Despite over 40 years of research and writing about how to lead educational change, we still can’t get it right. Although we keep fine tuning our present ways, we are yet to come up with an approach that enables educational change to happen successfully and sustainably. Although this book acknowledges the importance of learning from our past, it also highlights a key deficiency that has consistently compromised these efforts. To date, our approach to leading educational change has mainly focussed on trying to come up with the perfect practical strategy or plan. In contrast, this book argues that leading educational change successfully is not about following a clearly defined process like following a recipe, but it is an improvisational art more like driving down a busy main street during peak hour traffic. The successful leadership of educational change is an improvisational art because although the leader needs to have an overarching strategy, a guiding plan, what they actually do from moment to moment cannot be scripted. The leader has to move back and forth from their plan to the reality currently being experienced so that the plan is being achieved but any adverse effects on those involved are being empathically and immediately attended to as well. This approach to the leadership of educational change emphasises the relational as well as the rational requirements. While such views might be familiar to many, what is new and unique about this book is that it describes how it all can be achieved. It provides clear, research supported, guidance for those who wish to finally lead successful and sustainable educational change.
Leading Educational Change Wisely
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Christopher M. Branson

*Australian Catholic University, Victoria, Australia*
DEDICATION

With deepest gratitude to ....

Gayle, who taught me,

Christopher, who inspired me, and

Paul, who guided me.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Even a cursory glance over the large amount of educational change literature shows that, while much has been written since the early 1970s about how to lead educational change, considerable doubts, misgivings, and uncertainties still remain. We still don’t know how to successfully lead educational change. It would seem that hindsight has helped us to learn from past mistakes but we have yet to find a proactive rather than a reactive solution. Although we keep fine tuning our present ways of leading educational change in order to redress its perceived deficiencies, we have not been able to come up with a leadership approach that enables educational change to happen more constructively, productively, cooperatively, amicably, and successfully. Consequently, notable authors, such as Fullan, Dawson, Hargreaves, Hopkins, Hallinger, Miles, and Randall have regularly returned to the field of educational change leadership with new insights, new perspectives, and new suggestions.

But, this is not to say that our past efforts at bringing about educational change have been a waste of time and effort. This would only be so if we failed to learn from what has happened; what has failed and what has worked. Despite a lengthy history of an apparent general failure to successfully lead educational change, there remains an unquestionable trend, which, in itself, provides significant insight.

To this end, it can be gleaned from the authors cited above that the first signs of a more structured and directed approach to educational change began in the 1960s and has progressed through the various eras of innovation, implementation, meaning making, and capacity building. It would seem that the first form of a structured and directed approach to educational change commenced because external sources of financial support became available, but this initial foray is variously described as having been largely ad hoc, idiosyncratic, isolated, individualistic, and narrowly focussed innovations. Individual schools or teachers organising change to largely suit a specific, immediate, and personal preference.

However, this approach to educational change changed in the 1970s, which were marked by considerable social upheaval, particularly in the western world. During this time, western culture was confronted by the divisive issues associated with the Vietnam War, women’s liberation, animal liberation movements, and the hippy-culture lifestyle portrayed as supporting ‘free love’ and the use of previously ‘illicit drugs’. For many, the very foundations of a civilized society were under threat. Hence, with the realisation of the potential social benefits that could be achieved through education, those in senior positions more able to influence either the level of funding or the political power and authority within the system sought to implement an approach to achieving more unified, desirable, holistic and accountable educational change. It was thought that the right change implemented across an entire educational
system would help stabilise a seemingly turbulent and deteriorating society. Save society through changing schooling. But, if monies were to be spent on education by the district or the nation then education should serve the needs of the district or nation. The popular political opinion became that education should account for its financial assistance by producing students deemed to be better prepared to positively and willingly contribute to a more desirable, productive and stable society.

These were the ‘implementation’ years. Not surprisingly, this implementation phase began with a very rigid and controlled strategy. Leadership was still coming out of the shadows of the previously very successful and influential era of scientific and organisational management. Control, predictability and structure had brought unprecedented purpose, profit, and power into organisational and industrial life such that the managerial strategies deemed responsible for these successes were seen as timeless principles rather than contextual practices. Back in the 1940s, control, predictability and structure brought clarity, unity, and collaboration into an obscure, disorganised and individualistic world of work still struggling to make the change from an essentially rural farming lifestyle to an urbanised industrial and business centred world.

But once the change to a more controlled, predictable, and structured workplace had been achieved, were the managerial and leadership practices which brought these changes about still suitable and relevant? A question never seriously considered. Success engendered posterity such that these managerial and leadership practices became entrenched and unchallenged in subsequent change theories.

This implementation phase of educational change was marked by a very exclusive, top-down and controlling form of leadership. Those with the acknowledged formal power were taken to be the experts such that what was to be changed, how it was to be changed, and who would be involved in creating the change were all chosen by the leaders. Moreover, the entire change process was geared to achieve those outcomes chosen by those incharge. As a result, the change strategies used at this time were logical-sequential in nature; purely influenced by a scientific, technical-rational, approach to organising and controlling human behaviour. Thus, it was largely inflexible and impersonal. It was firmly believed that what needed to be done was entirely predictable and that each person involved in bringing about the change could be expected to fulfil their allocated role perfectly once they understood what they had to do. Indeed, the clarity of each person’s defined role added to their accountability to those in charge. Just as a broken cog in the workings of a machine can be replaced so that the machine can function effectively and efficiently, so too can a perceivably underperforming worker be replaced to ensure that the desired change could be accomplished.

