For the authors in this book, there can be no valid excuses for ignorance in any aspect of education as theory/practice. That is:

- If we come to learn that all educational problems involve knowledge of complex systems and processes, then quick, simple solutions should not be an educator’s first or only expedient option.
- If all education requires a measure of cultural and contextual understandings, then uniform, standardized programs and lessons will not meet the needs of all children or communities.
- If educational change takes time and strenuous efforts to take hold, then why do we abandon and restart reforms efforts year after year?
- If educational practices are best performed by those closest to the problems, then why do we not prepare and continuously develop teachers and administrators to grow intellectually and politically to make wise decisions?
- If who a person is culturally and intellectually shapes who they are as educators, then why are our recruitment, selection, induction, and retention policies not influenced by this assumption?
- If today’s best practices have not taken careful note of successes in the past, then how do we validly measure best practices in use today?
- If one-time, standardized test scores are not adequate measures of a person’s worth, a teacher’s competency, or a school’s value to its community, then why do our policies and practices say otherwise?

Unfortunately, our ignorance of the “what” and the “how” of education and educational leadership has persisted across contexts and history. Why? This book provides both theoretical and practical answers to these elusive and problematic issues.
The Elusive What and the Problematic How: The Essential Leadership Questions for School Leaders and Educational Researchers
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND LEADERS IN CONTEXTS
Volume 3

Series Editor
Tony Townsend and Ira Bogotch
Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL, USA

Scope
The series, Educational Leadership and Leaders in Contexts, emphasizes how historical and contextual assumptions shape the meanings and values assigned to the term leadership. The series includes books along four distinct threads:

- Reconsidering the role of social justice within the contexts of educational leadership
- Promoting a community of leadership: Reaching out and involving stakeholders and the public
- Connecting the professional and personal dimensions of educational leadership
- Reconceptualizing educational leadership as a global profession

Perhaps to a greater extent than ever before, today’s educational leaders find themselves living in a world that is substantially different from what it was just a decade ago. The threads of social justice, community leadership, professional and personal dimensions, and globalism have added contextual dimensions to educational leaders that are often not reflected in their local job descriptions. This book series will focus on how these changing contexts affect the theory and practice of educational leaders.

Similarly, the professional lives of educational leaders has increasingly impinged upon their personal well-being, such that it now takes a certain type of individual to be able to put others before self for extended periods of their working life. This series will explore the dynamic relationship between the personal and the professional lives of school leaders.

With respect to communities, recent educational reforms have created a need for communities to know more about what is happening inside of classrooms and schools. While education is blamed for many of the ills identified in societies, school leaders and school communities are generally ignored or excluded from the processes related to social development. The challenge facing school leaders is to work with and build community support through the notion of community leadership. Thus, leadership itself involves working with teachers, students, parents and the wider community in order to improve schools.

As for the fourth thread, globalism, school leaders must now work with multiple languages, cultures, and perspectives reflecting the rapid shift of people from one part of the world to another. Educational leaders now need to be educated to understand global perspectives and react to a world where a single way of thinking and doing no longer applies.
The Elusive What and the Problematic How: The Essential Leadership Questions for School Leaders and Educational Researchers

Tony Townsend  
*Florida Atlantic University*

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PREFACE

For some time the editors of this book have been discussing issues related to improving the quality of education as it relates to student outcomes in schools. The editors come from two different education backgrounds, one (Ira) where educational leadership traditionally has been developed through masters or other certification programs offered by universities that were obliged to follow the various certification rules set down by their associated US state departments of education and the other (Tony) where leaders in most Australian schools were traditionally appointed to leadership positions before they had any training on how to become a leader. These two very diverse backgrounds, the first where self-selection into a program is later followed by further training at the district level, with the possible eventual selection as a school leader on the one hand, and the second where the individual is identified as being a potential leader and then undergoes departmental led training as a leader which may or may not be done in conjunction with university credits, led to some interesting conversations.

The 2006 International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, which was hosted by the College of Education at FAU, provided the opportunity for people from many parts of the world to contribute to the interaction and a number of the people who presented at the conference were able to reshape their papers, which looked at various aspects of leadership research, into chapters that considered both the ‘what’ of educational leadership and the ‘how’ we come to know this through educational research.

The current book is an attempt to analyze these factors to try and establish a way forward for the future of leadership research. We would like to thank the authors for their contributions and look forward to hearing from readers that might wish to respond to the contents.

Tony Townsend and Ira Bogotch
Boca Raton, Florida
May 2008
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Section One: The What of School Leadership
1. WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD?

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership, like many other facets of human life, can be looked at from two different points of view. We have chosen to call these points of view the ‘what’ and the ‘how’. The ‘what’ in this instance is the knowledge required to do the job well. It is ‘knowing’ about curriculum, about management, about human relations and about the various factors, both inside and outside the school, that are required to keep those within the school, students, teachers and others, safe and productive. However, it is only when this ‘knowing’ is joined by the ‘how’ that school leadership is successful. The ‘how’ in this instance is the set of processes used by the school leader to communicate, implement, evaluate and relate the knowledge base to those with whom the leader interacts, together with the attitudes and values that are shared between both leader and followers. We would argue that the practice of educational leadership is artistry, when these two factors come together in a way that promotes both simultaneously.

If leadership is artistry, then we can make some comparisons to other types of artistry. A person may know how to mix paint, how to prepare a canvas and how to apply paint to the canvas (the what), but it is only when this knowledge interacts with the ideas and values that lead to judgments about how and where to apply that paint, that the painter moves from being a dabbler to being an artist. Likewise a person with great ideas but no knowledge on how to apply them becomes a talent unfulfilled. So too, with the actor, where a person may know the lines and where on stage to move, but without the flair required to convince us that the circumstances are real rather than playacting, the master becomes a ham. A doctor may know Grey’s Anatomy from front to back, but without ‘bedside manner’ his patients may desert whereas a doctor with great patient rapport but little knowledge becomes a danger and a teacher may be able to recite all the necessary information for students to pass their tests, but unless the presentation is delivered in a way that engages, the students will not succeed. On the other hand a teacher with flair but no knowledge may be entertaining, but won’t help students to achieve their dreams.
It is where knowledge and performance meet that artistry lies. Where the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ become the ‘whow’. It is this area that this book chooses to explore, by using chapters from all over the world. We have deliberately asked our writers to separate the ‘what’ from the ‘how’ to provide a better understanding of the importance of the ‘praxis’ effect, where theory and practice meet.

