



Australian Principals Centre®

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LEARNING CENTRED LEADERSHIP: THE ONLY WAY TO GO

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INTRODUCTION

There are three themes I shall focus on in this paper. They are:

- **change;**
- **leadership; and**
- **learning organisations
(in particular, learning schools).**

Each of these themes will be familiar to you and as school leaders you are all experienced and well versed in them. What I want to offer is a synthesis of the three, so that we begin to consider each in relation to the others, rather than as discrete entities.

One problem with modern thinking is that issues are seen in atomised ways and discussed and debated using binary logic, where we tend to argue in “either/or” terms. Atomisation and binary thinking are no longer appropriate in our post-modern world. Thus I will try to provide a more holistic picture than others have so far produced.

Moreover, I will argue that change, leadership and learning organisations are bound together by a common thread, namely learning.

Change requires all of us to learn our way forward. School leadership is fundamentally concerned with learning. Learning organisations — in our terms, learning schools — are equally about creating the conditions and the organisational capacity for all members of the school to be continuous learners. Learning is the key to improving and transforming our schools.

CHANGE

One of the things we know about leadership is that it is strongly influenced by context. Usually we understand this to mean the school as the arena for your leadership and certainly Principals (and other school leaders) need to be keenly aware and alert to their schools’ contexts if they are to be successful.

However, it is increasingly the case that we need a wider sense of context. Context today includes understanding the policy environments in which we work, particularly when you work in a devolved system such as those that operate in Australia or England. Only when we have a wide frame of reference can we begin to think about developing *strategic* plans.

Furthermore, we need to take account of social and economic changes, otherwise we are educating our children to face a world that may not exist when they leave our schools. For this reason I have always liked Roland Barth’s definition of a school:

A school is four walls surrounding the future.

If we accept this definition, we need to consider the extent to which we are educating children for their futures, or for our pasts. This is not to suggest the two are polar opposites. There is much overlap between the past and the future. Social norms such as learning to live with others, altruism, and respect for oneself and others, are basic and enduring human values. But when we turn to thinking about the skills and knowledge needs of young people then we do need to look at the change forces operating today, and consider how these will shape the futures we all face, but especially those of the children we teach, and the schools in which we work.



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School Leadership
in the UK, led an APC
Invitational Seminar,
which was held
in Melbourne on
Thursday 27 March 2003.

This paper was the basis for
Professor Southworth’s
presentation.

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It is, of course, too easy to over-estimate and over-dramatise change, yet, at the same time, it is equally too easy to under-estimate or ignore it. To understand change we need to start by looking back.

Educational change is no longer what it used to be! Over the last 15 years or so, change in education has itself changed. Where once it was one thing at a time, serialised and episodic, today it is multiple and simultaneous. While change has always presented us with challenges, today the sense of challenge is greater, because there are so many different changes “coming at us” all at once.

The felt experience of change is different, less orderly, manageable and voluntary, more chaotic, turbulent and imposed. There are times when we feel, if not out of control, then not quite in control, and that is very hard for us as professionals. Professionally teachers are accustomed to being in control. For some, any sense of a loss of control is uncomfortable and, sometimes, psychologically ‘disturbing’. Teachers may, professionally and psychologically, be ill-disposed to dealing with change.

For example, Fullan (2001: 30) notes the titles of published books and the image of change they convey: *Loss and Change* (Marris, 1975), *Beyond the Stable State* (Schon, 1971), *Thriving on Chaos* (Peters, 1987), *Only the Paranoid Survive* (Grove, 1996), and *Competing on the Edge* (Grove & Eisenhardt, 1998). I would add to this list *The Human Side of School Change* by Robert Evans (1996), which has a sub-title of *Reform, resistance and the real-life problems of innovation*.

Fullan’s ideas about the meaning of change are strongly influenced by Marris’ work. According to Marris,

“Whether the change is sought or resisted, happens by chance or design; whether we look at it from the standpoint of reformers or those they manipulate, of individuals or institutions, the response is characteristically ambivalent”.

(p 7)

New experiences are always initially reacted to in the context of some “familiar, reliable construction of reality” in which people must be able to attach personal meaning to the experiences regardless of how meaningful they might be to others.

Marris does not see this “conservative impulse” as incompatible with growth:

“It seeks to consolidate skills and attachments, whose secure possession provides the assurance to master something new”

(p 22, quoted in Fullan, p 30, 2001)

The meaning of change is that it is, in some ways, always subjective. Unless and until we each come to know and understand the meaning of the new requirements we will experience uncertainty and lack clarity about what we need to do. But these feelings are difficult for us as teachers because we are socialised by our work and our workplaces to deal with:

- ***the concrete and the immediate*** — teachers engage in approximately 1,000 interchanges a day, 5,000 a week, and 200,000 a year, most of them spontaneous and requiring action;
- ***the press for multi-dimensionality and simultaneity*** — teachers are great multi-task workers. You deal with an individual and monitor all the others, assessing progress, attention needs and behaviour.
- ***the press for adapting to ever-changing conditions or unpredictability*** — anything can happen. Schools are reactive places because they deal with unstable input — classes with different ‘personalities’, plans may fall flat, what works with one child does not with another.

(See Fullan, p 33, 2001)

It is one of the ironies of teaching that teachers faced with the daily unpredictability of the classroom and of the learning process, cling to as much stability as they can create. We may resist change because we work in ‘unstable’ conditions. This leads to what Schon (1971) called ‘dynamic conservatism.’ That is, we adjust, cope and deal with the little stuff, but do not change at a deeper level.

