

8

School Leadership Is Partnership Dependent

Introduction

Schools cannot and do not operate in silos, and nor can or do school leaders. Schools rely heavily on a range of partners/partnerships in order to carry out their functions and to be successful. Partners may be internal to a school (e.g. parents or teachers) or they may be external (e.g. industry). There are also different types of partnership, for example, school-to-school; school-to-industry and school-to-community. School-to-school partnerships may be local or international. Regardless of how they are structured, school partnerships are especially important to schools and to their abilities to deliver to students a “qualitatively different educational experience” (Miller, 2016, p. 106).

Schools are established to provide education services within particular communities. When I forge partnerships both internally (various school clubs/groups, e.g. PTA's) and externally (government and NGO's) it widens the human and resource capital which I can tap into to initiate and facilitate school improvement. Each type of partnership will have something different to offer regarding support. It is here that such partnerships can become useful to me as a leader for promoting enterprising and entrepreneurial cultures within the school. (Montserrat, 1M)

I think that the extent to which leaders network and draw on the expertise of others is crucial to their effectiveness. Particularly those with leadership experience and competence both within education and business. (England, 5F)

Globally, competition between national education systems and competition within national education systems have contributed to some school leaders shying away from engaging in partnership working unless they feel there is a definite and tangible benefit to be gained for their school. Drawing on evidence from his study of Jamaican and English school leaders, Miller (2016) quotes one school leader as saying,

We partner with local businesses so our students can get a ‘head start’ on what may be required of them in the real world of work, through a period of work experience. This is the only kind of partnership we feel we can take on as a school as the other kinds of partnership engagements would simply distract us and create extra work for everyone. (p. 131)

Miller describes this approach to partnership working as an “inverted view of systems leadership” (p. 131). In his view, Miller asserts that such an approach ignores the bigger issues at the expense of short-term goals that are singular to an institution. Miller notes that inasmuch as school leaders conclude that their choice of school partners was underpinned by the needs of their students and in line with the trajectory of their schools, by applying a restricted criterion school leaders may not have (always) provided their schools and therefore their students with the best opportunities available. Notwithstanding Miller’s view, it is hard to disagree with those who would argue that applying a restricted criterion to partnership working is a necessary evil, since partnerships can lead to a drain on resources and can demand more of some schools within a partnership than others. Moreover, all partners, regardless of the precise form a partnership takes, contribute from a position of strength whilst building capacity in other areas from partnership members.

Commenting on school partnerships and what he felt are advantages associated with them, the UK’s former Schools Minister, David Miliband (2003), suggested they “expand the horizons of young people, and ensure that their progress inside the classroom is supported outside it”. He also noted, “Partnerships are challenging but they are also exciting. They require brokerage, planning and critical review” (p. 3). More broadly, he suggested that partnerships could contribute to teaching that is more effective, and lead teachers and learners to become more knowledgeable

and more aware. If conceptualised and managed properly, partnership working can provide real opportunities for schools to become involved in cross-institutional working and in some cases cross-cultural learning and literacy.

The Issue in Context: Educational Partnerships

Education should prepare students to live independent lives and to contribute to national development through skills and knowledge gained. In many national education systems, however, despite the hard work of school leaders, teachers and many other professionals, there is no guarantee that schools, working on their own, are able to provide students the type of education to enable them and society to reap the best possible rewards. Successful schools, successful businesses and successful communities go hand-in-hand and, in order to meet individual and national developmental objectives, there is need for better links between local businesses and schools (Manchester City Council, 2006). Put differently, businesses must provide support to schools by helping them reinforce the relevance of learning through the development of industry-relevant programmes and courses, through offering apprenticeship and other placement opportunities, as well as through scholarship opportunities and/or direct funding.

