STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP 5

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Editors

Successful Principal Leadership in Times of Change

An International Perspective

Springer

SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CHANGE

STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

VOLUME 5

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SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CHANGE

An International Perspective

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CHAPTER 1

STARTING WITH WHAT WE KNOW

KENNETH LEITHWOOD AND CHRISTOPHER DAY

SETTING THE STAGE

This is the "golden age" of school leadership. Reformers widely agree that it is central to the success with which their favorite solutions actually work in schools (e.g., Murphy & Datnow, 2003). Many parents have come to believe that unless they have the ear of the head or principal, concerns about their child's schooling will fall through the cracks. Members of the business community, long enamored by the "romance of leadership", to use a term coined by Meindl (1995), assume that the shortcomings of schools are coincident with shortcomings in their leadership. And the research community has, at long last, produced a sufficient body of empirical evidence to persuade even the most skeptical that school leadership matters (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Nothing aborts an ambitious school improvement effort, we now know, faster than a change in school leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Leithwood, Jantzi, & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006).

Governments and foundations around the world are devoting unparalleled resources to the development of aspiring leaders, as well as those already in the role. While England's *National College for School Leadership* is the most visible example of this investment, virtually all developed countries are in the midst of unprecedented, if less dramatic, efforts to improve the quality of existing programs and to launch fresh initiatives (e.g., Hallinger, 2003).

It is no coincidence that these efforts are taking place in the face of tremendous pressure for public schools to be more publicly accountable. Such pressures are the outcome of an alignment in the position of those with neo-liberal, neo-conservative and new right ideologies about the job to be done about public education.[1] This aligned position, with minor variations, is now largely adhered to by political parties of all stripes. It is a position, sometimes called "new managerialism" (Peters, 1992) which embraces managerial efficiency and effectiveness as a key lever for reforming

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public institutions. This position, in addition, has created a very different working context for both teachers and school leaders than the context in which many of them "grew up" professionally. So efforts to better understand the consequences of that political context for the work of school leaders is quite crucial.

Evidence for the Book

This book describes results of research undertaken during the first-stage of the *International Successful School Principal Project* (ISSPP). Begun in 2001, our project aimed to better understand what successful heads and principals do in today's demanding accountability context, a context shared *more or less* by the successful leaders we studied in eight developed countries – *more* in Tasmania (Chapter 2), Victoria, Australia (Chapter 3), England (Chapter 4), Canada (Chapter 8), China (Chapter 9) and the United States (Chapter 10); *less*, but quickly catching up, in Norway (Chapter 5), Sweden (Chapter 6), and Denmark (Chapter 7).

Schools and principals were selected in each research site using, whenever possible, evidence of student achievement beyond expectations on state or national tests, principals' reputations in the community and/or school system as being exemplary, and other indicators of success that were country- and/or site-specific (e.g., the use of democratic leadership practices). These criteria, summarized in Table 1.1, helped to ensure that principals selected for study had been "successful" based on criteria common to all, as well as additional criteria unique to each country where there were such criteria.

At the point of writing this book, we had collected evidence about successful leadership in sixty-three schools. Table 1.2 summarizes key features of these schools including level (elementary, middle, high school), size, and school context and

Table 1.1. Principal and school selection criteria

Criteria for selecting principals	Countries (chapter number)
School reputation	2, 3, 7, 9, 10
Exceptional school programs	2, 9
Principal reputation with peers and/or senior administrators	2, 3. 4, 7, 8, 9
Student achievement beyond expectation or improving over time	2, 3, 4. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Student engagement	2, 3, 7
Student social development	3, 6
Acting in accord with democratic values	5
School improvement defined by creative use of learning and teaching strategies	5
Safe and inclusive environment	5
Efficient and flexible use of resources	5
Democratic and collaborative approach to decision making	5, 7

Table 1.2. Characteristics of schools

Countries	Number of schools	School level	School size (students)	Context & location
Tasmania	5	1 elementary, 1 mixed, 3 high	225 – 551 (m = 410)	Government, rural & suburban
Victoria	9	mixed	120 – 1330 (m = 511)	Government, Independent and Catholic urban schools;
England	10	mixed	200 – 1830 (m = 639)	Urban and suburban; challenging social environments
Norway	12	mixed	140 – 950 (m = 360)	Public; urban, rural and semi-rural;
Sweden	4	Junior high	120 – 1250 (m = 568)	Rural, urban
Denmark	2 (of 8)	mixed	350 – 500 (m = 400)	Urban, suburban
Canada	6	elementary	300 – 650 (m = 400)	Urban, suburban, rural
China	2	1 senior, 1 junior high	1625 – 2000 (m = 1812)	Urban
United States	7	5 elementary, 1 middle, 1 high	397 – 883 (m = 617)	Urban, suburban, rural

location. Schools serving students from the early to the later grades were included in our samples, in most countries. The contexts and locations of the schools, as well as their size, varied considerably within most countries. But we did not systematically inquire about the relationship between principal leadership and any of these variables. By qualitative research standards, this is remarkably large – very likely an unprecedented number – of educational leadership cases conducted from a relatively common perspective, using largely similar data collection techniques.

The evidence for these cases typically consisted of document reviews and interviews with principals, teachers, students and parents. Almost all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis. While case reports were then prepared for most of the sixty-three individual schools, the chapters in this book provide a syntheses of case study results within each country, not individual cases. While syntheses of this sort lose some of the rich detail found in individual cases, they offer us a better sense of what is similar and different across cases and countries, a primary goal for us in preparing this book. More specifically, research on which the book is based was intended to: clarify the nature of successful principal leadership, how such leadership influences students learning and what lies behind (or gives

rise to) it. Our research also aimed to uncover differences among countries in the way success is defined and how high-stakes assessments and accountability measures influence the practices of successful principals.

A Framework for Sampling the Initial Knowledge Base

Successful leadership is a highly interactive business. Indeed, we are inclined to agree with Wood that "... the essence of leadership is not the individual social actor but a relationship of almost imperceptible directions, movements and orientations having neither beginning nor end" (2005, p. 1115). And while reciprocity is fundamental to such relationships, the defining contribution to an organization of a "leaderful" relationship is the emergence of a shared sense of direction along with *perceptible* influence, eventually, on organizational members to move in that direction. Direction and influence are at the core of almost all conceptions of leadership.

While the essence of leadership, as we have portrayed it here, is both subtle and complex, at least many of the things we set out to learn about the leadership of successful principals in our study are quite straightforward to describe, as we illustrate in Figure 1.1. We view this figure simply as a generic tool for organizing a research agenda aimed at better understanding matters commonly of interest about virtually any occupational group (e.g., teaching, accounting, lawyering) not just principals. It is about:

- the nature of what members of the group actually do (their overt practices or behaviors – the independent variables in Figure 1.1),
- what it is that prompts those overt practices (e.g., principals' prior experiences, values, beliefs – the antecedent variables in Figure 1.1),
- the most important effects of those practices (e.g. student learning in the case of principals – the dependent variables in Figure 1.1),
- what it is that enhances or diminishes the effects of their practice (e.g., teacher trust – the moderating variables in Figure 1.1), and
- elements of the organization through which leaders work in order to help achieve those important outcomes (e.g., school culture – the mediating variables in Figure 1.1).

As our earlier definition of leadership should make clear, the lines joining variables in Figure 1.1 are not intended to suggest that relationships among the elements in the figure are actually linear or only one-way, in the real world. But the lines do convey a simplified logic that is helpful to researchers in focusing some types of research efforts. A good understanding of the figure also helps consumers of research better understand how the results of a study such as ours might inform their own practice. It is of considerable practical value to know, for example, that the indirect effects on student learning of the same set of principal leadership practices depend, a great deal, on the level of trust teachers have in their principal.

So the figure helps to organize and clarify the purposes of some research efforts in a way that is often difficult to achieve otherwise. In the case of quantitative

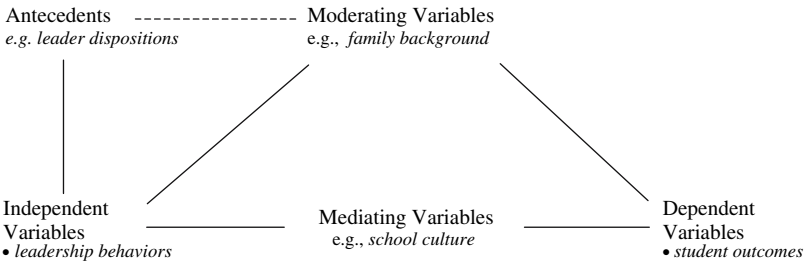

Figure 1.1. Framework for sampling knowledge about principal leadership

research, such a conception of relationships among variables is necessary if one is to make sense of one's data at all.

But it needs to be stressed that Figure 1.1 is not a *theory* of anything. Rather it is a tool for getting organized to develop and/or test a theory – or in the case of this chapter – to describe the results of previous efforts. To illustrate, Lord & Maher (1993) have developed a theory explaining how members of an organization come to attribute "leadership" to some of their colleagues and not others. This theory suggests that people's leadership "prototypes" are one of several sources of this attribution. Prototypes are cognitive structures developed from an early age and over long periods of time. They are used as the basis for judging the actions of one's colleagues. When those actions match significant features of a person's leadership prototype, the person is inclined to consider the colleague (or group of colleagues) a "leader" thereby volunteering to be a "follower", however temporarily. This theory, then, suggest that teachers' leadership prototypes might be important moderators of principals' leadership practices; furthermore, it is a testable theory. This brief account of leadership prototype theory, then, helps make clear that Figure 1.1 is useful for organizing existing theory and evidence, or getting organized to generate some theory and evidence, without, in itself, being a theory of anything.

The remaining sections of this chapter aim to give the reader a flavor of the knowledge base our work set out to extend. But two caveats are in order before we proceed. First, our review necessarily provides a consensus interpretation of the results of prior research, although we achieved no such consensus as a team, just to give readers a flavor of the challenges faced in undertaking large scale, multi-team international research. The second caveat to our review is that we make no claims to being comprehensive. As much as we might like to, this chapter can only provide a sample of the knowledge base with which we began our research.

Successful Principal Leadership Practices

By far the largest majority of educational leadership studies have been about the practices of principals or heads, the independent variable in Figure 1.1. We know much more about such practices than we do, for example, about their sources or what

it is that mediates and moderates their effects on students. Furthermore, evidence provided by research carried out in non-school organizations often confirms and supports the results of leadership studies in schools.[2]

This evidence, as a whole, points to four broad categories of basic leadership practices. Hallinger & Heck (1999) label three of these categories "purposes," "people," and "structures and social systems." Conger & Kanungo (1998) speak about "visioning strategies," "efficacy-building strategies," and "context changing strategies." Leithwood's (1994) categories are "setting directions", "developing people" and "redesigning the organization." Within each of these similar categories of practice are numerous, more specific competencies, orientations, and considerations. Evidence generated in school contexts about specific successful leadership practices, within each of these broad categories can be found in four sources, all of which attempt to be comprehensive, including: Leithwood & Riehl's (2005) and Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006) reviews of what is presently known about successful school leadership; the ISLLC standards (Council of Chief School State Officers, 1996) for school leaders now adopted in more than 40 American states as central goals for both initial and some continuing leadership development programs; Hallinger's (2001) model of instructional leadership, by far the most fully specified and widely researched conception of instructional leadership available; and a meta-analysis of specific leadership practices influencing student learning produced by Waters, Marzano & McNulty (2003).

A fourth broad category of leadership practices, "Managing the Instructional Program," is unique to schools and explicitly reflects concerns about the principal's role in improving instruction. These concerns have given rise to the widespread interest in, and research about, models of instruction leadership especially popular in North America. Most of the chapters in this book find evidence of successful principals engaging in all four categories of practice and several chapters explicitly frame a portion of their findings around such categories (Chapters 8 and 10).

Building vision and setting directions This category of practices accounts for the largest proportion of leadership effects. One of the central functions of direction-setting leadership practices is motivation. Most theories of motivation (e.g., Bandura, 1986) argue that people are motivated to accomplish personally important goals for themselves. Building on such theory, this set of practices aims not only to identify important goals for the school organization, but to do so in such a way that individual organizational members come to include the organization's goals among their own. Unless this happens, the organization's goals have no motivational value. So leaders can productively spend a lot of time on this set of practices. Three more specific sets of practices are typically included in this category, all aimed at bringing a focus to both the individual and collective work of staff in the school or district – identifying and articulating a vision, fostering agreement about group goals and demonstrating high performance expectations.

