least weekly, basis this involves not only the extra-curricular provision outlined above, but also playing the piano for assemblies (daily collective worship) and 'taking singing/hymn practices' (Ms Gambarini). Each term the subject leader will also be 'co-ordinating choir and orchestra and performances outside and inside school, and organising concerts' (Ms Gambarini). The subject leaders were all also involved in 'writing concerts [programmes]' (Ms Weichsell). All the above requires some degree of management and leadership, although again predominantly of children and resources. Organising external events may be done by other staff, but concert planning is always unique to music.

How does this compare with other subjects?

At this stage it is pertinent to compare the findings thus far with the 'key tasks' of primary co-ordinators reported by Bell (1992), and thus to identify the 'specific demands made on individual co-ordinators which are closely related to the nature of the particular curriculum area' (Bell, *ibid*.: 158). Most areas of curriculum leadership appear generic (although perhaps requiring different skills and abilities), but some areas are specific to music (see Table 3).

Although key tasks 8 and 10 were not mentioned by the interviewees, it is possible that this may have been a result of the focus of the interview schedule rather than a reflection of their absence. The additional musical items reflect the nature of music as a performance art and their appearance supports the hypothesis that music is different from other subjects (Harvey & Beauchamp, 2005). Further research is needed to see if the same may apply to other performance arts or to sports.

The high profile of the music subject leader in school activities such as concerts and other musical performances can lead to a situation where that person is perceived to have special abilities, which in turn can help to reinforce the idea that music leadership is a specialist skill (Hennessy, 2000). All three interviewees alluded to the almost iconic status accruing because of their perceived musical ability. This applied both to curricular and extra-curricular music. Ms Gambarini was typical in asserting that her colleagues were uncomfortable teaching music and felt deskilled in comparison to her competence. She added also

Table 3 *Areas of curriculum leadership*

Bell's (1992) Rank order	Music sample group interviews (non-rank order)
1. Communicating with headteacher	✓
2. Exercising curricular leadership	✓
3. Communicating with staff	✓
4. Organisation of resources	✓
5. Establishing and maintaining continuity throughout the school	✓
6. Organising in-service courses	✓
7. Liaison between head and staff	✓
8. Establishing record systems	✗
9. Motivating staff	✓
10. Curriculum development	✗
Additional for music	
Organising concerts and playing for school assemblies	✓
Organising/managing/coordinating with peripatetic staff	✓
Extra-curricular groups – choir, orchestra . . .	✓

> I can go into a room and people will say 'oh she's the music teacher, you have to see her teach because she just puts me to shame'.

Ms Weichsell similarly noted that colleagues constantly said, 'I don't know how you do that'. These comments reinforce a fundamental predicament about leading music in the primary school, which is teachers' well-documented lack of confidence (Mills, 1989, 1995/ 1996; Lawson *et al.*, 1994; Hennessy, 2000). Arguably, therefore, the interviewees' conceptualisation of leadership reflects a need to address the perceived lack of ability and/or confidence of other teachers to deliver the requirements of National Curriculum Music. As a result the leadership of music may require less in the nature of dynamic vision and more in terms of a supportive and consolidating culture, i.e. instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2000, 2003). If so, there are important implications for both the training of teachers and the continuing professional development of music subject leaders.

Professional development

Like many others in the past (see Bullock, 1988; OHMCI, 1994; Adey, 2000; Harris *et al.*, 2003), the respondents had rarely been offered meaningful official professional development opportunities. In primary schools, the most popular method of staff development is in-service education and training (INSET) (Beauchamp, 1997a). However, even when provided, INSET has varied considerably, often being limited, or even inadequate (OHMCI, 1994) Although the quality of provision for non-specialists appears to have improved in recent years (OFSTED, 2004), opportunities to attend relevant training had very rarely been offered to the teachers interviewed (see Table 4).