What we see in Fullan’s work is the idea that individuals only move from where they are, to a new changed state, by *constructing* new meanings and understanding. Fullan promotes a constructivist view of change, which is summed up in the following phrase.



The meaning of change is that it is, in some ways, always subjective. Unless and until we each come to know and understand the meaning of the new requirements we will experience uncertainty and lack clarity about what we need to do.

“Change is not an event, it is a process.”

(p 52)



Rather than resisting change and trying to wait for it to go away, or pass us by, we need to accept its ubiquity and learn to deal with it, indeed, learn to embrace it and be more adaptable than hitherto.

It is a process of coming to know new ways of doing things. In other words, change is not an event, it is a *learning process*.

To see change as learning is important for managing and leading your schools, something I shall return to in the next section. First, though I want to set out some of the change forces we need to understand and learn about. I shall group them under three sub-headings:

- economic change;
- contemporary thinking about learning;
- schools.

Economic change

For the last three centuries nations have prospered by what they could grow and/or what they made. In England in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, our factories were our national treasure chests and your Australian fields were your fields of gold. However, in the last 30 or so years we have left the factory age behind and agriculture, whilst still important, is less so.

There are many reasons why this is to be so. Fewer and fewer people are being employed in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, as mechanisation and robots take over more and more of the work. Labour rates are now controlled by unskilled or semi-skilled workers in Pakistan, Indonesia, China or wherever. We only have to look at where our clothes are made — or assembled — to recognise the global nature of manufacturing today. Unskilled labour in much of Europe, certainly in England, in the USA and in Australia, is too expensive. In other words, the factories and the fields that once absorbed unskilled and unqualified workers, can no longer ‘soak up’ these individuals.

Increasingly, the new work is related to knowledge, hence the notion of the knowledge driven economy, as outlined in the following quotation.

The success of individuals and businesses in a knowledge driven economy will depend on the skills, creativity and imagination of our people. Basic literacy and numeracy and specialist craft and technical skills remain vital, but today’s economy increasingly demands people with high level skills and the ability to adapt quickly to changing requirements. Lifelong learning and continuous reskilling are essential to cope with change, achieve security in their lives and benefit from growing prosperity.

*(Opportunity for all in a world of change
DTI/DfEE, 2001)*

This quote not only makes the point about the need for more knowledgeable individuals, it also suggests that we need to be able to live with change in new ways too. Change has become so pervasive we must become accustomed to living with it productively. Rather than resisting change and trying to wait for it to go away, or pass us by, we need to accept its ubiquity and learn to deal with it, indeed, learn to embrace it and be more adaptable than hitherto.

The notion of the knowledge economy is perhaps best illustrated by the City of Seattle in north west America. For most of the 20th century Seattle was dominated by Boeing, the aircraft manufacturers. Many citizens worked at the Boeing plants, factories and Boeing Field where they serviced and refitted aircraft. Many more citizens depended on those who worked for Boeing. Seattle was Boeing’s town. This lasted from 1919 until the early 1990s. Then another big player arrived — Bill Gates and Microsoft. Within a few years Microsoft superceded Boeing and Boeing have now begun to move — they have relocated their head quarters.

Microsoft is a company reliant on ideas and knowledge and this is symbolised by the workplace. When you go to work for Microsoft you do not go to work in a factory or a plant on an industrial or trading estate. You go to work at the Microsoft *campus*. The word “campus” conveys an image very different from that of a factory and, for me, encapsulates the shift through which we are living.

Of course, this is not about an “either/ or” for manufacturing and knowledge work. Both do and will continue to co-exist and we need both. My

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point is that a shift in balance has occurred between the two. Today and tomorrow we need many more knowledge workers than ever before and than we need factory or farm hands.

Contemporary thinking about learning

This shift towards increasing the numbers of 'knowledge workers' is really one which raises questions about the curriculum. The changes raise questions about what children need to learn. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and social behaviour remain vital, but what are post-basics? What else is needed?

If we need to increase students' creative powers, how might we do this? Surely, we will not have a creative lesson or lessons, let alone a Creativity Hour, to go alongside the literacy and numeracy 'hours' which we have in English primary schools today! Does the shift require more time for drama, poetry, the visual arts and music? Possibly, or will these areas of knowing be taught elsewhere, and by others? Certainly, in the secondary sector, thought is being given to whether students should be in school all day, every day.

Thought is also being given to where might be better venues for certain aspects of learning. Maybe local theatres, radio stations, film outfits and studios would serve students' needs? In the primary sector we might need to consider developing new partnerships with actors, painters, musicians, writers and journalists to teach elements of these ways of knowing.

There are many taxing questions but to answer them we must also consider the technological developments which are under way. Schools no longer have a monopoly on knowledge. The Internet has opened up new vistas for learning and schooling. Today, if you wish to do a project on some topic or other, the Internet offers access to world class knowledge, rather than whatever books the school's library offers.

In England our national curriculum is going digital in three years. This offers the prospect of individualised learning, with access when the learner wants or needs it, not when the timetable dictates. Moreover, it also conjures up other scenarios. What might our history, geography and natural science curricula look like in the near future — especially if, or when, Microsoft, Sony, Disney and Dreamworks move into producing materials?

Do you remember teaching or being taught about dinosaurs as a project? Given programs such as the BBC's *Walking With Dinosaurs*, just think what opportunities might exist very soon.

These, though, are essentially questions about what to teach. They are important, but the key question is not about **what should be taught**, rather it is about **how we learn**.

