

From **Dependency** to **Autonomy** and beyond

Dame Pat Collarbone
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Up until the late 1970's British institutions were dominated by a dependency culture, in which an individual's relationship to the state and their employer was similar to that of an infant to its mother. When times became tough individuals and organisations would revert to co-dependent behavior rebelling against their enforced dependence rather like a badly behaved teenager.

Our maturity model below describes the characteristics of the co-dependent and dependent individual or team but applies equally to organisations and even whole sectors. The last thirty years has seen institutions coming to terms with this failed dependency culture by becoming more independent and most recently interdependent. Initially, in the private sector, this meant many organisations simply going out of business. There was a surge in outsourcing, off-shoring and self-employment. In the public sector the

pace of change has been slower but no less radical. This is not solely a British phenomenon wherever I go in the world I see similar challenges, the need to do more for less, to use new technology creatively and for individuals to take up their own authority and go the extra mile.

In education one of the most significant changes is the growth in schools working together and collaborating with other agencies. Although this is nothing new it is happening to a much larger extent. In the UK the Department for Education is clear that there are significant educational benefits to be gained from promoting and supporting collaboration. They have funded initiatives such as the London Challenge, National Leaders of Education (NLEs), Federations and the National Schools Linking Programme¹. Similar initiatives are to be found in the USA and elsewhere. The one thing they all have in common is the aim of improving the educational experience of students and reversing some of the worst tendencies of the past.

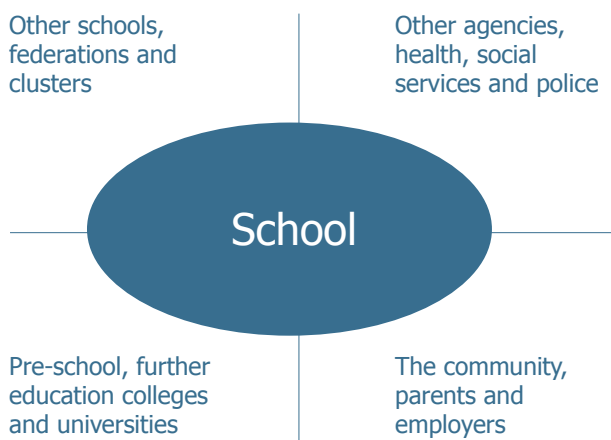
	Co-dependence	Dependence	Independence	Interdependence
System Focus	Confused	Centralised	Localised	Personalised
Leadership based upon	Fear	Control	Rules	Trust
Accountability	Remedial action	Inspection	Self evaluation	Peer review
Ways of working	Conflict	Consultation	Negotiation	Partnership
Approach to change	Status quo	Reactive	Proactive	Creative
Workforce response	Denial	Compliance	Development	Professionalism

Maturity of the individual, team, organisation and sector

'Strong networked learning communities that have a compelling sense of purpose and work within clear parameters of collective, multiple and light touch forms of accountability, are one of the many strategies for restoring the rich diversity that years of standardisation have depleted or destroyed'. Hargreaves and Fink 2006

There are many other benefits such as professional development for staff, knowledge transfer, raising standards and helping schools that are in difficulty.

A school working with other schools is just one example of collaboration. The Every Child Matters agenda in the UK had a focus on schools working closely with other agencies. Vertical integration where a headteacher has responsibility from nursery right through to nineteen is another example as is working more closely with the community and parents.



All this has profound implications for leadership. The transition from being the leader of a school to leading a complex interaction of relationships is very challenging. Any movement towards collaborative and integrated working faces not only rational issues such as structure and funding but political issues of status and power and emotional issues of loss and ego. But the benefits are so compelling that new ways of developing leaders with the skills to work in this way have become critical. Fullan (2004) puts it like this:

'A new kind of leadership is necessary for breaking through the status quo. Systemic forces, sometimes called inertia, have the upper hand in preventing system shifts.

Therefore it will take powerful, proactive forces to change the existing system.... To change organisations and systems will require leaders to get experience in linking to other parts of the system. These leaders in turn must develop other leaders with similar characteristics'.

Interdependence is less about control and more about working within complex and diverse systems. The reductionist view of leadership is one that simply looks at competencies and individual traits and ignores systemic thinking and relationships results in structures where individuals play their part without taking responsibility for the whole.

'The leadership of the future will not be provided simply by individuals but by groups, institutions, communities and networks, One of the road blocks for groups moving forward now is thinking that they have to wait for a leader to emerge: someone who embodies the future path... We have to nurture a new form of leadership that doesn't depend on extraordinary individuals' (Senge et al.,2004)

Interdependence also involves rethinking what success means. It is not simply being interested in the outcomes for ones own organisation but for the wider system as a whole. It is recognising, for example, that a school cannot be held solely accountable for results such as 'Stay safe', one of the desired outcomes of Every Child Matters. They are of course in part accountable, but to hold them solely responsible and therefore accountable for this would of course be counterproductive. A broad number of partners and stakeholders need to become involved for achieving such ends. The responsibility of the school is therefore to work with a team of partners to create a strategy that makes all children as safe as possible.

For alliances to work their needs to be agreement between partners on what they wish to achieve for a particular group and how they will know that they have delivered it. They need to focus on

- Outcomes rather than outputs
- Aligning vision and values
- Strategies that are data driven
- Dialogue and engagement
- Organisational adaptability

Change on this scale cannot be left to chance. The question is how do you bring about system wide change

'Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency'. Mahatma Gandhi

school by school so that the results are context specific and designed locally. We believe the answer lies not in providing solutions but in building capacity and capability at a local level so that schools can develop the networks which meet their needs.

For change to be sustainable, there has to be a compelling reason to change, a clear vision of where you want to be and a coherent plan for getting there. These three things underpin our approach - Change². Without any one of them new collaborative ways of working are unlikely to be successful.

Change² is a unique 'parallel process' where the strategic and operational objectives of collaboration are met whilst at the same time the development of distributed and shared leadership within and between the collaborating organisations takes place. This is leadership development that happens whilst doing real work. It is learning from, with and for others.

ⁱ See our think piece 'Network Schools - making the whole greater than the sum of the parts for more details of these initiatives.

■ *Pat Collarbone taught for 28 years in inner London and established a reputation for innovation and achievement during her headship of a secondary school in Hackney. In 1996 she established the London Leadership Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London. She has been Director of Leadership Development Programmes at the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and the Executive Director of the National Remodelling Team (NRT) and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).*

Pat is an acknowledged expert on educational leadership development and workforce remodelling and has advised the Department, NCSL and TDA. In 2000 she led the development of the National Qualification for Headship (NPQH). More recently she has been working on a remodelling and leadership project in the Further Education sector. She is the author of the book 'Creating Tomorrow: Planning, developing and sustaining change in education and other public services'.

Pat received a DBE in 1997 in recognition of her services to education.