But people aren’t cogs. The best laid plans, no matter how well they are described, are still prone to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and mistakes when they involve a number of people each with their own unique idiosyncratic mind. People make their own decisions and judgements about what they should do and how they should do it. Unless each person is individually supervised, they will complete their assigned tasks in their own way based on their own sense of importance and preference.
In addition, the social upheaval of these times, reflected in such things as the previously mentioned anti Vietnam War demonstrations, women’s liberation, animal liberation movements, and the hippy-culture, also introduced a widespread scepticism, if not resistance, to hierarchical authority. Blind loyalty became a thing of the past. The populous would no longer comply unquestionably with top-down directives. Employers had to prove they were trustworthy before their employees would trust their judgements and decisions. Also, in order to become trustworthy, leaders had to allow their followers to have some form of meaningful input into the decision-making process. The leader-follower nexus had moved from a ‘me-them’ perspective to an ‘us’ perspective.

Understandably then, such an external and authoritarian approach to the implementation of desirable educational change proved to be largely ineffectual. Often initial gains were soon lost as those involved became less efficient and effective.

In order to rectify this unsustainable lack of success in the implementation of educational change, the general change strategy took on a more inclusive form. Here, the implementation of educational change adopted a more bottom-up approach in which the experience and opinion of those involved was used to help construct the change strategy. In this way, it was anticipated that the change would be more meaningful for those bringing about the change and, thereby, enhance their motivation and commitment making them more effective and efficient. Although the outcome of the change was still the prerogative of those in charge, the change process, itself, was far more people-focused, flexible, and collaborative. It was about building cooperation and understanding within the organisation. Yet, hindsight shows that this revised form of implementing educational change was not the panacea expected. This approach did not engage the people involved to the level expected such that large-scale successful educational change remained an ideal rather than a reality.

At this point in the development of educational change leadership, a significant break with tradition occurred. Change leadership became a duality. Previously the fundamental consideration was the desired outcome; now the change leader had to also consider the persons involved in the change. While the previous strategy involved people, it did not consider them. Indeed, they were like invited guests at a dinner party who can eat and talk as much as they like but can’t change the menu. Those involved in the more meaningful approach to the latter phase of educational change implementation were welcome to become involved and enjoy the experience but the change outcome was predominantly presupposed.

Now the onus was on ensuring that the people affecting the change were not only involved in creating the change strategy but also they personally benefitted from the change. The change leader now had to consider both the strategy and the people. The change process not only had to achieve some desirable outcome but it also had to build the capacity of those involved. As Fullan (2008) explains, building the capacity of each person involved in the change process is about being concerned with competencies, resources, and motivation. “Individuals and groups are high in capacity if they possess and continue to develop knowledge and skills, if they attract and use resources wisely, and if they are committed to putting in the energy to get important things done collectively and continuously” (p. 57). Each person
involved in bringing about the change could no longer be seen as a pre-existing and complete package of beneficial resources but, rather, an evolving source of potential and unanticipated benefits awaiting the opportunity to bloom. Moreover, it was expected that the leader would provide the encouragement, support, resources and possibility for this potential to bloom.

Leadership of educational change now takes on a new ethical dimension while maintaining its original managerial dimension as well. Ethical decision making is about doing what you know you ought to do for the good of all rather than just doing what you would like to do. Now leading change is as much about acting so as to not produce harm but rather to do good, to honour others, to take positive stands, and to behave in ways that clearly show that their own self-interests are not the driving motivation behind their leadership as it is about achieving a desirable change. It is expected that those who now lead educational change will always act justly, rightly and promote good rather than harm and will be directly accountable to those they lead.

As such, the form of leadership employed is inherently relational and adaptable. It incorporates an understanding of a truly and sincerely shared approach to the attainment of a mutually desired beneficial outcome. The leader, and those being led, are in partnership, striving as one to learn more about the organisation, those they are working with, and themselves so that they can become more aware of what is best to achieve and how they can better help to achieve it. Such an understanding about the leadership of change views the process as incremental not holistic, proactive not preordained, and complex not linear. It involves a continuous commitment to review and reflection so that the change process is constantly attending to the current pivotal issues - be they practical outcomes or human needs.

Hence Bolman and Deal (2008) yearn for wise leaders of educational change. Leaders who have high levels of personal artistry so that they can respond appropriately and effectively to today’s challenges, ambiguities, and paradoxes. These leaders need a “sense of choice and personal freedom to find new patterns and possibilities in everyday life at work. They need versatility in thinking that fosters flexibility in action. They need capacity to act inconsistently when uniformity fails, diplomatically when emotions are raw, non-rationally when reason flags, politically in the face of vocal parochial self-interest, and playfully when fixating on task and purpose backfires” (p. 435).

However, while there is a clearly distinguishable transcending dimension to the evolution of the leadership of educational change, there are two important points of clarification about this evolution that need to be acknowledged. First, the establishment of a new understanding of how to better lead educational change supersedes but does not eliminate its predecessor. Indeed, by superseding rather than eliminating its predecessor, the new understanding actually preserves those views that preceded it. Each newly emergent understanding of educational change leadership includes its preceding view and then adds its own new and defining perspectives. This means that there are always elements of previous understandings still generally evident. Secondly, although this text has described this evolutionary process in a brief but systematic, logical, and sequential way, the reality is not as simple and clear cut.
Just as understandings can evolve, they can also regress. In following the pattern of emergence of educational change leadership understandings, we have to also accept that repressions and dissociations have occurred, and are still occurring, in this process. We humans find it hard to let go of previous habits, particularly when they have been perceived as beneficial or when our new ways do not seem to bring immediate beneficial results. In other words, there is ebb and flow in this evolutionary process. The actual evolution of change leadership has meandered more than it has progressed but the predominant movement has been towards the more person-centred, capacity building, and transformative perspective. Hence, while it can be claimed that there is a discernable pattern of direction in the evolution of how best to lead educational change, this pattern was far from clear and distinct at any given point in time.