After a century of being pre-occupied with instruction, teaching and what to teach, we are, at last, beginning to think about learning. For over 30 years we have been too strongly centred on what to teach and how to assess what has been taught. We have been fixated with curricular content at the expense of understanding and respecting how we learn.

If we built our curricula based on how people learn, as against what they should be taught, we might have very different policies and curricula in our schools and in our respective countries.

We know much more about learning today than ever before, and much more than when we all trained and qualified as teachers. Our knowledge will keep on growing, not least because of what we are discovering about the brain.

Today there is agreement that learning is an active process of mind, not a passive act of reception. Also, learning is understood as social, as well as individual. Learning is seen by many, including myself, as a process of "making meaning", in which individuals construct and re-construct their understanding of a topic, subject, discipline, the world, in the light of new knowledge and existing understandings. Seen in this way, the most important thing learners bring to the classroom is what they already know, since this will influence, sometimes govern, what they will learn next.

Learning is thus a process of changing your mind — or parts of it. It is a change process, usually a subtle change process which some think of as transformative:

Learning is understood as the process of using prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to future action.

(Mezirow, 2000, p 5)



Schools no longer have a monopoly on knowledge.

And also:

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. Transformative learning involves participation in a constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions and making an action decision based on the resulting insight.

(Mezirow, 2000. pp 7-8)

For these reasons, I am attracted to the idea of formative assessment. Formative assessment is assessment **for** learning, not assessment **of** learning. Again, we need more of the former and less of the latter. Formative assessment enables students to know what they need to learn, and how they are progressing towards their learning goals. When teachers engage the child in identifying what else s/he needs to do to progress their learning, then the child becomes empowered and takes responsibility for her/his learning. We are also seeing in classrooms, where this approach is adopted, that students also develop skills in self and peer assessment. These increase individual and social opportunities for learning.

Formative assessment ushers in, to those classrooms where it is used consistently, not only new approaches to teaching and assessment, but also new ways of learning in schools. Formative assessment promotes learning how to learn. This form of learning is critical to support life-long learning. If the change forces and the ever-present nature of change in our worlds today means we have to be able to adapt throughout our lives, then knowing how to learn is one of the “new basics” in learning. It is no longer an option but an obligation that we teach children how to learn.

At the same time, we should recognise that our beliefs about intelligence have changed. I was schooled at a time when intelligence was regarded as fixed. Thus the major task for schools was for them to sort out who had high levels of intelligence and who did not. Then once this was decided, they were despatched to different kinds of schools — those with high levels of intelligence went to grammar schools, those who did not went to other types of schools, usually poorer (in every sense).

Intelligence is now seen not as fixed but as developing and as multiple. Thus the question we must ask today is not:

How smart are you?

but:

How are you smart?

We need to think about each individual’s profile of intelligences. Thus we should also challenge teachers who label a child as “bright”. Calling a child “bright” suggests the teacher still holds on to a view of intelligence as fixed. Moreover, in primary schools we have sometimes been guilty of assessing intelligence simply by reference to a young child’s reading ability, or his/her articulateness. Often when teachers say

Whether or not we wholly accept Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, the critical point is that it describes a constructivist theory of learning.

Constructivism challenges those who see teaching and learning as a process of transmission. Teaching as transmission is today under attack, yet it remains influential, not least because it is embedded in our curricular structures, inspection regimes and assessment apparatus. Hence, it is no surprise to hear teachers and principals still talking about pedagogy as delivery. Teachers, to my mind, do not deliver learning to someone else. For one thing we must always ask *Whose learning is it?* For another, teachers are not transporters, or hauliers passing on parcels of knowledge from one place to another person. Neither is assessment a “signing for” process, whereby we test individuals to see if they (the students) have “got it” — what was to be learned, has been taught, has been transmitted and transported to them.

While delivery is a guiding metaphor for our teaching and thinking about learning, it can be no surprise that learning is understood as rote, memorisation and behavioural. Where delivery is the guiding metaphor, constructivist notions of learning will not flourish.

Teaching as transmission still has a role to play, but not a leading one anymore — indeed, it may be a very small part soon — but only as Principals and other school leaders promote more active forms of learning that are constructivist approaches too.



If the change forces and the ever-present nature of change in our worlds today means we have to be able to adapt throughout our lives, then knowing how to learn is one of the “new basics” in learning. It is no longer an option but an obligation that we teach children how to learn.

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this child is bright, they mean s/he is a “good” reader. Reading matters, and can be an indicator of future strengths, but it is also a diagnosis that the child needs to develop other intelligences too.

Given earlier points, it seems to me that “intelligence” today includes being able as a learner. One definition of intelligent people is that they know what to do when they do not know what to do.

In other words, they are not reliant on their teacher or someone else to tell them what to do. They have an independence of mind and action. Learners who know how to learn are likely to be able to figure out what it is they need to know and do, when initially they do not know what to do. Such a skill is essential for life-long learning. As individuals switch careers, change life styles or take on new roles, they need to learn new things. Given that they may well not know what to do in their new circumstances — in their new learning environments — being able to learn how to learn is vital.

Such highly skilled learners probably will have been encouraged to assess how they are learning. Formative assessment thus offers us a valuable route towards meeting the challenges the change forces pose for us, of developing advanced and independent learners and in developing constructivist approaches to learning.

Formative assessment may even be one of the keys to providing the very knowledge workers we believe we need. There are clear dangers here in suggesting that this one strategy is the panacea for all we need to improve our schools. Of course, it is not, as the later sections will show. But neither is formative assessment a small step forward. It could make an important and significant contribution to transforming our classrooms and schools.