Understanding and developing people Three specific sets of practices are typically associated with this broad category including providing support to individual staff,

offering intellectual stimulation that promotes reflection and modeling desired values and practices. As a whole, this category of practices aims at capacity building – not only staffs' knowledge and skills but their disposition to persist in applying that knowledge and skill in challenging circumstances. Socio-psychological theory (Bandura, 1986) tells us that people are motivated to persist at tasks about which they feel efficacious and that their sense of efficaciousness is powerfully influenced by the sort of mastery experiences normally associated with effective staff development initiatives of both a formal and informal type; building capacity leading to a sense of mastery is highly motivational.

Designing the organization Three specific leadership practices in this broad category include: building collaborative cultures, creating structures to support such collaboration, and developing productive working relations with parents and families. These practices aim to establish the conditions of work and organizational infrastructure which allow staff to make the most of their motivations and capacities. This broad category of practices follows Understanding and developing people in terms of its contribution to leadership effects. Its significant effects can be understood through the lens provided by Bandura's (1986) theory of human motivation. People are motivated when they believe the circumstances in which they find themselves are conducive to accomplishing the goals they hold to be personally important.

Managing the teaching and learning program Evidence about this category of leadership practices began to emerge many years ago from research on effective schools (e.g., Reynolds, 1998). Such evidence suggested that school leaders who made a significant difference in student learning paid very careful attention to teaching and learning in their schools. But just which instructional management practices matter most remains unclear. For example, Hallinger (2003) has found that those management practices in his instructional leadership model which involve close attention to teachers' classroom practices, and the supervision of such practices, have weaker effects than do leadership practices focused more widely on the school organization. Other studies of school principal effects that measure both their leadership and management behaviors (e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, 2000) have found that these more broadly focused principal management behaviors explain almost as much of principals' effects as do leadership behaviors. So they are important, as a class, especially those that create stability and strengthen the infrastructure. But those of a more supervisory nature seem less influential even though such "close to the classroom" leadership is often what advocates of instructional leadership are aiming to encourage.

Four more specific sets of leadership practices included in this broad category bring together managerial practices found in both Hallinger's instructional leadership model and a model of transformational school leadership developed by Leithwood & Jantzi (e.g., 1999, 2000, 2005) for which there is growing evidence of impact on students. These four sets of practices include: staffing the school's program with teachers well matched to the school's priorities (these practices are

not touched on in the three other accounts of leadership to which we have been referring); providing instructional support (all three comparators include versions of these practices); and, monitoring school activity (an important part of all three comparators). The fourth practice is buffering staff from distractions to their work. This practice includes Hallinger's "protecting instructional time" and the several different strategies leaders mentioned in the model for this purpose.

In sum, while the leadership practices described here reflect current evidence about what successful leaders do, they do not do all of these things all of the time. One does not have to create a shared vision every day, for example, although one may look for ways to reinforce the vision every day. And the way a leader enacts each set of practices will certainly vary by circumstance (and likely by personal style, as well). Principals or heads who are successful in turning around failing schools, for example, do much more selling of their vision to staff than developing it collaboratively - as they might in a school not in crisis - so the "rescue mission" can proceed in a timely manner (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005).

Factors that Mediate Successful Principal Leadership

The effects of successful principal leadership on pupil learning are largely indirect. To improve the learning of their students, principals must exercise some form of positive influence on the work of other colleagues, such as teachers, as well as on the status of key conditions or characteristics of the school that have a direct and demonstrable influence on pupils. These are the mediating variables in Figure 1.1.

While there is a considerable body of evidence about classroom and school conditions more or less directly influencing student learning, much less is known about how principals successfully influence those conditions. Providing such evidence is one of the important contributions of the chapters in this book. Some classroom-level variables warranting the attention of principals include, for example: time on task (Smyth, 1987); teacher capacity (Glass, 2002), quality of instruction/instructional climate (Biddle & Dunkin, 1987); a curriculum rich in ideas and engaging for students (Brophy, n.d.) and; procedures for monitoring student progress (Walberg, 1984).

School-level variables also serving as potentially promising foci for principals' work include: safe and orderly climate (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993); staff participation in school-wide decision making (Conley, 1991); school culture (Deal, 2005); teacher's organizational commitment (Dannetta, 2002); collective teacher efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000); sense of professional community (Louis & Kruse, 1995); organizational learning processes (Silins & Mulford, 2004); and school goals (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Factors that Moderate Successful Principal Leadership

Moderating variables are features of the organizational or wider social context in which leaders work. They interact with what leaders do as well as, for example,

conditions in the classroom and school. Such interaction potentially changes the strength or nature of relationships (depressing or enhancing them). The same principal behaviors, as a case in point, may have quite different effects on teachers depending on their gender, age, or levels of stress. Indeed, teachers who have experienced frequent turnover of principals in their schools (a plausible moderator) often become largely resistant to any influence from their principals (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004).

Evidence from earlier research suggests that at least six variables have the potential to moderate leadership effects: student background (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 2000; Seashore Louis & Miles, 1990); school location (Seashore Louis & Miles, 1990; school size Howley, 2002); levels of trust (Tyler & Degoey, 1996); and public vs. private schools (Bryk, Holland, Lee, & Carriedo, 1984). In their recent review Leithwood & Jantzi (2005) also found a consistent pattern of results suggesting that leadership effects are enhanced or augmented by prior student achievement, family educational culture, organizational culture, shared school goals, and coherent plans and policies. But there has been little accumulation of evidence about other potential moderators.

The Antecedents of Successful Principal Leadership

The factors giving rise to successful principal leadership could include, for example, on-the-job learning, professional development experiences, socialization processes and individual traits. The dotted line joining antecedent and moderating variables in Figure 1.1 acknowledges that one study's antecedents may be another study's moderators; these may be theoretically defensible differences. "Policy context" is an example of a variable that might be either an antecedent or a moderator. If the research question is: *What is the impact of accountable policy contexts on the frequency with which principals display instructional leadership behaviors*? then policy context is an antecedent. But if the question is: *To what extent do accountable policy contexts enhance or depress the impact of instructional leadership behaviors on the development of collaborative school cultures?* then policy context is a moderator.

The theory-driven nature of how variables are classified is a point worth a bit more attention here. The same variable actually might be assigned antecedent, moderator, mediator or dependent variable status depending entirely on the theory or framework used to guide a leadership effects study. To use a familiar example, employee trust is a moderating variable included in research about the effects of leadership on teachers' efficacy. But trust is viewed as a dependent measure in leadership studies when researchers are curious about the forms of leader behaviors which promote its development (e.g., Kouzes & Posner, 1995). And trust also is conceived of as a mediating variable in studies, for example, concerned with the effects of leader behaviors on employees' acceptance of decisions (Tyler & Degoey, 1996). The antecedents of successful leadership practices are both internal to leaders, as well as features of their external environments.

Internal factors: traits and dispositions School leadership research has not yet devoted much energy to the study of leaders' internal lives, with the exception of their values (e.g., Begley & Johansson, 2003) and cognitive processes (e.g. Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995). Evidence gathered over the past fifteen years in non-school contexts, however, makes a strong case for attending more broadly to leaders' dispositions, even though this focus had been actively discouraged many years earlier (e.g., Stogdill, 1948). This evidence points to the importance, for example, of leaders' motivations, self-efficacy beliefs, capacities and personality characteristics such as optimism and openness (Popper & Mayseless, 2002). As Antonakis and House argue, there is a "... compelling case for incorporating dispositional arguments and evidence into theories of behavior in organizations" (2002, p. 23).

The state-of-the-art of research about the internal antecedents of leadership in non-school contexts was well represented in a recent review by Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader (2004). This review classifies leaders' internal antecedents as cognitive capacities, personality, motivation and social appraisal skills. With respect to *cognitive capacities*, the review associates leadership success with above average general intelligence and relatively high levels of complex problem-solving capacity in organizational contexts, like schools, which require it. These results resonate with evidence provided about the problem solving processes of expert vs. non-expert school leaders (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995). The Zaccaro et al. review also associates leader effectiveness with creative and divergent thinking, along with metacognitive skill.

Zaccaro et al. report that the largest set of leader trait studies over the last ten years has concerned leaders' *personality*. Much of this research has focused on "the big five" leader personality factors including emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Zaccaro and his colleagues conclude that:

> *Taken together, these studies find robust associations between most of, if not all, the Big Five personality factors and leadership. Indeed Judge et al. (2002) report a multiple correlation of .48 with leadership* (2004, p. 112).

In addition to the big five personality factors, Zaccaro et al. found significant relationships between successful leadership and a preference for social engagement (vs. introspection). Some evidence also has also linked successful leadership with optimism, proactivity, internal locus of control and nurturance. Among the *motivational states* most closely associated with successful leadership in the Zaccaro et al. review were needs for dominance and power, responsibility and achievement. Although the object of multiple studies, successful leaders do not seem to be motivated by affiliation needs.

The *social intelligence or social appraisal skills* of leaders have been the object of considerable research, according to Zaccaro et al. (2004). It seems reasonable, in addition, to assume that *emotional intelligence*, a concept popularized by Goleman and his colleagues (e.g., 2002) is part of this broad category of traits. Research specifically about the emotional intelligence of leaders is relatively new, however.

In general, the capacities included in this broad category of traits (social and emotional intelligence, social appraisal skills) refer to the leaders' abilities to appreciate the emotional states of colleagues, to discern those states in complex social circumstances, to respond in ways that are considered helpful and to understand and manage one's own emotions. Overall, social intelligence has a moderate to strong relationship with leadership success. This relationship may vary in strength depending on the type of job. Wong and Law suggest, for example, "that emotional management skills would be more strongly related to performance in highly emotionally laborious jobs that in those involving less emotional labor" (quoted in Zaccaro et al, 2004, p. 116). Since the principalship most certainly qualifies as emotionally laborious, much greater attention to social intelligence and related traits seems warranted in subsequent school leadership research.

Internal antecedents: values and beliefs School-based research on successful leaders' values and beliefs has been the focus of a series of related studies by Begley (1988), Raun (1994) and Campbell-Evans (1988) extended and summarized by Leithwood & Steinbach (1995). Results of this research describe four categories of "expert" leaders' values and beliefs including Basic Human Values (e.g., freedom, happiness, survival), General Moral Values (fairness, care, courage); Professional Values (e.g., role responsibilities, consequences for students), and Social and Political values (participation, sharing, loyalty). This line of research indicates that school leaders' basic human values and professional values dominate their decision making. It also suggests that expert leaders (roughly comparable to our "successful" leaders) as compared with their non-expert counterparts are: guided by most of the same values; make greater use of their values to solve complex problems in their schools; give greater weight to the consequences of their decisions for students and; are guided more by their role responsibilities

External antecedents Evidence about external factors stimulating principal's leadership practices is modest, at best. A very restricted range of variables has been explored and there is little accumulation of evidence about any of those variables that have been studied. This neglect is surprising since a great deal of the educational leadership literature claims that the context in which leaders work is of enormous importance in determining what they do. But such claims typically have prompted research about leadership in one context at time – for example, whole school reform (e.g., Brooks, Scribner, & Eferakorho, 2004), technology (Anderson & Dexter, 2005), minority student populations (e.g., Riehl, 2002), and social justice (Shields, 2004). These "one-context-at-a-time" studies tell us little about how variations in context are related to variations in leadership practices, the kind of evidence that is needed if we are to become clearer about the factors stimulating successful leadership practices.

What you can Reasonably Expect from our Evidence

In two papers published seven years apart, Bryman and his colleagues explored the strengths and limitations of qualitative methods, much like ours, for studying leadership. The first of these analyses (Bryman, Stephens, & Campo, 1996) largely argued for the *potential* of qualitative research to reveal how leadership may be hindered or helped ("moderated") by circumstances confronting the leader, As well, this first analysis suggested that such evidence should be helpful for outlining, in detail, the influences on the nature of leaders' work of organizational type or sector.

Bryman's (2004) most recent analysis, based on a review of more than 70 qualitative leadership studies, unpacked the *actual* contributions of such research, in comparison with a substantial number of quantitative studies. Among the unique contributions of qualitative studies were: greater sensitivity to variations in both organizational context and leadership styles; often a longitudinal perspective on leadership; and a greater focus on the role of leadership in bringing about organizational change. This was the good news.

