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Management, by definition, is limited in its scope, horizons and possibilities. We are only now beginning to explore the potential of leadership in education.

Schools are constantly being challenged to raise standards and improve results.

Where will *your* next '5%' come from?

- From doing things the same way?
- From doing things dramatically differently?
- From making small but significant adjustments to existing good practice?

Section One

Introduction

The purpose of this book

This book is about what head teachers and school leaders can do to manage the change process required to improve the quality of teaching in a school.

It does not claim to be the ‘right answer’ – it is simply a collection of thoughts, prompts, strategies and models, which are based upon extensive experience in a wide range of schools. It acknowledges that there is no single recipe for improving teaching in a school – there are, however, some basic ingredients.

Tweak to transform

As anyone who has ever tried will surely testify, encouraging teachers to try out new ideas in the classroom and to develop their practice is far from easy. Yet few would disagree that improving the quality of teaching in a school lies at the heart of genuine and sustainable school improvement. It presents head teachers and senior school leaders with a considerable challenge.

This book is underpinned by the belief that few people, in any walk of life, make *dramatic* changes to the way in which they operate – very rarely are practices suddenly *transformed*. Teaching is no different. If teachers are going to make changes, they are more likely to make small changes – *tweaks* – to their current practice. Sufficient teachers making sufficient tweaks, as part of a managed process, can add up to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching in a school.

Tweaking involves making *small but significant adjustments* to existing practice. As such it is a reassuring and realistic way of approaching change. There are a variety of reasons why teachers are more likely to tweak than transform – that is, make small adjustments rather than large-scale alterations to their classroom practice.

- Many teachers are *unwilling* to make dramatic changes quickly. Most people are wary of change – the bigger the change, the greater the reticence.
- Many teachers *do not need* to make dramatic improvements. Most teachers are doing a good job with most of the students, most of the time and the proportion of lessons that OFSTED now judge to be ‘good’ or better is higher than ever before. The capacity for large-scale improvements therefore simply isn’t there.
- Some teachers are *unable* to make dramatic improvements. There may be teachers who are struggling in the classroom and require some significant improvements to their practice – but these people are unlikely to have the ability to make the changes in one go. If it were that simple, they would have done it long ago.

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identify one single
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It is, however,
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An emphasis on tweaking does not imply a belief that teaching cannot be significantly improved. It can. Indeed, there are many examples of how individual teachers or schools have substantially improved their practice. This emphasis simply acknowledges that significant improvement is usually the result of a series of smaller steps.

In isolation, the steps may seem almost inconsequential, but together they add up to something much more significant. Tweaking is a central feature of this book and is discussed in detail on pages 43–46.

Principles

This book is underpinned by the following eight core principles.

- 1 **The quality of teaching is the key to levels of achievement within a school. Not surprisingly, there is an emphasis on teaching and learning in successful and improving schools.**
- 2 **Improving the quality of teaching and learning is therefore the key to genuine and sustainable school improvement.**
- 3 **Change involves leaving the ‘comfort zone’. Understandably, most people are wary – even scared – of change.**
- 4 **It is the responsibility of the head teacher and the senior leadership team to initiate, drive and manage improvements in classroom practice.**
- 5 **All schools operate in a unique context. There is therefore no single correct way to develop the quality of teaching in a school.**
- 6 **You cannot *make* people change.**
- 7 **We are therefore seeking to make it *more likely* that more people will leave their comfort zones and develop their practice.**
- 8 ***Tweaking* – making small but significant adjustments – is a realistic and effective way of approaching changes in classroom practice.**

However, the book also acknowledges the following to be true.

- There is no single correct way to improve the quality of teaching – ‘There is more than one way to skin a cat’. Strategies that are effective in one school do not always successfully transfer to another.
- Head teachers and senior leadership teams have considerable experience and expertise in this area. A wide range of strategies are currently being employed to improve the quality of teaching in schools.
- There are inherent weaknesses in generalisations. There are exceptions to every rule and, in reality, situations are rarely ‘black or white’.
- Improving teaching and learning – indeed, change of any kind – is a complex business involving a large number of inter-related and inter-dependent factors. In the Sections that follow, these factors have been broken down and isolated simply for the purposes of clarity, precision and understanding.

‘... teachers really do make a difference ... our findings suggest that, taken together, teaching skills, professional characteristics and classroom climate will predict well over 30% of the variance in pupil progress ...’

Hay McBer, *Research into Teacher Effectiveness* (2000)