Not all partnerships will or can include industry, and not all partnership will be about funding or access to funding opportunities. School-to-school partnerships are important for developing both staff and students and can provide significant opportunities for personal growth. Rod Mackinnon and Anne Burrell, two school leaders in England, writing in *The Telegraph* (2014), describe the partnership between both their schools as a “meeting of minds, rather than money, and the sharing of excellent practice”.

There is no single definition of educational partnerships, and different forms of educational cooperation have been described as partnership. For example, educational “link”, educational “collaboration” and educational “partnership” have all been used interchangeably. Moreover, the term “partnership” has been used as an umbrella term to cover a broad range

of working arrangements that involve multiple actors (e.g. agencies, groups and/or individuals) working together to achieve common or agreed goals or purposes.

Partnerships can be short term or long term, and may be process oriented (e.g. focused on how things are done in a particular way, such as an approach to teaching), or they could be product oriented (e.g. focused on specific or intended outcomes). Partnerships can arise out of a school's desire to focus on community involvement, a desire to secure opportunities (mainly funding or gifts) for its activities, or a desire to provide students and staff with new and different experiences and opportunities to teach and learn. Partnerships are varied and the benefits for schools, school leaders, teachers, students as well as others involved can be significant. Partnerships, however, are not all the same, nor do they all have the same weight. Some partnerships are therefore purely pragmatic and others are strategic.

Partnership Drivers

A school's decision to enter a partnership can be influenced by an individual school or may be part of a wider scheme, developed for schools by governments in line with national agendas. Changes in a school's environment continue to lead national governments and school leaders to "do education differently" (Miller, 2012, p. 9). In particular, changes in the international and national environments have meant, increasingly, that schools are under pressure to produce different kinds of results, to be innovative and to stand out. Being innovative and achieving the best outcomes for students is, after all, what schools are and should be about. Nevertheless, levels of change demanded by supranational and national agencies appear to be a key driver in how schools and school leaders can and will (be able to) exercise leadership. As Miller (2016) forewarns, "as the policy landscape continues to experience rapid changes, nationally and internationally, schools will become involved in partnership working rather than attempting to go it alone" (p. 14).

In the UK, the educational policy environment has been and continues to be a key driver for school partnership working. For example, the

post-16 White Paper *Learning to Succeed* is “based on partnership and co-operation between individuals, businesses and communities, as well as institutions” (DfEE, 1999, p. 4). The White Paper *Schools Achieving Success* promotes partnerships for improving schools “with other successful schools, the voluntary sector, faith groups and the private sector” (DfES, 2001, p. 44). The Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners considers partnership working essential to securing improvements in schools, with partner schools having “responsibility for school improvement across the partnership ... flexible sharing of resources across the partnership and freedom about where and what support services to access” (DfES, 2004, p. 42). The Education White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010) describes partnership working as follows: “[s]chools working together leads to better results” where “[a]long with our best schools, we will encourage strong and experienced sponsors to play a leadership role in driving the improvement of the whole school system...” (DfE, 2010, p. 60).

Another driver for partnership working identified by Briggs (2010) is the “the shared resolve between organisations to work together for the collective benefit of the learners within (usually) a cohesive geographical region” (p. 7). Although Briggs’ definition restricts potential partnerships to geographical regions, key elements of successful partnerships such as shared commitment and a social benefit are well established.

Benefits of Partnership Working

The overall impact of school-to-school collaboration on student outcomes has been mixed, and the evidence for indirect impacts of school-to-school collaboration on student outcomes is more extensive. For example, many studies report improvements in areas such as innovation and best practice; approach to professional development; career development and opportunities; improved use of school leaders’ time; and greater efficiencies and waste reduction (Armstrong, 2015; Woods, Armstrong & Pearson, 2013).