The bad news, according to Bryman's (2004) analysis, is that compared with quantitative leadership research, qualitative research has tended to be less cumulative, less likely to acknowledge and build on previous evidence, and have weaker external validity. A recent analysis of qualitative school leadership studies reported in key U.K. journals arrived at much the same conclusion (Leithwood & Levin, 2005). To Bryman's list of limitations, this recent analysis would add that such research typically provides only weak evidence, at best, of leadership effects on organizational outcomes and is usually unable to detect the effects of variation in the status of key variables.

One important antidote to the typically non-accumulative nature of qualitative leadership studies is to explicitly build such studies on a foundation of prior theory and evidence. While pains were taken to do this in our project, our efforts were less monolithic than some might consider ideal in a perfectly rational world, though the initial 'slices' of prior theory and evidence selected by some country terms as most interesting to them in framing the analysis of the data, have now given way to the development of the beginnings of a 'consensus' meaning for successful leadership among all project members.

The outcome of this working style is a series of chapters focused on successful principals or heads each of which begins with sometimes significantly different assumptions and conceptual lenses. The Canadian and United States chapters, for example, build on very similar prior evidence and view the work of successful principals through quite similar conceptual lenses. The Danish and Swedish chapters are among those which stand apart in the uniqueness of their beginning assumptions and guiding conceptual lenses. Intellectual diversity such as this in a single research program inevitably reduces the number of variables for which significant amounts of evidence are collected but ensures relatively comprehensive perspectives on those which are widely explored.

NOTES

[1] For a synopsis of this position see Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 2002.

[2] Our synthesis of research about successful leadership practices builds on a recent review of research conducted for the *American Educational Research Association* by Leithwood & Riehl (2005).

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CHAPTER 2

SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP IN TASMANIA

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes recent overviews of and models developed from research on successful school leadership then outlines the methodology and findings from case studies derived from the Australian (Tasmanian) part of the International Successful School Principals Project (ISSLP). From this literature and rich case study data base, the paper presents a preliminary model for examining successful school principalship. This preliminary model is seen as being consistent with, but developing in greater complexity, other overviews and models of successful educational leadership.

Recent Literature on Successful School Leadership

A recent overview of recent literature on and models of successful school leadership (Mulford & Johns, 2004) identified the need for successful educational leaders to be able to understand and act effectively on "why" and "how". "Why" involves

- understanding, engaging and mediating the diverse, complex technological, economic, social, and political forces impinging on schools. Of particular note is the attention needed to be given to the wider community and accountability. This situation could be seen increasingly as one of "outsiders" attempting to change those "inside" schools;
- a broadening of what "counts" for effective schools and effective educational leadership with issues of equity and social justice very much to the fore.

C. Day and K. Leithwood (eds.), Successful Principal Leadership in Times of Change, 17-38

The "how" involves educational leaders who are able to create, acquire, communicate, and use knowledge wisely, for example by being able to translate the ever-evolving understanding of the knowledge society into school/community goals and processes. The material reviewed suggests this is best achieved through the ability to:

- choose and prioritize (for example, to "make" rather than "take" on the basis of evidence, social justice, and "deep" democracy);
- provide balance (for example, between leadership/management, designed/emergent);
- provide bridges (for example, between the professional and other communities);
- provide coherence; achieve shared understandings, ownership and responsibility;
- care for others, collaborate and negotiate (for example, in, with and for community and through distributed leadership and responsibility); and,
- most important of all, learn. Learning involves an ability to critique, assess and be accountable and, if necessary, constantly change. It can involve both development and transformation.

What has been discovered from the case studies in the Australian (Tasmanian) part of the International Successful School Principal project and how do these findings compare with this recent literature on school leadership? It is to the methodology and findings from these case studies that we now turn before using the results of both the literature and case studies to present a preliminary model for better understanding what is involved in successful school principalship.

Methodology

Site selection Five Tasmanian State government schools demonstrating successful leadership were selected for study. Criteria for selection included the reputation of the school within the senior ranks of the State Department of Education and with other school principals; the reputation of the current principal and in three cases, of the previous principal also, and evidence of success in terms of student outcomes. These outcomes were measured in a variety of ways, including traditional academic outcomes such as comparative state-wide testing results, as well as outcomes relating to student participation, engagement and satisfaction, measured by rates of school attendance, retention, suspension, and transition from school to work. Success was also measured in terms of local, state-wide and national recognition of successful school programs. Schools were also selected to represent diversity in terms of type, location, size, and socioeconomic status (for detail see Mulford & Johns, 2004).

Data collection Interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, not just school principals, were the major source of data. For each school, the following were interviewed:

- Principal (two interviews);
- Assistant principal(s) and/or senior teacher(s);
- A sample of classroom teachers responsible for teaching senior classes (Year 6 in primary school and Year 10 in secondary school);
- Coordinators of specific school programs and any other key staff/community members;
- School council chairperson;
- Group interviews with senior students;
- Group interviews with parents of senior students.

Prior to conducting interviews the research team spent an afternoon in the school familiarizing themselves with school layout and discussing the proposed visit with the principal. Approximately three days were then spent in each school conducting interviews, collecting written documentation and taking photographs. Written documentation included students' academic outcomes such as comparative state-wide testing results, as well as outcomes relating to student participation, engagement and satisfaction, measured by rates of school attendance, retention, suspension, and transition from school to work. All interviews were recorded on audiocassettes and later transcribed. Transcribed interviews were returned to participants for checking, amendment and addition of material as necessary. The research team then revisited the school between six to 12 months after the interviews were conducted, to present some preliminary findings and to check the validity of our analysis.

Evidence The agreed interview transcripts, observations and written documents were employed to write a case study of each of the five selected "best practice" schools. Each of these case studies, which were on average 40 pages in length, followed a similar format that included setting the scene, the methodology used, a description of the principal and his or her profile, philosophy and leadership style, the school's approach to change as well as its vision and how it is achieved, the school's approach to its governance and structure, the role of District and Central Office, and a summary of the school's successes and some areas for future attention. Each principal read and signed off on the case study of their school.

The five case studies form the evidence base for this chapter. Over 200 pages have been distilled and in so doing material has been grouped and each group given a name. Terms such as "individual support and capacity", "school capacity" and "community social capital outcomes" try to represent the best summation of the grouped evidence.

Findings

Findings from the five case studies confirmed that successful school principalship was an interactive, reciprocal and evolving process involving many players, which was influenced by and, in turn, influenced, the context in which it occurred. In fact, all of the sections that follow are set within or, in the case of monitoring,

interact with the context of understandings and requirements of and support from the environment – that is, the community (local to global) and the employer. Rather than discussing environment in a separate section, examples of the influence of context (environment) are embedded within each of the sections, to reflect the integral nature of context to the leadership process.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that successful leadership was underpinned by the core values and beliefs of the principal. These values and beliefs informed the principals' decisions and actions regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building, and capacity building at the school level, including school culture and structure. The principal's core values and beliefs, together with the values and capacities of other members of the school community, also fed directly into the development of a shared school vision, which shaped the teaching and learning, student and social capital outcomes of schooling. In addition, a key part of the process was monitoring and critical reflection, which could lead to further change and/or transformation. These key stages of successful school principalship and their relationships are presented and illustrated from the case studies in the following five sections, and are summarized in Figure 2.1.

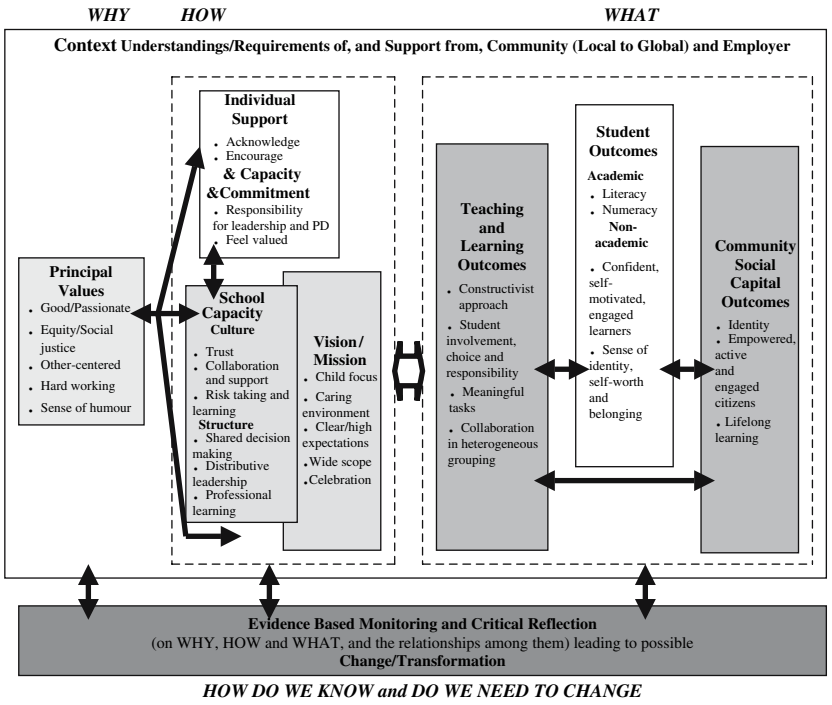

Figure 2.1. The Mulford-Johns Model of Successful School Principalship

Principal's Values and Beliefs

Principals in each of the five schools were characterized by beliefs and values that could be broadly grouped into three categories: innate goodness and passion demonstrated through honesty, empathy and commitment; equity (everyone matters) demonstrated through being open and flexible; and other-centred (all can learn) demonstrated through dispersed leadership and responsibility.

Findings from the case studies described principals in terms such as "visionary" or "inspirational", whose creativity and lateral thinking inspire the same qualities in others. Although differing in personality and leadership style, all displayed a number of similar characteristics, including honesty and openness, flexibility, commitment, empathy with others, and a sense of what one principal described as "innate goodness". Passion was another shared characteristic; with the comment from a senior teacher that "you need a passionate person in charge" echoed in each of the case study schools.

Regardless of school context, each of the school principals clearly articulated a framework of core personal values that was at the heart of their leadership practice. This framework comprised two core values: the need to ensure equity in and through education, and the belief that the knowledge required to lead schools was dispersed and that everyone within the school community had both a right and a responsibility to participate in decision making and leadership of their school. Principals' values were strongly child-centred, based on the belief that "all children can learn", and that "all children matter".

All principals believed that the responsibility for youth should be shared by the school community, that a sense of shared direction amongst staff, students and parents was needed, and that the outcomes of schooling should be equitably distributed.

The three broad values of innate goodness, equity and other-centeredness were reflected in the way the principals acted. For example, each principal clearly articulated their values framework within their schools, as one assistant principal confirmed:

[the principal] finds it very hard to pull the plug on a child ever and that rubs off on the staff. He can see good in people … Everything the principal does is modeled and it rubs off. It's important that a leader is good. There's a lot to be said about having a good person at the top.

All principals' actions and decisions were based on their clearly articulated values framework. The framework acted as a filter as principals attempted to reconcile the requirements of and level of support from the community and their employer, with the need to ensure equitable and successful outcomes for all students. Principals' values were linked to staffing choice, and each described how they sought staff with similar values to themselves. This match was important in all schools, but particularly in low SES schools.

At the same time, appointing the "right" people was not always easy, given the need for state government schools to comply with departmental policy in relation to transfers and teaching appointments. Principals described the importance of raising

awareness of their school in the broader community (school public relations) in order to attract quality teaching staff.

Evidence from the case studies, and implicit in the quotations used in the following sections, indicated that the principals' values affected individual support and capacity building, organizational capacity building, and school vision/mission.

Providing Individual Support and Building Individual Capacity and Commitment

Broadly, all leaders demonstrated a balance between the provision of three types of support: one-off or crisis support, support for individuals as they underwent change processes, and ongoing support in the form of acknowledging others. Case study evidence also indicated that individual capacity building was a three-stage process through which leaders supported and encouraged others to undertake leadership roles, encouraged staff to accept responsibility for their own professional learning, and fostered and supported professional learning for groups (for example, senior staff). These actions resulted in staff feeling valued and cared for. The context in which support and capacity building occurred was important, in that successful leaders matched the level and type of support to staff needs and staffing profile. These broad observations regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building by school leaders was reflected in extracts from interviewees discussed in detail below.

Principals were described as providing both personal and professional support to individuals, both in respect to particular problems or issues, and on an ongoing basis. In all schools principals and senior staff provided a support network to assist staff through change processes. One principal summed it up when he described how important it was to

tap into teachers' skills and be a sounding board, to be the magma plasm for their boil [a term his grandmother used]. Let them purge, purge what they want to purge out and then utilize their skills and let them build, build their confidence, build their ego, build their self esteem.