Schools

Changing our schools is necessary, not because they are poor or weak, but because it is now timely to do so. State funded education has been popular for 100 to 130 years in the UK, the USA and Australia. Before that we relied on voluntary organisations — usually the churches — and private schools to educate the few, to rule and supervise us. Now that we need everyone to be highly educated in our three countries, we have to think about the implications of this new demand for our schools.

A number of scholars and ‘futures thinkers’ are developing scenarios which may or may not happen. Brian Caldwell, from The University of Melbourne, has set out for NCSL three possible scenarios.

Public schools as safety net schools

Here more than half of secondary school students attend private schools, because their parents became dissatisfied with the education offered by state schools. The remaining state schools are now simply safety net ones.

The decline of schools

Here schools are disappearing as a range of educational, technological and social developments overtake schools. Schools are dangerous places to be, because of drugs and violence. Advances in telecommunications mean that home schooling is growing, alongside learning centres which are springing up as public-private partnerships.

The transformation of schools

Here Government has concentrated its efforts on creating a climate in which the whole community provides resources to support schools, while there is a demanding regime of accountability in the use of a steadily increasing pool of public funds. There is a range of innovative approaches in community-based learning centres and in the use of information and communications technology. There is still a place called school, but that place has been transformed after a decade of creative leadership (Caldwell, 2002).

Transforming schools is the emergent theme in the British government’s plans for education in its second term of office. Like much in education today, it resonates with what is going on in other countries. This trend is partly based on meeting the new demands of running a successful economy. It also reflects concerns about modernising teaching and teachers.

Schools still resemble their 19th century origins. State funded schools were established when manufacturing was the dominant force and, as people left working on the land to work in factories, schools were created to provide a literate work force, including one which could tell the time, as against respond to daylight and seasonal changes. Many schools in England are still located in 19th century buildings. Their architecture has not altered, nor has their teaching and learning architecture, as implied in the previous sub-section.



One definition of intelligent people is that they know what to do when they do not know what to do.



... isolation is a barrier to professional sharing and learning.

Schools where there is a sense of professional isolation are schools which are poor learning environments for teachers.

And these schools are not intelligent schools.

To transform schools we also need to reconsider our assumptions about their social architecture. This means rethinking how we view the workplace and the workforce.

In some ways, schools resemble prisons. Pupils have to be there; it is the law. Thus there is a custodial function. Also, teachers work on their own, with little flexibility in how they use their time and relatively few opportunities for interaction with other adults. Although the increase in other adults in classrooms is changing this pattern, it is still the case that teachers remain the only professional in the classroom for the great majority of the time.

Teamwork and interdependence amongst teachers remains weak in some schools. Also, links between schools are often fragile. While professional collaboration and interdependence are increasing, neither can be taken for granted.

Such a picture creates the circumstances whereby teachers can still feel isolated as well as independent of their colleagues, be it next door or in the school down the road. In turn, isolation is a barrier to professional sharing and learning. Schools where there is a sense of professional isolation are schools which are poor learning environments for teachers. And these schools are not intelligent schools.

While much has been done to heighten awareness about workplace and work-based learning, these capacities and dispositions cannot be assumed as a feature of all schools. Thus, opportunities to learn with and from colleagues are uneven because it is not an established norm, despite some excellent practice and examples in some schools.

Those who work apart from others are left to their own devices. Setbacks and disappointments cannot be shared, opportunities to learn from one's mistakes are denied. The latter is especially true when the culture of the school is "toxic". A school culture is full of toxins when teachers compete with one another, when there is an absence of trust, when colleagues are intellectually and socially closed and defensive about themselves.

In the worst cases, the culture of teaching allies with the school culture. Here teachers are always too busy with the here and now, and they work in schools where time is not devoted to reflection, sharing and professional conversation.

This is not to deny that teaching is demanding, that teachers have much to attend to. But if they are not also learners and encouraged to be learners, where it matters most — in their classrooms and staffrooms, where they have (or should have) access to colleagues who face similar demands — then their professional development will be severely limited. Moreover, it may never be focused on learning and teaching.

We can no longer tolerate schools in which teachers do not learn in collegial and planned ways, since to do so is to restrict severely the growth of teachers' knowledge and understanding about learning, pedagogy and student development. Collaboration inside our schools — coupled with external links to overcome the dangers of parochialism — is vital, if we are to avoid some schools from becoming "psychic prisons" (Morgan, 1986, p199).

Transformation of our schools involves changing the way we teach, concentrating harder and more on how students learn, being forward looking, re-designing the way we work to meet the challenges of the future, rather than reflecting the traditions of the past (or, as some have it, breaking free from the tyranny of custom and practice), promoting professional, peer learning in the school and drawing in best practice from beyond the school — be it in another local school, harnessing skills in the community, or from across the country, the continent or the world.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a contested concept. Leadership types and lists of categories abound. I think all this scholarly endeavour shows that there is no singular way of capturing leadership because it is pluralistic. Leadership is not monolithic, it is many things.

For example, while leadership matters, so too does management. We need both leadership and management. We need our schools to be well led and well managed. Too much of either, at the expense of the other is often unhelpful. However, it should be acknowledged that there is always more time devoted to management than to leadership, although the two frequently overlap and co-exist. What matters is how Principals and other leaders use the time and opportunities to lead when they have them

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Whenever we distinguish between leadership and management, we need to explain what is the difference between them. One of the papers commissioned by the NCSL argues that:

Leadership is ... about showing the way forward, whereas management as a word emerged out of the industrial revolution and describes the control and application of resources ... Leadership is connected to human relationships, culture and the personal effectiveness of people and working communities. Management, on the other hand, pertains to the 'architecture', that is, systems, procedures, control and the allocation of resources, or the housekeeping that allows people to live and work together effectively.