Table 4 *Professional development opportunities for the teachers in the study*

Teacher	INSET courses	Subject professional organisations
Ms Weichsell	None – 'the courses tend to be tailored to the non-specialists'	No
Ms Hardin	One – 'I was sent on a course'	No
Ms Gambarini	Singing course – LEA organised with secondary teachers – not sent by school	No

Although two of the teachers had attended a music training course of some kind, one had 'been sent' by the school, and the other had attended in her own time. In view of evidence that some music subject leaders lack confidence and expertise in fulfilling their role (Lawson *et al.*, 1994), it is perhaps surprising that none of the subject leaders had attended a course directly related to subject leadership. Lawson *et al.* (1994: 13) noted that, when the National Curriculum was introduced, there was 'clearly a need for in-service courses, not only for co-ordinators and class teachers, but also for specialist teachers'. Whilst courses may exist for all these categories, the priority which is attached to the needs of 'non-specialists' seems to have detracted from those of the subject leader. Ms Weichsell, for example, made it clear she had not been on courses because they were aimed at non-musicians, and so it was much better to send colleagues on them than to attend herself.

Inherent in this situation is the potential for music subject leaders to become isolated, both from suitable professional development, and from an appropriate professional network. This was confirmed by OFSTED (2004: 8) which concluded that, despite some evidence of good practice, for further development of music in primary schools 'most schools need to identify support for co-ordinators to avoid professional isolation'.

The importance of networking, and learning from peers, was identified by Hammersley-Fletcher (2004: 33), whose research into subject leaders in the primary school revealed that 'there was a belief that opportunities to meet other subject leaders in the same subject were invaluable'. Collaboration and collegial working was strongly identified by Stoll & Fink (1996) as a crucial influence on school improvement, and as a feature of successful secondary school departments in sources discussed by Hannay & Ross (1999) and Busher & Harris (1999). In the evidence from the primary schools we see that supportive collaboration is an inherent feature of the primary music subject leader's job, but the beneficiaries are their colleagues rather than themselves. They are likely to lack opportunities for collaborative and collegial working with other music experts apart from visiting instrumental teachers.

Unfortunately, given the absence of devolved budgets, and the lack of subject-leader autonomy, the availability or otherwise of suitable courses may not have any significant impact. Although all the teachers reported a supportive headteacher, it would seem that little has changed since Beauchamp (1997a: 205) reported that 'existing provision [of INSET] is largely regulated by financial exigency influenced by managerial perceptions of schools' priorities'. In this context, staff development in music might still be regarded as

'a luxury regulated by the perceived need of the school management team, rather than a personal prerogative of individual teachers' (Beauchamp, 1997b: 71).

In terms of wider professional development, none of the subject leaders belonged to any subject professional organisations which could have offered additional support. Indeed, they were unsure what organisations might be appropriate, or, in one case, that they existed at all. In the absence of external opportunities, the question arises as to whether the music subject leaders are able to benefit from 'in-house' opportunities. Adey (2000) found that many middle managers had learned most from watching others. All three primary teachers had used observation for professional development of colleagues, but unfortunately had no opportunities themselves to learn from other music leaders.

Is music different?

All three subject leaders strongly agreed that music *is* different. Ms Gambarini articulated the difference as follows: 'I think maybe music is different from other subject areas, because it might almost be a bit more personal'. It is perhaps the contradiction between the very personal nature of music and its very public appearance in schools, manifested through concerts and similar occasions, that helps to formulate a situation where the music subject leader is not perceived as needing development, because the standard of music is thought to be so good. This situation does not reflect the possibility that the standard of extra-curricular music may not be matched by the standard of curriculum music, since the former is taught by specialist teachers (instrumental and/or music subject leader), whilst the latter is generally taught by all teachers, who are mainly 'non-specialists'. There appears to be a supposition that if a music subject leader is able to provide high standards in extra-curricular music, then they will also be able to provide high quality pedagogic support for curriculum music, which may not automatically be the case. Distinct and separate skills are required for each, and each skill set needs to be developed. Whilst the subject leaders may not need extra training in arranging, conducting or rehearsing a school ensemble, this does not mean that they do not need further training in curriculum development or in how to lead and manage colleagues. This is especially true because they are dealing with colleagues whose confidence is perceived to be fragile. If this distinction is ignored, it can lead to a situation, apparent from the interviews, where non-specialist teachers receive support both from the subject leader and INSET courses, whilst the subject leader receives little or no professional development, particularly for effective leadership.