Principals also regularly gave feedback acknowledging the contributions of individuals to the school. Another principal explained:

this is a really high energy environment and the people here in our school work really, really hard. . . . I think the level of satisfaction of being part of a place that's vibrant and exciting is really important for the staff here. I'd like to think that I acknowledge and recognize that at every level when I get the opportunity to do that.

Consistent with their beliefs about shared decision-making and distributed leadership, school principals provided extensive support to staff, students and parents to facilitate their participation. Individual professional development was a key part of capacity building, and individuals were encouraged to take responsibility for their own professional learning needs. In particular, principals placed a high priority on building the capacity of senior staff by providing professional learning opportunities focused on:

encouraging their thinking, stimulating them, getting them listening to what other people are saying … broadening our understanding and improving our overall knowledge because they're the people who are going to ask the questions of the classroom teacher, it's not going to be me asking that. (principal)

Building School Capacity

School capacity was built through good communication and a carefully managed process of change. Building school capacity involved attention to two key areas: school culture, and school structure.

School culture Case study evidence indicated that successful school leaders promoted a culture of collegiality, collaboration, support and trust, and that this culture was firmly rooted in their democratic and social justice values and beliefs. This links directly to a broadening of the outcomes of schooling that were valued by each of the five case study school communities. Successful leaders also promoted a culture in which innovation and risk taking were encouraged and supported. These broad observations regarding school culture and leadership are reflected in extracts from interviewees discussed in detail below.

Each of the principals worked hard to build a school culture underpinned by trust, collegiality and supportive relationships, and free from intimidation and coercion, which in turn facilitated innovation and risk taking amongst staff and students, and also amongst parents and the broader school community. This reflected the principals' beliefs in the importance of empowering others to participate in democratic processes. They also worked to build and/or strengthen a learning culture within their schools, reflecting a commitment to ensuring equity in and through education.

Principals built trust through a number of activities, including articulating their own personal values and beliefs, their expectations of themselves and others, and their allegiance to the school community. This was illustrated in the following reassurance offered by the newly-appointed principal at his first staff meeting:

One of the first commitments I gave to the staff when I came here was that if there are issues that we need to discuss … well then we will discuss that and we'll try and do that as openly as we possibly can, but I won't ever go running off to District Office … and bag anyone in this school community. I don't care whether it's a student or a parent or … a staff member; I just won't do it, that is my commitment to you.

Principals built trust by facilitating collaborative decision-making practices to allow knowledge and power sharing across the school community. A social worker explained:

[The principal] is such an outstanding role model … and I think because of her style there is a high level of trust for her but also from her to us. And there is the sharing of the knowledge and there is a sharing of the power, so I think that the governance is very much shared amongst staff. I feel that I am an equal partner in that amongst other staff and for someone who's lived here that's huge and very powerful …

There was an ethos of collegial support amongst staff within each school. One principal was strongly against put downs so that "if someone falls here we put our hand down and pick them up, we don't kick them while they're down or say, "Jeez, that person's weak! … we're here to look after each other". More

broadly than this, however, the belief was expressed by principals and echoed by staff, parents and students from each school, that people and relationships were what mattered. In addition, all principals described a range of improved behaviour management strategies designed to minimize confrontation and provide opportunities for negotiation and dialogue, consistent with their beliefs regarding equity in and through schooling.

Risk taking in a supportive environment facilitates change. The culture in each school was one of innovation and risk taking, without fear of reprisals. This culture extended to all members of the school community. It enhanced school capacity and encouraged experimentation with new curriculum options and teaching strategies. The following principal's comment was typical:

I think you get a much more real and lively kind of school if people really are engaged and … can express their views at a staff meeting without any fear that there's going to be any repercussions whatsoever, and that debate is welcome as something that's good.

Principals in each school fostered a learning culture. For example, on her arrival one principal focused explicitly on addressing the generally unfavorable attitudes of parents to education, and on turning around a prevailing school culture in which "the naughty kids were put in front of a computer" and teaching was more about containment than education. At other schools, principals worked on strengthening the existing learning culture.

School structure The findings in relation to the influence of leaders on school structure can be broadly categorized into shared decision making, distributed leadership, and school wide professional learning. From all case study sites there was evidence that successful leaders foster shared decision making to motivate and empower others. Their focus was on distributed leadership, which was facilitated by providing support for distributed leadership processes and practices, promoting a culture of trust which encourages enthusiasm and a sense of agency amongst staff, students and parents, and by careful planning to ensure distributed leadership practices are integral to teaching and learning, and other key areas of school operation. Successful leaders also facilitate school wide professional learning, which was central to the change process. Each of the three broad categories of principal influence on school structure is discussed in more detail below.

Motivation and empowerment of staff, students and others within the school community, were central to organizational change. The following principal's comment was typical:

As a leader, if I can empower people in my school, whether it's student leaders or teachers or the cleaner or the bursar to feel that they are confident in doing their job and developing and trying things out and knowing that I have confidence in them to do that and will help them, then I think I get change and progress a lot faster than if I say, "Right, this is what we're going to do".

All principals articulated a firm belief in shared decision-making, distributed leadership and collaborative work practices, the provision of individual professional development to increase the capacity of individuals to work collaboratively, and facilitation of school wide professional learning. The following teacher

comment describing how shared decision making creates a trusting and supportive environment conducive to change was typical:

how you're treated creates the culture here in the school, if your leaders are consultative and they look after you and they listen to you … it tends to flow down, it just creates an ambience in the school of being listened to and being valued.

Staff from each school confirmed the structured and focused nature of shared decision making, and noted that they were involved in "more school wide decisions than ever before". At the same time, the right of staff to reject suggestions from the principal was respected, with a teacher commenting that "the give and take in discussion is fantastic!"

Students in all schools were also consulted on a regular basis about decisions relevant to them, leading to student empowerment and further contributing to school capacity. One assistant principal described how student participation in decision making embodied broader democratic processes, and facilitated student empowerment and ownership of decisions:

we … teach the kids the importance of being involved in decisions … with curriculum and activities that we run, we give a lot of student choice. [W]e have the representational process … and we try very hard to make sure that that's just not a tokenistic thing so, for example, if you've got a uniform change or an activity that people want, it actually happens, the kids see the results …

Principals noted that while shared decision making was desirable, it was not possible to lead in this way all the time, due to a range of contextual factors such as the confidential nature of the issue under discussion, or issues requiring an urgent response.

Success within each school was related to the extent to which leadership opportunities were distributed throughout the school community, utilizing the skills and experience of school staff, students, parents and other community members in a variety of ways. An example was the way in which one principal reshaped the school management team. Previous principals at this school had considered that the school's senior teachers (AST3s) "were either over the hill, dinosaurs, and weren't up-to-date, au fait with current education philosophy" and had effectively excluded them from playing a meaningful role in leading the school. The current principal believed his task was to "give these people a sense of belief again … a real role, and tap into their strengths".

Within each school there was a range of teams or committees, responsible for providing leadership in areas including school management, literacy and numeracy, pastoral care, and staff professional development. In addition, all schools had teams responsible for facilitating discussion, decision-making and planning regarding curriculum, and in most cases, assessment. These curriculum teams facilitated collaborative planning and curriculum cohesion across the school.

Leadership of teaching and learning by teachers was important because it built trust between principal and staff, acknowledged the professional expertise of teachers, and placed them at the centre of teaching and learning, and student outcomes. It also impacted positively on staff in terms of providing conditions

conducive to innovation and risk taking. At the same time, with the increased level of control of teachers over teaching and learning, came greater accountability for their actions.

The various distributed leadership practices and structures within each school were the result of strong principal support, as well as high levels of enthusiasm and sense of agency of all individuals involved. This was illustrated in school documentation from one school:

Our school provides a wealth of opportunities for staff to assume particular responsibility for various aspects of school life, and everyone is encouraged to become involved. … As well, there are many specific roles which require leadership, coordination and organisation, and where possible, these roles have been filled by staff who has indicated their interest in taking on that role.

In most schools, distributed leadership opportunities, or what some referred to as leadership density, were carefully planned to ensure leadership succession. One assistant principal explained:

we acknowledge each other's strengths and weaknesses and support each other in that way … . People really are in a position to say "Oh next year I'd like to have a go at that". Leadership density is something that we're always thinking about … and making sure that things don't just happen by chance, we're always planning ahead and getting people to fill people's shoes …

Professional development opportunities in all schools were linked to the school vision/mission, and facilitated school wide professional learning which was central to the change process. Such opportunities were designed to increase teacher commitment to change, and to encourage them to become leaders and participate actively in the professional learning of themselves and others. For example, the focus on curriculum and pedagogical review within the five schools involved individual professional development and extensive school wide professional learning, and was a high priority in terms of school resourcing.

Towards a Shared School Vision/Direction

Evidence from the case studies indicated that school success derived from the development of a shared or collective vision for the school. In most case study schools the vision comprised four aspects of school direction:

(1) focus (individual focus on each child)
(2) environment (e.g. safe, caring, positive relationships)
(3) expectations (school values regarding actions/behaviours of students, staff, parents), and
(4) scope (lifelong learning, community social capital).

The focus of the school vision/direction was reflected in the school curriculum and in teaching/learning strategies, and was underpinned by a pastoral care or similar supportive school environment strategy evident within each school. Evidence from the case studies indicated that each school's mission and vision was articulated and reinforced on a regular basis to ensure a cohesive and holistic school focus.

All schools demonstrated an individual focus on each child through their pastoral care and similar programs, as well as their diverse curricula, ranging from traditional academic courses to general interest and practical courses such as photography and automotive studies, as well as a wide range of leadership and extra curricular activities, such as afternoon craft and visual arts.

Central to each school's vision was the provision of a safe, caring environment for students, staff and parents, and the promotion of respectful relationships between students and adults. At Watersedge High, for example, such an environment was facilitated by grade level coordinators who followed student cohorts through their four years of high school, and by teaching and learning activities where "student opinion is listened to and respected".

Within each school, behaviour management, and teaching and learning outcomes, derived from a framework of clearly articulated school community expectations. For example, a senior teacher commented that

behaviour management has moved miles ahead … I think most of the people in the school … are actually working together to provide a situation that is safe for children, but set in boundaries so they know what is expected of them …

In the same way, the development of a learning culture within the school provided clear direction and expectations for students, staff and parents about teaching and learning. For students, the principal explained that this meant "you go into class to have an engaging experience that is academically focused and you are treated as an individual, respected, and you are expected to perform as a student".

In terms of scope, the vision of each school extended beyond the provision of education for students for a prescribed number of years, to include a focus on encouraging and nurturing lifelong learning amongst all within the school community and on contributing to the development of community social capital. One principal described how a broadening of the school curriculum to accommodate post-compulsory students (including adults) in vocational education and training programs, facilitated through shared school and community ICT facilities, was a good example of the role of the school in adding "to the social capital of the community by facilitating lifelong learning".

The case studies showed clearly that the development of a shared school vision/direction occurred simultaneously as school capacity was built. One principal described an approach to developing a shared vision and direction that was similar to that described by the other principals:

[It is] a deliberate strategy to talk … so that slowly you get a common view evolving. It is not about me going out there saying this is the direction in which I think we should be going. … It's about building the structures in the school so that people feel that they can have their say about where we're going and to listen to them, and to make sure that it is as much as possible we and not I …

A senior teacher described how

the principal pulls us back to the general vision [including "all children can learn", "the outcomes of schooling should be equally distributed", "to nurture an enjoyment of and a capacity for lifelong learning", and "providing responsive and innovative education to the whole community"] very often,

tries to have us think about the big picture a lot, like what we're doing, why we're doing things, what's the relevance, what we're doing in the classroom … as a school we do look at that bigger picture a lot … more now than we did a few years ago.

The school vision acted as a filter for school decision making, particularly regarding the effectiveness of current educational programs and the "fit" of potential new programs and initiatives. One principal described the vision as the "glue that holds all programs together" while another described how the development and articulation of a shared vision allowed the school to move away from its previous "pimples on a pumpkin" approach to curriculum, in which opportunities or additional programs became ends in themselves often driven by the availability of external funding, rather than complementary and coherent components of a broader school vision. A good example was a new school wide approach to teaching literacy that fitted with the school focus on providing an "inclusive environment" and on the development of individual potential as a "community responsibility". The principal described how and why staff agreed to adopt the literacy program:

as a staff we agreed … when we put that tender in that we weren't interested a literacy program that was going to be for literacy teachers. This was going to be a literacy program that operated across all learning areas and across all grades. So that meant that everybody gave that commitment to be part of it.