The benefits of partnership working for students is also much debated. Briggs (2010) identifies the “collective” benefit for students in terms of

raising aspiration, and increasing educational outcomes for groups of students, which should contribute to increased employment and social mobility. Briggs (2010, p. 12) also identified a range of potential benefits to the individual student from school level partnership working:

- Mixing with other learners
- Individualised provision
- Increased learner autonomy
- Improved self-image
- Increased independence
- Social benefits of learning
- Improved teacher/learner relationship
- Increased stimulation
- Increased aspiration
- Variety of specialist facilities and learning locations
- Range of learning cultures
- Increased curriculum range
- Increased chance of relevance
- Better match of learner to provision
- Improved engagement
- Improved achievement

A number of potential benefits for staff have also been identified from school-to-school partnership working whether organised nationally (Ainscow, Muijs & West, 2006; Hadfield & Chapman, 2009; Stoll, 2015) or internationally (Miller et al., 2015). These include:

- Joint problem solving and lesson planning
- Sharing of resources, practice and expertise
- Solidarity in responses to negative circumstances
- Increased/improved staff expectations of learners
- Renewed focus and professionalism
- Increased professional dialogue
- Shared curriculum development
- Shared strategy development for responding to needs of learners.

Similar benefits to staff are apparent in engagement with professional learning communities, which may operate within individual organisations, but may also extend beyond them. School-to-school partnerships (can) also provide opportunities for leadership training and development as schools seek to develop leadership capacity to compensate for and accommodate the additional workload that accompanies partnership work. In the main, schools are generally very positive about partnership, and many school leaders maintain that they can and do see a range of benefits of engaging in such partnerships that are carefully conceptualised and managed.

International School Partnerships

Globally, school-to-school partnerships as a means of improvement have also become more prevalent in recent years, with examples of school-to-school collaboration across a number of countries, for example, the USA, Canada, Finland, Scotland, Belgium, Spain, India, Northern Ireland and Malta. Furthermore, OECD-commissioned research has also identified examples of several school-to-school partnership activities occurring in several different education systems (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008). In the UK, for example, there has been renewed interest in encouraging educational institutions to engage in international partnerships. The White Paper *Putting the World into World Class Education* (DfES, 2004) acknowledges the global implications of national educational systems. The Crisp Report (2007) also highlights ways organisations can encourage, foster, promote and benefit from global partnerships. UK based schools engage in partnership working with non-UK based schools for a number of reasons, for example:

- Engaging with the global dimension in education
- Leveraging opportunities for UK staff to work in and/or collaborate with others in new and different socio-political and cultural environments
- Leveraging opportunities for students to visit and/or collaborate with others in new and different socio-political and cultural environments

The benefits of partnership working to staff and students in other countries, in particular developing countries, may be similar to those identified for staff and students based in England. Individual, interpersonal and organisational capacity development can be accrued to individuals and schools from carefully planned and delivered collaborative activities. From their Teacher Continuing Professional Development across borders project, which included school leaders and teachers from Jamaica and England spending time in educational settings both in England and Jamaica, school leaders described these international school-to-school partnership activities as “life changing” and “beneficial to entire school communities, not only those who participated directly” (Miller et al., 2015).

The Evidence

There are several different types of partnership in education, and a school by necessity will be engaged in some form of partnership working at different times during its lifetime. Partnerships provide schools several benefits, from work placement opportunities for students, to sharing good practice for teachers and school leaders. The type of partnership a school engages in will be based on their perceived needs and the phase of development and improvement they are at. Partnerships may be for pragmatic or strategic reasons such as fundraising, research and for sharing of resources and practice.

Educational leadership depends on partnership cooperation between the school principal and teachers, also between the school and the community outside. Students are customers of the school and it is better to manage positive relationships with them and with their parents. The school's success depends on partnership with various factors, but principals working in partnership with teachers is the most important one. Partnership with them will lead to success. Partnerships strengthen a school provide opportunities for new resources. (Israel, 3F)

Partnerships can enable schools to enrich and extend learning opportunities provided to students (Hadfield & Chapman, 2009) as well as leverage the expertise and support of community interests, parents and staff (Ainscow et al., 2006).

