



# AUSTRALIAN PRINCIPALS CENTRE

## Monograph Number 1

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## ***BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY IN SCHOOLS*** by Linda Lambert

### INTRODUCTION

Most of us probably think of a particular person or set of behaviours when we think of 'leadership'. When we use the word 'leadership', the next sentence often suggests what the Principal, Superintendent, or President does or does not do of importance. Leadership is generally considered to be synonymous with a person in a position of formal authority. When we do this, we limit the achievement of broad-based participation on the part of a community or society. School leadership needs to be a **broad concept** that is distinguished from person, role, and a discrete set of individual behaviours. It needs to be **embedded** in the school community as a whole, which suggests a shared responsibility for a shared purpose of community.

When we equate 'leadership' with 'leader', we are immersed in 'trait theory' – if only a leader had these certain traits, we would have good leadership. This tendency causes those who might otherwise roll up their sleeves, pitch in and help, to abstain from the work of leadership — abdicating both responsibilities and opportunities.

Leaders do perform acts of leadership, but a separation of the concepts can allow us to **reconceptualise leadership** itself. 'Leadership' needs to speak to a group broader than the individual leader. This breadth is more evident if we consider the connections or learning processes among individuals in a school community.

This concept of what I call 'leadership' is **broader than the sum total of its leaders**, for it also involves an energy flow or synergy generated by those who choose to lead. Sometimes we think of our reactions to an energised environment as being caught up in the excitement and stimulation of an idea or movement. It is this wave of energy and purpose that engages and pulls others into the work of leadership. This is a group of 'leaders', including the Principal of course, engaged in improving a school.

The key notion in this definition is that leadership is about learning together, and construct-

ing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively.

**Leadership involves opportunities:** to surface and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions through continuing conversations; to enquire about and generate ideas together; to seek to reflect upon and make sense of work in the light of shared beliefs and new information; and to make decisions and create actions that grow out of these new understandings. Such is the core of leadership that is about **learning together**.

### LEADERSHIP: EXPLORING THE DEFINITION

The Centre where I am based, at California State University, Hayward, works on a range of projects, with a number of Professional Development and League of Leadership Schools. I draw on practical examples from our experience throughout this paper.

**Our aims**, as framed with our teacher leaders and administrators, are to develop:

- **students** who are confident, reflective, self-directed, caring and competent; where children contribute to their broader community, ask questions, create, feel passion;
- **parents** who are full partners in the work of teaching and learning, understanding the purpose of schooling; where they derive confidence about their role as parents each time they come to school; where the parents advocate on behalf of the school and lead other parents to participate; where they are confident about learning;
- **educators** with a core set of values, who engage in meaningful dialogue while grappling with questions of practice, seek evidence and understanding; where teachers and administrators are skilful and knowledgeable about teaching and learning, challenging each other and the school community to grow and develop;
- **learning communities** as the centre for enquiry.



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We don't have schools like that as much as we would like. Currently we find that there are **pockets of excellence**, but in general we don't dig deeply enough into the talents, energies and leadership of all the educators in our schools. Over the years we have tended to keep leadership centred in those who have the formal administrative credentials. We want to **enhance teacher leadership** in the schools as well.

Leadership connects closely with learning. We define both in terms of what we know about human beings. Just as we now realise that learning is about more than filling an empty vessel, so we are beginning to realise that **leadership is about more than control**, or the domination of people.

About ten years ago, we began to work on developing the concept of 'communities of learners and leaders'. We started from the belief that schools are capable of generating their own approaches to teaching and learning, and that teachers, like all people, learn and grow throughout their lives.

What we wanted to do was bring learning and leading closer together, leading towards a form of '**constructivist leadership**' — not the simpler style of leadership where you are 'in charge', but one marked by facilitation, and teacher-leaders asking themselves questions like '*How do I contribute to the learning of others?*' and '*How do others contribute to my learning?*' Reciprocity — co-learning, working collaboratively with each other — is invested in these questions.

## LEADERSHIP AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

The idea of constructivism dates back to Jean Piaget. When students come to us in schools, their minds are not blank. Each mind has its **individual schema** — reflecting how each young person engages with the world. As teachers, we mediate that, helping our students to construct new meaning for themselves. Their schemas alter. That is what we call learning.

How we look at adult learning is, or should be, much the same, although we do not experience too much of it in schools. What do the adults in our schools today, the teachers in particular, experience in the Faculty Room? Do they think about new ideas, or talk about evidence of new learning? If so, it would be rare. Constructivist learning, on the other hand, provides opportunities for adults to have this kind of learning.

Leadership in this context is about the reciprocal processes that enable participants in a community to construct meanings that lead towards a **shared purpose** of schooling.

Historically we have usually said that leadership is the ability to do something; to make things happen; to reach goals; to manage people. That has been the view taken in most literature up until the last few years. The constructivist approach moves away from a narrow focus on the leader, and the ability to 'do', and looks more broadly than at a set of skills held by an individual.