At the same time, a variety of school and external contextual factors influenced the extent to which individuals within the school community shared the school's vision/direction. In particular, issues such as the relatively high turnover of teachers due to their temporary status made it more difficult to achieve cohesion amongst staff than in schools with a more stable staffing profile.

School Outcomes

The individual and school capacity building activities described earlier, as well as a clearly articulated and shared school vision/direction, are linked to a range of successful outcomes for school communities. The following teacher comment described a situation common across all five schools:

we can within our planning actually make sure that there are student outcomes linked to our planning. So that we're not planning in isolation if you like, there is an overall vision, an overall goal of where we want to be.

Successful school outcomes that were valued by the community can be categorized into three groups: teaching and learning outcomes, student outcomes, and community social capital outcomes.

Teaching and learning outcomes Findings in relation to teaching and learning outcomes illustrated clear links to the principals' values and the school vision/mission, in that successful teaching and learning outcomes derived from a social justice framework, and focused on student responsibility for their own learning. Evidence from each case study indicated that successful teaching and learning outcomes included meaningful tasks, collaborative/inquiry-based activity,

and negotiated student outcomes. Four key influences on teaching and learning outcomes were identified: principal/staff expectations, teacher involvement in instructional leadership, school context, and the external policy context (specifically, the Essential Learnings statewide curriculum framework). Each of these broad findings is discussed below and is illustrated with interview extracts from the case study sites.

The focus of teaching and learning in all schools was on providing equitable opportunities for all students through working in heterogeneous groupings, fostering student responsibility for their learning, and engaging students in meaningful tasks. For example, an assistant principal explained that the school's online learning program

is very much linked to an equity issue to offer the kids here the choice and the opportunity to study a subject with a teacher who is an expert, online … you can have a heterogeneous group of kids working and learning in a flexible learning environment of different abilities and they are there because they are interested in what they are doing. And they have got a commitment to what they are doing.

In each school, the importance of teaching and learning was reflected in the high expectations by staff of students, which in turn reflected the high expectations of staff and students by the principal. It was also reflected in the strong focus on teacher involvement in instructional leadership, which was seen by staff as recognition and affirmation of their expertise in this area. The team approach to teaching and learning and the innovative and risk-taking culture evident in each school, encouraged staff to reflect on and extend their repertoire of teaching practices to better meet the needs of students, and made them more accountable for their teaching. A teacher explained how the teams approach

affects my teaching because of the close knit nature of the team … we share resources and we bounce ideas off each other so I've learnt a lot from the people around me which has enabled me to experiment with new approaches and new ideas that I probably wouldn't have been exposed to. … because we are in such small cohesive groups we do have a lot of meeting time and a lot of sharing and supporting each other time … I think it probably also helps make us more accountable for what we're doing and keeps us on the ball …

Changes to teaching and learning within the five Tasmanian schools was set within the context of the government mandated Essential Learnings curriculum framework. Professional development linked to implementation of the Essential Learnings framework encouraged a number of staff to trial new teaching strategies designed to facilitate deeper learning, and to utilize a range of cooperative learning and critical thinking strategies. Moreover, it facilitated a process of school wide professional learning. Discussion of learning styles and experimentation with new teaching strategies has been important for all teachers, but particularly for those who have been in the classroom for some years. A teacher noted that the review of curriculum and pedagogy at her school

has pulled me right back into what we're here to do and that's to teach children and to find the best way to teach them through the content. So yes, less is more, but do it well …

In addition to leadership, a range of other factors also influenced teaching and learning. Of these, school context was at the forefront. In schools serving low SES communities, the "very nature of their constituency" was a powerful force for pedagogical change. A principal explained:

... our kids have low tolerance for didactic teaching, they have to have constructivist learning .... So it's got to be something that grabs their attention and interest and then the technicalities of literacy and numeracy can be taught.

Student outcomes The findings indicate that most student outcomes are relevant across all school contexts: achieving individual potential, student engagement, self-confidence and self-direction, sense of identity, sense of community and belonging, and literacy and numeracy outcomes. However, there were also indications that some outcomes were more important and/or more valued in certain school contexts. For example, academic achievement was more valued at a high SES school than in the low SES schools. Usually academic success was seen as only one of a number of equally important indicators of success, including happiness and a sense of belonging, opportunity, and the quality of relationships. On the other hand, student outcomes in four areas assumed particular importance in low SES case study schools: social learning, school attendance and retention, improved behaviour and attitude, and reduced vandalism. In all schools, evidence indicated that student outcomes were influenced by five factors: school context, relationships between students and staff, high teacher expectations, curriculum options, and teaching and learning strategies.

The range of valued student outcomes was closely linked to the school's vision/mission that each child should reach his or her potential, and reflected the beliefs of each school community that academic achievement was only one of a range of valued student outcomes. Academic scores varied in their importance according to school context, assuming greater importance in high SES schools. In lower SES schools, where students faced a variety of social and economic disadvantages, academic achievement scores were seen as a less relevant way of measuring student progress and outcomes, due to their inability to account for differences in student ability levels, mobility of the student population, and what was important in students' current or future lives.

The focus in all schools, regardless of SES, location, or size, was on developing confident, self-motivated learners and on building a sense of identity and self-worth in students. This was achieved through a supportive school culture in which staff–student relationships were fundamental. All schools identified literacy (and numeracy) as an important means of allowing students to reach their potential, and addressed these issues on a school wide basis, channeling considerable resources, both financial and human, into these areas. Steady improvements in literacy and numeracy scores in all five schools indicated their efforts had been successful although, particularly for low SES schools, measures of success needed to be calibrated according to the background and abilities of the students.

Student self-confidence and self-worth were built by offering a range of curriculum options in which all students could experience success, again a feature

of all five schools. High teacher expectations were also vital in building student self-confidence and encouraging them to reach their potential. The following parent comment was typical:

[Staff] seem to believe so much in the child and encourage them so much … even if they [students] think that they can't achieve it … I feel that they [staff] give them a lot of encouragement to at least try.

Student participation in school decision making and management resulted in a range of positive benefits, including greater connectedness and sense of community within the school, reduced levels of vandalism, and an overall improvement in student behaviour and attitude. The team approach to teaching and learning evident in all schools provided a sense of belonging and identity for each individual (staff and students). A senior teacher explained that

our strength is in our team and I believe then with our children their strength is in their sense of belonging. … if you ask them – well, we are Year 9s and that's who we are and that's our block and this is our classroom and our space and these are our team of teachers, and we are very recognizable for being that.

In all schools, students, staff and parents reported increasing levels of student engagement in their studies, brought about by a challenging and diverse curriculum, a variety of teaching and learning strategies utilized to meet student needs and backgrounds, and the usefulness and relevance of subjects to students' lives and likely futures.

Teaching strategies that foster group work, and a culture in which school community members "look out for each other" gave rise to increased social learning for students, as the following comment from a senior teacher illustrates:

I work in proximal groups so that kids have all worked with other members of that class. I have a real feeling that by doing that it eliminates bullying and it gets kids knowing that working in teams is such an important part of working in life …

Increased school attendance and retention rates were linked to a more diverse and engaging curriculum and positive and supportive staff–student relationships. Regular attendance at school impacted positively on student achievement levels, an issue of importance in all schools but particularly in low SES schools.

Community social capital outcomes While the findings from each site indicated that successful school leadership focused on building social capital within the school, in terms of facilitating collective action based on shared values, norms, and understandings, there was also evidence to indicate that these outcomes extended well beyond the school, to include the school community and the broader geographical community in which the school was located. These community social capital outcomes included an increased sense of community identity and empowerment which was particularly important in low SES areas, and a wide range of social, education, training and employment outcomes for all community members. Community social capital outcomes were facilitated by school leaders with a firm belief in the role of schools as centres of lifelong learning for the whole community,

who were willing to access and create opportunities with a focus on building active and engaged citizens. These outcomes did not come about by chance, but were closely linked to the values of the principal and formed part of the vision of the school, that responsibility for youth should be shared by the school community, and that the school had a responsibility to its broader community.

Case study findings indicated a range of community social capital outcomes. For example, involvement of parents in their children's' education and in the school, increased community confidence and allowed for a sharing of skills and knowledge for the benefit of all. Particularly in low SES schools, an assistant principal explains how empowerment of both students and parents, and an attitudinal change to the value of education and training, ultimately gave rise to more positive and lasting student outcomes, than

previous policies which have been very politicized and top down … I think the key to higher learning outcomes … is in empowerment of communities and … supporting kids to be empowered, with commitment to learning, and [that's] part of the culture here.

The various forms of community-based learning evident within most schools, and particularly important in low SES and rural schools, also built community social capital. For example, a school farm and its related activities such as the annual school agricultural show, provided a strong link "for kids and the community". At the same time, the school's relatively new and expanding information and communication technology program provided opportunities for post Year 10 online vocational education and training (VET) courses. Prior to offering online VET courses, these same young people would not have undertaken further education and training at all, or would have left the community to do so, and may not have returned. The principal described how these activities, as well as the school's shared facilities with the community, including a recently opened e-learning centre, "add to the social capital of the community by facilitating lifelong learning in the local community".

In another example, community-based learning extended well beyond the immediate local community to include two other schools and their communities. Located in the lowest SES area of the city, the school was successful in winning Australian government funding to implement a one-stop shop for all young people (12–25 years of age) in the local and surrounding suburbs, allowing them to access a range of public services including health, welfare, legal services, and education and training. The project officer employed by the school explained that although it was beyond the scope of what a school would normally apply for, given the school's ethos as a "community-centred organisation … we applied for that money because no-one else was going to and we knew there was a need here".

Evidence-based Monitoring, Evaluation, Critical Reflection and Change/Transformation

Evidence from the case studies suggested that successful leadership was more than continuing to do the same thing well. In addition to continually reflecting on their own values and actions, successful leaders facilitated monitoring, reflection and

evaluation through broad-based governance structures, individual and school wide professional learning, and by utilizing external drivers such as departmental policy. Critical reflection on the "why", "how" and "what" of leadership was then used to inform change if needed.

All principals outlined the value and importance of monitoring, evaluation and critical reflection as part of an ongoing process of individual and school wide continuous learning. One principal commented that he was "more reflective after seven years as a principal", although conceded that "I have days of doubt, real doubt, and you think hell, what am I doing", followed by "days of confidence". He described a recent period of sick leave as vital in allowing him time "to get back into theory and get back into reading", and commented that "sometimes you have to change sites [go home] to do it [reflect]". In another example, a principal described how the completion of her doctoral dissertation was central to the reflective process because it had "given me huge frameworks for approaching almost any situation …".

Monitoring and critical reflection were facilitated by shared decision making and broad-based governance structures in each school, in key areas such as curriculum and assessment, and behaviour management. A teacher explained that the formation of learning teams had facilitated the regular monitoring and evaluation process:

I think it's through continual evaluation of what we do and we're good at that, like we do a lot of evaluation. And after receiving that evaluation and lots of feedback we're very active in doing something about it.

Evidence from the case studies indicates that professional learning facilitated critical reflection on the link between vision, teaching and learning, and outcomes, and encouraged staff to experiment with new ways of doing things. The following comment from a teacher was typical:

we are also analysing our approaches [to] what we're doing, so that will flow through to student outcomes. If we're reflecting on our practice and often after a staff meeting where we've discussed something I'm sure people go home and think, that's a really good idea, what can I do to address that, or [is] what I'm doing in the classroom really engaging the children, [and] if not, what can I do? So perhaps it flows through that way. Teacher enthusiasm, teacher knowledge flowing through to improve outcomes.

Evidence from the case studies identified departmental policy as a facilitator of critical reflection and evaluation, and all schools described how they were increasing their evidence-based decision making as a result of both mandated and voluntary record-keeping practices. For example, schools regularly monitored and evaluated the outcomes of their literacy and numeracy programs using statewide literacy and numeracy tests, to ensure they were meeting the needs of students and to ensure accountability to stakeholders. As a result of this process, changes were made as necessary. At one school the success of the early childhood sector's literacy program resulted in the school allocating more resources and increased autonomy for the sector, which was now a model for developments elsewhere within the school. However, external policy as a facilitator of critical reflection sometimes had unexpected results. At another school staff was involved in a review

of curriculum prompted by the statewide Curriculum Consultation project. As a result of a review of the Health/Physical Education curriculum for senior students completing their Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE), the principal in consultation with Health/Physical Education coordinator determined that the school would opt out of the TCE in Health/Physical Education because of an over-emphasis on criterion-based assessment. Such assessment required ticking off a series of boxes, and left little time for student enrichment. This school subsequently developed its own Wellness and Enrichment program that focused on the social, mental, physical and emotional aspects of students' wellness.

