

Section I

Exploring Models for Leadership and Improvement



CHAPTER 1

Establishing Platforms for Leadership and Learning

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Traditional understandings of leadership have focused on individuals who occupied formal positions of authority within organizations; the 'leaders', their personality traits and their work. In business, the focus was on the chief executive officer (CEO). In education, the equivalent was the school principal. Studies of leadership within this framework typically examined how the leadership styles of these individuals allowed them to exercise influence and have authority over others. Of particular interest was, 'the heroic leader standing atop a hierarchy, bending the school community to his or her purposes' (Camburn et al., 2003: 348). Such a view of leadership, however, failed to realize its promise. On a practical level, there were simply insufficient numbers of heroes (Copland, 2003; Elmore, 2002; Harris, 2008) or 'want-to-be heroes' (Gronn and Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003) to run all our businesses and schools. On an empirical level, the evidence demonstrated that effective organizations were not typically run by a single leader who controls the activities of others who, in turn, play minor support roles. What happens within any organization is more complex than this. Many people are involved in both formal and informal leadership practice in influencing direction and outcomes. Thus, the vocabulary of 'leadership' replaced that of 'leaders' to reflect this complexity and the relational nature of leadership influence.

While there might be a general consensus about the importance of leadership rather than focusing on individual leaders and their dispositions, there is less agreement about how we should think about leadership. Ideas have been proposed, fallen into disuse, only to re-emerge some time later. Most of these ideas have been captured in the form of 'adjective-plus leadership'. Leadership, for example, might be transformational, shared, instructional, pedagogical or distributed. The 'adjective plus leadership' label has been deliberately avoided in the title of this book because it is not another book about a depiction of, or prescription for, leadership. Rather, it is designed to answer the question raised by Starratt (2004) that asks, 'Leadership of what, for what?' Clearly, given the title of this book, it is leadership of and for learning.

This learning focus is a relatively new area of scholarship but it draws on, and has emerged from, a tradition of research and thinking in the area. There are many possibilities for how these ideas can be broadly grouped and we have chosen three themes to include in this introductory overview because each has contributed to the foundations of what we know about leaders and learning. These themes include empowering relationships, patterns of leadership distribution, and how leadership contributes to improvements in teaching and learning. Our reason for providing this overview is to locate the central theme of this book on leadership and learning within the broader ideas and traditions of the study of leadership.

Empowering relationships

One of the early alternatives to the heroic leader involved a focus on empowering relationships between leaders and followers. Volumes have been written on these relationships and the associated micro-politics (for example, Blasé, 1991) but probably the best known adjectival label is transformational leadership. The origins of transformational leadership came from the generic literature on leadership rather than that specifically focused on education (Burns, 1978). The central question of this early work was why some leaders were able to engage with others in ways that raised each party to higher levels of motivation and morality. These leaders were able to motivate their staff to pursue the goals of the organization over their own interests.

These ideas gained currency within the education sector and shaped much of the educational leadership training through the 1980s and 1990s (Leithwood et al., 1999). Initially four categories of transformational leadership behaviours were the focus. These included idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. They were seen in combination with what was referred to as transactional dimensions of contingent reward and management-by-exception. Through the research of Leithwood and colleagues (Leithood et al., 1990; 1996; 1999), these dimensions were subsequently combined into four broad categories according to the immediate intended outcome. These categories included: setting directions (vision, group goals, high-performance expectations); helping people (individualized consideration/support, intellectual stimulation, modelling key values and practices); redesigning the organization (helping to build collaborative cultures, creating structures to foster collaboration, building productive relations with parents and the community); and transactional and managerial aggregate (contingent reward, management by exception, management).

Many of these key concepts within transformational leadership have underpinned some chapters in this book, particularly with the emphasis on developing clear visions and high expectations, together with promoting collaboration and productive relations. The problem, however, has been the difficulty in linking the dimensions of transformational leadership to outcomes for students in an environment of increasing international pressure for accountability within schools for

these outcomes. In a review of research on transformational leadership and student outcomes, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) found reasonably consistent relationships to measures of school engagement but more equivocal relationships with student achievement. These authors concluded that the effects of leaders on students were largely indirect – an idea that has gained increasing currency in the leadership literature.

Some argued (for example, Robinson, 2006) that the reason for the limited impact of transformational leadership on students' learning and achievement was the focus on relationships among the adults within the system, rather than on the students they were supposed to be serving. To achieve the impact on student learning and achievement, more focus was needed on developing the kind of relationships that would develop professional knowledge about the improvement of teaching and learning more directly. Focusing on relationships alone, however empowering, was unlikely to be sufficient in bringing about this change.