It is an approach more embedded in the **patterns of relationships**, interactions and learning together within the schools. In terms of leadership, the new emphasis is on a peer to peer, professional to professional, reciprocal partnership, not a hierarchy.

In our communities, we are nested — as students and students, teachers and teachers, teachers and students, teachers and administrators. **How do we make sense of our learning**, our teaching, and our relationships together? If we are together in community, in dialogue, and we're talking about what's important, a shared purpose continues to emerge, strengthen and evolve, together with new concepts about who leads, how and when.

The new, broader style of leadership has **implications for schools** and other institutions. Consider first what has been happening in wider society, taking an example from US politics. In the old definition we often would say '*What is the leadership of the country like*' and somebody would say '*Well, the President did or didn't do this.*' Political leadership was situated in an office, a place, or an individual.

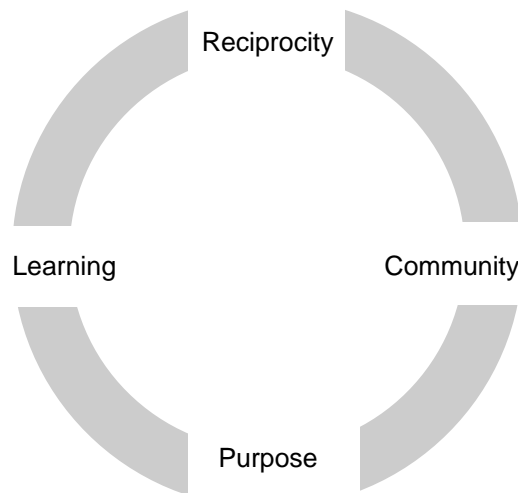
As we have become concerned about a broader sense of leadership, we are now recognising that in the last election, the smallest ever percentage of young adults between 18 and 25 years old voted. Similarly, numbers of communities last year were unable to find anybody to run for Mayor, or for Supervisor of Education. This tells us more about the leadership in the country, and its capacity to manage and organise itself, than one person does.

Transfer that sort of thinking to the educational context and it **changes the questions that we ask** about leadership. No longer should we concern ourselves so much with what the Principal is or is not. Rather we should be looking for strong leadership that is characterised by large numbers of teachers leading particular initiatives, children contributing to the community engaged



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parents — skilful broad-based participation in this work called 'leadership'. This is the shift I want to propose as we consider how to move from one conception to another. Thinking about things in this way has led us to develop the idea of a cycle for new-style leadership, based on **reciprocity** in relationships, individual and group learning, and shared sense of purpose, in the context of a community.



This concept looks simple, but it takes time to clarify. What we also say about it is that it is *'Easy to say; hard to do'*. Different people know different things, and they understand things in different ways. When someone thinks s/he knows all that you know, s/he may not yet be mature enough to be reciprocal in a relationship — whether or not that person is in a leadership position. What we need to do is look at new ways of recognising people's differences, capitalising on the talent and potential of each individual, reinventing roles and exploring the development of open teams, where 'power' or 'authority' is distributed in new ways. The Principal does not always have to make all the decisions. In fact, I would argue that the more s/he does so, the less skilful s/he is in the art of leadership.

**Different styles or levels of leadership** are possible. Consider this in terms of who will save and/or improve our schools. The teachers are the largest group working in the area, and are often the most stable element, while Principals tend to come and go. Teachers should be encouraged, energised and empowered to take responsibility in their own context for teaching and learning in their schools.

The same sort of message — the wish to tap everybody's energies and talent — is coming from many directions, including industry. Steven Spielberg has talked in similar ways about film crews and their place in the film-making enterprise. He has worked to develop new team direc-

tions, giving crew members opportunities to voice ideas, and in some cases to assume leadership in their implementation. Authority is not situated in a fixed way, in any one role.

## LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AND A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

Key reciprocal learning processes that engage a school community in the work of leadership can enable the community to renew itself. These processes include:

- **surfacing, clarifying and defining** community values, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions and experiences — extracting the current schema, identifying what is so, and why;
- **enquiry** into the nature and effectiveness of current practice — looking at student work, observing in classrooms, carrying out action research;
- **constructing meaning** and knowledge through dialogue — identifying and struggling between what may be polar points, helping us to learn;
- **framing new directions**, actions and practices, developing implementation plans — using the new understandings and criteria that have emerged.

These processes are part of a repertoire of continuous learning interactions. Staff need to tie their work conversations to their shared purpose, asking questions such as, *'What is it we're trying to do here?'* and *'Why is that?'* Altering personal and collective schema requires revisiting and re-interpreting ideas many times — in hallway conversations, informal small-group dialogue, lively faculty discussions and quiet personal reflection as well as structured meetings.