Several of the principals also described how they utilized mandated departmental review processes such as the School Improvement Review (SIR). The SIR process provided for a year-long structured evaluation and critical reflection on the school's vision, structure, processes, and student outcomes. As part of the process, target outcomes for the following three years were identified. Knowledge about the process of review and change gained from the SIR had been utilized by principals in their leadership of school change more broadly. For example, in terms of the process of introducing pedagogical and structural changes at one school, the assistant principal described how the principal

led … change, it hasn't been rushed, it's been a process that's deliberately set out over a period of time and I just think the thoroughness of it has impressed me because policies and changes that we've had have actually had some substance to them.

CONCLUSION: A PRELIMINARY MODEL OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

This case study research confirms Leithwood & Riehl's (2003) claims that successful school principalship makes important contributions to school outcomes and that these effects are indirect. However, it suggests that contribution occurs in a more complex way and with a wider range of outcomes than suggested by Leithwood and Riehl. Leadership in each of the five case study schools was strongly influenced the principals' core personal values, and by the development of a shared organizational values base. Although these core values were similar across school sites, the internal and external school context influenced the way in which they were translated into school practices and procedures. These findings support the highly politically values-led contingency model of transformational school leadership (Day & Naylor, 2004). They also acknowledge the accountability-oriented policy context in which principals operate (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) and the argument regarding the need for successful school principals to bridge the gap between the professional and other communities (Driscoll & Goldring, 2003).

Successful principals also displayed a core set of basic leadership skills regardless of school context, including developing a shared vision, individual capacity building and organizational redesign, supporting the findings of Leithwood & Riehl (2003) into the generic skills of school leaders. All principals, but particularly those from low SES schools, promoted equity and social justice through the creation

of strong school communities and socially just pedagogical practices (Furman & Shields, 2003), and by focusing on the development and reinforcement of a strong learning culture within the school community (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). One of the most powerful emerging concepts here was that of "deep" democracy: respect for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions, reverence for and proactive facilitation of free and open inquiry and critique, recognition of interdependence in working for the common good, the responsibility of individuals to participate in free and open inquiry, and the importance of collective choices and actions in the interest of the common good.

The extent of organizational learning (and therefore, school capacity) was found to be linked to the transformational leadership practices of successful principals, and supported findings from other research (Silins & Mulford, 2002). Consistent with others who have researched the area, principals' transformational leadership practices included the provision of individual support, development of a trusting and risk taking culture, implementation of structures to facilitate shared decision making and distributed leadership, development of shared goals and vision, and high expectations of students as well as challenging and providing intellectual stimulation for teachers (Leithwood & Hallinger, 2002).

Evidence from the case studies confirmed Gurr, Drysdale, Natale, Ford, Hardy & Swann's (2003) finding that principals impact indirectly on student outcomes by working with and through others and using a range of interventions in terms of individual and school capacity building, as well as teaching and learning. Principals created bridges and formed linkages across the school community and beyond to improve student outcomes (Driscoll & Goldring, 2003). Specifically, the case studies provide evidence of the important boundary spanning role played by successful school leaders (Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford, Falk, & Prescott, 2002), which Leithwood & Riehl (2003) identified as a gap in educational leadership research to date.

The case studies also provided evidence of the importance of both distributed leadership and positional leadership. Findings indicated that successful leadership involved roles for both formal and informal leaders, similar to those suggested in Kilpatrick et al.'s (2002) leadership model, and that the principal's transformational leadership practices facilitated widespread participation in school leadership. In brief, they demonstrated a strong ability to work with and through others (Gurr et al., 2003).

Findings from the case studies indicated that when the whole school community was involved in school leadership, a much broader definition of the valued outcomes of learning emerged (Feinstein, 2000), extending well beyond traditional measures of academic achievement. For example, the growing importance of community social capital outcomes was noted, supporting findings by Kilpatrick et al. (2002). Although other research (Silins & Mulford, 2002) has not found a link between the community focus of schools and student outcomes, our study suggests that community social capital outcomes were important in their own right, particularly in low SES and rural schools.

Successful school leadership emerged as a process of learning, both by individuals and whole school communities (Stein & Spillane, 2003). The findings indicated that a key part of the process was regular evaluation of the school's context, individual and organizational capacity, vision and goals, and outcomes, as well as the ability to critically reflect on these findings and make changes accordingly. This supported earlier leadership models by Day et al. (2000) and Kilpatrick et al. (2002) and the need identified by Prestine & Nelson (2003) for successful leaders to balance the demands of the designed and emergent parts of the organisation. The evolving concept here was constructivism, which sees learning as a process of active knowledge construction, not something that can be handed to someone else. The process involved knowledge dependency, with current understandings used to construct new understandings, and social activity situated in specific contexts.

This more complex view of successful school leadership not only encapsulates the characteristics of transformational leadership but also most of the dimensions of leadership identified by Furman & Shields (2003), namely communal and contextual, processual, transformative, and pedagogical, as well as the stages of organizational learning in schools identified by Mulford & Silins (2003), namely trusting and collaborative climate, shared and monitored mission, taking initiatives and risks, and on-going, relevant professional development. In encapsulating these models the case studies reinforce the suggestion that the characteristics are sequential or developmental.

To summarize (see 2.1), the review of some of the literature on, and models of, successful school leadership and findings from the five case studies suggest that successful school principalship is an interactive, reciprocal and evolving process involving many players, which is influenced by and, in turn, influences, the context in which it occurs. Further, the findings demonstrated that successful principalship was underpinned by the core values and beliefs of the principal. These values and beliefs informed the principals' decisions and actions regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building, and capacity building at the school level, including school culture and structure. The principal's core values and beliefs, together with the values and capacities of other members of the school community, fed directly into the development of a shared school vision, which shaped the teaching and learning, student and social capital outcomes of schooling. To complete the proposed model was a process of evidence based monitoring and critical reflection, which could lead to change and/or transformation. The context and the successful school principal's values form the "why" of the model, the individual support and capacity, school capacity and school vision/mission the "how", and the teaching and learning, student and community outcomes the "what". The evidence based monitoring and critical reflection on the "why", "how" and "what" and the relationship among them formed the final section of the model, the "how do we know" and "do we need to change" element.

The preliminary model of successful school principalship highlights the:

- imbedded/contextual nature of principal values, individual and organizational capacity, mission and outcomes;

- interactive nature of principal values, individual and organizational capacity and mission on the one hand and outcomes on the other;
- broad interpretation of outcomes, and their interaction with each other, to include teaching and learning, student academic and non-academic outcomes and community social capital; and,
- separateness of evidence-based monitoring – implying that professional educators have a responsibility to not just accept, for example, what an employer and/or community may expect but to critically reflect and if necessary act on all aspects of the model, including the context, and their interrelationships.

Within the preliminary model, a start has been made on describing the nature of each characteristics involved in successful school principalship. For example, successful school principals' values were found to involve being good and passionate, supporters of equity and social justice and being other centred. Clearly, more needs to be done to flesh out these descriptions, for example to include the ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Furman & Shields, 2003). There also needs to be further work on the congruence and sequence among the characteristics (Mulford, 2003b), the issue of the ability of successful principals to manage tensions and dilemmas (Day et al, 2000) within and between the characteristics and their ability to sustain balance (Mulford, 2003a) among the characteristics over time.

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CHAPTER 3

MODELS OF SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP: VICTORIAN CASE STUDIES

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Abstract: This article provides an Australian perspective on successful school leadership that focuses on nine case studies from the state of Victoria. The study shows the significant contributions principals make to schools, particularly in the areas of capacity building, and teaching and learning. Characteristics and qualities of the principals identified showed a common and consistent set of personal traits, behaviours, values and beliefs such as honesty, openness, flexibility, commitment, passion, empathy with others, belief that all children are important and can succeed, belief that schools can make a difference, high expectations of all, and highly developed communication skills. An intervention based model of successful school leadership is outlined that describes interventions that can impact upon student outcomes in the areas of teaching and learning, school capacity building and other influences

INTRODUCTION

As part of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) we conducted multiple-perspective case studies in nine schools in Victoria; a related project involved five case studies of Tasmanian schools and is reported in another chapter in this book. The focus was on the leadership of principals that were acknowledged by their peers as being successful, and who led schools that could demonstrate success through improved student learning outcomes and through positive school review reports. Findings from these case studies have been reported in Gurr, Drysdale, Di Natale, Ford, Hardy & Swann (2003) for three of the Victorian case studies, with a comparison across Victorian and Tasmanian case studies described in Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford (2005). In the next section we provide contextual information on school education in Victoria before discussing the methodology and findings.

C. Day and K. Leithwood (eds.), Successful Principal Leadership in Times of Change, 39–57

The Victorian Context

Australia has a Commonwealth Government that oversees six State and two Territory Governments. Education in Australia is a complex interplay between these different levels of government, and between government and non-government schools. The responsibility for the provision of government schooling constitutionally rests with the State and Territory governments, but increasingly there has been Commonwealth Government influence especially in terms of grants to both government and non-government schools.

The State of Victoria in Australia has a population of over 4.6 million people, with approximately 3.2 million people living in the large metropolitan city of Melbourne. The school education system consists of primary schools from preparatory year to year six (ages five to twelve) and secondary schools from year seven to twelve (ages twelve to eighteen). Most students (approximately three-quarters) complete 13 years of school and attain a Year 12 certificate. As in most states and territories in Australia, approximately 66% of students are in government schools. The non-government school sector is dominated by a system of Catholic schools that serves approximately 20% of all school age children, with the remaining children attending various independent schools that include a range of religious (e.g. Anglican, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Islamic, Jewish, Lutheran and Seventh Day Adventist) and non-religious schools (e.g. Montessori and Steiner). In recent years, the proportion of students attending non-government schools has increased. The government school system has approximately 1600 schools, with 1232 primary schools and 262 secondary schools serving over 500,000 students.

Since the mid-seventies reform of education in Victoria has been relentless, with a consistent trend to devolution to the school level of authority, responsibility and accountability. The most recent major education reform, *Blueprint for Government Schools*, is aimed at improving literacy and numeracy, retention rates and successful school completion. The reform program includes (Department of Education & Training, 2003):

- enhancing student learning through new curriculum frameworks, improved assessment and reporting, and improved sharing of best practice in teaching and learning;
- developing a new resource allocation model;
- building leadership capacity through improved principal selection, mentoring and coaching programs, and leadership development programs for new and experienced school leaders;
- creating and supporting a performance and development culture;
- supporting teachers through focused professional leave and induction and mentoring programs;
- school improvement through differential school reviews, and enhanced school performance data; and
- enhancing school networks.

Methodology

School characteristics The Victorian schools included two government primary schools, one government secondary school, one government special school, four Catholic primary schools, and one independent school covering the primary and secondary years. The average student enrolment at the schools was 511 with a range from 120 to 1330. There were six female and three male principals (see Appendix 1).

Selection criteria The focus of the investigations was on the leadership of principals, with selection criteria based on the reputation of the schools, the acknowledged success of the principals by peers, and evidence of improved student outcomes over time. These outcomes were measured (where data were available), on the basis of comparative state-wide test and examination results, through positive school review reports, and other data such as: staff and parent opinion; student participation, engagement and satisfaction; rates of student attendance, retention and suspension; and, student pathways as indicated by data on the transition from school to work. The selected schools were able to demonstrate success on a wider scale than that of the selection criteria and typically included aspects such as achieving individual potential, student engagement, self-confidence and self-direction, sense of identity, sense of community and belonging, as well as the more typical academic outcomes. Schools were also selected to represent school diversity in terms of type, location, size, and socioeconomic status of the families.