Most nonfiction books, especially those on the subject of education, are written to combat specific ignorances. In education, a subject that the late North American social critic Neil Postman “claims dominion over the widest possible territory,” we are immediately confronted by two sets of ignorance, the “what” and the “how.” In Postman’s words:

[Education] purports to tell us not only what intelligence is but how it may be nurtured; not only what is worthwhile knowledge but how it may be gained; not only what is the good life but how one may prepare for it. There is no other subject—not even philosophy itself—that casts so wide a net, and therefore no other subject that requires of its professors so much genius and wisdom. (Postman, 1988)

By highlighting the “what” and “how” of education, the authors of this book are reaffirming our faith in both theory [the purposes and ends of education] and practice [the processes of preparation and nurturing]. We do so not in the traditional sense of applying prior theories to practice, but rather as a mutual relationship between educational thoughts and educational actions. On this stage, we are happy to be in the company of such theorists as John Dewey (1904; 1920/62; 1916/63), Gilbert Ryle (1949), Chris Argyris and Donald Schon (1975), etc. Whether called re-constructivism, knowing-how, double-loop learning, reflective practice, pedagogical content or, most recently, the instructional dynamic, (Ball and Forzani, 2007), the essays in this book make both the ends and the means of education visible. “To profess to have an aim and then neglect the means of its execution is self-delusion of the most dangerous sort” (Dewey, 1920/1962, p. 75). We believe this is necessary pedagogically for advancing knowledge and improving practice, including the practices of educational research.

Although we assert that knowledge of the “what” and the “how” are necessarily connected, perhaps even as being one thing as Ryle (1949) indicated, we do so in the context of differences. No two people or settings or interactions over time are ever the same. Thus, our discussions of the “what” and the “how” have three objectives: (1) we must account for contextual differences; (2) we must account for unanticipated knowledge and skills related to educational leadership and school improvement; and (3) we must make these processes, in terms of the ends and the means,
THE ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS

completely visible to students of education. In so doing, we highlight systematic thinking, careful analysis, issues of validity, and practicality. Whether the professional objective involves the replication of research or the implementation of research-based programs, it is necessary that educators understand how ideas and actions together lead us toward new ideas and new actions — what we call generically educational leadership and school improvement. Conversely, we want to avoid, or at least limit as much as possible, ready made answers [i.e., miseducative what’s] as well as haphazard and irrelevant actions [i.e., miseducative how’s].

For the authors in this book, there can be no valid excuses for ignorance in any aspect of education as theory/practice. For example,

- If we come to learn that all educational problems involve knowledge of complex systems and processes, then quick, simple solutions should not be an educator’s first or only expedient option.
- If all education requires a measure of cultural and contextual understandings, then uniform, standardized programs and lessons will not meet the needs of all children or communities.
- If educational change takes time and strenuous efforts to take hold, then why do we abandon and restart reforms efforts year after year?
- If educational practices are best performed by those closest to the problems, then why do we not prepare and continuously develop teachers and administrators to grow intellectually and politically to make wise decisions?
- If who a person is culturally and intellectually shapes who they are as educators, then why are our recruitment, selection, induction, and retention policies not influenced by this assumption?
- If today’s best practices have not taken careful note of successes in the past, then how do we validly measure best practices in use today?
- If one-time, standardized test scores are not adequate measures of a person’s worth, a teacher’s competency, or a schools’ value to its community, then why do our policies and practices say otherwise?

Unfortunately, our ignorance of the “what” and the “how” has persisted across contexts and history. Why? In part, we believe that our strengths as educators have contributed to our problems. That is, our strength comes from our can-do, problem-solving, activist, desire to make a difference as teachers and school leaders. We as educators are pragmatic, political and ethical. At the same time, the demands that we place on ourselves and allow others to place on us have made us a vulnerable profession (Callahan, 1962, Lagemann, 2000). Constant busy-ness prevents any one from being at her/his intellectual, reflective, and critical best. Without study, discussion and debate, decisions are not well thought out and therefore susceptible to political pressures and popular opinions. We may, unintentionally perhaps,
cut corners or act expediently just to survive. We may, deliberately perhaps, resort to a form of leadership language, with such words as strength, decisiveness, community, involvement, etc.; but such words only mask our ignorance; they are not educational nor can the words themselves bring about school improvement. For too long we have hidden behind the mantel of leadership instead of practicing real educational leadership.

It would be dishonest for us to deny the above realities. It would be also disingenuous to deny a theory-practice gap within education. There is empirical evidence that indicates that practitioners find educational theory impractical and irrelevant. Likewise, we have evidence that academicians find classroom and administrative practices, including the many so-called best practices, far short of the purposes and ideals of education. This has been so throughout history: Greek students were more attracted to the teachings of the sophists in order to learn how to sway their fellow citizens than they were to the intellectual critiques of Socrates. Not surprisingly, Socrates’ student Plato took choice away from citizens and replaced it with a pre-set educational system functioning coherently in the service of society as a whole. He called this the Republic. It was not until the 20th Century and John Dewey that a philosopher once again asserted just how difficult education, teaching, learning, and leading, really is under any and all circumstances.

Over the centuries, social forces of modernization and progress should have elevated the status of education in societies. Instead, social forces have had the opposite effects, keeping educators and education vulnerable to centers of power, whether government, business, or military (Callahan, 1962). To some educationists, for example Bowles and Gintis (1976), the schools’ functional role was designed in order to slot individuals into different social positions with respect to labor and service so as to sustain and maintain societies. In many instances, the real powers of education as intellect and vision, would be selectively reserved for those attending elite and often inaccessible schools and universities.

With new laws for universal and compulsory education, however, a place called school (Goodlad, 1984) evolved to deliver prescribed lessons to the masses. In rare instances only, a place called school allowed both educators and their students to reconstruct knowledge through educative experiences, human capital, and moral practices (Dewey, 1904/1965). Today, such places are rarer still. In this era of national educational policies that impose accountability onto local constituencies, a place called school does not allow for professional decision-making or professional judgments. Separating educators from theory; separating practice from reconstructive theory has disenfranchised educators who – by themselves at least – cannot
be expected to reform the educational establishments around the world. All of us today must become even more aware of how professional judgments have been systematically erased in educational practice, especially in this current era of accountability. Professional judgments are not viewed by those in power as scientific, legitimate, research-based or theory. Instead, educational practices, limited by measurements, have supplanted the role of professional judgment. For Postman and us, this is ignorance.

It was out of this critical analysis that the idea for this book was born. We wanted to bring pedagogical knowledge of theory and practice together as a collective discussion of the “what” of education to be followed and explained in terms of the “how” of education. The authors of this book tell you why and how they arrived at the “what” of school leadership and school improvement. As you will see in the subsequent sections, their interpretations of the “how” differ greatly. Nevertheless, our message is that without an integrated understanding of both the “what” and the “how,” we will not advance the ideals of education and consequently we will remain vulnerable.

Education is contextual and temporal in theory and practice. In other words, what we are experiencing today was not always the case in education, nor is it the case in many international settings. There are school, states, communities, and nations that combine innovative thinking and with innovative practices. Education has suffered most in countries where national, bureaucratic systems have standardized and mandated practices limited to behaviors/outcomes that are easily measured. Fortunately, education comes armed with inherent powers that resist monolithic enterprises, powers that are able to keep the ideals of education alive around the world, even in difficult circumstances. Thus, Nieto (2003) reminds us that educators have a resilience to keep going because of who we are; at times, it is our love of others that sustain us; and at other times, it is our anger at central authorities; or, it is our optimism and hope in the present and for the future; and, of course, there is our exercising of intelligence as educators.