Although it can be argued that the evolutionary process for the development of educational change leadership is perhaps less distinct than has been described, there is no doubting the abundant evidence of recurrent failure which fuelled the continual search to find a better way to lead change. Indeed, there is much literary evidence to suggest that we still haven’t got it right. Margaret Wheatley (2006, p. 138) asserts that; “Our ideas and sensibilities about change come from the world of Newton. We treat a problematic organization as if it was a machine that had broken down. This approach explains why the majority of organizational change efforts fail. Senior corporate leaders report that up to 75% of their change projects do not yield the promised results.” Similarly, Andy Hargreaves (2005, p. 282) argues that despite all of our previous endeavours and our “impressive knowledge base and expertise about the strategic and cultural aspects of educational change, too many change efforts remain disappointing and ineffective. Successful school change on a widespread basis continues to be infuriatingly elusive.” An understanding completely shared by Fullan (1998; p. 217) who writes that; “Despite massive inputs of resources and despite numerous different types of plans and strategies, very little significant change has occurred at the school level corresponding to the intended consequences of these innovations.”

Thus, the view expressed in this text is that there has been a clearly discernable evolution in how best to lead educational change but we have yet to sufficiently understand the impact of change on people such that how best to lead educational change remains a mystery. Various writers have described this evolution as a shift from a predominantly transactional to an essentially transformational approach to leadership. Others describe this evolution as having moved leadership away from its self-centred, explicit, practical, and outcome-based focus and more towards a moral, implicit, relational, and human-centred style. The leadership of educational change has gone from implementing a prescribed process to more about building a professional culture that is able to embrace change.

Hence, this text concentrates on how a school leader is able to build and implement just such a professional culture. How the school leader can build capacity within their self and others so as to more readily achieve the educational changes deemed necessary by the school community. This is about describing wise leadership that is expert and intuitive, practical and thoughtful, purposeful and empathic, strategic and flexible. Today, it is wisdom, rather than technical and procedural knowledge, which is at the heart of successfully leading educational change.
To this end, this text constructs an understanding of the leadership of educational change in the following ways. Chapter 2 takes the lead from a number of literary sources, which highlight the phenomenological, particularly the emotional, consequences invariably associated with change. As so powerfully foreseen by Fullan (1982, p. 4), “Neglect of the phenomenology of change – that is, how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended – is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most educational reforms.” Yet we have mostly ignore this advice since, more recently, Hargreaves (2005, p. 293) laments that, “The emotional dimension of educational change is not a frill but a fundamental of successful and sustainable school improvement and deserves increased attention.” Hence this chapter explores the implication of including a far more explicit awareness of the phenomenological issues associated with the leadership of educational change. Here the essential role of wisdom in guiding the leader is highlighted.

However, it is all very well to promote the role of wisdom in guiding the leadership of educational change; it is another thing to explain in more detail what this might mean. There is something very wholesome and reassuring in associating wisdom with the leadership of educational change but being able to provide a detailed description of the practical implications of this association is far more ambiguous, complicated and challenging. It is essential that this association does not become just another motherhood catch-phrase. Hence, chapter 3 not only defines wisdom but also describes how wisdom can better guide leadership through the challenges, ambiguities, uncertainties, and paradoxes associated with successfully implementing change. Here, the development of crucial knowledge about one’s self, one’s external reality, and one’s social reality is clearly established and described with reference to an appropriately devised conceptual framework.

As a result of this discussion of the foundations of the wise leadership of educational change, the fundamental place of self-knowledge through self-reflection is recognized. Unfortunately, self-reflection is neither natural nor simple; one has to work very hard at it in order to benefit from it. Consequently, chapter 4 uses theoretical precepts and research data to provide a clear picture of the essence, and means for developing effective self-reflection techniques, which are specifically geared towards enhancing the successful leadership of educational change.

Chapter 5 then deals with the crucial role associated with leading educational change that deals with the gaining of essential knowledge about one’s external reality. Here, two aspects are considered. The first aspect is the way to develop a guiding logistical strategy. Unlike the past, such a strategy is not meant to dominate the process but, rather, to give clarity of purpose and responsibilities. Although people do not like to be controlled and manipulated, they do wish to know where they might be heading. This provides the prerequisite sense of minimal safety and security that we all yearn for. People might argue against and resist any proposed change but at least they will know the ground upon which they are standing and this is a primordial need. In addition, this chapter examines the many competing forces, which are pulling or pushing schools to change. The argument presented is that the principal needs to have the awareness of all these forces so that they can lead their school community through the change rather than being led by the forces unquestioningly and powerlessly.
Then, chapter 6 discusses arguably the most overlooked dimension of leading educational change – the phenomenological aspect. This is about the leader being able to develop the appropriate relational knowledge and capacity so as to maximise the engagement of those being led. Essentially, this chapter explores change from the perspective of the ‘other’. It highlights the incredible depth and breadth of the possible impact of change on people. In this way, this chapter is about building communal understanding, trust, empathy, and collegiality. It describes resistance to change not as interpersonal conflict but as a search for shared wisdom, common understanding, and strategic development.