Patterns of leadership distribution

Another alternative to the heroic leader came with the work of Camburn et al. (2003), Gronn (2003) and Spillane et al. (2004). Their collective empirical work confirmed that leadership involves activities and interactions that are *distributed* across multiple people and situations. This work had its origins in the ideas of shared leadership (Etzioni, 1965) and distributed cognition which shows how material and social artefacts aid in the distribution of understandings across situations (Cole and Engeström, 1993). This work shifted the focus from the 'what' of leadership concerned with people, structures, functions, routines and roles, to 'how leadership gets done through the ordinary, everyday practices involved in leadership routines and functions' (Spillane, 2006: 5). Who leads and who follows is dictated by the task, and not necessarily by the hierarchical positioning of any individual (Copland, 2003).

In line with this rather non-heroic view of leadership, Spillane defines leadership in the following way: 'Leadership refers to activities tied to the core work of the organization that are designed by organizational members to influence the motivation, affect, or practices of other organizational members or that are understood by organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect or practices' (Spillane, 2006: 11–12). While the main premises of this definition (core work, influence, practices) appear to be widely accepted, inevitably differences in perspectives have arisen. Spillane and colleagues have been concerned about developing analytical and conceptual frameworks for studying this influence process through a distributed lens. Others have transformed the leadership descriptor to the adjectival form of 'distributed leadership'. This latter group have advocated that greater distribution of leadership is something to which educational organizations should aspire if they are to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century education (for example, Harris, 2008).

Something on which most researchers taking a distributed leadership perspective agree is the potential benefits of utilizing expertise across and within organizations

through the co-construction of knowledge (Harris, 2008). Effective distribution of leadership creates more opportunities for professionals to learn. The increased opportunities, coupled with the focus of distributed leadership on the core work of the organization, create strong links between leadership and learning. Thus many of the chapters in this book implicitly, if not explicitly, take a distributed perspective on leadership.

While most researchers have welcomed the shift to studying the 'how' of leadership practices with its focus on learning rather than analysing styles or tasks, nagging doubts have surfaced about whether distributing leadership per se will actually be what makes the difference to some of our enduring educational problems. Harris (2008), for example, explains that it is not the distribution of leadership that determines effectiveness, but rather how it is distributed. Timperley (2005) showed that greater distribution may lead to greater distribution of incompetence. Robinson (2009) argues that to tackle the kinds of endemic achievement problems evident in many countries, more focus is needed on the educational content of the leadership process. What this educational content might look like and how leadership contributes to improvement in teaching and learning for students is the focus to which we turn next.

Leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning

While the other two themes of empowering relationships and patterns of leadership distribution have as an important goal the improvement of teaching and learning in schools, this third theme addresses this issue more explicitly and brings us closer to the central task of this book. Part of this reorientation towards leaders being more focused on teaching and learning arose from a concern with the introduction of self-managing and governing schools in many countries in the 1990s. This movement led principals to become more focused on the efficient undertaking of management tasks than on providing professional direction for the school (Southworth, 1998). This emphasis on learning-centred leadership is partly about reclaiming the professional role of school leaders, albeit in a more modern guise than that existing prior to self-managing schools.

Another impetus for more instructionally focused leadership was the research on effective schools. As those studying schools with high student achievement compiled lists of these schools' characteristics, references to strong leadership were invariably among them (for example, Reynolds et al., 2000). Similarly, in the schooling improvement literature, it became evident that unless leadership influenced what was happening in the instructional core, it was unlikely to have an impact on outcomes for students. As Elmore states:

Improvement occurs ... by raising the capacity of key relationships in the instructional core: by increasing teachers' knowledge of content and their knowledge of how to connect the content to specific students, by increasing the prerequisite knowledge that students bring to their interactions with

teachers and by deepening their own knowledge of themselves as learners, by increasing the complexity and demand of content. (Elmore, 2002: 122)

As researchers have sought to identify the kind of leadership activities that lead to improvement in teaching and learning in the instructional core, adjective-plus forms of leadership have inevitably emerged. These forms have included instructional leadership, learning-centred leadership, pedagogical leadership and educational leadership. Each provides nuances on the central theme of learning for both the leaders and teachers within the organization and the students that educational organizations are designed to benefit. What is common among them all is the priority given to thinking about how particular leadership tasks and activities might impact on student achievement and well-being (Hallinger, 2005; Robinson et al., 2009; Southworth, 2004).

A recent meta-analysis of leadership practices that had high impact on student outcomes by Robinson et al. (2009) is one such example of this kind of pursuit. These authors found that those practices that could be construed as 'pedagogical leadership' were associated with highest effect sizes for student achievement. In a subsequent analysis, they established that the dimensions with greatest impact included: establishing goals and expectations; resourcing strategically; planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. Three of these dimensions are supported by Hallinger's (2005) review of the literature that described instructional leaders as those who frame and communicate the school's goals; manage the instructional programme by supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress; and align the school's structures and culture within the school's mission.