Thus, we must all strive to bring professional knowledge to ourselves and others, even to those held hostage by oppressive and monopolistic systems. We all know that national and state educational policies, district and school educational decisions, educational programs, and local educational judgments all compete for the mantel of legitimacy. Those of us who work inside universities have argued that educational research – our research questions, methods, and findings should be at the top of the list when searching for educational solutions. Such a view reflects this book’s overt bias. We believe, however, that when readers from all levels of
education see the “what” and the “how” explained and demonstrated, then they, too, will embrace the legitimate meaning of research-based – as not only understanding for competency, but also being prepared for unanticipated contingencies (Ryle, 1949).

John Dewey (1904) pointedly asked why educators were constantly coming to new reforms, jumping onto bandwagons, and not distinguishing between substance and appearance. He believed that we as educators had not nurtured our own intellectual cores, and as a result we have been swayed to do this or that depending upon the political reform current of the day. He devoted his entire career to bringing knowledge through systematic experiments and laboratory learning to his audiences. His faith in the power of education as a profession never wavered. That same faith is reflected in this book.

THE WHAT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The first section of the book, chapters two through seven, looks at the question of ‘what is school leadership?’ from various perspectives. These perspectives range from a general understanding of the purposes and ends of education to what school leadership should look like within and across different settings and under different cultural conditions. Collectively, the ‘what’ of school leadership provides a strong foundation for school improvement efforts around the world.

In chapter two, John MacBeath argues the case that the notion of ‘superleader’ as the person who takes charge and can turn schools around by him or herself is no longer viable. He argues that when schools do succeed the leader is applauded, but if they fail the leader is criticized, sanctioned or dismissed. This is a simplistic view of a very complex organization and that if schools are to really become places of learning in the future then a different understanding of leadership is required. He argues that servant leadership, where the role of the leader is to bring out the best in others, together with an understanding that all people in the school, including teachers, administrative assistants and students need to be able to demonstrate leadership given appropriate circumstances, while the leader should be prepared to be the follower when these circumstances arise. As Townsend and Otero (1999) indicate, in a good school, everyone is a learner, a teacher and a leader.

In chapter three, Sharmistha Das provides an overview of the way in which school culture impacts on learning and the issues that leaders must consider in developing a school culture. She discusses the importance of considering the impact of values and the various roles people play in developing a school culture and outlines how short term efficiency-based
values may impact on the longer term desire to provide students with a quality education. She provides an example to show how similar statements of value might create different outcomes in practice. The chapter then identifies the connections between school ethos and school effectiveness and how history, people and context of the school are critical factors in building a school culture. Her review of the literature demonstrates the complexity of the various terms associated with school culture and how different terms might be used in different contexts, countries and disciplines. She defines an effective school culture as one where there is a sense of

− belonging to an organization with a unique history,
− where people follow a certain code of practice,
− share a particular set of values, and
− respect a specific way of communication in pursuing a common goal towards children’s learning.

The absence of some of these things might be considered as less effective and the absence of all of them is a toxic school culture, one that reinforces negative values. The chapter provides an overview of some of the typologies associated with school culture and the roles that school leaders might play in these.

In chapter four Lejif Moos, John Krejsler and Klaus Kasper Kofod consider what successful leadership means, based on the data collected during the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSP). The data collected from the USA, UK, Australia, China, Canada, Sweden, Norway and Denmark suggest that although there are common directions undertaken by the nations involved in terms of movement towards decentralized aspects leading to school-site management, coupled with more centralized approaches to curriculum and assessment, there are many different approaches adopted at the local level, which makes any global statements of what makes successful school leadership problematic. They use the case of two schools in Denmark to demonstrate how the concept of success in these schools is interpreted and created in different ways as a means of demonstrating how at the local level what seems to be the same can be very different. One important outcome of the study, however, was that in both countries where the accountability movement has been in place for some years and in countries where it is comparatively new, principals agree that education is more than simply attending to the basic of literacy and numeracy. For schools to be successful, students must become good citizens.

In chapter five, Alma Harris and Pat Thompson focus their attention on the issue of leadership in schools that work under challenging circumstances.
First, they identify why the demographic, social, health and safety issues that exist in such schools might suggest that schools facing such circumstances might always struggle to perform as well as schools in much better areas, with much healthier, supported and protected children. Rather than indicating that this might be a reason why we need not aspire to improve student performance in these schools, they argue that the research does indicate that it is possible for such schools to substantially increase student achievement and that one of the main factors in doing this is the leadership that exists in these schools. They identify a series of common factors that characterize leaders that have been successful in challenged schools. At the center is the vision and values that arise from the underlying belief that all children can learn and then enabling the whole school community to align to these values and vision. Essentially these values could be identified as moral, focusing on the welfare of the people involved, rather than instrumental or custodial. Added to this was a firmness that enabled principals to ensure that the vision was followed and that hard decisions would be made when some teachers failed to do this. Always the focus was on improved teaching and learning. Underlying this was a structured plan of professional development, distributed leadership, community building and relationship building. These supported the twin activities of promoting both structural and cultural change within the school. This focus on capacity building, necessary for all schools, is essential for schools in challenging circumstances.

In chapter six Ira Bogotch, Luis Miron and Gert Biesta consider the specific case of the Algiers Charter School District Association’s attempts to rebuild a school system in post-Katrina New Orleans. They consider this development from the viewpoint of a critical review of the school effectiveness and school improvement research, which they argue has gained a privileged status (particularly from politicians and government) when it comes to characterizing good schools, good teachers and good student outcomes. They suggest that the managerialist approaches that have been proposed and developed by education systems to improve student outcomes, have been based on SESI research that ignores the underlying conditions and values that reside in the schools themselves. In short the SESI research is accused of ignoring the contextual issues that are attached to schools by culture, race and socio-economic conditions. The chapter reports on the creation and progress of a new charter school district, one among other charter school systems, that seeks to transform the educational provision for students in a way that supports all those involved, through strong focused relationships with their teachers. They report that, at the early stages of this transformation, the new ethos has been promoted and supported. The fear, however, is twofold: first, the demands from further
afield, related to accountability requirements associated with the SESI perspective might disrupt any attempts to build a new way of recreating a city through education; and, secondly, the entrepreneurialism inherent in the charter schools in Algiers and throughout New Orleans will not serve the city as a whole, but rather reinforce the cultural privileges inherent in the pre-Katrina public schools.