(Doughty, 2001)

This outlook is in line with my own thinking:

I tend to think that management is largely to do with ensuring that a school runs smoothly on a day-to-day, or week-by-week basis. Leadership though is about ensuring the school is going somewhere.

(Southworth, 1998, p 8)

In terms of school leadership, there are four major ideas which currently underscore and guide our thinking. These are that leadership is:

- situational or contingent
- cultural
- transformational
- instructional

These four ideas alone show that school leadership has become more complex than formerly (Hill, 2001).

Situational theories

Situational theories show that leadership is contingent on the context and circumstances in which you work. Leadership depends in large measure on where you are and with whom you are working. This common-sense explanation is actually quite intricate. The idea of “where you are” embraces not only a sense of place and time, but also a sense of personal, psychological and

performance factors too. Furthermore, it includes everyone, including the leaders. A sense of situation involves our own and colleagues’ beliefs, dispositions and understandings about issues, as well as where the school is located (urban, rural), the community it serves, the school’s size, its history and levels of performance.

This idea also means there is no final word on what is good leadership. We cannot have a simple formula for what you do because “*outstanding leadership is exquisitely sensitive to the context in which it is exercised*” (Leithwood et al, 1999, p 4)

Cultural leadership

Cultural leadership refers to the importance of understanding, creating and changing organisational cultures. Every school has its own culture; it is “the way we do things around here”. While many theorists emphasise the importance of understanding the norms, beliefs and values which act as taken-for-granted rules for the organisational members, the essential feature of cultural theories is that they acknowledge schools to be social arenas, full of feelings and subjectivity. They are places where members actively construct their own meanings, but often within the bounds of tacit rules and assumptions which bind them together. Thus schools are places where individuals construct their own meanings about the organisation, but which are simultaneously contoured by the organisation’s values.

Cultures operate through symbols, rituals and ceremonies, since these communicate in subtle ways who and what matters here, as well as what does not matter as much. Schools are rich in symbols, rituals, ceremonies — think of assemblies, reward and punishment systems, concerts, sports events and award times. Leaders are exemplars of values and beliefs. Leaders are closely watched by their followers and closely observed to see whether their espoused values are consistent with their daily actions.

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership attempts to transform the culture and social relations in a particular institution, not as an act of individual or charismatic leadership but as a shared enterprise of the teachers, students, the community. It involves skills of social advocacy, inter-group relations, team building and inspiration without domination (Grace, 1995, p



Leaders are closely watched by their followers and closely observed to see whether their espoused values are consistent with their daily actions.



... we need school leaders who do focus on classrooms and are interested in teaching and learning. However, they are also concerned with developing the quality and the power of classroom processes and those of the staffroom too, since they wish to enhance the school's levels of performance.

54). It is also concerned with developing a community of leaders (Foster, 1989, p 52).

This form of leadership does not flow from an individual in a position of power; leadership is exercised by many at different times and by individuals who sometimes are leaders, sometimes are followers. All of these leaders seek to transform others by offering them new ideas, values and skills. In this way leadership is distributed, shared and occurs at all levels of the school. This is an important feature of transformational leadership, although, in truth, not all of those who advocate transformational leadership see it like this. Some see transformational leadership as visionary and cling to notions of leaders being heroic and charismatic.

Transformational leaders who do not rely on charisma and heroism use power differently. They do not exercise “power over” others, but increase everyone’s “power to” (Southworth, 1999, p 50). This is leadership that operates like an electrical transformer — upping the voltage of everyone. When power is seen as “infinite” then, when we “up the power” of everyone, the school is transformed and more powerful.

By contrast, if power is seen as finite, then if I give you power, I may have less. Clearly, this outlook is seen as inappropriate by those who support transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is critical leadership, in that it is concerned with power relations and has an emancipatory dimension.

Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership assumes that “*the major focus for attention by leaders is the behaviours of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students*” (Leithwood et al, 1999, p 8). It is leadership that concentrates on teaching and learning, as well as on curricular provision and development.

Some regard instructional leadership in a “narrow” sense, believing this is all that school leaders should attend to. If this ever was a sensible outlook it is no longer true today. The increased complexity of leadership and management — which is a feature of devolved education systems such as Australia’s and England’s — means that you have many things to attend to. Thus we need to consider instructional leadership in a “broad” sense, which includes organisational management, cultural and transformational issues as well. In other words, we need school leaders who do focus on classrooms and are interested in teaching

and learning. However, they are also concerned with developing the quality and the power of classroom processes and those of the staffroom too, since they wish to enhance the school’s levels of performance. They also wish to develop the school by making it fit to meet the change forces which always surround us today, in order to prepare the children for their tomorrows.

It might be possible to develop a broad and inclusive form of instructional leadership which encapsulates the other three types. However, there are two reasons for not taking this route from here.

- 1 While instructional leadership needs to be conceived broadly, it cannot be all things to everyone. Its distinctiveness needs to be retained. It is leadership which should operate alongside and as part of the other forms.
- 2 I want to argue that we should change the title for this particular form of leadership, because instruction is no longer our guiding star; rather it is learning. If learning is our primary goal, then we should think of leadership being “**learning centred**” rather than instructional, and it is this title I shall now adopt.

Learning centred leadership has been used in schools for many years. Primary Principals and Heads may well be the best leaders we have in this domain. Thus we should build upon this expertise, which is what we are trying to do in the UK’s National College. We are developing approaches to learning centred leadership that are informed by recent research (Blase & Blase, 1998; Southworth, 2002; 2002a) and by best practice in schools.