All of the learning must be embedded in a **trusting environment**, in which relationships form a safety net of support and challenge (think of a net under a high wire walker). Especially in the beginning, however, people are taking risks, and no matter how valuable things may be, in practice barriers may go up when new things are suggested.

Because these processes take place among participants in a school community, it means people are in relationship with one another. This means providing **long-term support** for one another, challenging each other to improve and to question our current perceptions, and to learn together. Attention to relationship is critical, for just as in the classroom, 'process is content' (Costa et al. 1997)



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# APC Monograph No.1

Linda Lambert — *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools*

The staff at one school used reciprocal processes to focus on literacy and reported that they learned themselves through the process of change to redesign what they do, not only in terms of literacy but also in leadership.

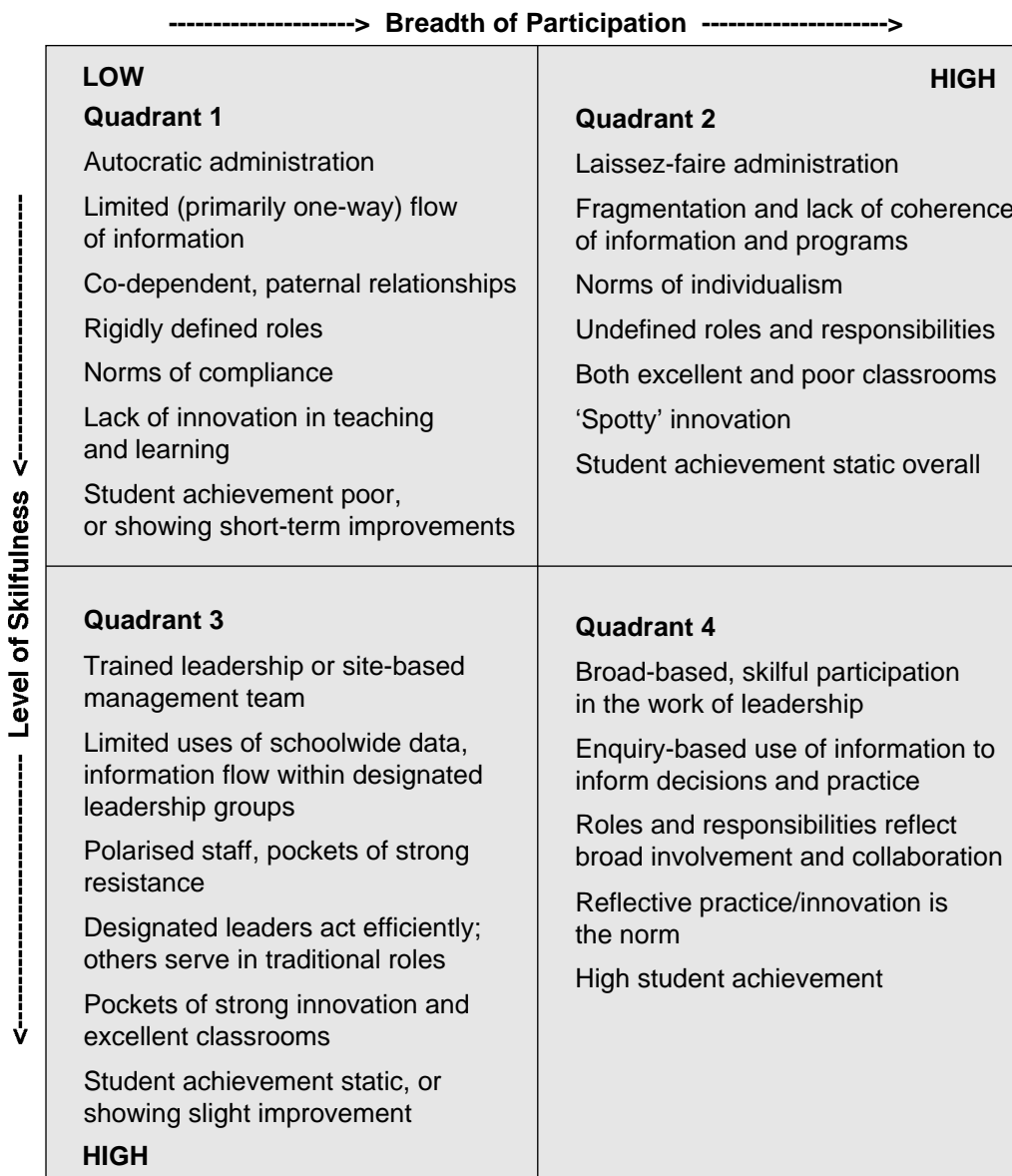
Not all learning processes constitute leadership. To be 'leadership', the processes must enable participants to learn themselves towards a shared sense of purpose — a purpose made real by the collaboration of committed adults. Leadership has direction, momentum, and it negotiates tough passages. It is this type of leadership we are seeking to build — the capacity to collectively learn ourselves towards purposeful action that allows a school community to keep moving when two teachers, a Principal, or a powerful parent leave. Leadership Capacity can be defined as **broadbased, skilful participation in the work of leadership**. Its dimensions, in terms of level of participation — breadth and depth — can be illustrated in a four-quadrant matrix (see Figure 1, below).