In chapter seven Charles Duke and Kavin Ming discuss what it means to be culturally competent, where educators and school leaders have to bring the complexity of cultural differences in society together with national mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). They argue that cultural competence is more than just sensitivity, but a real awareness of both the richness and limitations brought about by working in a diverse setting. They indicate that cultural competence is part of multicultural education, but indicate that multicultural education still suffers from being seen as content rather than process. Teachers have a tendency to see multicultural education as a course, rather than something that should be understood by all teachers. Rather multicultural education is the knowledge base that generates the sets of skills that lead to cultural competence. They make the point that although current classrooms are now much more diverse and complex places, as integration of students with various differences (language, disabilities, color), that were previously taught in other places has occurred in recent times, the training necessary to support the skills required by the regular teacher to teach these children has not kept pace, leading to a mismatch between the needs of the students and the abilities of the teachers to serve them. The chapter considers some of the issues that need to be considered if cultural competence is to be promoted in pre-service teacher education programs and through professional development of teachers in the field.

THE HOW OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP RESEARCH

The second section of the book considers the various research activities that have generated the positions held in the first section. Essentially the question here is ‘How do we know what good leadership is?’ These chapters consider the research from a number of countries and across countries in an effort to answer this question.

In chapter eight MacBeath describes the learning developed through the Carpe Vitam project, a multi-country study that looked at the linkages between learning and leadership. Five principles of practice are identified if leadership within the school would lead to learning. The first and most important of these is that leadership should focus on learning, and the other
four principles followed on from this one. They were that leadership needs to create and sustain the conditions for learning, that it must make learning visible and discussable, that it needs to be undertaken by all in the school, not just those in positions of leadership and finally that leadership for learning must practice accountability. For MacBeath, leadership is essentially subversive as it fails to accept what is currently offered and always seeks to improve the status quo.

In chapter nine Das provides data from four case study schools in Scotland to demonstrate that, although every school may have common factors related to school culture in play, it is how these factors are combined or handled that makes each school culture unique. The case studies demonstrate clearly how school culture reshapes and reorganizes itself based on the people and processes that are in play in the school. This reinforces the critical role that school leaders play in shaping school culture. The leadership shown in each of the case study schools is analyzed using Bush’s (1995) models of educational management and Bolman and Deal’s (1991) organizational frames.

In chapter ten Moos, Krejsler and Kofod consider the nature of the changing leadership interactions in schools in Denmark, arguing that the meeting of some of the newer international trends towards testing, accountability and decentralization with the more traditional understanding of the relations in the school that lead to a ‘democratic community’ has led to new interpretations of leadership in ways that are complex and not always accepted. They argue that the loose couplings that exist between semiautonomous departments and self-governing teams, a product of the move towards greater decentralization, is matched by tight couplings brought about by leadership teams maintaining control over many of the important decisions by structuring the school in a way that only the leaders have the overall knowledge required to make important decisions. So while the schools display many of the signs of democratic communities in many cases people seek out the leader’s reassurance to ensure that they are on the right track. Although people are actively involved in the decision making process, there is also the social mechanism that wants them to make decisions that will be acceptable to the leader.

In chapter eleven Harris and Thompson identify the research underlying the arguments developed in chapter four. They identify four major strands of research that has helped to explain the development of this perception of leadership. These strands are identified as ‘what works?’ or accounts of research that led to generalizable understandings of practice, ‘I did it my way’, the stories of successful leaders, either written by themselves or others, ‘what is going on here?’ or ethnographic studies of either schools or
leaders that help to enlighten us about the circumstances in which they operate, and ‘what might schools/leaders do to help all children succeed?’ where alternative approaches to leading schools in challenging circumstances, and critical, feminist and post-modern theories are considered. The authors also identify the importance of what they call ‘How can we find out how to do better for all students and in so doing, make it happen?’, where schools, sometimes in conjunction with universities, undertake action research projects that are often unpublished or only available to a small audience. They argue that although each method is important, that the true way forward for research of schools in challenging circumstances lies in the more comprehensive multi-method and multi-disciplinary approaches of studying leadership in these schools. Finally they identify what they see as being significant gaps in the research and challenge future leadership researchers to be more multi-disciplined and comprehensive in their approach.

In chapter twelve Bogotch and Miron consider the unique position they experienced as “native” son researchers into the educational system rebuilding that occurred in New Orleans post Katrina. They describe how the role of the researcher in circumstances such as these changes from being an observer to being an observant participant. They identify their concern that the political moves towards marketization and accountability, observable in the rest of the country may curtail the opportunity for real educational reform to take place. They make a plea that the role of research in the process of redevelopment on this scale cannot rely on what we previously knew about research. New research methods and new theories of education will have to be generated in such circumstances, but for this to happen more resources and time than are usually given to schools (and to researchers) must be provided.

In chapter thirteen Duke and Ming consider three necessary steps for school leaders to support their schools and teachers to become culturally competent. The first step in the process is for school leaders to become knowledgeable about today’s society, in all its diversity and how in turn, this impacts schools, families and students. The second is that issues of cultural diversity should be systematically embedded in the professional development undertaken by people working in the school setting. The third step is to provide teachers with support to change the way in which they teach by either recruiting or training teachers or other professionals who are skilled in multiculturalism to provide advice and train teachers in these skills. The chapter provides some strategies for school leaders to use to increase the dialogue about cultural competence within schools and strategies
for teachers to use to improve their own cultural competence in the classroom. The strategies discussed are:

– take an introspective look at your own culture along with your feelings toward culturally diverse students,
– classroom meetings,
– arrange classroom discussions that highlight cultural diversity,
– engage in one-on-one conversations with students from diverse backgrounds,
– use multicultural literature for personal and professional development,
– use multicultural literature in the classroom,
– use culturally responsive classroom management strategies
– seek the guidance of a mentor, and
– establish sound parent relationships

In the final chapter of the book Tony Townsend and Ira Bogotch consider how the chapters contained in the two sections of the book demonstrate that understanding school leadership is not only a matter of knowing the what, but also knowing how to bring school leadership into practice. For the authors the two objectives merited distinct analyses. Identifying the ‘what’ as vision, cultural competence, servant leadership, distributed leadership, world class standards, communities of learners, etc. represents one phase of school improvement. By itself, this knowledge of school leadership is incomplete and illegitimate. They argue, we must marry the ends of education to the knowledge of how we make change, improve schools, initiate structures, evolve into new mindsets, reflect on practices in action, and manage processes that sustain, succeed, and regenerate learning. It is here that the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ become the ‘whow’, where artistry starts to take place. They consider two schools systems, Victoria, Australia and Florida, USA, to demonstrate how some parts of the world focus mostly on the what but others are starting to consider the how as well. However, they recognize (as does Richard Elmore, 2007) that there is still a long way to go before we get it right.

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JOHN MACBEATH

2. WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Leadership is a word that invites immediate associations, with authority, conviction and with larger than life figures striding through corridors of power, making decisions that will impact on the lives of acquiescent followers. Leadership is a generic notion and one that is carelessly applied across differing institutional and political contexts.