In other words, in order to meet the challenges of change and prepare students for their futures, we need to transform our schools. This transformational agenda for schools involves re-conceptualising learning and teaching. Leadership for transformation involves re-culturing schools, transforming the workplace and the workforce and ensuring that we focus strongly on students’ learning — and using this knowledge about learning to inform and develop how we teach.

Learning centred leadership lies at the heart of transforming schools. Research shows that leaders influence others in both direct and indirect ways, as well as being influenced themselves by those with whom they work (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). For example, Principals in small schools exert quite a lot of direct influence because they

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teach, in their own and colleagues' classrooms. On the other hand, the larger the school the more indirect influence a Principal is likely to have, because his/her actions are mediated through others. Thus school size has a bearing on the balance of the direct and indirect effects of principals. However, while balance is an important feature, the fact remains that Principals use both. Effective principals strive to influence what teacher colleagues do in their classrooms in:

- 1 as many ways as possible; and
- 2 through as many leaders as possible.

It also seems from research in the USA and England (Blase & Blase, 1998; Southworth, 2002a) that three tactics are especially influential in shaping teachers' classroom practice:

- modelling
- monitoring
- dialogue

Modelling

The power of example is exceptionally strong in schools. Being able to show others that you can "walk the talk" is of inestimable value. indeed, for Heads or Principals, and for teachers, it is the very foundation of their credibility.

As already mentioned above, teachers are keen observers of one another and they especially watch their Principals like hawks. What leaders **say** matters to teachers, but what they **do** matters more. Wise Principals know this and consciously use their practice as an example for others. In this sense, Principals are always on show, on stage, and playing before and to their audiences.

Monitoring

Monitoring involves Principals and other school leaders, as well as all teachers, looking at one another's work, be it teaching plans, observation of teaching, examining samples of students' work, analysing learning outcome data, or reviewing test results and assessment information.

These are important ways of developing evidence-informed practice. They help us to see more clearly than otherwise what we are actually doing, as against believing what we think is happening.

Experience suggests that four forms of monitoring are valuable:

- 1 Principals observing teaching throughout the school;
- 2 colleagues observing one another;
- 3 staff collegially reviewing learning outcome data;
- 4 students being invited to say what they think about the school.

The first three have been discussed already. The fourth is especially potent, in checking out whether what we, as teachers, **think** is happening, is really being **experienced** by the students. We have much to learn from the students, much more than we used to think. Students' perceptions permit us access to the "received" curriculum, which in many ways is the only curriculum that really matters. At any one time in classrooms and schools there are always three curricula running simultaneously:

- 1 the planned curriculum — that which teachers intend to do;
- 2 the taught curriculum — that which actually is taught; and
- 3 the received curriculum — that which students experience.

As we know, there is also considerable potential for these three curricula to become disentangled and divorced from one another. Unless we explore the third of these, we will never know if they have or have not been synchronised.

Dialogue

Professional dialogues occur in a variety of settings. Staff meetings, the preparation and agreement of school policies, reviews of practice, analysis of data and planning meetings are just some of the many occasions when staff talk and discuss practice.

However, when leaders follow up these more formal occasions with informal visits to colleagues' classrooms these too are influential. Such conversations do a number of things simultaneously.



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There are five to focus on here.

1 Modelling

When leaders talk about learning and teaching, they demonstrate that they are interested in these core tasks. Leaders who show they are interested in colleagues' professional work are modelling that teaching and learning matter. This has considerable symbolic significance for colleagues, because followers watch and note what leaders pay attention to. Paying attention to learning and teaching gets noticed and colleagues therefore know that their leader is interested in the school's primary purpose; that s/he wants to know what is happening and wants to improve the school's work in these areas.

2 Support and assistance

Principals who know that such conversations are important, use them to provide support and assistance for their teacher colleagues. Although some teachers can develop themselves when given minimal information and assistance, it is overly optimistic to assume all teachers can do this. Many teachers benefit from being invited to talk about their classwork, the students' learning, and their teaching. Principals can also benefit from what the teachers say.

3 Description and analysis

When leaders ask colleagues to talk about their work they are asking them to describe to another person what they have been doing and, often, to say why they did it and whether it was of value. This process is more than simply describing what you did. It is also a process of analysing your actions. To explain to someone else what you do or did, you have to organise what you did into an account, into a kind of short story, selecting and editing what to include and exclude. The process demands that you find the right words to capture what happened and to explain and rationalise what you did as a teacher. Thus the teacher's account becomes an analytic description. Increasing teachers' powers of analysis is an important skill in its own right and a major step in becoming a reflective practitioner.

4 Articulation

While it is true that we are asking colleagues to provide analytic descriptions of their practice and professional concerns, it is even more than this. Rendering one's actions intelligible to another person is essentially a process of *articulation*. Articulation requires us to make explicit to someone else what was hitherto largely

implicit. Furthermore, when we do this for an interested listener, we also turn what was implicit to us into something that is explicit to ourselves.

Articulation — making our craft knowledge explicit — is essential for two inter-related reasons. First, it enables us to express what we only knew in a less precise way. When we describe our work to someone else we are often — and sometimes in a profound way — “talking to ourselves”. We are describing and making concrete our professional experience to ourselves. Often, it is only when we do this that we can learn consciously from our experience. Of course, we can also do this on our own, but there are times when during the conversation with others we gain fresh insights into our practice — either because of what we have just said, what the telling of it has made us think about, or what the listener has said.