Home-School Partnerships

A Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) (also called: Parent-Teacher-Student Association, Parent-Teacher and Friends Association, Home-School Association) is a formal entity within a school's structure, composed of parents, teachers and staff. The primary intent of a PTA is to encourage and facilitate closer links between home and school. However, over time, PTAs have developed a reputation for spearheading a school's fundraising activities and for contributing to their social agendas. They provide extensive support to schools in areas of policy development and improving school community relations, and it is customary for the leader of the PTA to be co-opted to serve on a school board, which, according to Miller (2016), "may be thought of as a group of 'agents' or 'middle men' (sic) with important internal and external accountability functions" (p. 111).

Successful school leaders rely heavily upon a strong and functioning parent-teacher organisation and other alliances. (Guyana, 1M)

Parent and guardian support is integral to the success of students. The most important part of this partnership is the joint appreciation for the value of education. Parents do not need to visit the school daily or even provide the school with financial support. Some parents are unable to assist their children with homework assignments etc. However, instilling that value for education and the respect for the individuals who are working with their children is paramount. Without the support of parents/guardians it is almost impossible for teachers to be effective in their roles. (Canada, 1F)

Although not all home-school partnerships will automatically lead to increased funding or scholarship opportunities becoming available to schools, home-school partnerships are among the most essential and important partnerships for a school. Students and their families are customers and schools are set up to serve students and their families, and when parents understand, embrace and transmit what schools are trying to achieve for students, there is a greater likelihood that students will be much more focused and more responsive to the process of schooling. Moreover, when home-school partnerships are based on an awareness of the role and value of education, underpinned by a

school's vision and objectives, activities undertaken by parents and staff involved in these partnerships will be more targeted and therefore more meaningful.

School Based Partnerships

A school is a community where webs of partnerships involving school leaders, teachers, staff and students hold members together by a shared purpose and a shared understanding of that purpose. This shared understanding allows each member to connect with the school and with its mission, and partnership webs are underpinned by teamwork and by respect for what each partner must do in order for a school to advance or achieve its goals.

No school leader is an island. As discussed in Chap. 4 (School Leadership is Teacher Dependent), no matter the age, years of teaching/ leadership experience and/or the qualifications of school leaders, they cannot do leadership on their own. As also discussed in Chaps. 1 and 3, school leadership is a collective endeavour, where, within a common or shared understanding of purpose, each member plays a role in making a school's vision a reality.

Principals today are expected to be visionaries (instilling a sense of purpose in their staff) and competent managers (maintaining the physical plant, submitting documents on time), as well as instructional leaders (coaching teachers in the nuances of classroom practice). Under such pressure from a range of sources, many administrators simply cannot devote enough time and energy to school improvement. Therefore, principals have to form an excellent relationship with academic and ancillary staff in delegating duties. This helps to reduce stress and better avoid burnout ... Being able to introduce new ideas and approaches in their school with greater receptivity. (Jamaica, 2F)

Schools wishing to be successful often have to look beyond the boundaries of their own school. Schools are increasingly dependent on school-to-school support and collaboration. Schools cannot afford to remain isolated, for not only would this lead to stagnation, it also risks closure. The current educational landscape in several national education systems

means school leaders have to tread a fine line between collaboration and competition—and collaboration can only work if there is trust between all stakeholders, a shared moral purpose and a commitment to system leadership that transcends the immediate boundaries of an individual school.

There is an obvious pragmatic issue regarding school partnerships. In order for schools to be successful, those who study and work in them must work together, being guided by the same values and expectations. Successful teaching and working within a school community is therefore entirely dependent on the whole school community working together—where school leaders, staff and students work in tandem for the overall success of their school.

