
1

Introduction: Diversity, leadership and education

I'm tending to be a bit dismissive about this issue to be frank, saying well really all these diversity issues ... I personally don't feel very switched on to the idea of diversity ... I just feel a little bit amused about it.

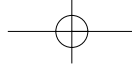
(Senior leader in education, 2004)

Key terms and definitions

The first section of this introductory chapter is designed to orientate the reader to the broad purpose and thrust of the book. It gives working definitions of key terms and allows the reader a brief glimpse of the ideas that are core to the book, and which are developed in more depth in the rest of the chapter.

The book focuses on leadership and diversity in education. The term diversity is chameleon-like, taking on different meanings for people over time. At the period of writing the term is used variously, but the current prevalent use is as synonymous with minority ethnicity. Our understanding of diversity is much wider, reflecting the reality of leading in education where staff have a large range of characteristics which may matter to themselves and to those with whom they work. The everyday usage is indicated by Wikipedia (2006), which defines diversity as 'the presence in one population of a (wide) variety of cultures, ethnic groups, languages, physical features, socio-economic backgrounds, opinions, religious beliefs, sexuality, gender identity, neurology'. Even this extensive list omits aspects of difference which contribute to the diversity of staff, for example, their educational background or age. Diversity is the range of characteristics which not only result in perceptions of difference between humans, but which can also meet a response in others which may advantage or disadvantage the individual in question. This book considers how educational leaders respond to diversity so defined; how they work both for and with diversity; *for* diversity to increase the range of characteristics of people included in leadership, and *with* diversity to ensure that the leadership of all, whatever their characteristics, is productive to the organisation and satisfying to the individual.

Leadership is a second contested concept. We take it to be the conduct of emo-

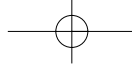


tions, thought and actions which are designed to influence others in a chosen direction. Leadership is evident when the influence is effective to the extent of being discernible by others (Drucker, 1997; Pitt, 1987; Russell, 2003). All educators are potentially leaders, in that all may create followers by influencing those around them, whether as teacher leaders, heads of department, faculty or service support team, bursars, members of a senior leadership team, principal, vice chancellor. We believe all have a role to play in relation to diversity.

Leaders are, of course, concerned with responding to diversity amongst learners. There is a substantial literature concerning the effects of characteristics in learners such as socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity, disability. There is considerable support for reflection on how to support learners so that, whatever their characteristics, they have equal chances to learn. We acknowledge that such endeavours are central to the purpose of educational leaders but the focus of this book is different. It explores the much less considered aspect of leadership relating to equal chances amongst staff, specifically those who are leaders or who aspire to leadership. Its rationale reflects the fact that while there is considerable research on equity for learners there is relatively little on equity for staff. Equity amongst the leadership of an educational organisation is in any case as vital a part of learners' experience as teaching and learning as it models expectations of equality.

The perspective adopted to examine the interplay of leadership and diversity in education is international, drawing on research, issues and practice from a variety of locations. However, the book does not attempt to examine diversity and leadership globally. The context within each country, region and organisation is so varied and distinctive that it would be beyond the scope of one volume to consider leadership and diversity in the education systems in all parts of the world. We recognise also that there are areas, particularly in developing economies, where a specific characteristic such as gender may raise such complex and intransigent issues as to justify a volume in itself. Consequently, rather than attempting to cover leadership and diversity throughout the globe, we have referred internationally to a range of available research. Each reader, wherever they are located, may adopt a critical stance and challenge or take from the volume what appears to them to be stimulating and relevant to their own specific context.

