



*Principled  
Headship  
A Teacher's Guide  
to the Galaxy*

*Revised Edition*

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# *Introduction*

“Education is... a journey into the infinite, a participation in the movement of the universe”

*Herman Hesse*

## *“Beam me up, Scotty”*

How often have you wished you could use Captain Kirk’s famous phrase to follow his example and fly away from an alien, threatening form of life in an inhospitable school? To feel the relief of re-materialising in the warm safety of your own familiar mother ship? As a head teacher, facing the unknown wonders of the future, where is that special place? Where will your security lie?

*Isn’t the best place in your own principles, your own beliefs and values?*

If you think you can answer ‘yes’ to that question, then the next question to ask yourself is:–

*What principles guide my behaviour as a leader?*

Since your principles are the launch pad of your behaviours, articulating your principles to yourself links your language with your behaviour. Scientists claim that of the 80,000 thoughts you typically have today, 60,000 will be the same thoughts you had yesterday! This is because you live most of your life on automatic, following long-established patterns of behaviour. In a similar way to a computer, our complex behaviour in everyday contexts is based on many, much simpler, programmes at a deeper level. These behavioural patterns are established in the neural pathways of our mind and are evidenced in our speech. The words we use give others clues to what sort of pre-programmed patterns are going on inside us. Conversely, our speech and behaviour can develop and reinforce such neural programmes. The study of how language and action affects the central nervous system is known as neuro-linguistic programming. It was first developed by John Grinder and Richard Bandler (1975) who studied transcripts of the language of

acknowledged leaders in the field of conversational therapy. Behind their classification of the language patterns used by these models of excellence, they uncovered similarities in their thinking and belief systems. This is the work that gave rise to many of the principles in this book. They come from current ideas about how you form your own individual beliefs and how you sustain those beliefs in your daily living. Out of this study has come a range of techniques and procedures designed to allow you to develop your own inner resourcefulness and achieve your goals.

There are many writings describing successful heads. They are the results of research studies linked to theories of leadership or case studies of excellent head teachers and have titles like *'the eleven characteristics of an effective head'* or the *'eight attributes of great leaders'*. They are good guides of *what* to look out for and aspire to. They don't usually tell you how to acquire and develop them. These attributes and characteristics hang in the air in front of you, like the grin on the Cheshire Cat: appearing, appealing to you and then disappearing, leaving you wishing you could see the whole cat – and grab hold of it. The problem is, as Alice remarked as she wandered in Wonderland, "I've often seen a cat with a grin, but a grin without a cat? It's the most curious thing I ever saw in my life". It seems to me that many management books are collections of such grins. A guide has to be more than a list of external features. It has to utilise the modelling process of Bandler and Grinder. This book describes a set of internal beliefs, which work outwards, allowing you to shape yourself into the best leader that only you can be as the first step in that modelling process. It offers a way of linking the studies of excellence with your own daily management actions.

Education is a people enterprise and relationships are the key to the successful accomplishment of its primary task of pupil achievement. People are the school's primary resource. There is no school improvement or curriculum development without people development. The quality of interpersonal relationships – between staff and between staff and pupils – is the greatest single factor in the development of the school as a learning community and therefore of gains for all its students. It is the relationship between teacher and learner, not the technical skills of teaching, which are the strongest determinant of what a child learns. In the same way,



what ultimately helps or hinders the improvement of a school is the relationship between the head and the individual member of staff, not the technical skills of management. That is why this book focuses on those key principles that are the basis for building good relationships with and between people.

Imagine what it would be like to lead a school that really works, where you have all the time you need to do the things you want and have the respect and co-operation of your staff as well as the support of all the parents. A school fit for children. That would be like heaven, wouldn't it? But how do you get to the heavens? Sylvia West, a head teacher in Cambridge, began by posing, to her colleagues, two vital questions in 1993 about being a head:

“What values will you/did you bring to headship?”

“How will you attempt to realise these values in the practice and organisation of your school?”

This book offers some answers to both those questions, because it is a compilation of the distinctive guiding principles that many head teachers and other managers have found to work in the daily round of leading a school team towards its goals, to reaching its chosen stars. According to the Collins dictionary, a belief is ‘a principle accepted as real or true’ and a principle is ‘a standard or rule of conduct’. The principles in this book conform to these definitions.

