
Conflict Resolution

Reservoirs of Hope by Flintham

Refer to "testing the reservoirs: the response to critical incidents".

Head teachers were asked to reflect on critical incidents in their leadership journey where they had acted as the reservoirs of hope for the institution whilst preserving their own internal reservoir of hope.

The range, frequency and depth of reported critical incidents was staggering and reflects the level of sustained high level leadership qualities that headteachers are called upon to display.

Flintham put these into three categories:

Community tragedies

These may be the loss of pupils, parents or staff to long term illness and sudden death. The head teacher then had to take the role of spiritual and moral leader, quietly keeping the school on track.

"If leaders fail in this primal task of driving emotions in the right direction, nothing they will do will work as well as it could." Goleman 2002

An inner confidence in the ability to cope, this personal reservoir of hope was a characteristic which enables head teachers to deal with tragedies. It also offers hope for the communities they serve.

Personnel problems

These can be small scale such as challenging staff behaviour which had to be challenged to remain true to their personal and school values. In some cases they may involve serious issues such as dismissal. Head teachers who were invested in their staff as individuals brought about 'empowerment through caring.' One head said: "he who cares, wins."

Organisational crises

These could be building problems or operation decisions, which can provide conflict and negative responses in school and its community. Head teachers perceived the need to be proactive and stand up for what they knew was right, even at some internal cost.



"Our task is not to put the greatness back into humanity but to elicit it, for the greatness is there already." John Buchan



This is a further example of the head teacher acting as the external reservoir of hope in the first priority and coming back to rebuild and refill the reservoir. Head teachers felt they were stronger for coming through these crises, and so was the school.