All educational organisations are within our scope. Diversity is an issue for schools, further/technical/community colleges, higher education, and district and regional administrations, such as local educational authorities. However, in considering leadership for and with diversity in education there is a difficulty in that relatively little relevant research has been undertaken specifically in educational contexts. Consequently, while our focus remains firmly on education, much of the research on which we have drawn is from the wider public and private sectors. This continues longstanding practice. Educational leadership has always been eclectic in adapting research and practice from a range of disciplines and contexts for its own different purposes. Additionally, the boundaries between education and the public and private sectors are weakening in some contexts, with schools particularly draw-



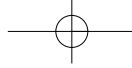
ing closer to other public sectors, for example, as children's services merge in the UK. Many educational organisations, particularly colleges and universities, consider themselves to be businesses. Drawing on a wider generic literature and relating it to educational contexts is therefore appropriate.

Having briefly highlighted some of the key definitions, the remainder of the chapter delves more deeply into what we intend and why.

The international context

Internationally diversity has become of increasing interest to corporations, the public sector (including education) and other not-for-profit organisations. Exhortations abound to consider diversity and to act variously to conform to the requirements of national and international legislation, to respond to business pressures and to ethical obligations. Leaders have ready access to codes of practice, training programmes, formulae for action. Despite all this, there is a sense that attitudes have not changed fundamentally and shifts in practice have proved relatively superficial in their effects. Dass and Parker (1999, p. 68) suggest that despite the ubiquitous and essentially similar official public statements of organisations committing to equality of opportunity, there is in fact a range of attitudes evident beneath the rhetoric. 'An increasingly diverse workforce is viewed as opportunity, threat, problem, fad or even non-issue.' The failure of even committed employers to generate equality and the gulf between the rhetoric of 'managing diversity' and employees' lived experience is reported repeatedly in the generic literature, for example from the United States of America (USA), Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) (DiTomaso and Hooijberg, 1996; Gagnon and Cornelius, 2000; Maxwell et al., 2001; Sanglin-Grant and Schneider, 2000). In education numerous commentators paint a similar picture (Cochrane-Smith, 1995; Lumby et al., 2005; Mabokela and Madsen, 2003). Rusch (2004, p. 19) suggests that 'silence, blindness, and fear frequently mediate the discourse about diversity and equity among educators'. It would appear that, rather than significant strides being made in relation to diversity and inclusion, formidable 'forces for sameness' (Walker and Walker, 1998, p. 10) prevail. 'White men still hold the best jobs, make the most money, are preferred for promotions, and have the best prospects for future success' (DiTomaso and Hooijberg, 1996, p. 173).

Within this context, this book is driven by various imperatives. It grows out of the commitment of both authors, who have engaged with issues of diversity in educational leadership over two decades. It reflects not only personal commitment, but also more widely, in our view, the increasing urgency with which issues of diversity demand attention. This view is shared by some but is by no means universal. As long ago as 1994, commentators were concluding, 'the types and degree of diversity in organizations have increased greatly to a point where their effects cannot be ignored' (Maznevski, 1994, p. 2). The quotation from a senior leader in education



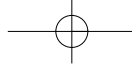
which opens this chapter is drawn from research undertaken by one of the authors in 2004. The words challenge Maznevski's assertion. It would seem that ten years on, leaders in education can and do ignore diversity. Clearly there is variability in the experience of pressure to consider and react to its effects.

Governments and broader groupings of nations have enacted increasingly complex and wide-ranging legislation. European anti-discrimination policy relates to sex, racial and ethnic origin, religion and belief, disability, age and sexual orientation, both within and beyond the labour market. The Human Rights Act 1998, implemented in October 2000, with the UK to be fully compliant by 2007, also has far-reaching implications. Member countries, including the UK, have embedded the European legislation and directives in national laws. In the UK, longstanding legislation, such as the Disabled Persons Acts 1944, 1958, 1986, the Equal Pay Act 1970 (amended 1983), the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986, the Race Relations Act 1976, have been strengthened by the addition of a raft of further acts, regulations and codes, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Employment Act 2002, the Flexible Working Regulations 2002, the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003. The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 has been held to cover lesbians and gay men. The government published a voluntary Code of Practice on Age Diversity in 1999. Legislation on age and disability discrimination was effected in 2006. There is a duty on organisations to promote equality for disabled and black and minority ethnic people and this is being extended to gender in April 2007.