These are archetypal descriptions. Although I have seen schools in each of these boxes, it is rare that they fit neatly in any box. Usually what you will see is that a few elements in each box relate to your own situation. However, you should be able to see a flow of movement through the matrix.

In Quadrant 1, the leadership style is autocratic; very few people are involved in decision making and there is a low level of skilfulness in leadership. The fact that only the leader makes decisions impacts on information flow. There is a clear (top-down) information path, from State/District to Principal, to teacher, to students, to parents. The Principal works on the basis of a perceived mandate, where the role of teachers, students and parents is to comply, and there is little feedback. Often this model occurs in primary schools, and a co-dependent, paternalistic relationship exists — an old paradigm that some teachers still like because of the feeling of security that it engenders in them.



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**Figure 1:** Leadership Capacity Matrix, Level of Participation and Skilfulness

In this environment, to ask permission for something is like waving a red flag. It gives or assumes the message that one person is in control. As Principal, if you give or withhold permission, **you're not operating in an adult-adult relationship**. In my book I have suggested ways to break down this model, and to encourage people to become engaged in a reciprocal problem solving role.

Where there are co-dependent relationships and cultures, what is most important is what your perceived authority figure says or tells you. People in the school are not there to talk with others to seek solutions to problems; there is a tendency to lay blame outside — the students weren't prepared by the last teacher; the parents aren't supportive; the State doesn't give us what we need — rather than taking responsibility.

If we are operating in a **Quadrant 1** context, we will stay boxed there unless we build adult-to-adult approaches. It is the hardest box to break out of.

In **Quadrant 2**, there is laissez-faire administration. This does not mean that the Principal or Vice Principal does not make decisions; they often make very quick or sound ones. However, the effect of how authority is used tends to be laissez-faire because the school becomes fragmented; so many people are doing their own thing. There is a norm of individualism.

Often in a big school there will be excellent classrooms, but others will be less impressive. It is difficult to bring people together, keep them on a similar track, or talk about instruction in the school. There is no shared sense of focus. In this sort of setting, it is difficult, for example to develop a whole school approach to a topic such as literacy.

Any innovation tends to be 'spotty' in terms of implementation. Information, similarly, will be fragmented throughout the system, and may verge into disinformation. Student achievement may appear static, but if you disaggregate the data, you'll find that some students are not doing well at all while others do wonderfully, because the really difficult issues that affect the whole school are not being addressed.

**Quadrant 3** can be used to describe the situation arrived at through many excellent reform initiatives. Often, leadership teams are chosen and trained but participation is limited to a few good people. Others who find themselves on the outside looking in may become polarised. In one school, for example, a major restructuring effort was upset by two teachers who had never been

brought into the decision making circle. They mobilised the community against the proposed changes. The Superintendent resigned. The Principal left. The school slid back and lost many of the reforms it had fought hard to develop.

It is not unusual to see reform fail if not all the stakeholders are taken along in the process. Leadership teams are therefore starting to consider how they can open the circle, become more inclusive and create better communication patterns, rather than relying on the high skilfulness of a few people. We need to move towards high skilfulness for more people.

**Quadrant 4** is a sort of 'Nirvana' in that context. Some schools are starting to operate in this arena, but they can be fragile and lose direction, though they may bounce back. In this model, authority is distributed broadly, and those who are involved in the broader context are skilful in that work.

Breadth here includes students and parents as well as teachers and administrators, which means providing training where necessary, for example in preparation for work on School Councils. They are not just to be rubber-stampers.

Information is generative in Quadrant 4. It is not just 'outside-in' or top-down. People form their own understandings, develop their own questions, and construct their information from inside-out. There is feedback, discovery through evidence, posing of questions of practice, looking at student work, and considering how to address emerging issues in a broad-based way.

In a way this is a parallel to where we have come in this century in our thinking about learning — moving from a model of outside-in learning to where we know that knowledge and beliefs form within the individual, inside-out. Roles and responsibilities reflect this broader involvement and collaboration. They will change in nature and design, as discussed later in this paper. Teachers and administrators will increasingly work in the realm of high leadership capacity.

**Reflective practice** becomes a norm in this model. Because participants are reflective, they begin to see causal relationships between what they do and what students learn. How different from Quadrant 1, where we used to blame students for not learning!

Teachers in this model reflect on how they need to change their practice to reach all their students, and how to help them raise their levels of achievement.