While these approaches to leadership have a stronger instructional focus, they also draw on the other two constructions of leadership, albeit with a different lens. Robinson et al. (2009), for example, include a relationship dimension of indirect influence called creating educationally powerful connections, which has similarities with the transformational leadership literature. Similarly, Elmore (2002) writes that cohesive schools occur when there is a high degree of alignment between individual responsibility and collective expectations complemented by a relatively explicit internal accountability system.

The contribution of the three themes

These three themes, empowering relationships, patterns of leadership distribution, and leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning, come together to provide a strong base for understanding what it takes to create the conditions for successful learning, for adults and for students – in fact, for all in the educational community. The challenge is that systematic investigation into the field of how leadership influences learning has been relatively recent. However, emerging

and strengthening evidence indicates that leadership that is relational, and is an influence process focused on successful learning relationships that are reciprocal, collaborative and empowering for all parties have an impact on student engagement, achievement and well-being. This means that leaders are learners as much as their teachers and students. All have a willingness to learn from the people one works with in order to work more effectively with them and deliver an education system to which all contribute.

Leaders talking about learning, students talking about learning, communities talking about learning and through these, reciprocal, collaborative processes create new knowledge about the leadership of learning to improve systems and practices within the school.

About this book

Each of the broad traditions we have outlined above have influenced our collective thinking about leadership and learning, with different chapters in this book giving more or less emphasis to particular ideas: transformational leadership with its emphasis on inspiring shared vision and values for learning through strong relationships; distributed leadership with its focus on how the everyday interactions and activities of leaders influence the work of the organization; and instructional leadership with its focus on improving teaching and learning.

This volume brings together the work of a number of leading scholars who have been researching and thinking about this emerging and important field for many years. They are held in high regard by practitioners and research colleagues alike, and they readily agreed to contribute to a book that we have brought together in three important sections, with a central, underlying principle of developing capability of all within the organization to improve student outcomes. All chapters are about leadership focused on making a difference to students; leadership as an indirect influence; and developing leadership capacity through learning.

Section 1: Exploring models for leadership and improvement

The chapters in this section focus on models for overall change and improvement. In Chapter 2 Chris Day presents a five-part model which focuses attention not only on what leaders know and do, but who they are. He suggests successful system change is a 'layered' leadership approach. The chapter ends with some clear messages for principal educators and policy-makers.

A social justice agenda for leadership is right at the forefront of Russell Bishop's chapter as he challenges that leadership is about reducing disparities for indigenous and other minoritized peoples. He presents six key areas that leaders need to know and do to achieve school change. He acknowledges that school reform is complex, but challenges that we know the conditions that are necessary to support student learning, and that is where we should start.

In Chapter 4, Kenneth Leithwood synthesizes two lines of inquiry: 'what leadership practices nurture improved student learning' and 'how successful leadership practices are connected to the experiences and eventually the learning of students'. He identifies four paths along which the influence of successful leadership practices flow in order to improve student learning and puts forward that one of the major leadership challenges is the alignment of leadership influence across the paths. He presents a case study of one leadership practice on the rational path, 'Improving teachers' pedagogy' to illustrate this theory.

Philip Hallinger and Ronald H. Heck examine the ways in which the field of educational leadership and management has approached the study of leadership impact on student learning over past decades. They present a variety of conceptual models as well as empirical evidence that addresses whether and how school leadership impacts learning in practice. They challenge policy-makers that a comprehensive and valid model of leadership for learning must place leadership in a specific context.

Geoff Southworth, in Chapter 6, is unequivocal that learning has to be the number one priority for leadership. He argues that leadership should be strongly focused on learning and teaching, particularly pedagogy, and he elaborates on what this priority focus on learning means and how it can be achieved. He presents three leadership strategies and organizational conditions that need to be in place to maximize their effect. Southworth challenges that a modern, twenty-first century approach to human resource management needs concerted attention.

The potential of system leadership and the moral purpose inherent in such leadership practice is the essence of David Hopkins's, chapter. He challenges principals about their need to care for and work towards the success of other schools as well as their own as only through such systemic reform will every student be enabled to reach their potential and every school have the possibility to be great. He explores the 'policy conundrum' and offers four drivers for system reform.

Section 2: Challenges in developing learning-focused leadership

The chapters in this section have a clear focus on the key leadership for learning challenge – creating the conditions for teachers to be effective instructional professionals.

In Chapter 8, Louise Stoll not only defines and critiques the difference professional learning communities make, but also offers eight succinct processes that are involved in leading professional learning communities. She argues that 'creating and developing capacity is an imperative for anyone passionate about improvement and transforming learning' and that professional learning communities support sustainable improvements because they build such capacity.