Researchers have, for decades, looked for the common qualities of leaders that span the military, corporate business, public service agencies and the world of education. Such studies have appeal for governments always eager for templates that bridge description and prescription. In one of the early cross disciplinary forays in 1975 Lyle Spencer identified a range of common ‘soft skill competences’ that distinguished successful leaders in a number of different spheres of work. His findings were the spur for numerous successors, confirming the McBer division of leadership skills into ‘soft’ and ‘hard’, the people oriented qualities as against those more concerned with the technical or managerial aspects of the job. Each successive study offered new definitive, lists of key competencies of ‘new leaders’ (Goleman, 2002). These competency catalogues have been highly influential in proliferating self-assessment protocols (many available from the internet) and in recruitment of new leaders in the business world as well as in education.

‘New leaders’ are distinguished by their emotional intelligence, says Goleman, whose publications and empirical work at Harvard’s Center for Creative Leadership have arrived at 23 competencies. These are, in alphabetical order, analytical problem solving, conflict management, continuous learning, creativity/innovation, customer service, decision making, diplomacy, empathy, employee development/coaching, flexibility, futuristic thinking, goal orientation, interpersonal skills, leadership, management, negotiation, personal effectiveness, persuasion, planning/organizing, presenting, self-management (time and priorities), teamwork and written communication.

It is a formidable list and presupposes superleaders whose personal qualities and range of skills is such that they will not only inspire followership but transform their places of work (be they businesses, hospitals or schools) into effective high performing, high reliability organizations.

There is, however, sparse empirical evidence to connect individual leadership with high performing schools’ qualities. This is because in good schools leadership is mediated and distributed across the organization and it is the industry of teachers in classrooms who make the difference (Mulford, 2003, Spillane, 2006).

In search of the ‘what’ of leadership we have to look not only at those who lead from the apex of the organizational pyramid but also those who exercise leadership at lower levels of organizational hierarchies and, at a deeper level still, leadership which is often imperceptible, subtle in its effects and expressed neither in status nor position but in activity.

THE FALLACY OF HEROIC LEADERSHIP

Advocacy of ‘strong’ leadership runs through much of the corporate and educational literature and is international in its scope. It is the foundation stone of accountability, as Elmore remarks:

Accountability systems, and American views of leadership, tend to treat school leaders or principals as the primary agents of accountability in schools. The mythology of American education is heavily tilted in the direction of “strong leaders make good schools”. (Elmore, 2005, p. 11)

Something of the fallacy of heroic leadership is portrayed in Norman Dixon’s study of Military Incompetence (1994) in which the myths of the heroic leaders are exposed. From analysis of major wars in a number of different countries he adduces 15 incompetences. Among the 15 are:

- An inability to profit from past experience
- A resistance to exploiting available technology and novel tactics
- An aversion to reconnaissance, coupled with a dislike of intelligence (in both senses of the word)
- An apparent imperviousness to loss of life and human suffering amongst the rank and file
- A tendency to lay the blame on others
- A love of bull, smartness, precision and strict preservation of the military pecking order
- A high regard for tradition and other aspects of conservatism
- A lack of creativity, improvisation, inventiveness and open-mindedness

Asked to choose those that resonate most with their own workplaces, business leaders and school principals have no trouble in providing anecdotes in which these routinely play out in practice. Incompetencies (the dark corollary to competences) may be seen as individual human frailties but, like their positive counterpart, they deserve a more systemic analysis.
Their very commonality and recurrence across time and place point to something deeply institutionalized in assumptions about leadership. In her book Longitude Dava Sobel (1997, pp. 12-13) recounts the story of the Association, a British warship sailing towards home shores along with four others. An intrepid Midshipman warned the captain that they were approaching the treacherous pinnacle rocks of the Scilly Isles. For his insubordination the young sailor was hung from the yardarm. Not much later the ship ran aground on the pinnacle rocks leaving only two survivors to tell the tale. In modern guise the engineers who warned the NASA high command of the imminent disaster of the Challenger space shuttle launch were rewarded by the contemporary equivalent – losing their jobs.

Dissent and departure from the norm is intolerable in institutions built on strict hierarchy, and tall poppies are soon cut down to regulation size. Describing Major-General Damien-Smith, Dixon writes that the military had ‘never forgiven him his brilliance and unorthodoxy’ (p. 162). A ‘dislike of intelligence (in both senses of the word)’ is not restricted to the military or business world. An example of the latter comes from Judi Bevan’s study of The Rise and Fall of Marks and Spencer (2002). Explaining its decline in the late 1990’s she attributes this in large part to a leadership incapable of listening to divergent views, together with a sycophantic followership, too timid to confront hierarchical authority. Similar examples are all too easy to find in the world of educational leadership.

The construction of what it means to be a strong leader finds little endorsement in Collins and Porras’ studies (1994, 2001) of successful corporations in the U.S. The leaders of those successful companies were described as modest and self-effacing, surprised to be singled out as effective leaders, building the leadership capacities of their colleagues. They recognized that self-aggrandizement and holding onto power actually diminishes the social and intellectual capital of the organization. There are echoes of this in Hesselbein et al’s 1996 characterization of great leaders.

The most notable trait of great leaders, certainly of great change leaders, however, is their quest for learning. They show an exceptional willingness to push themselves out of their own comfort zones, even after they have achieved a great deal. They continue to take risks, even when there is no obvious reason for them to do so. And they are open to people and ideas even at a time in life when they might reasonably think—because of their success—that they know everything. (Hesselbein et al., 1996, p. 78) There are resonances of this in De Veer’s (2004), characterization of leaders as:

– seeking opportunities to learn and act with integrity
– adapting to differences
– committed to making a difference
- seek broad based knowledge
- bringing out the best in people
- insightful-seeing things from new angles
- have courage to take risks
- seeking out and using feedback to learn from mistakes
- open to criticism.

These qualities provide an antithesis to the heroism of strong leaders single-handedly turning round a school before moving on, leaving an imprint behind so deep as to defy meaningful succession. As has been pointed out by numerous commentators (Argyris and Schon, 1978, Senge, 1990, Hargreaves and Fink, 2005) leadership conceived in this mould is more likely to destroy than to enhance the capacity of schools for self improvement.

By restraining the exercise of leadership to legitimate authority, we also leave no room for leadership that challenges the legitimacy of authority or the "system of authorization itself" (Heifetz, 1994, p. 21).

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING DISABILITIES

As Senge (1990) argues, disempowering disabilities are not restricted to the military but are found deeply embedded in organizations that lack the resilience and creative energy to challenge authority. First in his list of organizational learning disabilities is the stance ‘I am my position’. This is all too familiar in the world of schools where principals and headteachers are their position and sometimes little else. The corollary to this is for others in the organization to define themselves in terms of their position - ‘I am just a classroom teacher’, ‘I am only a classroom assistant’, ‘I’m only a student’.

Very often teachers and students are happy to collude with this definition of roles. On the one hand it offers the security that comes from well-defined parameters, and on the other from a reluctance to assume responsibility for anything that exceeds the prescribed institutional remit. Martin (2002) terms this the ‘responsibility virus’, evidence of which was found in abundance in English schools which took part in a study for the National College of School Leadership (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004).