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The crucial nature of information is evident in each of the Quadrants that I have described. Margaret Wheatley, writing about leadership in the new sciences said:

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*'If information moves through a system freely, individuals learn and change, and their discovery can be integrated by the system. The system becomes both resilient and flexible. But if information is restricted, held tightly in certain regions, the system can neither learn nor respond ... When we shrink people's access to information, we shrink their capacity.'*

Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers,  
1996, p 82

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## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

What are the principal uses of authority? A number of uses are starting to emerge, ones that we're finding to be effective, and which are moving away from the traditional concept of single person decisions or telling people what to do. These include:

- **developing a shared vision** — how to do it is the question. It used to be that the Principal developed it and then tried to sell it within the school. What we are looking at instead is embedding the vision in the hopes and aspirations of everyone on the staff, or in the broader educational community. In my book *The Constructivist Leader* I include sample agendas for the development of shared visions.
- **organising, focusing and maintaining the momentum of the conversation.** I was once on a panel looking at a case study of successful school reform. One of the audience asked the school Principal 'How did you know what to do?' Her answer was that she had not known what to do. When she got to the school, she said to the staff that they would all start talking about it, and that they would stay in the conversation until they had decided how to solve the issues, and what to do in the school. That is precisely what they did.
- **developing leadership among others.** The transition often starts with inviting people into leadership; then there is a turning point when they begin to initiate actions and take on leadership on their own;
- **focusing on, and protecting community values and goals,** keeping attention on teaching and learning — taking into account is-

sues such as how we deal with decentralisation through self governance, or the nuts and bolts of school facilities — and yet still keep our eye on the ball;

- **establishing with educators and parents clear rules for decision making** — acknowledging that some decisions will be made by the Principal, some will be advisory, some will be by consensus, some will be made by the State. If we clarify this up front, we will not lose trust later on: for example, by pulling the carpet from under a decision that teachers thought they had the authority to make.
- **implementing community decisions,** which on occasion may mean using traditional approaches to authority, intervening if one or two individuals refuse to move in the direction of a group decision;
- **mediating political pressures and demands** while holding fast to a sustainable student learning agenda.

Using authority in each of these categories tends to expand the talent, energies and leadership of others, rather than moving towards co-dependent relationships.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND ACHIEVEMENT

There are now multiple long term studies that reveal the positive relationship between professional cultures and student achievement.

As an example, Newman concludes that if adults are involved in sharing in the decisions, if there is a clear sense of purpose, if there is time for collaborative work, and collective responsibility for all the students in the school, that this relates directly to various forms of student achievement. These have to do with:

- **academic achievement,** including test scores as well as the kinds of performances and products that students create and demonstrate as part of their learning. There is a major shift towards students building rubrics about their own learning, developing portfolios, designing projects and products and then doing public exhibitions — a much more complex way of looking at the nature of achievement.
- **positive involvement,** including factors such as attendance and suspensions, who comes to school and what they think about it;
- **sustaining improvement over time** — It has been discovered that students need to be in schools for a number of years with teachers who work in professional cultures in order to experience continuing improvement in per-



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formance. For example, if students come from a relatively autocratic primary school, it will take some time to recoup improvements in performance at the secondary level.

- **resiliency behaviours.** This is the ‘flip-side’ of ‘at-risk’. New-style leadership in the resiliency area means that instead of looking at the students who ‘didn’t make it’, and asking why, we should be looking at those who made it in spite of everything and figuring out why.

The literature suggests that there are four major factors related to the resiliency of children:

- (1) at least one person really cares about you
- (2) there are skills in problem solving and decision making
- (3) there exists a social network and meaningful work
- (4) there is a sense of future and a feeling that the future can be influenced by the child.

These protective factors can be built into the school community.

- **closing the achievement gap,** among diverse populations who learn and perform in very different ways, or who come from poverty backgrounds and need a head start.

Schools in US urban areas, when they disaggregate their data, discover that particular groups (for example African-American boys, or Hispanic girls) are not doing as well as others. The sorts of leadership approach I have described tend to narrow that achievement gap.

## SHARED TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Teacher leadership is a new concept in many areas of the world. Many Principals still think that people are only motivated by moving into administration. When teachers begin to lead, their agenda is seen as reflecting an ambition to become Principal — which is threatening to incumbent Principals. They need to reach a new understanding, coming to see that **teacher leadership is an enrichment of the teaching profession.** Teachers may help to lead the school but in a capacity other than Principal or Vice Principal.

There seem to be four main reasons why teacher leadership is the essential ingredient in building leadership capacity:

- 1 **Teacher leadership sustains improvement.** Since Principals can come and go, if there is not intense participation by teachers in the school, reforms do not stay; they recede and the school reverts to its old ways of doing things.

- 2 **Teaching is intellectual work.**

When teachers become involved in leadership you can see the growth that takes them to higher levels of human development. As they develop over time, they begin to focus on three prominent values: equity, justice and caring. When more people in a school are involved in thinking about these broad issues deeply, you can really start to struggle with the issues for families and students, and how to organise schools beyond the academic focus.