Acknowledging the complexity of changing teachers' practice, Helen Timperley offers a way forward to an enquiry mindset, based on a synthesis of international literature, in Chapter 9. The five-dimensional cyclical model of enquiry and knowledge-building for teachers and leaders 'begins and ends with students'. Timperley provides questions and examples at each stage of the cycle, and ends

the chapter with the implications for school leaders in creating the conditions that support and develop such enquiry mindsets in the school community.

Viviane Robinson, Linda Bendikson and John Hattie study and critique the empirical evidence from meta-analyses to ascertain whether there is a difference in the extent and type of instructional leadership between primary and secondary schools. They challenge researchers to more clearly differentiate between instructional leadership as direct influence on teachers' practice and instructional leadership as 'creating the social and technical infrastructure for quality teaching and learning' if there is to be a greater understanding of instructional leadership by principals in large secondary and primary schools.

In Chapter 11, Helen Wildy and Simon Clarke explore instructional leadership at the teacher level. They address three questions: What do we mean by instructional leadership? How is instructional leadership practised at the teacher level? What, if any, are its effects? They conclude that cultural change 'with investment in professional learning and collaborative communities of practice' is the key to improvement.

Section 3: Broadening ideas of learning and knowledge development

This section focuses on leaders co-constructing new knowledge and new ways of being that lead to the sharing of knowledge. Honouring diversity, acknowledging the emotionality of leadership and social interactions are explored.

Writing from a distributed perspective, and presenting empirical research evidence to support their argument, James Spillane, Kaleen Healey, Leigh Mesler Parise and Allison Kenney study relations between school leadership and formal professional learning as well as on-the-job professional learning. They call for researchers to 'cast a wider net' in their efforts to understand such relations, and focus more on the social interactions within the school, to 'estimate the investment in professional learning and its effects on valued school outcomes'. They argue that the context is not only a site for, but also an element of, professional learning, either enabling or constraining professional learning.

Marianne Coleman focuses on the implications of diversity for leadership theory and practice. She states that 'diversity is not just about difference but also the ways in which differences are perceived and valued' and challenges that the idea of diversity bringing value to leadership has not yet been embraced fully by the research community and resulting theorizing.

Knowledge work and knowledge leaders, state Lorna Earl and Lynne Hannay, in Chapter 14, are the essentials for innovation in schools within this knowledge society. They present a cycle of knowledge work and outline seven major activities of knowledge leaders, with illustrated examples from case studies. They argue that educational leaders must be knowledge leaders and that they 'are morally obligated to bring a disciplined process to the creative and divergent activities inherent in innovation, that allow it to flourish, to be shown to work and to spread through the profession'.

Arguing that emotion is a key part of the social reality in which leadership is exercised, in Chapter 15 Megan Crawford calls for more research in this important

area. Because leadership is relational, she argues that workplaces, and therefore the leadership therein, are full of emotion and that leaders need an understanding of how emotion affects their work and the social context of the organization as a whole. Crawford explores the affective concepts of emotional intelligence, emotional regulation and emotional contagion in this chapter.

In Chapter 16, Jan Robertson puts forward that the concept of 'partnership' provides an avenue for thinking about leadership and learning and the development of mutuality and reciprocity within relationships. These spaces for leadership, learning and professional practice are more collaborative and less hierarchical with all participants learning from the interaction and involved in the creation of new knowledge. The meta-cognitive processes of coaching leadership, developed through learning partnerships, with enquiry-mindedness, are illustrated in a case study of such work with leaders in British Columbia.

In the final chapter, Andy Hargreaves looks at future directions for leadership and learning. He draws parallels between the evolution of fusion in cooking and in leadership. Fusion in cooking has come to mean the finding of new compatibilities; a blend that is deliberate, principled and practical; an 'inner and individual integration', an 'outer and collective integration' and a 'temporal and sequential integration'. Hargreaves picks up these threads by extending Draft and Lengel's (1998) conceptualization of leadership fusion to present a theory of fusion leadership in action which culminates in innovative and creative connections and partnerships. A case study completes the chapter that 'exemplifies the presence and the power of fusion leadership in a secondary school in the North of England'.

We hope that this book not only challenges your thinking in your pursuit of the theory and practice of leadership, but that it also affirms the many powerful examples of exemplary practice that we experience and hear about in our studies of leadership internationally. These thought leaders are continually in quest of leadership *for learning*: leadership practice that has a positive effect on learning outcomes for *all* students, everywhere. Leadership *for learning* is always focused on addressing the disparities in education and recognizes that as such these disparities are key indicators that the theory and practice of leadership remains incomplete.

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