This is not meant to be an inclusive list, but merely uses the UK as an example to indicate the notable rise in legislation in the UK and elsewhere. It is designed to eradicate discrimination and impel people to offer equal opportunities. The range of characteristics which it is assumed may be subject to discrimination grows ever wider; the mandatory arrangements to ensure paid work is feasible for those with children and/or care responsibilities grows ever more complex. The pressure for employers to consider diversity issues is therefore strong and growing. Legislation is a considerable compulsion to address diversity. This book, however, is not about how to comply with legislation or to avoid litigation. Its focus and value base are quite different.

The values of the book

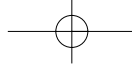
Our intention is to contribute to increasing social justice. This of course can be variously understood. Hayek (1976) suggests that generally those who use the term do not know what they mean by it and therefore its chief purpose is to provide rather vacuous justification for a wide variety of policies and actions. The book is in part an exploration of how we might understand social justice in relation to diversity



more exactly, and what action might follow such understanding. Definitions which include terms such as equality or inclusion immediately demand further definition: providing such definition is a major task of the chapters that follow. At the start of the journey, our intention originates in a perception that social justice is not evident in educational leaders and leadership; that is, unjustified benefits and detriment accrue to individuals and groups by virtue of their characteristics. The book explores the mechanisms of such unfairness and considers the different ways in which reduction of detriment might be achieved. How could fairness be understood? Is it a question of equal chances or equal treatment or equal outcomes, for example, or might it be conceived quite differently? Educational leaders should be enabled to live lives they value, in dignity, while contributing productively to their organisation. An increase in social justice is one development that moves us closer to this goal. The remainder of this book will stimulate further reflection on the goal itself and the means to achieve it.

Simons and Pelled (1999, p. 51) suggest 'Diversity is a tricky business which can help you or hurt you'. Navigating amongst the competing conceptions of who is oppressed or disadvantaged and how, amongst peoples' differing notions of who has a legitimate right to research, to write and to speak reflecting the concerns of varying groups, is indeed a tricky business. The book runs a number of risks. It may be that by exploring various aspects of diversity we risk embedding further perceptions of 'difference' from a norm, or of alienating those who disagree strongly with our analysis. We risk a backlash from those who will see this book as part of an unwarranted attention given to diversity, by those who, according to Dass and Parker (1999), see diversity as a fad or non-issue. We are likely to provoke strong emotions in readers. The literature repeatedly attests an emotional reaction to diversity issues or even the term diversity, such as denial, anger and rage (Dass and Parker, 1999; Milliken and Martins, 1996; Osler, 1997). As white women, our right to consider issues affecting those from minority ethnic and other groups to which we do not belong may be questioned, and we acknowledge that there is no way that we can fully understand the alternate realities which grow out of experience very different from our own (Bush et al., 2005). The book will therefore reflect various limitations and – the most significant risk of all – may inadvertently result in perpetuating rather than combating inequities (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000). The latter assert that the idea that diversity issues can be addressed is a fantasy which rests on absurdly naïve apolitical analyses or simplifications of complex political and social phenomena. While we recognise much truth in this, we reject a pessimistic determinism which refuses to act because action is futile.

Failing to act can only serve the interests of the dominant in organisations and society (Reynolds and Trehan, 2003; Rusch, 2004). While the risks outlined above are real, our assumption is that increasing knowledge and deepening reflection may, over time, bring about positive change. We are in agreement with Reynolds and Trehan's (2003, p. 167) belief in 'the importance of difference being deconstructed, understood and confronted'. We wish to contribute to the exposure of the mecha-

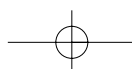


nisms of inequity, on the grounds that mere goodwill is insufficient. As many corporations and public sector organisations have found, those with a genuine commitment to responding positively to diversity may still be confounded by the chasm between intended and actual effect. Research reports outline the frequent gulf between how senior managers believe the company acts in relation to diversity and employees' very different perspective (Gagnon and Cornelius, 2000). International companies which believe themselves to be at the forefront of diversity policy and practice are shaken by litigation instigated by employees who consider they have been treated unfairly (Dass and Parker, 1999). In schools and colleges, the same gulf appears between the intention of leaders and the experience of staff (Bush et al., 2005; Lumby et al., 2005). Training on disability or diversity, instead of achieving the intended effect of greater awareness and support, can result in antagonism and resentment (Stone and Colella, 1996). Greater understanding of cause and effect is needed to support effective action.