- 3 **Teacher leadership breaks patterns of resistance built up by the hierarchy.**

The hierarchy invests resistance in every system in the world. It is the very nature of being ‘kept in place’.

- 4 **Since we’re all leading, it tends to build collective responsibility.**

We explored some of these ideas with teachers in professional development schools through extensive interviews. From these we drew information and quotes, which we sent back to the teachers for comment on the extent to which this reflected what they saw happening in their schools.

Based on their input and feedback it seemed that **the primary shift took place in the area of identity — how teachers saw themselves.** As leadership opportunities and experience grew, they saw a changing role for the teacher. In an ongoing dialogue, they were reflecting with, discussing with, and getting feedback from colleagues, the school administration and the university. They became more confident and took on different responsibilities, in a kind of spiral movement.

One primary teacher had seen herself as focused almost exclusively in the classroom when we started the work. When we ended she said ‘*I now see myself as part of education*’ — a much broader view than seeing herself as one teacher in a school — ‘*and I see myself as responsible for the next generation of educators who are coming into the school*’. She had also taken on a mentoring role.

This teacher attributed the change to the opportunities she had to talk to colleagues, to lead, to be involved in networks and just to experience life differently.



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## A RUBRIC FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

We are moving towards rubrics of all kinds. We have rubrics on superintendents, on leadership, on parent participation, on social participation in undergraduate courses. **A rubric defines, in narrative form, stages of development or growth**, and is developed with the people who are directly involved in the area. In the case of emerging teacher leadership, we created a rubric which examined growth in four sections: adult development; dialogue; collaboration; and organisational change.

In terms of a continuum, the rubric moves from dependent behaviours to independent or individualist behaviours, to being an interdependent reflective practitioner, to adopting a leadership role and enabling others to be more reflective and collaborative.

In workshops with teachers we use the rubric as the basis of group activities to explore human development in the context of leadership. It provides **a focus for participants** to think about the strengths that they and their colleagues bring to the work of leadership; to identify those strengths on the rubric; and to identify growth target areas for their staff and school.

Limitations of space prevent the inclusion of the full rubric in this paper, but it is available from the Australian Principal Centre on request, or via the Centre's website.

## COGNITIVE COACHING

Cognitive coaching was developed in the last decade by Art Costa and Bob Garmston. We worked together and it has influenced my thinking a lot. The notion is not to coach in that way where you need the expertise, but rather to **ask questions** that are designed to cause people to reflect on their practice, to grapple with the causal relationship between yourself and your actions, and build internal responsibility, moving away from blame and causing people to plan together. It is a very powerful strategy.

One part of it has to do with the mediational question — much like the mediational questions that we use in the classroom. It imbeds in the question the kind of thinking process that you're hoping to engage in together. For example, *'When you reflect on that lesson you taught today, what was it that you did that caused Student A to act in*

*that way, to learn in that way, or to respond in that way?'*

Such questions are built into the coaching process as a way of learning how to coach students better, and to coach each other better.

In this way we can explore how people construct meaning and knowledge together; we can consider what criteria or evidence of student learning we will accept that had been planned for the day. We may not have time to sit down and discuss such penetrating questions in a formal way, but they can be asked over lunch, in the hall, or out on the playground.

We need to be **transparent** when we do this, so that people do not feel manipulated by technique.

Other kinds of reflective practice include teachers and administrators writing about their practice. This builds a legacy honouring the quality of your work, but it also causes you to reflect on the intent, structure and outcomes of the lesson.

Effective teams, groups and faculties often develop norms of practice or codes of conduct together. This helps to build a professional culture based on shared values.

One activity that a faculty can use to explore this approach is to start by thinking about the most effective group or organisation ever experienced by the participants. The faculty then works to pull out those characteristics that made that group so effective; refines in small-group discussion what's essential for such an effective style of operation; displays the results for debate among the groups; eliminates redundant items; identifies the top five or six characteristics that have been identified; and makes a decision that this is how the faculty will try to behave with each other in future. **The agreements that come up repeatedly on such a list include:**

- respectful listening to each other's ideas;
- keeping confidentiality in the group;
- fully balanced participation; and
- starting and ending meetings on time.

The reflective twist on this is for the first few meetings to have a process observer who will provide feedback, and reflect back the behaviour within the group, like a mirror — for example, identifying who didn't participate, or saying who talked over each other. Participants can take turns in this role. Norms for group behaviour, used in this way, facilitate the operations of meetings. They help to determine and regulate behaviour



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*... Using the ZCI approach... you free up time to do the really important things, in more depth than has previously been possible.*

— in terms of decisions that have been made by the group itself, and constitute a valuable part of the team building process.

