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## Introduction to Leadership: The Context of Managing Educational Psychology Services (EPSs)

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This book is written by educational psychologists (EPs) for EPs in leadership positions. It offers a combination of reflections from practitioners past and present combined with a range of practical exemplars pertinent to key themes that current and prospective Educational Psychology Service (EPS) leaders are interested in debating.

This text is inspired by the absence of evidence-informed guidance and literature for EPs aspiring to join the leadership of educational psychology; and we are appreciative of some of the EPs in leadership positions for their commitment to share with you some of the principles and practicalities in the UK context. The importance of experienced EPs providing informed and resilient leadership in every Local Authority (LA) ensures the highest quality of service for the community. Using the British Psychological Society Quality Standards Framework as summarised by Gillum and Whitehead (Chapter 13) enables EPS leaders and service stakeholders to reflect upon and continually improve the quality of an EPS.

Whilst inequalities and disadvantage remain, radical recalibration of the mindset that created the problem in the first place is the only way to limit the damage of some of the current public sector policies. In Chapter 9, Bham and Owen discuss issues relating to recruitment and retention and Jervis and Hardy (Chapter 2) discuss the development of leaders to consider collaborative approaches in leadership. Both chapters touch on the importance of interdependence. Global leadership paradigms have influenced how leadership is being interpreted and enacted in the UK as well as elsewhere. A term from the Bantu languages of Southern Africa that is difficult to translate exactly into English in summary offers a rich idea:

Ubuntu: I am because of you, or I am because you are<sup>1</sup>

Essentially, Ubuntu offers the alternative to the inspirational leader or hero innovator and speaks of the interdependence of humankind. It is only through a spirit of collaboration that the leaders will be able to thrive; in particular through professional networks, supervision and coaching and continuous professional leadership development. In Chapter 7, Hardy and Bham write about the importance of relationships and in Chapter 14 they discuss support mechanisms and ways to manage the well-being of leaders.

<sup>1</sup> <https://medium.com/thrive-global/ubuntu-i-am-because-you-are-66efa03f2682>

Some of the leadership-speak that we come across in our work within LAs will be familiar from your general reading and specific knowledge of psychology. In this book we will not debate at length recurring topics, such as the differences between leadership and management. Certainly we will not be coming to simple conclusions, such as how leadership is about coping with change while management is about coping with complexity (Kotter, 2006), the well-known phrase attributed to Peter Drucker and Warren Bennis that ‘management is doing things right, leadership is doing the right things’ nor will we address what typifies the behaviour of ‘good leaders’ (George, 2003). It does aim to provide models and creative ways of thinking that can enable Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs), both those new to their post and those who are more established, to develop and support their EPs and as importantly themselves.

There are a number of cross-cutting themes that run throughout the chapters. Firstly there is context. Although there have been pressures from national policy, local practice and finance in the past, EPSs are now working in times of great austerity when all the services available to children and families are severely stretched or even absent. Given this climate, EPSs are challenged by a fragmented education system, an impoverished LA, cash-strapped schools and at least within England an increasing pressure from changes in legislation which have led to a high demand for statutory work in many LAs. Leaders in EPSs are further asked to ‘market’ their services to schools and communities such that they provide an income for their EPS and the continuation of their service. This need to ‘trade to survive’ sits very uncomfortably with professional practice centred on equity and inclusion. Alongside this are societal pressures which draw in an increasing emphasis on ‘othering’ and segregation rather than a willingness to foster and promote inclusive practice. To take one example the exclusion of children as young as two is now being reported in the national press (*The Guardian*, 2019). Given this background, becoming a leader within an EPS can be a daunting task.

Secondly is the nature of leadership. Rowland and Chandler (Chapter 6) remind us that both leadership and change have produced a continual debate within educational psychology almost from the beginning of the profession within the UK. There are many theories and understandings of leadership within the literature. Some chapters (Hardy and Jervis, Chapter 2) refer to current and also long-lasting leadership theorists, for instance Covey (2004) who uses the ladder-climbing metaphor when thinking of management as being efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; whereas leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall. There is, however, consistency in the way the authors see leadership. Leadership is viewed as participatory. It is about engaging with all members of the EPS and beyond (when PEPs manage a number of teams) to develop a shared understanding of the aims and purpose of the EPS. It involves listening to and enabling members of the service to speak about what is important to them as educational psychologists; how they wish to practice in the best interests of children, families and communities; to share ideas they have about effective service delivery and be open about the challenges and difficulties experienced in day-to-day work. A key to developing this approach is to understand the organisation within which you and your colleagues work (see Hardy and Bham, Chapter 7).

