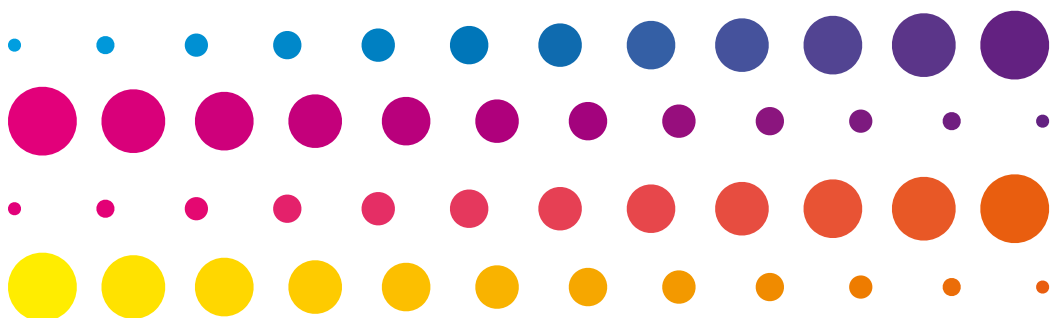




Specialist Schools  
and Academies Trust  
**THE SCHOOLS NETWORK™**

# Leading system redesign – 1

David H Hargreaves  
October 2008



# Leading system redesign – 1

## Author

Professor David H Hargreaves is Associate Director (Development and Research) at the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and Emeritus Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge. He has been Chief Inspector of the Inner London Education Authority, Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and Chairman of the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency.

## Editor

Peter Chambers

## Mission of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust

The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust works to give practical support to the transformation of secondary education in England by building and enabling a world-class network of innovative, high performing secondary schools in partnership with business and the wider community.

## THIS PUBLICATION

### Audience

Educational practitioners at all levels.

### Aims

To demonstrate how 'Wikipedia world' (web 2.0) presents opportunities for transforming the goals of system redesign in education; the means by which they might be realised; the kinds of leadership that will be required; and the forms of governance under which it will flourish.

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For other copying or general enquiries contact:

Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, 16th Floor,

Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank, London SW1P 4QP

Tel: 020 7802 2300 Fax: 020 7802 2345 Email: [info@ssatrust.org.uk](mailto:info@ssatrust.org.uk)

Websites: [www.ssatrust.org.uk](http://www.ssatrust.org.uk) [www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk) [www.ssat-inet.net](http://www.ssat-inet.net)

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# 1 Introduction

This second series of pamphlets on system redesign, like the first series, charts the way forward in system redesign at both the conceptual and the practical levels. This first pamphlet is largely conceptual in its treatment of system redesign. Its aim is to show that system redesign will need to be yet more ambitious if it is to achieve its aim of educational transformation. It points to the opportunities that are becoming available but will not be deployed without changes in how we define leadership and put it into operation in schools. This means that the challenges to leaders at every level in the education service are now unusually exacting. The pamphlet is concerned with the nature of the challenges and the general direction of the ways by which they can be met.

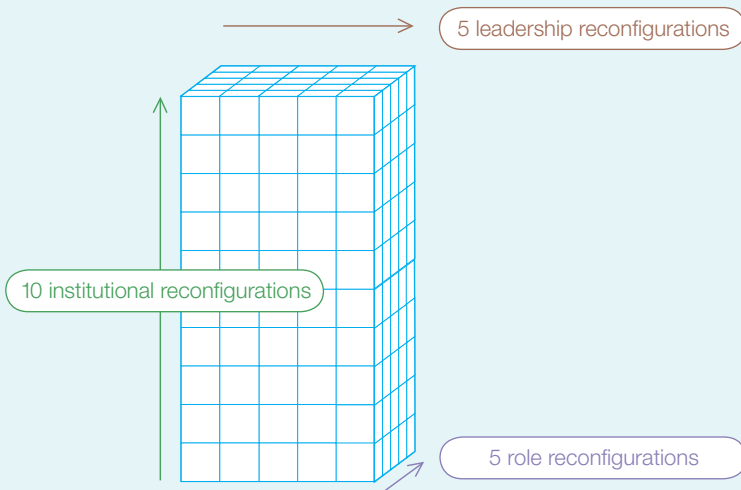
The next two pamphlets in the series, *Leading system redesign – 2: the changing profession* and *Leading system redesign – 3: the students*, deal with how leadership roles and responsibilities are already changing at school level in line with the direction of travel outlined in this pamphlet. It goes beyond what has hitherto been treated as distributed leadership.

But leadership is undoubtedly the key. In *System Redesign – 1*, the building blocks of system redesign were described in terms of 20 reconfigurations in three sets – 10 institutional reconfigurations, five role reconfigurations and five leadership reconfigurations. It is usually the set of institutional reconfigurations, not the role or leadership sets, that capture the immediate imagination of most of the teachers with whom I have discussed system redesign.

This is, I think, because among the institutional reconfigurations are some startling potential changes to 20th century schooling: the end of the autonomous school, stage not age and the disappearance of year groups, reworking of the academic-pastoral divide, new designs for buildings and learning spaces. These have an instant appeal – or challenge – that is missing from talk about leadership. Yet system redesign demands a rethink about leadership without which the pace and depth of system redesign will be severely restricted. This is the motive behind a second series of pamphlets.

The architecture of system redesign can be represented as a three-dimensional box (figure 1). The inside can be divided into 250 (10 x 5 x 5) small cells that represent the interactions between the three dimensions. As an example, the cell in the top left hand corner represents the interaction between the first institutional reconfiguration (the move from the autonomous school to multiple institutions), the first role reconfiguration (co-construction between stakeholders), and the first leadership reconfiguration (flatter staff structures). In other words, for a school embarking on the move from a single, autonomous school into a hard federation of several schools, there will be an interaction between that (institutional) change and associated changes in how the federation is to be co-constructed between the parties involved (roles) and how staff structures will change (leadership).

Figure 1: The 20 reconfigurations of system redesign



In system redesign of any individual school, some of these 250 cells are likely to be more important than others. Some will be more difficult to achieve than others. In principle, it is possible to use the cube to show how each school is likely to have a unique combination of cells that it regards as crucial to its own redesign – for not all cells can be given the same importance at any one time. It will not be easy to analyse how, in setting about system redesign, different schools *select* different combinations of cells and *sequence* them in different ways. These processes of selecting and sequencing are the strategies system redesigners use to achieve maximum complementarity.

In this series of pamphlets we seek to demonstrate that of the three dimensions to the reconfigurations, it is the leadership set that is the most critical. Without the right leadership, system redesign will fail. So understanding how and why the leadership reconfigurations drive system redesign is an urgent task. This will entail an enquiry into some of the recent developments in the internet and the creation of what is called web 2.0. If you are unfamiliar with some of the language used about the new technologies and the internet, you can always consult 'jargon buster' at <http://en.teachtoday.eu/home/>