We believe that education, while it reflects society, may also have a role in leading society. Schools, colleges and universities are not only employers with the responsibility to facilitate ways of working that allow all staff to live in dignity and to work productively; they also thereby act as models to their learners and to their communities. They have a double obligation reflecting their cultural and social centrality. We reject means–ends attitudes to human beings and believe that, in any case, ultimately, paradoxically, such attitudes may not serve the efficiency needs of organisations, though they may appear to do so in the short term. The book rests on the assumption that many in education will value humans for themselves and not just for their usefulness to the organisation, and therefore welcome a stimulus for reflection. A second assumption is that leaders at all levels in education in the model they present are key to addressing diversity, not only in their own organisation but also in their community and thereby, ultimately, in wider society.

The centrality of leadership

As the changes described in the first part of this chapter unfold, the role of leadership in relation to diversity is progressively more under scrutiny in a number of ways. Analyses increasingly stress that diversity is related to inequity because of differences in the distribution of power and resource (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000). Leaders, while they may not be the only people with power in an organisation, by virtue of their formal role of authority, and potentially through other sources of power which have led to them becoming leaders, have the possibility to disturb power relations in ways that may not be open to others. Their validation of the concerns and emotions of those who may feel disempowered or disadvantaged is of importance to such groups (Dreaschlin et al., 2000; Osler, 2004). Their commitment may buffer those who experience a backlash against initiatives related to diversity and inclusion. Their stance, while it may not be decisive, has the potential to orientate



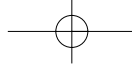
the organisation to means–ends attitudes to human beings or to ethical and community-based values. The position of leaders in relation to diversity is therefore of central concern. Secondly, as organisations change in their nature, with many more diverse and fluid ways of working, it may be that leaders are required to lead in different ways. Maznevski (1994) suggests that the skills and techniques that worked in relatively homogeneous institutions are no longer appropriate or effective in organisations that are more diverse. The act of leadership may need to metamorphose. Thirdly, and most fundamentally, how we conceive leaders and leadership may need to transform. Numerous researchers have uncovered evidence of the degree to which the concept of leadership reflects the predilections of the dominant group (Coleman, 2002; Foti and Miner, 2003; Leonard, 1998; Singh, 2002). If the characteristics that translate to success in leader emergence, leader persistence and a leadership career (Foti and Miner, 2003) continue to relate to the current leadership, then we will continue to get copies of the dominant group and to believe them successful. They will match and reinforce the template of leadership which embeds the preferences of the dominant group. In summary, our interest in leadership in relation to diversity reflects knowledge to date which suggests a need for leadership itself to be reconceived and for leaders to lead differently in a more diverse society.

Aims of the book

Within the value base described, the book sets out to achieve the central aim of stimulating reflection on diversity and its implications for leaders in education, with a view to supporting the development of practice. A number of objectives follow:

- 1 To explore conceptions of diversity.
- 2 To explore the tensions and possibilities related to addressing broad conceptions of diversity, that is, encompassing a very wide range of characteristics of 'difference', and the tensions and possibilities related to addressing single strands of diversity, such as gender or ethnicity.
- 3 To explore the links between diversity and context within the UK and internationally.
- 4 To re-conceptualise leadership to embrace diversity as central rather than as a peripheral or bolt-on issue.
- 5 To consider how leaders might work for and with diversity.