Finally, chapter 7 draws all of our insights about what constitutes the wise leadership of educational change together. It argues that it is only if we have a comprehensive awareness of the phenomenological demands on all those involved in educational change, with all that this entails, will our leaders have the wisdom, knowledge, skill, and support required to transcend the turbulence and uncertainty that invariably accompanies educational change and, thereby, be able to lead others to create a better learning environment within their school. Also, this chapter argues that the school leader cannot do this alone. The political and systemic governance of schools and schooling must change, too.
CHAPTER 2

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

If deliberately focussed organisational change has been endemic within our schools for over 50 years, then why have we not perfected it? Why do so many authors in the field of educational change continue to claim that our educational leaders still need to learn how to lead change more effectively? As was highlighted in the previous chapter, much of the educational change literature positions the commencement of deliberately focussed and organised educational change in the early 1960s and goes on to acknowledge the still lingering lack of clarity and certainty in just how it should be implemented. Quite recently, Fullan (2005, p. 1) declared that while some progress has been made in knowing how to better implement educational reform processes, invariably they remain “neither deep nor sustainable”. Similarly, Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) lament that “producing deep improvement that lasts and spreads remains an elusive goal of most educational change efforts.” (p. 5) Moreover, Hargreaves (2005, p. 282), himself, argues that even with all the knowledge we have gained over the past 50 years about how to effectively lead change, “too many change efforts remain disappointing and ineffective [and] successful school change on a widespread basis continues to be infuriatingly elusive.” Despite all our theories and all our efforts, deeply effective and sustainable educational change remains indefinable. Arguably, something, some key integral feature, must be missing from how we conceptualise and, thus, implement change. Until we can unearth and appropriately attend to this ‘missing bit’, our approach to the leadership of educational change will remain deficient and, thus, frustratingly unsuccessful.

Here lies the conundrum. As educational change theorists, we cannot continue to largely promote the same form of change processes and expect different results. Nor can we ignore the burgeoning demands being made upon our schools and educational systems throughout the world to implement change. Educational change is endemic and we must continue to strive to find a key to achieving it successfully.

Finding the correct way to properly lead educational change is not just about ensuring that our schools will be able to achieve what they are meant to do but also to ensure that the well-being of those who are in charge of leading the change is paramount.

Being caught between having to lead change and not having access to a reliable change process must be incredibly stressful for our school leaders. Thus, it is not surprising to note the widespread acknowledgement of serious problems associated with unacceptable levels of stress in leadership, untenable levels of disinterest in leadership positions amongst suitably qualified middle managers, and some unsustainable administrative practices within organisations (Allison, 1997; Bergin and Solman, 1988; Carr, 1994; Rees, 1997; Robertson and Matthews, 1988; Smith and
Cooper, 1994). More specifically, Allison (1997, p. 39) highlights that Canadian research supports the perception that “a substantial number of school administrators have had to take medical leave due to stress-related illnesses”. There is indisputable worldwide evidence showing that school leaders, today, are more prone to serious, even life threatening, levels of stress than ever before and an inadequate or deficient change theory must be acknowledged as a contributing factor.

However, believing that it is possible to instantaneously and magically create a totally new and completely credible and reliable educational change process is an unrealistic and ridiculous presumption. In order to improve the future, we must learn from the past. There is an abundance of data and documentation from our past attempts to develop a credible and reliable educational change process and it is folly to ignore this resource when searching for a better process. Rather than ignoring this resource, because it seems to have failed to produce the expected results, what we must look for are the overlooked insights which will provide the key to finding and extrapolating a successful change process.

In other words, this is about locating a transcendental pattern, an observable direction, to our slowly evolving understanding about how best to lead educational change. This means that any new component within this process includes but goes beyond our current understanding. We are in search of the next stage in our understanding of what constitutes a credible and reliable educational change process. This search proceeds by first distinguishing the continuing relevant components of our existing understanding, then adds its own new and more differentiated perceptions. Rather than our new understanding being a distinctively separate perspective, our new understanding incorporates, integrates and then transcends what we currently know about how best to lead educational change. Our new perspective treats our current knowledge and practices with dignity by incorporating and integrating any perceived beneficial dimensions but transcends these by redressing their perceived deficiencies.

This means that by superseding rather than eliminating the existing understanding, our new understanding of what constitutes a credible and reliable educational change process will actually preserve some aspects of our current practices. Some of our current understandings and practices will continue to prevail as an integral part of how best to lead educational change. For example, developing a logistical plan or strategy will remain as an essential and integral part of the leadership of educational change but its pre-eminence might well be diminished.

Following this lead, what constitutes a credible and reliable change process is formed from the procedures of incorporation, integration and transcendence being applied to our current educational context. To this end, the first step in this process, incorporation, means that our change process must include any fundamental, immutable, and universal aspects of our current understanding of leading educational change. However, in order to accomplish this step we must first determine what these key aspects might be.

Here it is essential to distinguish between the universal and the specific aspects within the leadership of educational change. It is the universal aspects of such leadership that we wish to select.
Chapter 1 provided a brief overview of the issues, tensions, and practices associated with the leadership of educational change, which evolved from its perceived inception as a formalised process in the 1960s up until today. The universal aspects of such leadership are the constant factors found in the stories and theories associated with educational change during this time. While how such leadership took place may have changed considerably since the 1960s, there are constant elements in what the leader had to achieve and, in a general sense, the environment in which this change had to occur. First, such change cannot happen without some form of a plan or strategy. The common assumption is that beneficial educational change won’t happen naturally or automatically. Also, that this change implies a movement away from a current state to some new or improved state and that this requires some rationalised, logistical, planned action. Secondly, the leader could not achieve this desired outcome by their self. The leader had to involve others in order to accomplish this plan or strategy. Finally, the leader needed to be aware of the diverse forces or pressures causing the need to bring about change.