Data collection and analysis As with the other countries involved in the ISSPP, data were collected at each school using multiple sources including documents illustrating school achievements and student attainment, and individual and group interviews with a variety of people typically including the principal, school council chairperson, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, teachers, parents and students. The focus of the interviews was the exploration of perceptions of the success of the school, and particularly the principal's contribution to the success. The study, while modelling interview questions on those developed by Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford (2000), adopted a grounded approach in that there were no pre-conceived views of successful school leadership. Questions were open-ended and interviews semi-structured to allow participants the opportunity for deep reflection. The data generated from the interviews were analysed utilising a cross-case, inductive analysis approach (Patton, 1990). Participant perceptions were grouped on common questions, whilst thematic meaning units were drawn from across all interviews, thus allowing for the development of grounded theory. Each case study was analysed separately using this methodology, with this paper reporting an overall analysis of all nine case studies. Several researchers have been involved, with different researchers taking the lead role in individual school analysis: School A (Hardy, 2006), School B (Di Natale, 2006), School D (Drysdale & Goode, 2004), School E (Karvouni, 2005), Schools C, F, G and H (Ford, undated), School I (Doherty, undated). Gurr had overall responsibility for the project, and supervised all case study analyses, and one of Gurr, Drysdale or Swann was involved in data

collection at each of the school sites. The findings and models described in this paper derive from a cross case analysis conducted by Gurr and Drysdale, with the veracity of the findings verified by the other researchers involved. Hence, this paper describes a collective understanding of successful school leadership derived from the nine Victorian case studies.

Findings

Themes identified were:

- the principal's contribution to success;
- values and beliefs;
- personal characteristics;
- styles of leadership;
- understanding the context and the situation; and
- leadership interventions in the areas of teaching and learning, student outcomes, school capacity building, and other factors.

The Principal's Contribution to Success

An important finding was that each principal made a positive difference to the quality of education. Positive contributions included: engendering a sense of confidence; providing a positive direction through their vision and enthusiasm; holding high expectations of staff and students; focusing on students and families; empowering staff; aligning the community, staff and school goals; promoting change in teaching and learning; and building school capacity. All the principals were recognised for their contributions to the success of their school and were regarded as the "engine rooms" of this success.

The school communities were able to clearly articulate the positive impact of the principal. For Principal A these included: establishing a "high expectation" culture; developing a school-wide pedagogy, raising student achievement levels; increasing enrolments; and, gaining the support of parents and the wider community. Principal A commented:

Continuous improvement is emphasised – we will continually set goals to improve. It is now part of the culture of the school. Teachers now come with new goals, because we have changed our view of students and believe that they have the capacity to learn. We will need to continually "up the bar" [aim higher]. It also comes with a philosophy that kids are giant sponges and a school can continually improve the way it delivers its curriculum.

For Principal B these included: establishing the first "Full Service" school for special students (a school that included additional services such as dentistry and physiotherapy on-site); developing the school's reputation as being one of Australia's leading special schools; and gaining sponsorship that resulted in extensive new resources and facilities. Principal B described her vision and success:

I embarked on a plan to protect the rights of students to have a quality specialist education. First by ensuring the school's viability as an educational option in the eyes of policy makers and then by harnessing support from the corporate world both financially and philosophically. Eight years later we now have an enrolment of 105 students and 50 staff, as well as a new school.

Values and Beliefs

Each principal in the study was able to articulate a set of educational values and beliefs that guided their vision and actions. A strong personal philosophy of education was evident. Values were both local and universal, with Gospel values strongly evident in the Catholic schools. The principals clearly wanted the best for their school, and held strong beliefs about the importance of a sound education for all children. Common values and beliefs across the principals included:

- every child is important;
- every child can succeed;
- every child has unrealised potential;
- teachers needs to feel happy and valued to give their best;
- all members of the school community need to be supported;
- schools should focus on what is in the best interests of the children; and,
- principals can and should make a difference.

Principal D noted:

I have had a long and enduring commitment to all children receiving the best possible range of educational experiences, opportunities to succeed and to reaching their full potential. Within the educational context, I believe children grow and develop best in an environment that is supportive and caring and where attitudes of respecting the rights and differences of others are appreciated and fostered.

In regard to supporting teachers Principal H commented:

The main issue is to keep the teachers happy and contented and valued within the school. As a leader this is the main challenge. To enable the children to reach their full potential in all the areas I spoke about before, I have to give the teachers the right atmosphere and environment for that to take place.

In describing school priorities, Principal G noted aspects that reflected many of the values and beliefs noted previously, but which also highlighted strong Catholic values:

Our priorities are to do with welfare and the well being of the teachers and children, and to ensure that we have structures and programs in place to facilitate this. That children and teachers feel good about themselves, and that the teaching and learning is focussed and children fully engaged. That parents have trust in the school and can talk openly about their children, and that children can be problem-solvers and risk takers. As a Catholic school that we help the children to grow so that they will be positive – Catholic schools need to change to meet the changing world – and that we can help students to make a difference and contribute to the Church in the future.

Personal Characteristics and Qualities

All the principals were recognised for their distinctive personal characteristics and qualities. Common traits identified included being passionate, enthusiastic and highly motivated towards helping children achieve their best. They were described as being persistent, determined and assertive, with high energy levels. They had excellent interpersonal and communication skills and were able to build trust and enhance individual motivation through the integrity, care and respect they demonstrated. Principal I commented:

what you have to do is continue to be the model for the other person, and the other person will take on the model and then will go to other people. It is the modelling of being genuine people, of one being one person to another, respecting skills, respecting achievements, respecting everything. It is the modelling that is the powerful thing.

They were achievement oriented, not only personally, but also for the whole school community. High standards and expectations were set for themselves and the community. None were content with the status quo as they continually "raised the bar", seeing "barriers" as "challenges" rather impediments.

For example, a teacher at School C observed:

I think she has changed the culture of the school (by) having an understanding of what a school is meant to achieve, and having high expectations of students and staff. Also having lots of compassion for students and staff so that when there are problems they are dealt with very professionally … Her leadership, her openness to listen, her sense of humour I think contributes a lot. You can be frank with her.

Leadership Style

The majority of the principals were seen as "strong" leaders. They used a combination of influence and support strategies to achieve school goals. These could be both top-down and bottom-up. The principals were characteristically "hands-on", and acted as role models. Their leadership style was inclusive in the way they were able to bring people along. They cleared a pathway for people to be involved and achieve by removing blockages and providing a clear vision serviced by adequate resources. Staff felt empowered within a structured yet supportive environment. A teacher at School C described how the principal had helped them to enhance their professionalism:

For me personally, she has given me a "kick up the bum" to start doing things. I could have just coasted along, but not investing too much, but now I feel that I do invest more. She inspired me to take my job and the responsibility for it, for what it is. She makes you feel as though what you are doing is important, and always lets people know that what they are doing is important.

The principals were excellent at remaining focused on enhancing the quality of education for students and families. They established good relationships with a range of stakeholders that allowed them to develop strong support networks and alliances. In regard to working with teachers, Principal H noted:

You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. The strategy that I use that works really well is relationships with people. You develop the relationship and with that relationship, you can always go to people and say, "Gee you're doing a fantastic job, BUT you need to do this", and get them to do it.

Understanding the Context

The school and community context in which all principals operated was clearly understood. The principals were able to successfully analyse situations and contexts, and plan and act accordingly. For example, Principal E understood that the school was coasting and not in accord with the high community expectations:

I sought to change the culture by setting high expectations and encouraging academic rigour … I set about recruitment of new staff as a priority and attempted to create a culture of continuous learning through professional learning teams.

Principal C found that the community was less than supportive of the school as evidenced by poor attendance, late arrival at school and general tardiness. She quickly acted to raise expectations, clarify appropriate behaviour and encourage adoption of new school rules. When Principal C began at the school she noted:

In the first couple of years I had to forget about curriculum. I mean literally I had to get kids sitting in classrooms … I would look out into the yard at 25 past nine in the morning and there were kids wandering around outside thinking about whether they would go to the library or whether perhaps they might go to their classroom. I was just appalled.

Interventions

The principals acted purposefully and strategically. They engaged in a series of interventions that reflected the contexts and needs of their schools. These interventions were sometimes focussed on specific areas, while others had a whole-school focus. We have categorised the interventions as: student outcomes; teaching and learning; school capacity building; and, other influences.

Student outcomes All principals were concerned to improve student learning outcomes in traditional areas such as literacy and numeracy. They did this by setting specific goals and continuously raising standards and expectations. For example, even though School A is located in a low socio-economic area, the principal set an expectation that every child would achieve above the state average in literacy. Others principals focused on achieving other educational and social outcomes. For example, Principal D developed a values education policy program that targeted social competencies as a school priority and which was built into the curriculum at every year level.

Teaching and learning This intervention often targeted classroom teaching practices and school curriculum. Principal A noted that he was the "curriculum leader" and purposefully aligned teachers to a particular teaching pedagogy. A teacher at School A described the principal's success:

Principal A had a reputation as an excellent teacher and this helps in his leadership. He is the curriculum coordinator of the school – he maintains his interest and knowledge whilst many principals let this go. He doesn't see his job as a lot of principals do – it is not only running a school, but also the kids and the curriculum. He talks to every teacher every day, he is in classrooms, he is aware of what is going on and speaks about curriculum with passion. His knowledge of curriculum and how education works has been a key to teachers taking on-board change so well. He has real credibility because he practices what he preaches.

Principal E set about getting behind the often closed classroom doors of the secondary school in order to challenge current teaching practices. Principal C focused on restructuring the curriculum to maximise time on task.

School capacity School capacity included many interventions that could be clustered into the areas of personal, professional, organisational and community capacity. All principals encouraged individual teacher growth and provided opportunities for professional development. Principals B and D set about building community support and acquiring resources and facilities. Principals A, C, D, E and I took steps to make the school environment psychologically and physically safe. A student at School A described the school environment:

It is definitely a safe school, and I don't think there are many people who don't like coming to school. From my personal experiences I have never felt unsafe or unhappy here. All staff and students are friendly here.

Other areas of influence Principals were aware of the many other influences that could impact on their schools. Many of the principals were actively involved outside their school to ensure that knowledge and ideas were brought into the school, and to promote and protect their schools within the wider community. Many principals were on government or systemic committees in areas such as curriculum, facilities, resource allocation, or special projects. Most of the principals were influential in professional and community networks. Principal B described how she used external networks to enhance her school:

I embarked on a plan to protect the rights of students to have a quality specialist education. First by ensuring the school's viability as an educational option in the eyes of policy makers and then by harnessing support from the corporate world both financially and philosophically. Eight years later we now have an enrolment of 105 students and 50 staff, as well as a new school.

Towards a Contemporary Model of Educational Leadership

From our case studies it was clear that each principal contributed significantly to their school's success. The level of success was determined to a large extent by a combination of factors: what kind of person the principal was, including their personal qualities, values, beliefs, attitudes, skills, and what type of interventions they made within a particular environment. In order to make more sense of the leadership exhibited by the principals, we propose a model that incorporates the range of interventions used by the principal. The model of successful school leadership (Figure 3.1) was developed to achieve three objectives:

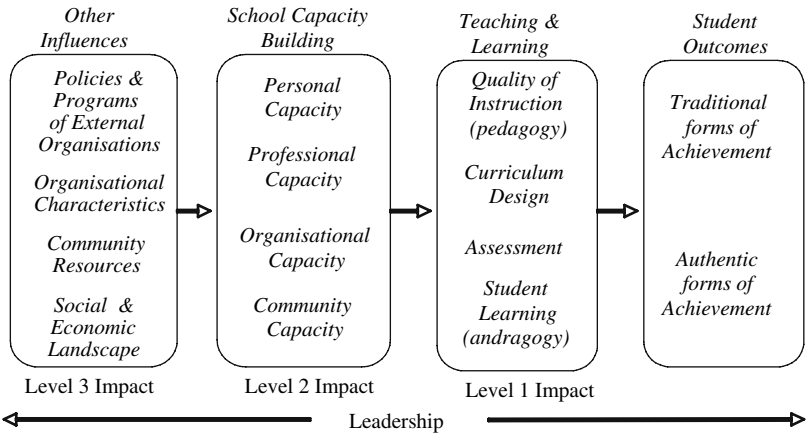

Figure 3.1. Successful School Leadership: An Intervention Based Model

1. To describe, explain and categorise the various kinds of leadership interventions and outline their relationship and impact on student outcomes.
2. To provide a conceptual map of the interventions used by the principals.
3. To provide a framework for other practitioners to use as a guide to future action.

The model is based on the findings of the Victorian case studies as well as previous models that have identified key influences on student achievement. For example, King & Newmann (2001) showed that student achievement is influenced by the quality of instruction (curriculum, instruction and assessment), which is influenced by school capacity (teacher knowledge, professional community, and program coherence). In turn these factors are influenced by other internal and external factors (policy and programs developed by other agencies). Hopkins (2001, p. 183) provided a similar framework based on concentric circles that places pupil learning in the inner circle. Each circle shows a sphere of influence on pupil learning. In order of impact (from the inner circles to the outer) these include: curriculum and instructional programs; creating the conditions and capacity for school improvement; and policy context and external support networks.