The term diversity has been used unproblematically in this chapter, but it is of course highly problematic. One of the first objectives in the book therefore will be to explore the varying ways that the term is conceptualised, and more than this, the social and political dimensions evident in the different kinds of conceptualisations. One of the distinctions that will be explored will be between broad and narrow conceptualisations. Broad conceptualisations admit a very wide range of human charac-



teristics as possibly linked to inequity. Narrower conceptualisations select from such characteristics those which appear to elicit a higher degree of possibility of encountering discrimination, for example gender, ethnicity and disability. Gender and ethnicity have been selected as exemplars in the volume. There is no intention to explore the issues connected to gender and ethnicity in depth, each of which would easily take the entire book. Rather, the objective is to explore what might be gained and what lost through focusing on one characteristic rather than multiple characteristics. The choice of these two characteristics inevitably means that other characteristics which could equally have been considered, such as disability, religion, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, will not be subject to the same review.

As our discussion develops, a central question is how far a focus on a single strand or strands is tenable or helpful in relating to the complexity and uniqueness of each human being. The intention therefore is not to present a comprehensive review of how inequity in relation to specific characteristics can be understood and countered. Rather it is to respond to the day-to-day dilemmas of leaders who work with people who have multiple characteristics and to consider how they might conceptualise leadership and act in response.

The consistent focus throughout is leadership. Consequently, a further objective is to consider the ways in which leadership is conceptualised and the impact this has to diminish, maintain or increase the inclusion or exclusion of people from leadership roles. There is, of course, a substantial body of literature considering this issue from the perspective of gender: some, though much less, considering the issue from the perspective of ethnicity. However, the substantive body of literature on 'leadership' remains largely untouched, often apparently oblivious to diversity issues. Exploration of why this is the case and the relationship of leadership theory to exclusion is an objective of the book.

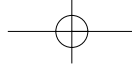
Finally, the book intends not just to support reflection and thereby greater knowledge and understanding of the self, others and organisations. It is also to support action in response. It is not the intention to suggest normative formulae of what should be done. Nor will compliance with the requirements of legislation or the funding bodies for schools, colleges and higher education be assumed to be the motivation for action. Rather, as outlined in the values section above, our assumption is that many people in education believe in the right of all human beings to dignity and to a productive role which allows them to fully utilise their talents. Consequently, the intention is to stimulate reflection on how educators might understand diversity, conceptualise the goals and formulate actions to achieve them. It is about more than working *for* diversity, interpreted as achieving representativeness. It is also about working *with* diversity, that is the potential productive inclusion of all in a diverse leadership. These are ambitious objectives and no doubt our achievement of them may be partial, but we hope to contribute to the body of work reflecting the commitment and efforts of many people over time.

Research base

The book will draw on both literature and our own empirical research. The literature may be characterised as that which directly addresses issues of diversity or particular aspects of diversity such as gender, and literature which, though not focused on diversity, may have relevance for understanding the relationship between leadership and diversity. For example, the research on leader emergence may provide insights into how leadership is conceived and thereby the degree to which it is inclusive or otherwise. Research from the behavioural sciences on group and individual interactions, from political science on power relations, from sociological and historical studies on the interrelation of class and power, may also have considerable relevance. Selected research from the various disciplines suggested above has much to offer the analysis of diversity in leadership. Looking to focus more closely, the body of literature which directly addresses diversity in leadership is limited (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000). Gender and leadership is the area most fully researched, but even here there is a relatively small body of work as gender issues are generally not prioritised in the education leadership field or more broadly within generic leadership and management (Irby et al., 2002; Sinclair, 2000). The relationship of other characteristics such as ethnicity, disability, religion or sexual orientation to leadership have infrequently been subject to research. As authors, we therefore have to navigate selecting from a large body of literature drawn from specific disciplines, and focusing on the much more limited and somewhat inadequate literature on diversity and educational leadership. We hope the synthesis may offer new insights and stimulus to leaders in education.