Indeed, these three elements are described in the educational change literature as the technological, socio-political, and structural perspectives (Blenkin, Edwards, & Kelly, 1997; Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1997; House & McQuillan, 1998). The technological perspective is the systematic, instrumental, logical, sequential, objective action or plan, which is essentially concerned with describing the presumed most effective and efficient strategy for bringing about the desired intention or outcome. On the other hand, the socio-political perspective acknowledges that schools are heterogeneous entities such that they are inevitably sites of ongoing political, social, and cultural struggles as individuals and groups apply various strategies, and various sources of power and influence, to further their own interests. Finally, the structural perspective emphasises the need to realise that schools are not isolated social entities but rather they are an integral cog in our social construction mechanisms, which highlights the need to be fully aware of the breadth and relative strength of sources of influence that strive to force schools to adopt change.

Thus, it is clear that these three elements remain constant in educational change, today. They are the universal aspects of leading educational change. Too obvious you may say! But it is essential to state the obvious if we are to move fittingly to the next stage of our formation of a more credible and reliable process for leading educational change. Before ‘integrating’, we must ‘incorporate’ each of these universal aspects. This means that each element must be seen in its fullness and removed from any form of existing prejudice or misunderstanding, which could minimize and, thereby, compromise, its essential role in our new understanding of change leadership.

In order to recognise and understand how, in the past, we have not treated these three elements equally it is necessary to briefly explore the social milieu, which influenced our thinking at the time. Essentially, our past thinking about the leadership of educational change was influenced by our lingering modernist perspective. One of the features of this modernist perspective was its commitment to the differentiation of all that constituted human experiences. In endeavouring to seek truth, control, and predictability through scientific methods of observation, measurement and analysis, reality was particularised and differentiated. Moreover, once
differentiated, the resultant individual components were isolated, separated and dissected in order to be more thoroughly studied, scrutinized and evaluated. Ultimately, this process of differentiation and dissection not only led to a heightened emphasis on those aspects of human experiences that readily or partially lent themselves to analysis by scientific reasoning but, also, led to a devaluing of those other aspects of human experiences that defied analysis by scientific reasoning. This outcome resulted in the formation of clear distinctions and perceived levels of importance between human qualities that had previously been considered united as one within human affairs.

Simply stated, understandings about the important features of human life became fragment, differentiated, and discriminatory. Not only was a particular important feature of human life, such as leadership, broken up into its constituent parts but also the perceived importance of each of these parts varied greatly.

Applied to the leadership of educational change then, it was universally accepted that this leadership responsibility entailed three essential elements: the technological, socio-political, and structural perspectives. However, as for the reasons just described, these three elements of the leadership of educational change are differentiated. Rather than seeing them as equally important interwoven dimensions of leadership, the importance placed upon each of these dimensions varied greatly. Unfortunately, the how of leadership, the technological perspective which was essentially the leader’s plan or strategy, lent itself more readily to being studied, scrutinized, evaluated, and described such that this element easily dominated leadership of educational change theorising. Hence, much of the focus of leadership literature was about particular logical-sequential plans, or strategic models, for how the leader should act. That is to say, these theories concentrated on the rationalised strategy for bringing about change, with less attention given to the structural or contextual perspective, and far less attention given to the socio-political perspective of leadership as these latter dimensions are inherently more abstract, subjective, and inconsistent than objective, controllable and predictable and, thereby, far less suitable for the application of scientific reasoning.

As we now move to the integration phase of forming a more credible and reliable process for the leadership of educational change the first step is to redress the imbalance in the perceived level of relative importance assigned to each of the three universal elements. Each perspective is to play an equal part within the new understanding.

However, being an equal part does not necessarily mean that each perspective will be treated equally in this book. No, in order to redress the previous imbalances it will be necessary to provide more information about those parts less well understood and appreciated. In other words, although this book will describe in more detail the socio-political perspective, in particular, and the structural perspective, this is not meant to raise their perceived level of importance above that of the technological perspective but, rather, to counteract the lack of existing knowledge and awareness of the nature of these perspectives.

This process of integration, or reunification, of these three perspectives underscores their fundamental interdependency. Each perspective is influenced by the
others and, at the same time, influences the others. Hargreaves (2005, p. 285) captures this understanding nicely when he writes;

Managing change becomes a collective process, not an individual one. Initiative and creativity come out of the shadows of coordination and control. Leadership calls for the ability to create underlying senses of basic personal safety and emotional security, in which risk and creativity can flourish. Efforts are coordinated and new directions set by learning, information gathering and dialogue rather than through administrative regulation and hierarchical control.

Here, Hargreaves is not calling for the abolishment of the technological perspective but rather for its integration into a more open, collaborative, flexible, and inclusive working environment. Indeed, he posits that the essential qualities of initiative and creativity, which are needed for bringing about suitably beneficial change in our complex and busy world, actually grow out of “the shadows of coordination and control”. Initially people need some form of definition, they need to know their boundaries, they need to understand the direction they are being asked to follow, they need to be aware of the meaning of what they are doing. This is to say, to begin with, people need some form of coordination and control. This provides the safety, security, and stability from which creativity, initiative and ingenuity can flourish if supported. Thus, such coordination and control must be flexible, adaptable, malleable, it must be tangible but not restrictive, permeable and not impenetrable. It must form the foundation upon which a suitable change strategy can be created rather than a boundary within which change must take place. Coordination and control are, in this sense, interdependent with creativity and initiative. Creativity and initiative generates the change required by coordination and control. While coordination and control produces the environment in which creativity and initiative can thrive and produce.