Secondly, unless and until we make teachers' craft knowledge explicit, we cannot transfer this knowledge to others. While our professional knowledge lies implicit, untold and unexplored, we cannot share it with others or examine it through the ideas and experience of colleagues. Requiring colleagues to talk about their work and their ideas about children's learning creates the conditions whereby teachers' individual knowledge and experience becomes available more readily for others. In this way, we move towards ensuring that everyone's practice and experience becomes a learning resource for everyone else. Thus, in these seemingly small ways, we actually build capacity in the school, for each of us to learn with and from one another.

5 Coaching

The processes of inviting colleagues to describe, analyse, articulate and reflect on their practice with another are obviously ones that facilitate peer coaching. We should acknowledge that this approach is thus in line with the growing emphasis which is being placed on the value of leaders coaching colleagues.

However, what this whole approach also embodies is a constructivist way of learning. Teachers are encouraged and enabled to make sense of their professional experience. It is a meaning-making experience. The process should sensitise teachers to learning being an active process of mind. As such, teaching becomes more facilitative and coaching plays a greater part, while telling and transmitting facts and bundles of information become much less important.

In other words, the medium is the message.

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The beauty of this form of leadership is that it is educative in its intention and methods. It also embodies the kinds of changes we need to see taking place in classrooms, if they are to be places where children — intellectually, socially and emotionally — become fit for their futures.

CONSTRUCTING LEARNING SCHOOLS

By now it should be clearer why I favour calling this a learning centred approach to leadership. It puts the learning process at the heart of leadership and teacher development, while simultaneously transforming teachers and schools, in small, but vitally important steps. Moreover, the size of these steps enables the change process to be one of learning our way forward. Such leadership recognises that change is a subjective experience in which all of us develop subjective meanings about what we are doing and where we are going.

Some will argue this is too slow a process. I would argue that the issue is less about speed and more about sustainability. This is as fast as we can go if we are to transform our schools in terms of how children learn and how teachers “teach” new ways of learning — and if we are to sustain these changes as we meet other challenges along the way.

In addition, we have not yet come to the end of the full range of changes needed to create the conditions for transforming learning, teaching, leadership and schools. To do this, leaders also need to construct learning schools.

Learning organisations

This idea has been around for some time now and is well known to us all. A learning school is one where through the processes of learning centred leadership teachers develop and deepen their craft knowledge and share their intellectual capital as widely as they can, inside and beyond the school. To achieve this we need to reconfigure the social architecture of schools and their cultures.

At the very least we need collaborative teacher cultures for reasons set out a long time ago by Rosenholtz (1989), Nias et al (1989; 1992), and Fullan and Hargreaves (1993), among others. When Jennifer Nias and I, with others, studied

how teachers worked together, we identified and described how in the highly collaborative cultures that we observed, social relations among all members of staff were characterised by trust, security and openness. When we looked at how school staff developed their curricula, we saw the same three characteristics were present, alongside another: the willingness and ability of staff to learn from one another and to take responsibility for each other’s professional learning.

As it is expressed in today’s terms, we need to ensure that in every school there are high levels of “social capital”, which essentially means trust.

An effective school might be one in which all the teachers have developed individually the knowledge and skill of teaching effectively; but it will be more effective, and certainly have greater capacity to improve, if there is sufficient social capital for the teachers to share that professional knowledge and to create more of it as new demands are made. Low social capital among teachers entails a lack of trust and networking among colleagues, who thus fail to share their pedagogic experience ... failure to recognise that social capital supports the knowledge transfer essential to the maximal mobilisation of intellectual capital damages the school’s capacity for any kind of improvement.

(Hargreaves, 2001, pp 492 -3)

This picture is one of a high-powered learning school. Teachers share what they know, and they talk about their problems and challenges in a spirit of enquiry and problem solving. They feel sufficiently secure to be open with one another, because they trust one another. They know they do not need to be defensive because they will not be attacked. Classroom difficulties and problems are not — given acceptable levels of teaching in the first place — a cause for concern; rather they are opportunities for learning. If we accept that we all learn from our mistakes and misjudgements, then we need to create a climate amongst staff where we can all talk about our “errors”, so that we and others can learn from them. Such openness is important, because none of us can learn if our minds are closed.

It is also important to note that learning schools are outward looking. They are connected to other centres of learning. Clusters of schools have long played a role in teacher and school



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development. However, networks of schools are now becoming common, where the “glue” is not so much geographical locality, but rather a common interest in educational issues. Increasingly these networks are transcending regional boundaries and becoming national and international.

At root, learning schools provide the best learning environment for teacher development, learning centred leadership, school improvement and transformation. Also, they are likely to be the best organisational model for children. Learning schools should project an image of adults learning and enquiring, and this is surely a message we need to convey to the next generation of life long learners and knowledge workers.

CONCLUSION

If we take learning to be our central goal, it can also be our centrifugal force. Meeting the challenge of change requires us to transform our schools, both as places of learning for the children and as organisations in which teachers and other adults work. But it places new demands on leaders in schools.

Leadership for transformation means being a learning centred leader, where you and others simultaneously focus on students' learning and enable teachers to think about their teaching in the light of these insights. Such an emphasis marks a reversal of contemporary approaches. Currently teaching is largely a matter of identifying what is to be taught, then planning one's teaching to transmit the knowledge to largely passive recipients. Teachers hold fast to this model because it is expected by the accountability systems we have in place, and because it served teachers well when they were students. The roots of today's teaching system run deep and are entwined in many teachers' biographies as learners. These roots will therefore not be pulled up quickly.