We will also be drawing on our own research. This book does not report or draw on a single discrete research project. Rather it will draw on research undertaken by the authors over a number of years reflecting evidence from different phases of education, at different points in time and with different foci. One major project on which it will draw is *Leading Learning*, undertaken in 2003–2004. The project, commissioned by the Learning and Skills Research Centre, investigated aspects of leadership and its development in the Learning and Skills Sector in the UK. It also investigated diversity as a key element of leadership. Ten cases were constructed in different kinds of organisation in the sector; organisations were of various sizes, in different locations in England, and included further, sixth form and specialist-designated colleges, adult and community services and workplace learning providers. A rich range of qualitative and quantitative data was collected from focus group and individual interviews and from questionnaire surveys of all staff in each organisation. Staff expressed their views on what form or forms of leadership were prevalent within their organisation, how diversity is understood, the degree of importance attached to the achievement of a diverse leadership and how the latter might be achieved. The methodology is detailed in Lumby et al. (2005).

The book will also draw on research on gender and leadership carried out over a period of ten years and latterly funded by the National College for School Leader-



ship (NCSL). This research has focussed on the relationship between gender and leadership particularly in relation to women and men head teachers in England. It has centred round questions of access to leadership in education and the ways in which gender impacts on the perceived experience of head teachers (Coleman, 1996a, 1996b, 2000, 2002, 2005). The research has been conducted through interviews and major surveys of women and men head teachers and has recently impacted on the work of the NCSL in the development of their programmes. Focus groups, individual interviews and survey research with middle managers relating to gender and ethnicity provide further data and insights (Coleman, 2004, 2005).

Structure of the book

In summary then, the book considers the pressures to consider and respond to diversity which result from the environment within which educational leaders work. It explores from a number of perspectives in different cultures and contexts the understanding of diversity in a pluralist society and how different conceptions might lead to action in theorising leadership, preparing leaders and the enactment of leadership in education.

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter considers the developing context. There is variability in the pressure to take account of diversity and in the range of actions which have evolved in response. Business, legislative and ethical pressures to work towards greater equality are explored, comparing the generic context with that in education. The chapter reviews the globally rising level of awareness of diversity in society and specifically in the workforce. It suggests that workplaces now function in qualitatively different ways to previously, for example in more fluid employment contracts and less certain boundaries between the organisation and the community. The implications for equality are considered in the new ordering of employees. It may be that the twenty-first century organisation is even less likely to offer equality than that of the previous century. The chapter also reviews the response to context: the approaches which have been utilised with the intention to increase equality or eradicate inequalities. It examines the shifting terminology, from equal opportunities, to diversity and inclusion, to capabilities approaches, considering policy and action in a number of countries. It explores how far each of the changes in discourse reflect different conceptualisations of the issues raised by diversity in leadership and the different assumptions about the resulting goals and actions to address them.

Chapter 2 is therefore concerned with the big picture, global trends and policy approaches. It concludes that analysis at this level will lead to only partial understanding and reform. Chapter 3 adds a different perspective, that of the psychology of communication and relationships. While there has been relatively little research within education about the experience of being an 'outsider' in leadership, other than that related to gender, research in other public sectors such as health services and

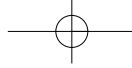
within the private sector has revealed something of what causes the experience of being perceived or perceiving oneself as an outsider. Diversity is often seen in some sense as a problem in itself. The third chapter refutes this and suggests that, in part, the root of inequality is the way diversity is conceived and the fearful attitudes towards diversity which are profoundly embedded in human relations. Such anxiety underlies the creation of in-groups, out-groups and the outsider experience. The chapter explores how the idea of 'other' is created at the individual and group level and considers the place of individual strategies for change at the personal level.

Internationally, the teaching profession tends to be numerically dominated by women, but in most countries, women do not occupy a commensurate proportion of senior leadership and management roles. The fourth chapter addresses issues of gender equity in accessing leadership roles in a number of countries, and the impact of gender on women and men educational leaders. The frame of gender allows consideration of what may be gained and lost through a focus on a single characteristic of diversity.