Valuing is a basic human process. Each one of us expresses preferences and antipathies for certain people, certain situations and occasions. These preferences, even if not well articulated, determine what we are drawn to and what we shrink away from; what we desire and what we reject. As you visit many different schools, it is easy to detect differences in their atmosphere, culture and ethos. This is not surprising, as they all reflect and sometimes magnify, the values of their individual community. And head teachers, like the communities they lead, have different values, which take expression in the feel of the school and are therefore easily detectable to an outsider. This is because values are defined by the visible behaviour. The ringing words in a school prospectus can sound off-key if they are not lived out in the school by its community. To answer Sylvia West's question you need first to



***Behaviour***  
***is the***  
***best***  
***form of information***  
***about a person***

them singly. Responding in this empathic way increases the level of harmony between you and improves the quality of your communication. Eventually you will put them all back together seamlessly to be an excellent communicator. People will want to speak to you.

Conscious awareness-skill development is about the ability to detect very fine details when necessary. Paradoxically, it is also about quietening your conscious, analytical mind because of its tendency to keep asking questions. These questions tend to get in the way of listening and watching. If you are an aware person, you can notice what your body is telling you, pick up on the small signs of muscles tensing or relaxing, of your breathing rate and depth. Body and mind are focused together on the same present moment, the same here and now. There is some evidence that a woman's brain is constructed to do this more easily than a man's. But whether a man or a woman, you can practise improving the sense of your own body and then get better at noticing these small differences in the people around you.

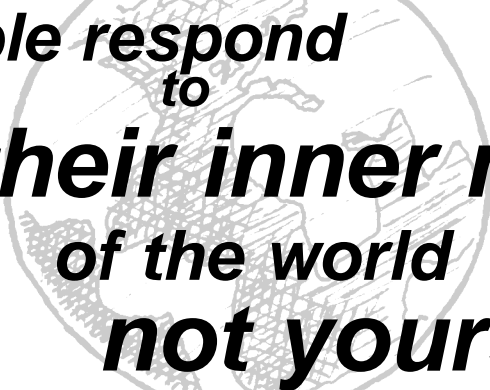
When I was young I thought my mother and her twin sister were magicians. They seemed to know exactly what each other was thinking, or what they were going to say next. When I was older I was told it was telepathy. That satisfied me for a while – it wasn't magic, 'just telepathy'. Later still, as a sceptical scientist, I was reminded of Richard Feynman's story of his scientific upbringing. One day out on a walk, his father pointed out a bird to him and said it was a sparrow. He then gave it half a dozen other names of what the bird was called in other countries and said "You can know the name of that bird in all the languages of the world, but when you're finished, you'll know absolutely nothing about the bird". I knew the name of the form of communication but it told me nothing about what was involved.

Now I know that my mother and her sister were just very sensitive to each other's movements, voice inflections, facial expression, etc. They could notice extremely fine differences in these and other characteristics, even though they, themselves, were unaware of just what they were doing. Although I didn't know what they were doing either, I did know that I could do the same thing with respect to them. It explained why, as a child, I could never

understand how anybody could possibly confuse my mother and her sister, just because they were called identical twins. I noticed very small differences that neighbours and friends missed. However, because I didn't consciously know what I was doing, I couldn't transfer that skill and that sensitivity to other twins. I could just as easily be as confused with other sets of twins, as strangers were with my mother and her sister.

### *Much of our life is spent on automatic*

This partly explains how some people seem to possess a 'sixth sense'. They react automatically to signals from other people that are below the threshold of their conscious awareness. Awareness skills can be improved and awareness training is aimed at changing that threshold. It is about gaining greater sensitivity to what you can see, hear and feel about your surroundings. Like Argos in mythology, seeing with a hundred eyes. Even when asleep he still 'saw' with fifty of them. With his conscious mind elsewhere, his seeing then was into his unconscious mind. As an experienced driver you know this effect really well as you have almost certainly driven a car on 'automatic', when your journey has ended with no conscious remembrance of much of the route. All the multiple perceptions needed to complete it safely were unconscious, but like Argos, you can be well aware that if necessary, the unconscious mind would kick-start your conscious mindfulness at any time. Psychologists have likened this day-dreaming state of mind to a light hypnotic trance – wide awake in terms of sensory input from the outside world, but with all your thinking process busy with internal matters. They believe we have many different trance states that we switch into when triggered by outside events. You can understand this as trance when your actions flow automatically and without any conscious thinking. It is possible to increase this way of problem-solving. And when you can extend that ability to use all your unconscious perceptions when needed of you, you too will be wonderfully intuitive – an unconscious thinker.



***People respond  
to  
their inner map  
of the world  
not yours!***

blocks – those of principles and values and feelings. You will also need to appreciate that the attitudes you hold spring from your values. Attitudes are by origin, therefore, evaluative in their nature and can limit even our best of honest approaches to the rational analysis of a situation.