Teachers too often shared in leadership but without consciously recognizing the leadership roles they were performing, tending not to ‘leadership’ with themselves even when holding a designated promoted role. Where ‘distributed leadership’ was more explicit it ended to be seen in terms of subject leadership and referred to formal structures. Casting leadership exclusively in these terms, however, inhibits others in non-promoted roles to see
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leadership as their province, deprives the school of vital social capital and allows the ‘responsibility virus’ to multiply. (Martin, 2002, p. 25)

This study also furnished evidence of teachers’ welcome for prescription and ready packaged teaching materials, not because they lacked professional will or autonomy but because in a high pressure, high stakes climate it reduced the hours in an already extended workload. In two successive studies conducted in English primary and secondary schools (Galton and MacBeath, 2002, MacBeath and Galton, 2004) teachers reported no longer feeling in control of their teaching, while principals expressed similar levels of frustration at the lack of latitude for professional initiative and the lack of professional trust accorded to them by ‘nannying’ government bodies.

Reviewing a large body of evidence Roger Martin (1997) found that the feelings of being out of control of your own work was significantly correlated with chronic illness (physical and psychological) and reduced life expectancy. The individual disabling of teachers and senior leaders from without is compounded by an institutional response which reaffirms hierarchical responsibilities and stifles potential exercise of leadership at every level of a school.

Milgram’s (see for example Milgram, 1964) famous experiments in conformity demonstrate how easily personal authority can be ceded as a result of acquiescent followership being persistently reinforced. Helplessness, it is now widely accepted, is learned (Garber and Seligman, 1980). The puzzle is to know how much of this is a human weakness, a consequence of social conditioning or a product of schooling. Institutions, said Ivan Illich (1971) are designed to frustrate their own goals and, in respect of leadership and learning, schools seem by design to successfully frustrate both. The logic of deschooling was to remove the institutional constraints and ‘free the children’ (Graubard, 1971). In common with school effects studies, however, the problem and the solution are seen as located within the school, and removing hampering conventions will not of itself restore a natural order of spontaneous learning and democratic leadership. What has been, often painfully, learned by freedom of schools is that conventions cannot be removed, only rethought.

THE END OF PRINCIPALSHIP?

The image of the lone star principal directing, shaping and ‘running’ the school may be one that has now outlived its usefulness. It is a world view so deeply entrenched that it may take a long time to shift. However, notions of highly talented individuals being sought out to transform practice is no longer a tenable proposition says Southworth (2002), a view which receives widespread endorsement, (Fullan, 1991, Hargreaves, 2004, Cheng, 2005).
The scale and nature of change is such that we have to rethink what it means to lead schools in the twenty-first century.

‘Unrelenting change’ is a story told in many different places as policy initiatives flow across the principal’s desk in a seemingly endless stream (Mulford, 2003). The multiplicity and simultaneity of initiatives have become not only too pressing, argues Mulford, but external drivers undermine the power and discretion of school principals to exercise the leadership talents for which they were recruited. Instead they find themselves in compliant managerial roles, delivering agendas decided elsewhere and yet for which they are held to account.

The task of leading schools in the twenty first century can no longer be carried out by the heroic individual leader single handedly turning schools around, writes Gronn (2003). Schools are ‘greedy institutions’ and individual leadership is ‘greedy work’. It is all consuming, demanding unrelenting peak performance from superleaders and, Gronn concludes, no longer a sustainable notion.

The end of principalship as we have known it may be impelled, however, by what has been loosely but widely termed as a recruitment ‘crisis’. The crisis is common to many English speaking countries in which government policy shares uncannily similar demands, perhaps because policy borrowing is now so integral to the globalization agenda and susceptibility by policy makers and politicians to international league tables emanating from the OECD.

In 2003 Thomson and colleagues in Australia analyzed media reports on the recruitment crisis and identified two prevalent narratives, one of ‘sleepless nights, heart attacks and sudden death accountabilities’, the other of the ‘savior principal… who is able to create happy teams of teachers, students and parents for whom all reform is possible’ (2003:128). This duality needs to be understood, Thomson and colleagues argue, within a policy rhetoric of failing schools and ‘best’ practice. Where schools fail it is due to lack of leadership and when they succeed it is attributed to the savior principal. The policy logic that follows is to emulate what the best leaders do or have done. Unfortunately, this rarely works because this belief rests on a very shaky foundation, one which assumes that knowledge and skills transfer across contexts as if one school was simply like any other. Schools are not only greedy places but they are complex places too.

The following eight factors that recur most frequently in the ‘crisis’ literature focus on what happens to individual leaders to wear them down and sap their abilities to manage creatively. It has led many commentators to suggest alternative ways of thinking about and practising school leadership. The eight ‘dissatisfiers’ are:
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1. Stress
The increase in stress reported by principals and headteachers in a number of countries is attributed to the competitive nature of a market economy, bringing with it a need to work harder, more demanding hours and in face of progressively higher stakes. Principals/headteachers carry on their own shoulders liability for the success or failure of their schools but with more responsibility and accountability than real power (Thomson et al., 2003). In a study of 266 schools in the UK (Boyland, 2002 quoted in Mulford 2003), 71 per cent of long term absences for men over 45 were attributed to stress, while the figure was 58 per cent for women in the same age range.

2. Workload
Workload is closely related to reports of stress and appears to be common to many countries. In the US it has been a continuing source of concern for half a decade (Hertling, 2002, Lovely, 2004). Jones’ 1999 study of headteachers in the UK found close parallels with Livingstone’s study of primary school heads in the same year in New Zealand and Louden and Wildy’s 1999 study in Australia. One effect they report is for school leaders to devote less time to the core business of teaching and learning and more time to administrative tasks. Time, it is argued, has become fragmented, the demands of the urgent leaving inadequate space for the important while time for reflection and discussion with colleagues has shrunk commensurately.

In a 1998 UK Parliamentary report the Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) claimed that:

The reason why people are not applying for headteacher posts is that it is an enormously high-stakes, high-risk job without an understanding of their professional responsibilities or the fact that they may face a snowball of additional professional responsibilities in the future. Basically no one knows what the ground rules are when they apply for a headteacher post. That is the big issue.

(9th Parliamentary report on education & employment, 1998, item 166).

3. Accountability and bureaucracy
While principals/headteachers widely recognized the importance of accountability it was the bureaucratic aspects that demotivated them (Livingstone, 1999). Excessive paperwork combined with a constant pressure to justify actions taken and the ‘blame and shame’ attended with it is compounded, in the US at least, with threat of exposure and closure. Accountability has acquired negative connotations, researchers conclude, because it is not only highly demanding but often directed at the wrong
things and located in the person of the individual leader where the buck is seen to stop.