Similarly, in the fifth chapter, ethnicity is considered discretely. The student population of schools and colleges internationally, particularly in urban areas, is increasingly ethnically diverse. However, this diversity is not mirrored in the teaching community, where the number of black and minority ethnic educational leaders remains very small. This chapter addresses the current state of knowledge about the experience of being an educational leader from a black or minority ethnic background, taking into account current policy and practice in a number of countries. Different countries' engagement with a range of interventions such as anti-racist policies, targeted training and affirmative action are considered. The central question is whether issues that arise from attitudes and reactions to black and minority ethnic leaders, current and potential, are best addressed with a single focus or through incorporation into a generic view.

Leadership itself comes under the spotlight in Chapter 6, which argues that current theories of leadership in fact embed ever further the hegemonic attitudes and practice which ensure that a diverse leadership, if ever achieved, is likely to face problems in being effective. The chapter considers a number of different theories of leadership, including transformational, distributed, democratic and authentic, and explores how far each takes account of the diversity or potential diversity of leadership. The chapter questions the assumptions embedded in some theories that consensus and 'common good' are achievable and the foundation of effective leadership. It proposes that to be inclusive leadership theory must reject false notions of consensus and assume ongoing conflict and disagreement as the bedrock of leadership. The chapter contributes to a development of leadership theory fit for the more diverse context of schools, colleges, universities and their communities.

Chapter 7 draws together the threads of the exploration of previous chapters. It suggests that while we should not abandon what we have learned from focusing specifically on single characteristics such as ethnicity, gender and disability, nor set aside initiatives to address the disadvantage likely to be encountered by particular groups, a



more holistic approach is needed, both in terms of encompassing the very many ways in which individuals can be in a position of disadvantage, and to embed diversity within leadership theory and practice, rather than as a parallel and minor adjunct.

The final two chapters focus on what change might be needed to ensure the recruitment of leaders is inclusive and that a diverse leadership is both productive and equally supportive to all members. Chapter 8 reviews initiatives undertaken at operational level to support access to and the practice of leadership by diverse groups. It includes consideration of the role of policy, data collection and use, training and development. Chapter 9 tackles the issue of change at a variety of cognitive and structural levels. While there is much rhetoric and exhortation to view diversity as a positive feature within leadership, research indicates that it can in fact be counter-productive and may lead to less efficient working among leadership groups. At the same time, research also indicates that diversity amongst leaders has the potential of leading to a better performance. This chapter explores how leaders might approach harnessing diversity in leadership as a positive factor and what actions are needed to overcome the difficulties created not by diversity, but by attitudes towards it and by entrenched structures and working practices.

Risks and rewards

Smith (1997) suggests that those who question existing practice and suggest new ideas within leadership and management are often punished by other team members. There is certainly no dearth of scathing comment in the literature targeted at those who adopt a particular stance or suggest particular actions in relation to diversity. Lorbiecki and Jack (2000, p. 29) castigate the adoption of 'the everyone-is-different metaphor'. Others pour scorn on 'diversity management', suggesting it is but the latest in a line of vehicles for making sure diversity is *not* addressed (Sinclair, 2000). Litvin (1997) undermines the very notion of categorising 'difference' into groups such as black and ethnic minorities, as based on inappropriate notions of essentialism derived from the natural sciences. There is no safe ground anywhere in discussing diversity, no agreement on any aspect, not even that diversity is an issue at all, let alone how one should act in response. We have set out our stall in this introductory chapter. We believe, like Milliken and Martins (1996, p. 14) that the 'tendency to drive out diversity is an extremely serious and systematic force'. The appropriate response is to engage critically, reflexively and with humility, recognising that the contribution this book can make is partial, imperfect and limited. Nevertheless, our intention is to make a contribution, to stand on the shoulders of all those who have gone before and to offer some insights of value to those who will be in a position to act as leaders, colleagues, researchers and writers. To our mind, no action is no option.