Similarly, Fullan (2005, p. x) stresses the need for leaders of educational change to become “system thinkers in action” or “new theoreticians”. He describes such leaders as those “who proactively and naturally take into account and interact with larger parts of the system as they bring about deeper reform and help produce other leaders working on the same issues. They are theoreticians, but they are practitioners whose theories are lived in action every day. In fact, that is what makes their impact so powerful. Their ideas are woven into daily interactions that make a difference.” Clearly, Fullan is acknowledging the interdependency of all three universal elements of change leadership. The structural perspective is captured in his explanation of why it is essential for the leader to proactively and naturally take into account and interact with larger parts of the system. The technological perspective is captured in his description of these leaders as theoreticians. The socio-political perspective is encapsulated in Fullan’s emphasis on the leader needing to establish interactions that make a difference. But most importantly, in Fullan’s description of what constitutes effective leadership each of these are woven together, they are interdependent perspectives so as to allow the leader’s theories to be lived in action every day.
At this point in our search for a more credible and reliable way to successfully lead educational change our understanding can be illustrated in the following way:

However, now a fourth element needs to be integrated into this model. An element that has been acknowledged within the literature but, as yet, has failed to gain the attention it requires. This continuous omission remains not only as a imperfection, a defect, but also an inherent vulnerability. Until this particular element is adequately attended to, our change processes will remain infuriatingly ineffectual.

But this is not to say that the nature of this element has been hidden from us. No, indeed, as far back as 1974 (as cited in Hargreaves, 2004), Marris emphatically highlighted that many changes that teachers experience are accompanied by profound feelings of loss. Marris was drawing our attention away from solely concentrating on the objective side of leading educational change. In any form of change, people invariably have a subjective experience. As Fullan (1982, p. 4) later subscribes, “Neglect of the phenomenology of change – that is, how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended – is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most educational reforms.” We do not live in an entirely objective world devoid of feelings, emotions, values, beliefs, and sensitivities. With every objective reality there is a subjective response and for every subjective reality there is an objective outcome. Our objective world initiates a subjective response within us and our subjective response causes us to react through our idiosyncratic behaviours. Change always impacts on our feelings, emotions, values, beliefs, and sensitivities - our subjectivity.

In more recent years, this essential awareness, at least, has been acknowledged in the literature but it has not really been unravelled. Hargreaves (2004, p. 287) implored those involved in leading educational change to realise that “change and emotion are inseparable. Each implicates the other. There is no human change
without emotion and there is no emotion that does not embody a momentary or momentous process of change.” In a subsequently article (2005, p. 293), he added that “the emotional dimension of educational change is not a frill but a fundamental of successful and sustainable school improvement and deserves increased attention.”

Often people feel overwhelmed and vulnerable as a result of the speed, diversity, and regularity of change (Dawson, 2003). A feeling of being overwhelmed, explains Heifetz and Linsky (2002), is caused by the fact that “change involves loss, and people can sustain only so much loss at any one time.” (p. 119) Such a sense of loss raises fear and anxiety in people and that manifests in feeling “angry and alienated” (Kouzes & Posner, 2000, p. 78).

These feelings of anger and alienation are not just because the thought of having to implement the change presents the people with something new, uncertain or unclear but also because they feel disconnected from its apparent meaning and significance (Hargreaves, 2005). People resist applying themselves to work which seems to have a trivial, obscure or personally irrelevant purpose. Most people desire to do something meaningful, to contribute and serve, such that any process that aims to bring about a change must ensure that it has meaning for all involved. As argued so powerfully by Wheatley (2006, p. 133),

If we want to influence any change, we need to work with this powerful process rather than deny its existence. We need to understand that all change results from a change in meaning. Meaning is created by the process of self reference.

We change only if we decide that the change is meaningful to who we are.

Moreover, enabling a person to find meaning is about helping him or her to find alignment between their own life and their work (de Quincey, 2002). While meaning-making involves experiences of purpose and values, it also refers to what is beyond the person. While we might think that having a meaningful life is something solely intrinsic within ourselves, de Quincey reminds us that such meaningfulness “gets its richness from its interconnectedness and interdependence with the whole” (p. 78). We find meaning and purpose through how we understand ourselves and how we understand others and our reality. “The more we feel connected with the whole, the more we experience life to be rich with meaning and possibilities. Meaning involves intentionality in the sense of directed awareness. It is awareness that refers to something beyond itself with which it participates in some way.” (p. 79)

Thus, there is a twofold challenge for the leader of change. The leader of the change is not only held responsible by the others involved for creating their sense of loss but also for making their world appear more uncertain, ambiguous, and meaningless. As explained by Heifetz and Linsky (2002, p. 12), “People do not resist change, per se. People resist loss. You appear dangerous to people when you question their values, beliefs, or habits of a lifetime. You place yourself on the line when you tell people what they need to hear rather than what they want to hear. Although you may see with clarity and passion a promising future of progress and gain, people will see with equal passion the losses you are asking them to sustain.” Any leader of change who ignores these intensely important emotional responses is destined to fail.
Hence, authors have now taken up the mantel of promoting the fundamental role of considering the emotional side of educational change. Margaret Wheatley (2006, p. 138) highlights that “It is a particular characteristic of the human species to resist change, even though we are surrounded by tens of millions of other species that demonstrate quite the opposite capacity to grow, to adapt, and to change.” In describing our natural human tendency to resist change, Michael Fullan (2001) writes that, in a culture of change, emotions frequently run high because change often evokes differences of opinions, which can be expressed as doubts, reservations and sometimes outright opposition. More particularly, Heifetz and Linsky (2002, p. 27) provide the insight that “habits, values, and attitudes, even dysfunctional ones, are part of one’s identity. To change the way people see and do things is to challenge how they define themselves.” It is impossible to control how people decide to define their self – how they will interpret the effects of change upon their self. No matter what type of change is being proposed, each person will view it in terms of how he or she thinks it will directly impact on their self. Some might be enthused by its possibilities, while others will only see personal struggles and uncertainties. The same proposed change can incite totally opposite responses on those being asked to bring about the change.