4. **Personal and domestic concerns**
A frequently cited inhibitor among teaching staff to apply for principalship was ‘crossing the professional border’ into school leadership (Tucker and Codding, 1999) For many of those teachers unwilling to take that step ‘the burden of headship’ (James and Whiting, 1998) threatened to destroy the balance between school and family life. In Australia, Dorman and d’Arbon (2003) reported similar disinclination among staff for whom principalship implied not only longer hours but impacted profoundly ‘on the balance of lifestyle’.

5. **Salary**
Salary rarely tops the list of dissatisfiers but it has to be weighed against the intensive demands and thanklessness of the job. Comparison between levels of responsibility of school leadership with leadership in other occupations are invidious. In an Australian study by Dorman and d’Arbon, (2003) principals commented on comparisons with similar positions of responsibility in industry or commerce ‘where the management of human and material resources was seen as equivalent but not as highly recompensed’ Principals, they claimed, earned less per hour than their staff although they worked thirty per cent longer hours in a week.

6. **Social Factors**
We are, argue other social commentators, living in a society where social relationships, parenting and attitudes of young people are experiencing dramatic and often unforeseen changes. The increasing diversity of the student population, multiplicity of language and ethnic backgrounds, short term refugeeism, the casualties of war, transience of the student body, concentrations of poverty in inner cities and depopulated rural areas, all bring their own, often formidable, challenges. Problems such as drug abuse, intimidation and violence create dilemmas which are often beyond the power of leadership to resolve but have repercussions within the school walls.

7. **The teacher supply line**
An OECD Education Policy Analysis in 2001 warned of a ‘meltdown scenario’ caused by a growing teacher exodus from the profession, positing widespread public dissatisfaction with the state of education in the face of a deep teacher-recruitment crisis and a growing sense of declining standards,
especially in the worst affected areas. The ‘crisis’ in teacher recruitment impacts directly on recruitment for principalship which has to understand and accommodate to a changing profile of the profession and the nature of teachers’ career paths. Those who came from industry looked for opportunities to work in teams and to have expanded influence. For example, new recruits with a background in industry, argues Susan Moore Johnson (2005), expect to work in teams and to share leadership responsibility but find themselves working in isolated classrooms, robbed of the initiative and latitude of decision-making they previously enjoyed.

8. Lack of succession
The ‘hole in the bucket’ inflow and outflow of staff, creates new kinds of challenges for sustainability and capacity building. A US study by Ingersoll (2003) reported 30 per cent of teachers leaving within three years, while 50 per cent are no longer in post after five years. This is a reflection of a shifting socio-economic situation in which job portfolios assume new shapes making it easier to cross professional demarcations. New recruits from other sectors of the economy bring to teaching changing expectations of the job, while others leave teaching as no longer the job they signed up to. This ‘revolving door’ syndrome, means there is a lack of flexibility for leadership in addressing issues creatively and with confidence in a minimal threshold of stability.

A FACTOR OF EIGHT
When these eight factors are taken together they depict something of the challenge facing the principalship in the new millennium. They suggest the need either for superleaders able to rise above the constraints and dissatisfiers, or a fundamental recasting of how we think about and practice school leadership. One variant, practised on a limited scale in the U.S. is dual leadership in which there are two incumbents in the job, sharing duties and carrying joint accountability. This is not too dissimilar from the Danish tradition in the Folkeskole in which there is no internal hierarchy and the school is led by a senior team of two. Although designated as principal and vice-principal they tend to work as a democratic leadership team.

When there is dual leadership or a principal and vice principal working closely together there may be a fluid and flexible interchange of roles, or alternatively leadership and management may be clearly demarcated, playing to the strengths of the respective individuals. One may be an inspirational leader but an ineffective manager, while the manager may possess of a high level organizational skill but lack leadership qualities.
The search for the super leader who both leads and manages and fulfils all of the 23 Goleman criteria helps to explain why there is a recruitment crisis, seen to apply not only in schools but in the business world too. In 2001 McKinsey published a book entitled The War for Talent (Michaels et al., 2001) describing the search for that rare species of transformational being. In riposte Malcom Gladwell (2002) offered an alternative construction of the issue. While the Mckinsey thesis was that talented individuals create great organizations, Gladwell proposed a counterpoint – great organizations create talented individuals.

If Gladwell’s analysis is preferred over the Mckinsey thesis the task of the principal is to let go rather than to hold on to power, to recognize and nurture incipient leadership and to spread it out. Perceiving and nurturing expertise enhances personal and professional authority rather than formal or institutional authority.

Improvement requires a relatively complex kind of cooperation among people in diverse roles performing diverse functions. This kind of cooperation requires understanding that learning grows out of differences in expertise rather than differences in formal authority. If collective learning is the goal, my authority to command you to do something doesn’t mean much if it is not complemented by some level of knowledge and skill which, when joined with yours, makes us both more effective. Similarly, if we have the same roles, I have little incentive to cooperate with you unless we can jointly produce something that we could not produce individually. In both instances the value of direction, guidance, and co-operation stems from acknowledging and making use of differences in expertise. (Elmore, 2000)

Much of the terminology in the alphabet soup of leadership contains heroic connotations – charismatic, transformational, inspirational, visionary, leadership. One variant that stands out from the imperious crowd is ‘servant leadership’. The originator of the term was Robert Greenleaf (1977) who developed his theory after reading Herman Hesse’s (1957) Journey to the East. In that book the author describes a group of men on a journey to the East in which they are sustained by a servant who not only does the menial chores but keep up their spirits through his stories, songs and his very presence. When he suddenly disappears the group falls into disarray and abandons its journey.

The defining character of the servant leader is subjugation of the self, born not from low self-esteem but from a highly developed sense of self which is strong enough to feel no need for deference, adulation or reinforcement. This is the very antithesis of charismatic and narcissistic
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leadership, although it might be argued that by the very qualities that define service to others it conveys a powerful charismatic authority.

Greenleaf makes the following comparisons between the traditional leader and the servant leader (Figure 1).

Servant leadership presupposes a culture in which senior leaders are able to operate in the fashion described by the right hand column rather than the left. In a study for the National College of School Leadership in England (MacBeath, Waterhouse and Oduro, 2004) we found that the ability and confidence to ‘let go’ of authority and upset traditional expectations of headship required a slow burn. Like the teacher who takes over an unruly class, stamps her authority on the situation, and follows the maxim ‘don’t smile until Christmas’ (Canfield and Ryan, 1970), English headteachers found they had to fit the mould before they could break it or even begin to fray it at the edges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The traditional leader</th>
<th>The servant leader</th>
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<tr>
<td>- asks subordinates questions such as “did you do this? What is the status of...?”</td>
<td>- asks “How might I be of help?”, “What is it that you need from me?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>- measures productivity and outcomes using quantitative indicators.</td>
<td>- expects people to do the right things because they understand what needs to be done and will do those things without being instructed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- sees people as a valuable resource and himself as chief</td>
<td>- believes that people come first and that his role is facilitating and fostering the leadership capabilities of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- is seen as a stern taskmaster often driven by a self-serving ethic</td>
<td>- models and lays stress on ethical behaviour and is trusting, accepting and open to new ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>- promotes internal competition</td>
<td>- believes that service and competition are antithetical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- mediates disputes</td>
<td>- notices those whose views are not being heard and takes time to listen, to offer supportive coaching in order to help the individual and to strengthen the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- demands compliance and seeks to recruit people in his own image</td>
<td>- empathises and accepts the person as they are but refuses to accept performance as less than the best that individual can offer.</td>
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Figure 1: The traditional leader and the servant leader
Authentic leaders breathe the life force into the workplace and keep the people feeling energized and focused. As stewards and guides they build people and their self-esteem. They derive their credibility from personal integrity and ‘walking’ their values. (Bhindi and Duignan, 1996, p. 29)