Another useful tool for effective training of the team is to have the whole faculty take a **leadership style inventory** — identifying those who are analysers, needing data and reflective time to make decisions; those who are harmonisers; and those who tend to be visionaries, controllers, persuaders. The idea is to develop teams with a balance of dispositions and characteristics.

In terms of overall reflection and communications, however, nothing is quite as powerful as **dialogue**. Dialogue is different from discussion or debate. It is very skilful work, which broadens perspectives. It can be characterised as ‘shared talk’ among the group.

The point is to listen to each other, not to be rehearsing your next comment as the conversation progresses. Participants seek to surface the assumptions held in the group and draw out new levels of understanding.

The point is not to make decisions, although it is seductive to want to do so in every discussion. Time is precious, you have little of it, and genuine dialogue takes a lot of work. It is better to identify a specific topic and allocate a limited amount of time, say twenty minutes, for dialogue. Then the group can shift into what Senge calls *skilful discussion*, synthesising the ideas from the dialogue, summarising the discussion, and starting to look at the emerging options for action.

Creating the time for this to happen means clearing the deck of the issues that crowd your time together. One strategy for doing this, which I have used successfully for many years as a teacher and administrator, is called ‘**ZCI**’.

ZCI involves categorising and redistributing tasks in different ways. An example is shown below in Figure 2, where I have listed a number of agenda items that regularly crop up in meetings in the US. Such items take up a lot of time but are relatively institutionalised by now.

The Z stands for the ‘z’ in ‘authorized’ (in the US spelling). The notion is that each person on the staff will take at least one ‘z’ during the year. For example, I might take on Open House — its main organisation, developing the agenda, working with others to set it up. Two other teachers might agree that while they do not want to take full carriage of Open House, they do want to be consulted (C) before the final work is done. The rest of the staff agree that they trust these three people, and are not vitally concerned about how things turn out, so they just want to be kept informed (I). In this way, a number of tasks that have consistently taken up time on meeting agendas can be redistributed for action, monitoring and responsibility among the staff. That doesn’t mean that it doesn’t come back to the group. It may well do, but it will allow a lot of work to be done mainly through a system of fluid sub-committees (Z and C).

Using the ZCI approach provides multiple opportunities for all staff to take on leadership roles, contributing to their personal and professional development. By not spending faculty time on these agenda items, you **free up time** to do the really important things, in more depth than has previously been possible. This clearing of the decks might include issues such as physical plant, furniture, supplies, purchasing and so on.

While administrators’ names might well tend to appear more often in the C column, they no longer have to do all of these tasks, or every aspect of them.

**Figure 2:**  
ZCI example

Agenda items	Z Authorized	C Consulted	I Informed
Supervision schedule			
Open House	Linda	Don, Julia	All staff
Parent Conference			
Orientation			
Grade 8 Picnic			
Grade level meeting			

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Linda Lambert — *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools*

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A CLEAR VISION

A clear vision is not something fixed in time. Developing a clear vision needs to be built upon the core values of all the Faculty. Strategies that work in achieving this include interviewing faculties in focus groups, or one-on-one, asking questions like:

- why faculty members entered teaching;
- what they value most about the school;
- what they really hope will be changed.

This is a way to collect initial data. Then the faculty can work together to decide what they value most, to **build a scenario** based on the individual and group values.

Some new Principals ask whether they should hold a retreat in the first month of school to work out a vision for the school. I would advise against that sort of move. Vision building is a developmental relationship issue among people, which happens over time as you come to learn how they think and operate, and what they value. This process needs to be open and fluid, and to breathe — it is always **a work in progress**.

Another way for staff to gather useful data, perhaps on an individual basis, is to use a **staff survey** (see Figure 3, opposite). A survey like this takes the key features in leadership capacity that we considered earlier (in Quadrant 4 of the matrix) and places indicators under each one.

Teachers can be asked to rank themselves on how well they are doing particular things, identifying what they perceive as their strongest areas and drawing out areas where they may want to take additional action. They need not share their reactions, although they may be asked to extract material from their analysis later on, in a group context.

## WHERE DO WE STAND?

We now have three forms of information:

- the matrix;
- the rubric; and
- our own patterns of growth and strengths.

These data provide a powerful tool and shared understandings. They can help in identifying directions, priorities and intervention strategies based on informed decision making

## INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

The environment in a school may not lend itself immediately to the kinds of strategy I have described above. Where the administrative style is relatively autocratic, for example, teachers will not want to go to the Principal and say 'We've decided we're going to take over the leadership'. That wouldn't go over too well!

Teacher leadership is a very political, subtle, diplomatic process. Consider some **possible strategies**.