Hence, Fullan (2001, p. 1) is correct in saying that, “change is a double-edged sword. On the one side, exhilaration, risk-taking, excitement, improvements, energizing; on the other side, fear, anxiety, loss, danger, panic. For better or for worse, change arouses emotions, and when emotions intensify, leadership is key.” Here, Fullan is not only describing the added complexity of change as being the element of emotion but he is also saying that it is up to the leader to deal with it in a proper and constructive way. The leader of educational change cannot ignore the emotional element of change. Dealing with the emotional side of change is an integral element of leading the change process.

This understanding that the emotional side of change is an integral element of leading the change process is further supported by views expressed in the change literature that confident and effective leaders of change “respect those they wish to silence” (Heifetz, 1994) and see them as touchstones for “getting beyond the wall of resistance” (Maurer, 1996). Rather than ignoring or suppressing the emotional response, these authors are saying quite the opposite. The leader of change is being encouraged to bring this negativity out into the open and deal with it openly and constructively. In support of this view, Fullan (2001) posits that leaders of change must learn to appreciate, if not welcome, such resistance rather than striving to suppress it. Moreover, he suggests that dissent should be seen as a source of new ideas and breakthroughs, whereas, the absence of conflict is seen as a sign of decay.

When confronted with opposition it is a natural human response to become defensive. A defensive leader of change either avoids actions that arouse resistance (does nothing), assumes that the responsibility for overcoming the resistance rests with the resistor (distances themselves), or sees the resistance as a political issue that can be redressed through the application of power and authority (mandates compliance). None of these reactions to opposition will lead to the achievement
of effective change. Only when the leader has the courage, resilience, confidence, honesty and forthrightness to provide transparent channels of open communication for the emotional element of change to be empathically and purposefully attended to, will the change process have the chance of being successfully implemented.

Thus, with respect to our previously presented illustration of the constituent and integrated elements of educational change (Fig. 2.1), this understanding of the integral role of emotion implies that emotion is not a fourth component but, rather, it pervades the entire environment in which the change is taking place. It is inherent within, and a potential or likely outcome of, each of the other elements. In a sense, it is the ether, the medium, which permeates the space and fills the interstices amongst the other three elements. Figure 2.2 is an illustration of this understanding.

In order to illustrate this all pervading influence of emotion within educational change, our three previously described elements of the technological, structural, and socio-political perspectives have not only been encircled by emotion but each of their boundaries have been drawn as dashed lines thereby indicating that emotion can exist inside these spaces, these elements, too.

Now, for our third, and final, stage for developing a better way to lead educational change is the transcendent stage. The first two stages helped us to become aware of what were the essential things to include. The third stage informs us as to how we should now act in the light of this awareness. To this end, this third, and final, stage in our formation of a more credible and reliable process for the leadership of educational change involves describing the transcendent feature; the new way of understanding the world of educational change – a new consciousness – a new awareness of how to synthesise and integrate an emotionally charged, complex, chaotic, conflict-ridden, and highly subjective world with a very demanding, multifaceted, multidimensional, intensely accountable, and extremely confronting objective world so as to confidently overcome what is now an infuriatingly elusive way to lead educational change successfully.

Fig. 2.2 A modified illustration of the elements associated with the leadership of educational change to show the integral role of emotion.
Simply put, this transcendent stage calls us to re-unite the objective and subjective parts of leading change. This is not only about the leader knowing what to do but also about he or she being alert to the array of consequences of their actions upon their self, upon others, and upon what they are trying to do. This is about the leader thinking about their thinking, thinking about their actions, and thinking about the actions and the reactions of those others involved in, or affected by, the change. Moreover, it is about the leader learning from this thinking and that their subsequent actions are being informed by this learning. This is human consciousness at its very best – informing and guiding human action.

Regrettably, in our rationally dominated world, our human consciousness has been trained to objectify, externalise and specialise decision making by striving to limit any subjective influence. This is a kind of dichotomised consciousness, a consciousness associated with either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, true/false type perspectives, which cannot lead to synthesis and integration. In the context of leading change, this over emphasis of the objective dimension has led to a dependence on solving the infuriatingly elusive effective change process puzzle by concentrating on the strategy, trying to finetune the plan to ensure it incorporated every essential piece of the ‘jigsaw’. The ‘perfect’ plan was assumed to guarantee success in leading change. But, as has been clearly shown already, success never came. The objective dimension, by itself, is deficient.

Hence, it is argued that a new consciousness is required that not only frees the leader to be more actively and confidently involved in the change process but also encourages their development of a more integrated personality and enables them to develop a more holistic perspective. By allowing subjectivity to be an integral part of the whole change process, the leader is then more likely to become aware of all that needs to be attended to and more readily able to attend effectively to each of these needs.

This is about enabling the leader to see the world not as divided, separated, and dichotomous but as harmonious, united, and interdependent. It is about freeing the leader to see their self and those they are leading as an integral part of a harmonious, united, and interdependent world. It is about seeing the world through “vision logic” (Foucault, 1970) or “centaur consciousness” (Heidegger, 1968) where the task and the people, the objective and the subjective, are reunited and transcended through one’s consciousness so as to not only create a more integrated self with one’s reality but also, ultimately, to create a better understanding of the world of change.