It is only when the culture is characterized by mutual trust and a willingness to cope with uncertainty and flux that leadership and followership can become interchangeable rather than fixed and immutable roles. In such a culture leaders find occasion to follow and followers discover occasions to lead as the occasion demands.

LEADERSHIP AS DISTRIBUTED

The term ‘distributed leadership’ is now widely used as an antithesis to heroic or charismatic leadership. It tends, however, to be interpreted as a conscious and deliberative act by those in positions of power, giving away tiny morsels of power, selecting out and appointing people to roles within the school. To think of leadership this way, as design, says Jim Spillane (2005), is problematic. Describing principals who have told him they plan to distribute leadership in their schools he points out to them that, if they have eyes to see it, leadership is already distributed. ‘It bubbles up’ and can either be blocked by institutional artifacts or allowed to rise freely.

Leadership is inherent in what Spillane et al calls ‘reciprocal interdependencies’ (2001, p. 34). Whether taking action, innovating or creating knowledge, individuals play off one another. What A does can only be fully understood by taking into account what B does, and vice versa, each bringing differing resources - skills, knowledge, and perspectives to bear.

We contend, in other words, that the collective cognitive properties of a group of leaders working together to enact a particular task leads to the evolution of a leadership practice that is potentially more than the sum of each individual’s practice. Consequently, to understand the knowledge needed for leadership practice in such situations, one has to move beyond an analysis of individual knowledge and consider what these leaders know and do together. Depending on the particular leadership task, the knowledge and expertise of school leaders may be best explored at the group or collective level rather than at the individual leader level. (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 12)

Distributed leadership is made manifest in ‘negotiated order’ between leaders and followers. While leaders can often draw on their positional authority to support the beliefs and actions they advocate, followers can influence leaders by drawing on personal characteristics, access to information, their special knowledge or expertise and so may influence leadership strategies through subtle forms of manipulation, subversion and ‘creative insubordination’. In other words, followers are an essential
WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

element of leadership activity. Nor, might we add, that those roles are static. Those who lead may also follow, while those who follow may also lead, depending on context and the task at hand.

This is akin to what Sergiovanni terms leadership ‘density’. (2001) Inserting a dipstick into the culture of a school can provide a reading of how far leadership penetrates into the ‘way we do things round here’. Much of the incipient leadership is dormant, unrealized, and, says Ann Liebermann (video, 2005), ‘many of the pedagogical and leadership secrets are ones which teachers take with them to the grave’.

The foremost task of leadership is to ‘awaken the sleeping giant of teacher leadership’ (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001). It is an apt metaphor to capture the dormant qualities of an underestimated and undervalued profession and the massive potential for leadership which lies often unexplored and unexploited. Why, asks Argyris (1993) are organizations generally less intelligent than their individual members? It is because they do not have, or have not found, ways to bring to fruition the hidden capital of their people.

This principle extends beyond teachers, to classroom assistants, to support staff of all kinds and to students, the school’s largest untapped knowledge source, ‘the treasure in our very own backyard’ (SooHoo, 1993). If self-efficacy and emotional intelligence are essential allies of leadership then passivity and dependency are its adversaries (Dweck, 1986). Students will encounter few occasions in life after school when they are not required to take the initiative on behalf of others. There are few occupations that do not require some form of leadership and informed self conscious followership.

Schools which overlook these intelligence sources are inevitably poorer as a consequence. There is a danger of student voice and student leadership at one extreme being merely tokenistic and, at the other, enjoying a privileged status as against the voices of teachers or others with an equal right to be heard and to enjoy opportunities to make a difference.

Like teacher leadership, student leadership is there to see for those who have eyes to see it. Much of student leadership is exercised in the underlife of schools, often in anti-educational and anti-social activity. The power of the peer group has long been recognized as a key, and often insidious, determinant of learning (Hargreaves, 1967, Harris, 1998, Thrupp, 1999) and leadership often assumes insidious forms such as bullying and intimidation. In recognition of this, third millennium schools are increasing opportunities for young people to lead in pro-social ways and to lead the learning of others. Peer mentoring is one such example. There is also increasing scope, particularly in ICT, for students, even very young children and children with special needs, to lead their teachers’ learning. Likewise through projects, sport, music, creative and performing arts and
through extra-curricular activities young people have opportunities to lead their peers and often their teachers too. Leadership is to be found in the flow of learning activities in which students are engaged.

LEADERSHIP AS ACTIVITY

These insights lead us to a view of leadership, less as roles and more as activity. Because leadership is often so deeply buried within school life and invisible except to the enlightened eye (Eisner, 1991) we need a new frame, or new lens, through which to perceive it. To make leadership visible and bring it self consciously to the surface, one has to detect it in the minutiae of activity, often simply taken as read or, as was often said to us, ‘it’s just the way things are’. Yet when we examine micro activity within the school we can begin to detect situations in which leadership is informal and intuitive but often highly influential. In situations such as the following a school may ask itself ‘Who singly or jointly exercises leadership?’

- A newly qualified teacher in the staffroom is showing signs of distress.
- A senior colleague has acted unjustly but no one is willing to challenge the decision.
- A parent is waiting outside the office looking lost.
- A fight has broken out among a group of students in the school yard.
- Students are complaining about boredom and passivity in their learning.

Making small acts of leadership visible broadens understanding and smooths the path to distributed leadership. It demystifies leadership and furthers student, professional and organizational learning.

Making leadership and learning visible is not simply an academic exercise for schools in the current policy climate. It is implicit in school self-evaluation, in school improvement, in schools as centers of inquiry, and as teachers as researchers. ‘Know thyself’ was a Socratic first principle of education. Without that self-knowledge schools simply become pieces to be moved in someone else’s game plan. With self-knowledge the connective ‘and’ takes on new meaning.

Social capital flows from the endowment of mutually respecting and trusting relationships which enable a group to pursue its shared goals more effectively than would otherwise be possible. It can never be reduced to the mere possession or attribute of an individual. It results from the communicative capacity of a group. (Simon Szreter, 2000)

NOTES

1 Workshop run over a period of two years for Newcastle Talent Group
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JOHN MACBEATH