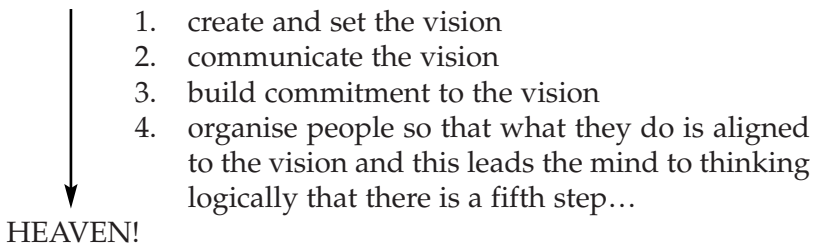
One common example of how worlds differ is that many head teachers rate themselves more highly as managers and leaders than their staffs do – that's *their* world, *their* reality. It's obviously not the world of their staff. To gain the trust of staff, you will first have to explore *their* planet. You have to meet them there, understand its ecology, become familiar with its contours and its rocks. You will also need to speak their language. Being amongst staff and mediating mindscapes. This is the way to gain rapport and is the basis for motivating them to explore other planets themselves.

## *Strategic thinking*

Analysing things strategically in school starts from the results of the enquiries you (the community of learners) have already made about:

- your beliefs and values
- your dream of the future school
- the purposes it will serve

Having checked where you are now with regard to currently held beliefs and intended purposes, and with the dream in mind, strategic thinking marks out the journey step from here and now to there and then. This is straight-line thinking:



This makes strategic planning seem deceptively simple. Deceptive because such planning presupposes that the future is largely predictable. However, even if the landfall is mapped, no sailor and certainly no astronaut points their craft exactly at the proposed landing site at the moment of launch. Both know that there are invisible if not unknown forces at work between launch and landfall, whether they are tides or gravitational forces, and so start slightly *off* course. Hitting the desired landing point then demands a constant appraisal of the path covered and decisions on the possible alternative ways of traversing the remaining distance. So a good course plan contains within it plans for moving *off*-course. Perpetual steering! It's a complex, intuitive, and for an experienced navigator, unconscious thinking exercise. The secret of future successful headship is likely to be the skill of recognizing what is emerging from the complex conditions of the journey and then making the necessary adjustments.

### *Systemic thinking – the circles of the mind*

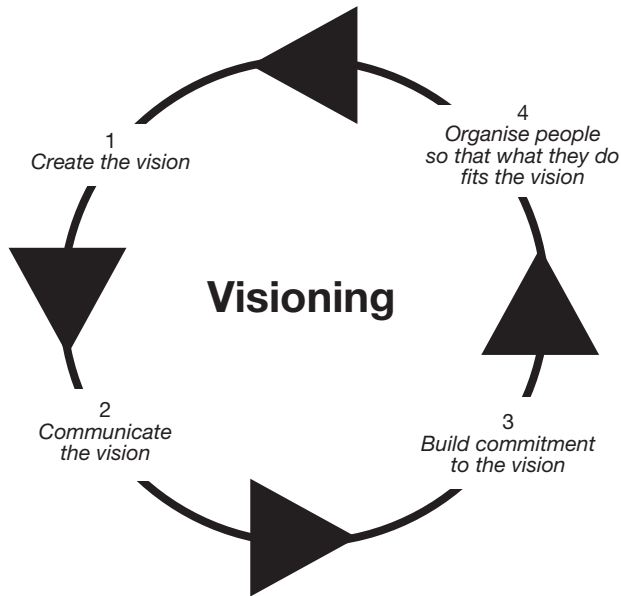
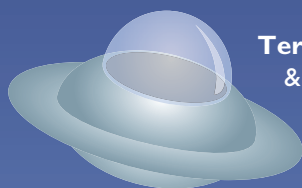


Figure 2.5: *Systemic thinking – the circles of the mind*

The education world is currently experiencing a turbulent period which demands new capabilities of school leaders. Just what challenges does the pace of change present to you as a teacher? And what are the key areas of competence that you will need to master over the next decade?

***Principled Headship*** equips you with the essential skills needed for a future in teaching. Utilising newly-emerging techniques in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), this book shows you how to extend your inner resources and prepare yourself to confidently take on the leadership of a school. Pioneering a programme of behaviours and exercises using a combination of left- and right-brained approaches, it includes indirect suggestions, visual image associations, and extensive work on personal beliefs. Written in a light and personal style, it will increase your ability to lead, communicate and motivate.

***Principled Headship*** covers a range of personal skills that are currently given insufficient prominence in teacher training. It provides you with practical ways of improving your awareness and your emotional, behavioural, linguistic and self-management skills. It also presents a fresh and practical approach to clarifying and consolidating a core of personal beliefs and values. If you are contemplating launching yourself into a teaching career; and especially if headship is your aim, ***Principled Headship*** is the book that will help you achieve your goals.



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