Such a leader is not influenced by power, authority and control but, rather, relationships, intuition, and meaningfulness – precisely the qualities previously described as essential requirements for a successful leader of organisational change in today’s highly competitive, unpredictable and ever changing, if not chaotic, educational world.

Hence, I argue that it is the formal recognition of the integral place of this new consciousness within the leadership of educational change that is its transcendent dimension. Here, consciousness simply means our ability to be fully aware of the reality we are facing. In this sense, our consciousness is the precondition for having knowledge. Within such leadership, the leader’s consciousness is the receptacle in which all of their knowledge lies. This understanding mirrors Schopenhauer’s (1819)
insistence that only our own consciousness is known immediately: everything else is mediated through our consciousness and is therefore dependent on it. This is true for both the subjective, intuitive knowledge that arises from our senses and the discursive, objective knowledge we construct from our material world.

Then, the final, transcendent, phase of constructing a better understanding of educational change leadership involves the acknowledgement and nurturing of the leader’s consciousness to not only ensure the credibility and fidelity of the integration phase but also to extend the leader’s awareness and knowledge beyond its previous limits. Most often, we are mainly influenced by what can be termed as our first level of consciousness. The self at this level of consciousness is aware of both the mind and the body as experience. They are equally in touch with the subjective and objective data associated with the experience. That is, the leader is able to observe and reflect on what they are doing, how they are feeling, and how they are relating to others as they go about their role of leading change. This level of their consciousness enables them to become fully aware of what is happening in the technological, structural, and socio-political realms associated with their change. Moreover, this level of their conscious is an important source of self-referential and self-assessment data that guides the leader’s preferred behaviour as they work in each of these three realms.

At this first level, consciousness adds depth to the leader’s normal patterns of thinking. As explained by Frattaroli (2003, p. 343),

The mind can account for the contents of consciousness – thoughts, impulses, emotions, memories, fantasies, personality patterns – but not for the consciousness that experiences and finds meaning in these contents and can discern the difference between thought, impulse, emotion, fantasy, and personality. This is the consciousness of the soul and where the person finds their true self.

Consciousness at this level ensures that the leader is not controlled by their personal desires, the influence of others, or the need to do everything asked of them in a perfect way. This level of consciousness nurtures the possibility that the leader can make autonomous conscious choices so that they will be free to direct their lives from the very centre of their self-reflective consciousness.

But, there is a second level of consciousness, which takes effort and commitment to utilise. Furthermore, it is this second level of the leader’s consciousness which enables them to become more attentively aware of, and appropriately deal with, the emotional element of the change process. Thus, if we are to implement a more credible, reliable, and successful process for the leadership of educational change, then it is this level of consciousness that must be recognised and nurtured. The second level of consciousness is the “I that stands above”, as Frattaroli (2003) refers to it. This is the observing self that transcends both the mind and the body and thus can be aware of them as objects in awareness. It is not just the mind looking at the world; it is the observing self reflecting on the interplay of the body, the mind, others, and the world around them.

At this second level, the leader’s consciousness becomes the vehicle not only of self-discovery but of self-actualisation. As the leader thinks about what they are doing, how they are feeling, how others are reacting, and how they are relating to
others as they go about their role, they can also reflect upon this thinking. They can think about the accuracy, the comprehensiveness, the limitations, the motivations, and the quality of their thinking. The simple act of paying attention to their inner thinking world, to the finely differentiated layers and qualities of their private experiencing, creates a deepening awareness that each moment of that experiencing elucidates the core meanings of their role as the leader of the change. The result is a unique experience of consciousness in the act of expanding itself that is the heart and soul of understanding, accepting, and affirming their self as a leader. This level of consciousness enhances leadership because it opens the leader to a more genuine sense of relationship with those they are leading and inspires the leader to live in accord with their higher values and aspirations. By generating an awareness of the discrepancy between what they are doing, what is the impact on others from what they are doing, and what they would like to achieve, such consciousness gives the leader the self-knowledge of how they can grow towards becoming a better person and a better leader.

Hence, self-knowledge gained from their second-level of consciousness is the prerequisite for achieving credible, reliable and successful educational change. Such self-knowledge enables the leader to act more purposefully and with greater awareness of their cognitive thoughts that underpin their actions. It enables this leader to acknowledge their physical and cognitive limitations, to be aware of the propensity for their thoughts to be influenced by personal desires and inaccurate information, and to account for the interdependency of their actions with the lives of others. A leader with such self-knowledge is able to analyse and review their own motivations and underlying values in order to confirm or amend them as valid guides for action. This means that leaders of educational change need to engage in a continuous search for such self-knowledge, as they need to know why they are acting in a particular way, how others are reacting to what they are being asked to consider, and what the likely outcomes from their actions are.

It is through the full, open and authentic application of their consciousness that the leader creates wisdom; wisdom that will help them to decide what is significant, what is right and what is worthwhile as the change process unfolds. It is this wisdom that elevates the leader’s actions above mere pragmatics or expediency in order to transform their self and those they lead so that change not only becomes achievable but also readily and optimistically anticipated.

However, it is all very well to promote the cause of wisdom in the leadership of effective educational change; it is another thing to explain in more detail what this might mean. There is something very wholesome and reassuring in associating wisdom with leadership but being able to provide a detailed description of the practical implications of this association is far more ambiguous, complicated and challenging. It is essential that this association does not become just another motherhood catch-phrase. Hence, chapter 3 not only defines what is meant by wisdom but also describes the practical implications of developing wise leaders of educational change.