School-Community Partnerships

School-community partnerships is a major area of interest and energy for schools. For some schools, entering into partnership with the community is pragmatic whereas for others it's strategic. Used here, pragmatic partnerships are short term and focus on the achievement of specific (mostly one off) opportunities. Pragmatic partnerships may be described as opportunistic and may at times be ad hoc. Strategic partnerships are longer term and are associated with more sustainable outcomes. To be effective, these require commitment and investment from all members, and they are highly structured. It is, however, the responsibility of a school to determine the nature and type of partnership it enters into with its local community and business organisations. However, from what we know, school leaders tend to enter into a combination of short-term partnerships that can provide (usually funding) opportunities for students as well as providing students and staff opportunities that can contribute to broadening their horizons (Miliband, 2003).

The community helps the leader in achieving the vision and mission of the school. (South Africa, 6F)

Community partnerships allow for additional resources—e.g. role models, apprenticeship, career exploration opportunities, financial support. (Canada, 1F)

School community relationship is critical in today's society and it is imperative that as a school leader I try to forge meaningful partnerships with the community in an effort to aid student learning and help in the realization of the vision of the school. (Antigua, 2F)

There is an interdependent relationship between a school and a community. Although the interdependent nature of this partnership has not always been recognised, schools leverage significant resources and other benefits from a community, whilst also providing for the community—in different ways, both in the short and longer term.

Schools must lead community success as all values learned at school are indirectly related to what pupils will face in community in the future. (Israel, 1F)

School leaders depend on the community and the community depends on schools. (Jamaica, 1F)

The importance and relevance of school-community partnerships cannot be overstated. Faced with continuing cuts to school funding, school leaders in developed and developing countries are turning to public-private sector companies for financial and other forms of assistance. Although this is a feature commonly associated with schooling in developing countries, school leaders in developed countries are also extending the degree of entrepreneurial leadership to partnerships geared around sourcing (extra) funds for schools. Moreover, school-community partnerships provide (community) members opportunities to better understand and appreciate current educational, social, economic and cultural demands on schools, students and families.

Partnership Benefits

A number of benefits are associated with members of a school community working in partnership with each other as well as schools working in partnership with each other and/or with other agencies/individuals: sharing resources, practice and expertise (Ainscow et al., 2006), coordinated responses to negative circumstances (Hill & Matthews, 2010),

improved staff expectations of learners (Hadfield & Chapman, 2009), renewed professionalism and focus (Miller et al., 2015), increased professional dialogue and shared strategy for curriculum development and responding to needs of learners (Stoll, 2015).

School-to-school partnerships can (and do) provide several opportunities for school leaders to share and receive feedback on ideas and strategy, and for staff to share ideas and co-construct solutions to challenges associated with their practice. In other words, school partnerships are useful for improving pedagogical practice and leadership practice. This strongly held view among school leaders in this study mirrors earlier research by Woods et al. (2013) that found that school partnerships can (and do) lead to innovation and sharing best practice, waste reduction and improved efficiencies, opportunities for staff development and better use of time for school leaders.

Schools can do more when they work in partnership with each other and with other agencies and institutions. As resources are scarce, *economies of scale, developing and sharing good practice, and raising and moderating standards and raising standards are best realised through partnerships that are built on trust and a shared moral purpose.* (England, 6M)

In order to develop best practices, it is important to be aware of and learn from what is happening in different educational environments. (England, 4F)

Strong school leadership works in partnerships—learning from others, sharing ideas and resources and (hopefully) creating solutions that benefit others. (England, 3M)

Perhaps the most obvious reason for schools entering into partnership with community interests, in particular businesses and wealthy or well-connected individuals, is the hope of sourcing or securing (additional) funding for school. As discussed earlier, some school leaders are very pragmatic about the type of partnerships they engage in and some are unlikely to engage in partnerships that do not provide an associated financial gain. This approach to school-community partnerships is more commonly associated with schools/leaders in developing countries.

