Leadership and Diversity within Education

About

The on-going drive to improve pupil attainment and always strive to raise standards within schools has highlighted the importance of regular professional development (CPD) for all staff as well as high-quality leadership training for those in and aspiring to senior roles. In recent times the educational sector has seen a gradual shift from a model of one-off training days targeted at individuals to more integrated school-based training, sharing of best practice and leadership training that has borrowed from business.

Added to this, recent research into the ‘effectiveness of school leadership’ points to the importance of the personal qualities and behaviours the Head and senior leaders possess.

The Challenge

Alongside improved CPD and leadership training, the current education system has a well-established pathway of progression. However, in order to make the most of all of these opportunities, individuals need to feel confident, qualified and able to take that next step to apply for new roles.

It was found by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) that there were a number of unseen barriers that made it especially difficult for women in ‘middle management’ to progress in their careers. Although qualified to apply, it was evident that there was a lack of self-confidence and a perception that senior roles require a skill set they did not possess.

“The research demonstrates that heads in more effective schools are successful in improving pupil outcomes through who they are - their values, virtues, dispositions, attributes and competences - the strategies they use, and the specific combination and timely implementation and management of these strategies in the unique contexts in which they work.’
National College of school Leadership report DCSF – RR108

Sophie Frances – Deputy Headteacher, Wellsway School

“C-me has provided a refreshing and interesting alternative for me to use with middle and senior leaders. The focus on natural and adapted personas, as well as behaviours makes this an original and interesting profile to use. A particularly valuable aspect is the workshop facilitated by staff who have an educational background and who can explore in detail with leaders what their profile means in practice in the day to day leading of teams within schools.”
The Solution

In order to persuade female middle managers to look towards senior posts, the North Somerset Teaching Alliance, (NSTA) using funding from the National College for Teaching and Learning designed to increase diversity within school leadership teams, devised a specific course for women moving into senior leadership roles.

Purpose

By using the C-me profile, the women on the course were equipped with a structured way of thinking about their personal behaviours. This provided an excellent starting point for the 6-week course.

Why C-me?

Course Facilitator, Fiona Dorman explains. “The conveners of the course selected the C-me system for a variety of reasons. Primarily it is simple to use and clear in its findings’. For a group of teachers, busy with complex jobs, the ease and speed of finishing the questionnaire is very important”.

The Benefits

C-me provided candidates with the tools to challenge what is sometimes the accepted leadership style. They developed a shared language to talk about themselves and their preferred way of leading and had an opportunity to reflect on personal behaviour.

Results

Every woman on the course worked towards applying for a new role and attending a two-day interview process including a mock interview and assessment with external moderators. At the end of this exercise, the results showed that 100% of the candidates would have been offered the new job. Feedback included that the candidates felt more secure to lead in their preferred style.

Plans for the future

The third ‘Women into Leadership’ course has been completed and has continued to use the C-me profile in the opening sessions.

Following careful monitoring and examination of the outcomes funding has been secured to continue the course and roll it out into other areas across the region.

“I think it is a great way to start the programme because it forces the participants to think about themselves ... it is empowering because to know yourself is so valuable and will in the long run make you a better leader. Your statement that you can 'lead from anywhere on the wheel' is really important - because there are certain qualities that do not always appear as valued and this gives women permission to build on their strengths rather than try to be what they ‘think’ is expected of them.”

Isobel George
Assistant Headteacher, Teaching School, Backwell School

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