- Principals often say that teachers come at the end of the day and complain about things — processes, conditions, whatever. This tends to affect Principals' views of the teachers. It can help to come in with **possible solutions** rather than problems and complaints. This moves both the teacher and Principal into a problem solving mode, especially where the Principal is prone to giving quick decisions.
- When you see people in traditional authority roles — Principals and Vice Principals — operating outside those roles, it's good to give them specific feedback, especially when it's positive. For instance, when a Principal does something supportive, you might say: 'When you did that, this is the effect it had on me' ... or ... 'When you said that, it really made me think about ...'. The more specific you can be in terms of feedback, the more positive will be the reinforcement of the behaviours you're commenting on. Be careful, however — **don't give judgemental feedback**, since even if it is positive, it will tend to have a negative effect.
- **Self invitation** can be effective. For example, if you see the Principal struggling with something, offer yourself as a feedback person, or as a helpful problem solving colleague, about that specific thing.

Given the above types of approach, Principals may well realign themselves. People who usually take full charge are frequently overburdened. The stress on health of taking full responsibility is great. I therefore assume that although people may find themselves in this position, they may not necessarily want to be there unreservedly.

Always **assume positive intentions**, even though sometimes the person's behaviour may not seem to follow that intent. There are many diplomatic ways you can use to bring out the kinds of behaviour that will contribute more productively to the school



*Always assume positive intentions, even though sometimes the person's behaviour may not seem to follow that intent. There are many diplomatic ways you can use to bring out the kinds of behaviour that will contribute more productively to the school.*

**Figure 3:**  
Extract from a  
Leadership Capacity  
Staff Survey  
(Lambert, 1999)

The Leadership Capacity Staff Survey is designed as an assessment of the dispositions, knowledge and skills needed to build leadership capacity in schools and organisations. The items are clustered by the characteristics of schools with high leadership capacity. It may be completed by a school staff member or by a colleague who is familiar with the work of that staff member. The survey information is most useful if each staff member completes a survey as a self assessment and then asks for an assessment by two colleagues. To the right of each item is a Likert-type scale:

NO = Not Observed IP = Infrequently Performed FP = Frequently Performed  
CP = Consistently Performed CTO = Can Teach to Others

Participants are asked to circle the rating for each item and add up the number of chosen items in each column.

**A. Broad based participation in the work of leadership**

I ...

	NO	IP	FP	CP	CTO
1 assist in the establishment of representative governance and work groups					
2 seek to increase interactions among staff, students and community members					
3 share authority and resources broadly					
4 engage others in leading opportunities					
<b>TOTAL NUMBERS</b>	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

The Survey continues with questions in the following categories:

- Skilful participation in the work of leadership
- Enquiry based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice
- Roles and Responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration
- Reflective practice/innovation as the norm
- High student achievement

(The complete Survey is available on request from the Australian Principals Centre, or via the Centre's Web site.)

When the survey has been completed, it is scored. Scoring summarises the number of responses in each category of characteristics in three broad groups: NO/IP; FP/CP; and CTO.

	NO/IP	FP/CP	CTO
Broad based participation in the work of leadership			
Skilful participation in the work of leadership			
Enquiry based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice			
Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration			
Reflective practice/innovation as the norm			
High student achievement			

The Survey is then used by participants as a resource for diagnosis and personal/professional planning.



*Teacher leadership is a very political, subtle, diplomatic process ...*

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## FINAL COMMENTS

Five assumptions form the conceptual framework for leadership capacity building. Together, they advance the ideas that I believe are essential if we are to develop sustainable, self-renewing schools:

- 1 Leadership is not trait theory; leadership and leader are not the same.** Leadership can mean (and does mean in this context) the reciprocal learning processes that enable participants to construct and negotiate meanings, leading to a shared sense of purpose of schooling.
- 2 Leadership is about learning that leads to constructive change.** Learning among participants occurs collectively. Learning has direction towards a shared purpose.
- 3 Everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader.** Leading is skilled and complicated work that can be learned by every member of the school community. Democracy clearly defines the rights of individuals to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives.
- 4 Leading is a shared endeavour, the foundation for the democratisation of schools.** School change is a collective endeavour; therefore people do this most effectively in the presence of others. The learning journey must be shared; otherwise, shared purpose and action are never achieved.
- 5 Leadership requires the redistribution of power and authority.** Shared learning, purpose, action, and responsibility demand the realignment of power and authority. Districts (in the US context) and Principals need to explicitly release authority, and staff need to learn how to enhance personal power and informal authority (for a fuller examination of this notion, see Lambert, Kent et al, 1997, pp 122-143).

In times of continuous change and reform, we need to continue along this path with optimism and hope, as we discover how to **invest in learning** — our own, that of others in the staff group, and that of the students we are helping to move towards higher levels of achievement. As we travel along the path we need to reflect on our progress, asking ourselves, *'Did I listen? Did I understand more? How well is it working?' and 'How can we do things better than we have before?'*

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'We need to reflect:  
*'Did I listen?'*  
*'Did I understand more?'*  
*'How well is it working?'* and  
*'How can we do things better than we have before?'*

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