Partnerships for this school have proven very effective. It has been established that the greater the partnership the greater the achievements. Partnering with individuals, institutions and organisations in line with the institutional needs

can be mutually beneficial. Our school has benefited from partnerships educationally and socially and this has had a positive impact on academic growth and students and teacher morale. (Jamaica, 4F)

We have allowed several community businesses and influential persons to sponsor and/or to contribute heavily to supplement the regular curricula as well as extra curricula activities. (Anguilla, 1F)

The school cannot do it alone. Partnerships will help keep the school accountable, provide additional resources both financial and human to help alleviate limitations. Also when students realize how involved their parents are their performance will improve. (Antigua, 1F)

Schools cannot, on their own, transform the fortunes of society. No school is an island. To be successful or to stand a chance of being successful, school leaders must forge purposeful partnerships with several stakeholders and the wider community. It is the responsibility of each school/leader to determine the precise approach to partnership working that is suited to their needs and appropriate to their circumstances that best enables them to leverage any likely benefit. The NCSL (2013) found that school leaders benefit from the mutual support they receive from working in partnership since collaboration provided access to different ways of tackling problems. Furthermore, it was also stated that partnership working helps to develop and deepen systems leadership practices and thinking among school leaders through working with education related agencies, businesses and community organisations.

Partnership Drivers and Enablers

Two main drivers appear to be at the heart of school partnerships: the national educational policy context and the need for financial assistance. Both were previously identified as contributing to the formation of school-community partnerships—in particular pragmatic partnerships driven by an expected (or likely) financial outcome. Miller (2016) notes that changes in the international and national environments of schools mean that, by necessity, school leaders have to “do education differently”

(Miller, 2012, p. 9). This is both as a response to events within a school's environments and as a means of surviving since, increasingly, events outside of school are shaping what schools/leaders do and this can be expected to continue well into the foreseeable future.

The principal is entirely dependent on partnerships to help with the school plant as sometimes the ministry seems to forget rural schools and the myriad of challenges they face. These schools are underfunded and the grants sent by the ministry on a termly basis is never enough to take care of the needs of the school. (Jamaica, 8F)

Whatever the driver, the primary objective of school leaders remains constant: achieving the best (possible) outcomes for students. Schools cannot be isolated from the community, for to be isolated would be at their own peril. Instead, schools are choosing to leverage economies of scale and other forms of assistance from various interests, including businesses, PTAs, religious and other organisations and past student associations in order to increase the likelihood of meeting their governments' and their own performance targets for students.

Sustaining Partnerships

Partnership working is hard work. Research suggests that some school leaders shy away from partnership working because of the volume of work involved in setting up and sustaining them (NCSL, 2013). Former UK Schools Minister David Miliband warns that partnerships are challenging and therefore require planning and critical review. Deciding the focus of partnerships and therefore planning for their longevity is not only smart human resource management but also common sense.

Partnerships are key for schools to be the best they can be—whether it is with business, parents/carers, local authorities/trusts, Higher Education, etc. However, it is important that schools have the capacity to manage those partnerships and not become overwhelmed by them. (England, 7F)

Partnership arrangements require careful negotiation and joint planning. School based schemes require a great deal of flexibility and a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances (Frost, Durrant, Head & Holden, 2000, p. 157). Successful schools, argue Hillman and Stoll (1994), “depend on people ... understanding the school’s culture and developing it in such a way that supports the process of change” (p. 3).

My local partnership of schools is small, diverse and if I am honest fairly dysfunctional. I have come from a much larger, powerful partnership where there was a great deal of activity on a collective level—joint conferences, networks etc. I do seek networks to work within, for example a recent peer review programme organised by the teaching schools alliance, but I think the power of these networks is mostly on a personal professional level for me, rather than having a wider impact on my school. The opportunity for teachers to see different schools at work is very valuable, but hard to arrange regularly unless there is a partnership available. (England, 10F)

Where partnership goals are clearly established, they increase the likelihood of success and of making desired impacts. Moreover, when partners have a shared understanding of what a partnership is about and their role in it, they are more likely to be successful. Becoming overly involved in external partnership arrangements can be distracting and can result in loss of focus for a school and/or a school leader (Miller, 2016). Schools need to maximise every opportunity to work collaboratively with other schools and other agencies in their environment, albeit not at the expense of students and the quality of their education. Similarly, schools that work in silos should understand that doing so is also at a cost to students.