Conclusions

Though the subject sample for this research is small, a number of hypotheses can be drawn from the data so far which merit further research. Perhaps the most influential factor revealed in the primary interviews is the strong influence of the SMT and headteacher, which can lead them to exercise more significant authority in subject leadership and management than the subject leader. The very low ceiling for making decisions limits the authority of subject leaders. Although this may equate to Hammersley-Fletcher's (2004: 21) autocratic leadership model, the perception of the subject leaders was much more benign. The end result, however, was the same. These subject leaders were working

under direction and decision-making predominantly remained within the remit of the headteacher. These circumstances may have restricted perceptions of the concept of leadership and management throughout the schools and may also stifle the evolution of different, more distributed, styles of leadership. Further research with a larger sample group, in a wider geographical area, is needed to investigate this.

Harris (2003) makes the distinction between formal and informal leadership activities. Formal leadership

> encompasses responsibilities such as subject co-ordinator, head of department or head of year, often moving away from the classroom to achieve this (p. 314)

whilst informal leadership

> constitutes classroom-related functions such as planning, communicating goals, regulating activities, creating a pleasant workplace environment. (p. 314)

The evidence from the interviews, along with the dual nature of the subject leader as 'full-time classroom teachers and whole-school subject leaders' (Lunn & Bishop, 2002: 64) suggests that, despite a 'formal' title, the reality of the role of music subject leader in primary schools reflects 'informal' connotations and tasks.

The above situation may also contribute to the limited self-perception of the interviewees as leaders and managers. In general terms they all found it difficult to discuss and identify specific leadership and management roles and they did not consider them a facet of their jobs – despite being denominated as subject leaders. They focused on leadership as providing a support network (with subject leaders as motivators, rather than visionaries), whilst management was perceived as a very pragmatic function of their job, largely ensuring that the right resources (both physical and human) were in the right place at the right time. From this it may be argued that, to enhance the effectiveness of the leadership and management function of primary music subject leaders, and thus raise standards in the subject, teachers first need to recognise that leadership and management are vital parts of the job of subject leader. One of the necessary pre-requisites of this is corresponding empowerment of primary subject leaders by schools' most senior leaders. However, it was unclear from the interviews whether the subject leaders would welcome further empowerment. This is another area where further research is needed. Given their limited conception of leadership and management in relation to their own practice, potentially there might be substantial need for professional development, particularly in leadership skills, to enable them to adopt a fuller role with sufficient confidence.

Evidence from the interviews suggests that, whilst there may be occasions where existing leadership and management is unrecognised (for example Ms Weichsell's leadership and management of the peripatetic teachers), the existing style of leadership was fashioned by the high level of support needed by colleagues in 'demystifying' music and music teaching. There appeared to be a strong correlation between perception of low confidence in colleagues and the need to 'support' them, rather than lead or manage – equated to Science and ICT by interviewees. This situation was further complicated by the apparent high standing of the music subject leader as 'expert practitioner', whose musical ability seems to be a possible challenge to colleagues' confidence. As a consequence, subject leadership is largely an act of consolidation, rather than one of innovation.

Hence, the subject leaders interviewed adopted a role as guide/exemplar rather than source of knowledge and, as a result, one of their major leadership skills was appearing 'approachable'.

The profound influence exercised by headteachers in our sample on the leadership and management of music in their primary schools raises a wider issue. In all three schools, comparatively recent inspections had identified good standards in music. To what extent were these due to the influence of the subject leaders, and how much to the pro-music stance of the heads? Huberman (1993), Bennett (1999) and Harris (2003) may be right that subject leaders have a vital role to play in school improvement, but in these schools at least the possibility that headteachers have an even stronger influence on outcomes cannot be ignored.

Coda

Tentatively, from our small sample, we conclude music *is* different, largely because of its 'personal' nature and its specialised skills base. Subject leaders may therefore require special consideration if they are to be equipped to work effectively. Evidence from the pilot study suggests that the first move in the schools studied would have to come from senior leadership, by examining their current practice and distributing not only the formal leadership titles but also the actual power of decision-making. Subject leaders themselves also need to reconceptualise their roles so that they recognise they have the potential to be both leaders and managers. Both within and beyond the school context, training providers must begin to address the needs of subject leaders in the new framework provided by distributed leadership, as defined by Hammersley-Fletcher (2004: 3): 'the development of a learning community where initiative is applauded within a no-blame culture'.

There may be schools where forms of distributed leadership are already a reality. However, in these also it is important that the special nature of music leadership and management in the primary school is recognised, so that the role of the subject leader is no longer 'one of those scary areas'.

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