They can be lifted steadily, however. Formative assessment, student perspectives, teachers observing one another, coaching and looking at one's teaching through the lens of learning — all of these are valuable tools for turning around the way we have been thinking about schooling. Applied with determination, separately and together, they can help us achieve substantial progress.

Where these processes follow the tenets of this paper — in social constructivist ways, with teachers actively making meaning of their own practice — we can learn our way forward. Moreover, given that the medium of change is also the message, this doubles the forces of change.

In addition, the more leaders we involve in this in each school the better the prospects for teacher growth and classroom changes that will steadily revolutionise schooling in a sustained way. Experience also suggests that the most likely scenario for schools moving in these ways is that the capacity for change increases, and transformation will accelerate, as conditions in the school become more amenable to this approach.

There are clear implications here for leadership development. We need school leaders to be familiar with the latest ideas about learning. We need them to adopt the learning centred approach advocated here. However, this approach is already familiar to many Principals. What may be more important is that they apply it more frequently and develop other colleagues in the school to lead in these ways. What is advocated here is learning centred **leadership** not simply **principalship**. Without doubt it will only flourish through Principals' support and advocacy, because it relies on their modelling it and monitoring its growth. But the task is one where we need to ensure that all school leaders lead in this way.

This is not to say it is the only way to lead. It will also be important for leaders to attend to the teacher cultures in their schools, creating as much trust and social capital as possible. Only then will our schools become learning organisations.

There are also obvious dangers in this model being seen as a panacea. It is not, which is why I have tried to argue for a broad approach to leadership — one that is situational, cultural and transformational. Where these three are combined — alongside a strong and persistent attention to the learning of students and adults alike, including the learning of leaders — then we will have in place the enabling conditions for school growth, based on professional knowledge creation, management and transfer.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Participants at the APC seminar contributed comments and questions during and at the end of the session. Some of the emerging issues and discussion points are summarised below.

1 The importance of engagement

Not everybody will want to be involved in the kind of team work, or the overall directions, that this paper advocates. In order to achieve team work with the optimum level of involvement, all members need to be engaged from the early developmental stages. A fundamental strategy is to schedule time for a process of ongoing dialogue — where input from all participants is expected and overtly valued. This will first help the participants identify key issues and then facilitate the development of a shared view.

2 Moving on from the previous model

There is always a lag time when moving from one model to another. The leaders' role includes making it as clear as possible what is being done, and why, as well as modelling the new approach. Problems may arise where the explanation is unclear, where the followers have a personal investment or belief in the old model, or where the followers either over-estimate or under-estimate what their leaders can do.

Delegation and the strategic use of resource allocation can be powerful tools in dealing with such problems. Another part of the leadership role will be to monitor closely what progress is being made, and by whom. If one or two people drag their feet, this monitoring can become part of an educative process, where informed intervention by the leader can make the difference between the successful implementation of a policy decision and a potentially damaging partial loss of direction. In the UK, this is seen as an important aspect of school leadership; Inspectors monitor and may report on whether senior leaders are monitoring progress appropriately.

3 Strengths and weaknesses of dialogue

Dialogue can be a powerful tool, but it needs to be structured and focused. Often it can be hard to move above discussion of the day-to-day. If the issues are difficult ones, some participants will try to keep the discussion within their comfort zone. Smaller groups help. Another strategy is to require a given product in a given time. In any

case, especially in the early stages, and regularly thereafter, the first rule for leaders and meetings — in a school, other organisation, or politics — is “be there”. That is essential if specific directions and goals are to be achieved.

4 The growing need for leaders

The successful achievement of much of that has been discussed in the paper relies on the development of lots of teachers — to deal with the range of complexities and issues that come with varied and rapid change. In recognition of this — as well as coming demographic changes among school leaders, as the baby-boomers leave the service — is a growing emphasis in educational systems on capacity building, particularly in terms of leaders developing other leaders. This in itself may require considerable changes in school cultures, for example in countries where the element of competition for promotion has been a dominant factor, or where hierarchies have become increasingly flat, with few opportunities to move into formal leadership roles or positions.

The change of culture, in part, will involve all teachers embracing the responsibility for leadership, albeit in different ways. This will not be a pay issue. A new paradigm is needed, based on enhanced concepts of professionalism. Status and authority do not necessarily relate to remuneration. With time at a premium in schools, the allocation of discretionary time, or time to complete specific duties, can be a powerful measure of respect. The same is true of resource allocation to particular areas or projects.

5 Thinking and working outside the square

Some commentators are concerned that Learning Centred Leadership might go astray if misunderstood or misapplied, for example leading to the creation of a learning environment that entrenches old ways rather than exploring ways to achieve improvement. It is important to remember that sometimes the tree needs to be challenged and shaken, by responsible professionals to move colleagues out of their comfort zones, and towards the desired direction. They may well undergo what one commentator has called “promising pain”, as they move away from the familiar but become more aware of fresh possibilities. In that case, the leader may hear their protests, listen, soothe, support and keep the process going until they come out the other side. Not all change is easy, even when it is ultimately beneficial. One strategy might be to broaden support by encouraging discussion with other professionals, in local or virtual networks.

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Professor Geoff Southworth



*...change, leadership
and learning organisations
are bound together
by a common thread,
namely learning.*



*Change requires all of us to learn our way forward.
School leadership is fundamentally concerned with learning.
Learning organisations — in our terms, learning schools — are equally
about creating the conditions and the organisational capacity
for all members of the school to be continuous learners.
Learning is the key to improving and transforming our schools.*

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