Evidence Summary

With respect to school leadership is “partnership dependent”:

- Both male and female school leaders scored highly for partnership dependent leadership, although female school leaders scored higher than males—which means female school leaders are more likely to enact leadership through partnerships compared with male school

leaders. This confirms earlier research by Eagly and Koenig (2006) that female leaders are more communal and put more energy into relationship building.

- “Personal and internally motivated leadership” correlates strongly with “partnership dependent leadership”, confirming earlier findings that although school leadership is a personal activity it is also a collective endeavour.
- School leaders in both developing and developed countries entered into partnerships for pragmatic and strategic reasons. For example, school leaders in developing countries are more likely to enter into partnership arrangements for practical and mostly short-term reasons such as to raise funds for a specific venture, whereas school leaders in developed countries were more likely to enter into partnership arrangements for both strategic and pragmatic reasons.

Characteristics of partnership dependent schools include:

alliances
symbiotic relationships
cooperation, trust
multiple stakeholders
strategic, openness, conflicts
pragmatic and strategic choices
capacity building, change
sustainability

Making Sense of It All

The activities of schools are supported by and delivered through a series of partnerships—some of which are internal to a school, although some are not. Some examples of partnerships include school-to-school, school-to-community, school-to-industry as well as the PTA working with a school or on behalf of a school. Arguably, partnerships are the lifeblood of a school without which schools would not be able to achieve their goals and maximise their potential.

Schools enter into partnerships for different reasons. In several countries, school-to-school partnerships are sometimes mandated or strongly encouraged by education ministries/departments through the creation of education action zones (also called networked learning communities, education learning zones). In these partnerships, school leaders share problems, strategies and solutions in an attempt to improve the provisions of all schools within a cluster or zone. Moreover, in education action zones, the focus is very much on the development of “the system” through improving schools that are geographically clustered, or schools that share certain characteristics likely to enhance the value of the overall partnership and for each participating school. These are examples of strategic partnerships—built on and held together by a common purpose for each participating school, for the community and for society as a whole. Strategic partnerships, I should clarify, do not only include school-to-school partnerships or those directed by an education ministry/department, but can also include partnerships established between schools and other organisations/groups to achieve longer-term objectives. Home-school partnerships are therefore good examples of strategic partnerships.

As we have also seen, partnerships can be entered into for pragmatic reasons. School leaders often choose which schools or which business or other group or organisation with which to partner as they seek to achieve short-term outcomes for schools/students. This pragmatic view of partnership working is quite common and is perhaps the norm. Miller (2016) described this approach to partnership working as “an inverted view of systems leadership” (p. 131). At a time of high stakes testing, increased class sizes, increased performativity, compliance and accountability measures, schools can scarcely run the risk of being distracted when school leaders and teachers already agree that there aren't enough hours in the day for them to cover core activities such as completing curriculum and assessing and planning extra-curricular activities.

Although an area not as developed, international school partnerships are a growing focus. Students and staff and therefore schools benefit directly from the trickle-down effect of increased cultural awareness and from new or improved intercultural and cross-cultural understandings

(Miller & Potter, 2017), engaging with the global dimension in education and leveraging opportunities for staff and students to work, study, visit or otherwise collaborate with others in new and different socio-political and cultural environments (Crisp, 2007). Whatever form a partnership takes, whether internal to a school or external, partnerships are crucial to a school's success and sustainability. Partnerships provide schools with a range of benefits acknowledged by school leaders, and without which a school would be somewhat poorer and somewhat further away from achieving its objectives.

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