Thirdly is equity in practice. There is acknowledgement that there has always been a concern that children who may be the most in need of support were not accessing the help

of an educational psychologist; however, this concern is heightened by the marketisation of education. This hangs heavily over leaders who are charged with delivering educational psychology services as fairly as possible alongside the need to maintain a steady income to ensure EPs continue to be employed. Ways of addressing this tension are discussed by Hardy, Braithwaite and Hobson (Chapter 12) with the suggestion that trading can provide opportunity as well as challenge and EPs need to reflect on how to be entrepreneurial within a LA context.

Fourthly there is ethics. As practitioners we need to continually reflect on and revisit our practice, not only our activities and actions but also the many taken for granted ways of working that can remain unexamined and out of kilter with what we would want to achieve. This match or mismatch between espoused values and practice is considered in depth by Midgen and Theodoratou (Chapter 3). Crawford (Chapter 4) also examines this when discussing how her EPS began to explore what EPs really meant by 'inclusion' and how their understanding could be translated into everyday work with schools. Hobbs and Owen (Chapter 5) bring to the forefront the way women have been portrayed in leadership literature and how this affects selection for leadership positions and the way women may view themselves and be viewed by others.

Fifthly, inevitably in a book by psychologists, relationships are referred to in most chapters. Positive relationships within a team are crucial. Tuckman's (1965) forming–storming–norming–performing model of group development focussing on the improvements in team effectiveness over time, with a dip in functioning after the forming stage, when there are inevitable conflicts before moving on to accepting norms of the group and then reaching the peak in performance. Martin and Meheux (Chapter 11) consider how to create team working which as far as possible avoids conflict alongside providing ways of addressing difficult situations if they do occur. Beckhard (1972) wrote about team development and at the same time the diagnosis of issues, whether they are about goals, roles, procedures or/and interpersonal relationships. Lewis (Chapter 8) examines appreciative inquiry (AI) as an approach to rebuilding teams in challenging times. Relationships also need to be outward facing when developing, maintaining and evaluating educational psychology services. Hardy, Braithwaite and Hobson (Chapter 12) emphasise the importance of hearing the views of 'customers' (these are the children, young people and families we work with as well as schools and other commissioners) and Gillum and Whitehead (Chapter 13) acknowledge the need to work closely with 'stakeholders' in establishing a sound process of evaluation.

All the authors in this book have experience of educational psychology leadership in the public sector context and all share the obligation to get engaged with the leadership challenges in the climate of austerity and marketisation of education services. Waterman and Peters (1982) wrote about the 'Eight Attributes' of management excellence, including a bias for action. The bias for action is a hidden thread throughout this book, with an emphasis by EPS leaders on prioritising their actions within a system that will benefit all children, young people and their parents/carers and staff in education settings. They are all involved in designing and sustaining high-quality EPSs. Now that we have again secured government funding for training educational psychologists in England and Wales, these prestigious professional doctoral qualifications with the highest qualified practitioners in LAs, bring an obligation to work for the public sector and its community to try to fix the broken

system and the way in which the system functions – what happens in our communities impacts on us. In Chapter 9, Bham and Owen discuss recruitment and retention and nothing matters unless we recruit the best staff, offer the range of professional practice opportunities and keep them engaged on the key issues: that everyone is entitled to an education and to have their special educational, disability and well-being needs met. We have been a profession of optimists and scientist-practitioners; we must get engaged in the civil rights struggle, the human right for an inclusive education and well-being of all.

We are training our psychologists to be fully capable and better equipped for the challenges that lie ahead. We are certain that the current and future generations of leaders in EPSs will also be able, through peer support, supervision, coaching and professional leadership development, to capably lead the profession in the public sector for our community.

There are many metaphors within leadership texts and we are attracted towards Senge's (1990). He sees the gap between vision and current reality as a source of energy. If there were no gap, there would be no need for any action to move towards the vision. This gap is 'creative tension'. It is hoped that this book brings together many ideas for taking action towards the vision.

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