The model moves away from the traditional, narrow notion of instructional leadership that focused on teacher supervision (Hill, 2002), and suggests that principals can make interventions in a range of areas that contribute to student outcomes. Explanation of the different elements of the model follows.

Student outcomes The model identifies student outcomes as the key focus of schools. The forms of student achievement noted in the model can vary from traditional forms of achievement, such as performance on national tests, standardised tests and the league tables often generated from these data, to more authentic forms of outcomes (Newmann, 1996) such a social competencies, community values, and

citizenship. This category is not focussed on interventions *per se*, but there is an intervention aspect to it in so far as principals and schools determine which student outcomes will be prioritised. By doing this, aspects of teaching and learning, school capacity building and external influences can be impacted upon, rather than the more typical pathway of interventions occurring which lead to student outcomes. For example, in School I, there was a focus on values-based student outcomes associated with leadership and service. This meant, for example, that by adopting these outcomes new teaching programs were developed (level 1 – student leadership program), there was modelling of appropriate behaviours by staff (level 2 – most notably through the behaviours of the principal), and the school reached out to support external agencies (level 3 – links with indigenous communities).

Teaching and Learning (Level 1 Impact)

The teaching and learning category is identified as Level 1 impact. It is labelled Level 1 because the factors identified in this category have a direct impact on student outcomes. The model identifies four factors in this classification – quality of instruction (pedagogy), curriculum design, assessment, and student learning (andragogy).

Quality of instruction (pedagogy) Pedagogy is the science of teaching children (Knowles, 1986). More commonly it refers to the knowledge that teachers have about teaching and learning, and the strategies they use to support learning. It is a learning process where the teacher assumes responsibility for making decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, and when it will be learned.

Student learning (andragogy) Andragogy is the science of teaching adults (Knowles, 1986). It is a process where the learner assumes much more responsibility for their learning. Students learn to organise, structure, and use information autonomously. They are encouraged to take more responsibility for designing their own learning elements, such as planning, formation of objectives, determining content, accessing information, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes.

Curriculum design This includes system-wide and school based curriculum development. Curriculum can be defined as a blueprint for learning that defines what students need to know, understand, do and value. (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). While most school systems provide curriculum frameworks or guidelines, the school is responsible for delivering the curriculum. In school based curriculum development schools make choices about developing a curriculum profile that most suits their need.

Assessment Assessment helps to improve student outcomes by providing formative and/or summative information to students and the school concerning student progress. It is the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of evidence used to measure and monitor performance, motivate students, and determine whether

the goals of education have been met. Assessment affects decisions about performance levels, placement, advancement, teaching strategies, future learning needs, curriculum, and, in some cases, resourcing.

School Capacity Building

A school's ability to build capacity is identified as a Level 2 impact because of its potential to affect teaching and learning. Several writers identify capacity building as a significant factor in influencing school improvement (Hopkins, 2001; Hopkins & Harris, 2000; King & Newmann, 2001; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; Stoll, Fink & Earl, 2003). The proposed model identifies four areas of capacity building: personal, professional, organisational, and community and within each of these, four elements. These are shown in Figure 3.2. We have termed this a 4 by 4 approach (4X4). In Australian culture, 4X4 is associated with a piece of wood that has a four inch by four inch cross section, and is used as a key structural member for timber framing. We view these capacities as key structural elements of successful schools. Leaders help build capacity in each area.

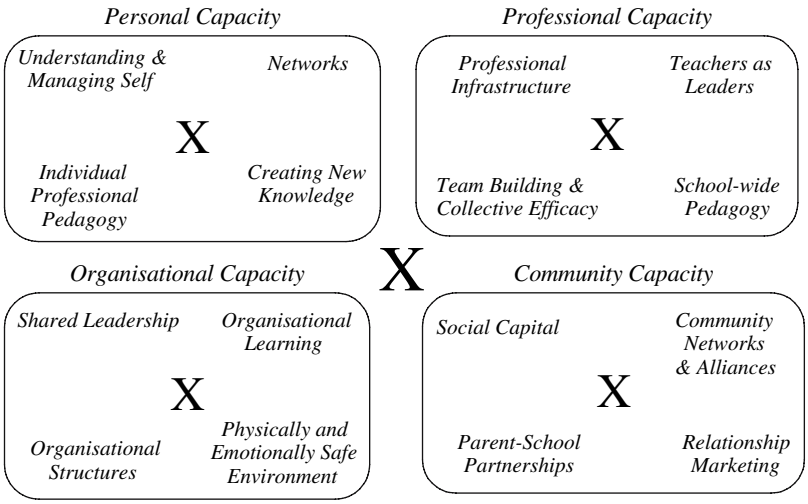

Figure 3.2. 4X4 Approach to School Capacity Building

Personal capacity Personal capacity is the ability of an individual to do what is demanded of them. This includes values, assumptions, competencies, and practices that individuals hold (Mitchell and Sackney, 2001). Building capacity means providing opportunities and experiences that enhance that ability. Senge (1990) uses the term "personal mastery", that is, a set of practices that support individuals to clarify and deepen their personal vision while developing an awareness of seeing reality objectively. Four elements can be identified to help strengthen personal capacity.

- Understanding and managing self – This is the ability of a person to better understand themself in order to maintain and improve their own effectiveness and overall performance. It is being able to reflect, monitor and improve one's own cognition and behaviour. This requires personal motivation, self direction and emotional maturity.
- Individual professional pedagogy – This capacity refers to the need to grow and learn in a professional sense. Teachers need to confront and challenge and search for their own theory of practice. Being able to understand and articulate one's own teaching philosophy, methodology and learning assumptions are important ingredients to change and improvement.
- Networks – Building personal and professional networks provides the capacity for personal growth and resilience. Different networks provide different opportunities. Some provide new ideas and allow for experimentation, while others provide stability, support, trust and security.
- Creating new knowledge – Knowledge creation requires a search for new ideas and practices and seeking ways of embedding them into new practices.

Professional capacity Professional capacity is the potential for a range of professionals, based inside and outside the school, to mutually enhance each other's and pupil's learning as well as school development (Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, & Wallace, 2005). More specifically it refers to groups of professionals (teachers) who share and critically interrogate their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth- promoting way (Toole & Louis, 2002). There are four elements that can contribute to building professional capacity.

- Professional infrastructure – Professional infrastructure refers to the time, space, resources, environment and culture that allow professionals to engage in professional learning. Harris & Muijs (2005) suggest that infrastructure involves the philosophy and mission of the school, selection of personnel, resources (time, money and talent), teacher training, work structures, policies and available outside networks.
- Teachers as leaders – Teacher leadership derives from the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth and adults. Teachers are leaders *in* learning as well as leaders *of* learning. Leadership is not necessarily aligned to a formal leadership role or function. Leadership is located between and among individuals within a school (Harris & Muijs, 2005). It reflects the need for teachers to increase their influence beyond the classroom and into school-wide leadership activities (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002). Teacher leaders can plan and implement changes that make a difference to learning and learners.
- Team building and collective efficacy – This capacity is related to concepts such as team performance (Katzenbach & Smith, 2005), professional learning communities (Hord, 1997), and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). A team may consist of small groups of teachers, departmental groups, subject or discipline groups, cross-grade groups and even whole school groupings. Teachers

work collaboratively, develop a shared vision for student learning, and take collective responsibility for student learning (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). As a team, teachers build the capacity to learn professionally to enhance their effectiveness for the benefit of students.

- School-wide pedagogy – School-wide pedagogy (Crowther, 2001) is synonymous with the concept of program coherence (King & Newmann, 2001). It refers to a whole school approach to teaching and learning. Teachers share their pedagogical practices and together construct a common approach which reflects a collaboration of best practice teaching and learning in the school, an evaluation of current authoritative approaches, and desire to develop an approach that represents a common set of community values.

Organisational capacity Organisational capacity is concerned with building appropriate structures, processes and organisational culture to enhance organisational effectiveness (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Mitchell and Sackney, 2001).

- Shared leadership – This element is similar to concepts such as distributed, dispersed and democratic leadership (Yep, 2005). At its core, shared leadership provides a pool of expertise that contributes to a school's effectiveness. To work it must be accompanied by social cohesion and trust.
- Organisational learning – A learning organisation is an organisation in which people at all levels are, collectively, continually enhancing their capacity to create things they really want to create. There is a sense in which organisations as a whole can learn. It is skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights.
- Organisational structures – Organisational structures can either enhance or hinder performance (Hoy, 2003). Structures include formal and informal arrangements, organisational processes which help govern and control work and relationships, distribution of authority, procedures, rules, regulations, policies, communication channels and processes.
- Safe environment – An important capacity building activity is developing a physically and emotionally safe environment for students and staff. Attending to this capacity is particularly important in schools in challenging circumstances.

Community capacity The school is part of a larger community which includes a range of constituencies; that is, organisations, groups and individuals who have a direct or indirect interest in the school. The participation and engagement by these constituencies can provide mutual benefits for those involved including: (1) a sense of community whereby members see themselves as stakeholders; (2) a willingness to participate; (3) a range of leadership skills that can be employed; and (4) resources that can be accessed (Chaskin, 2001).

- Social capital – This is the value of relationships (Baker, 1992; Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). Putnam (2000) describes it as the dense networks of connections between individuals, including norms of reciprocity and trust which arise from community involvement. It is the assets that one accrues from these relationships (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005).

- Community networks & alliances – Establishing alliances and networks with organisations and agencies within the broader community can provide resources, expertise, new insights, and support. Building partnership and alliances requires a strategic and purposeful approach (Watson & Fullan, 1992).
- Parent-school partnerships – Parent-school partnerships can help families and schools to construct environments that lead to enhanced student learning, especially in challenging contexts (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood & Steinbach, 2003)
- Relationship marketing – Relationship marketing (Drysdale, 2001, 2002; Grönroos, 1994) attempts to establish, develop, enhance and maintain, and in some circumstances terminate, relationships with distinctive groups and members that make up the school community. Schools need to be customer focused and transform the way they relate to their consistencies, for example, changing clients into supporters, who can become advocates, and eventually partners with the school as relationships develop.

Other Influences

The final impact on student achievement (Level 3) is labelled "Other Influences" (King & Newmann, 2001). These might vary across schools, but could include several internal and external aspects such as: policies and programs of governments (system or district level), employers and other organisations; school organisational characteristics such as size, facilities and resources; community resources such as public libraries, sporting facilities, and transportation; and, social and economic landscape such as population demographics, employment opportunities, and community wealth. For Day et al. (2000), their successful headteachers were expert at managing competing tensions and dilemmas, including adapting external demands to fit with school directions and influencing the external demands through participation in key decision making groups. Day et al. (2000) also found that school organisational features mattered, with, for example, leadership of small schools being more challenging due to the often high teaching load of the principals, and the capacity of a small staff to provide the breath of knowledge and experience needed to cover increasingly diverse curriculum.

Giles, Johnson, Brooks, & Jacobson (2005) illustrated how a principal can work with and influence the context surrounding a school; the school they describe is Fraser Academy, one of the seven case study schools included in the chapter from Jacobson and colleagues in this book. The principal took over a school in very challenging circumstances, and not only improved the school but also improved the local neighbourhood so that both became safe environments for children and adults. Over a period of eight years, teachers no longer felt threatened, drug trafficking in the neighbourhood diminished, housing improved, the school had a waiting list for student entry, parent participation improved, and, most importantly, students wanted to come to school and learn. One of the attributes of this principal was her ability to use aspects of the external environment to help transform the school. For example, the principal used system accountability requirements to focus staff and parents on improving student learning. This behaviour is supported by the review of Leithwood &

Riehl (2005) who have, as their fifth claim about successful school leadership, that these leaders act in ways that acknowledge the accountability-oriented policy context.

Generalisations from the Case Studies that Illustrate the Model

This section provides an indication of typical actions used by principals that illustrate how the model reflects practice. The educational leadership demonstrated by the principals showed interventions in each of the areas of the model, especially in teaching and learning, and school capacity. What helped to make the interventions successful were the beliefs, values, vision, personal characteristics and leadership style of the principal. In terms of student outcomes, the principals set high academic achievement goals, but added and negotiated other outcomes that were felt desirable by the school community. In the teaching and learning area, interventions included student leadership programs, redesigning key elements of the curriculum, questioning existing teaching strategies, and adopting alternative assessment measures. Interventions aimed at building personal capacity included challenging individual teachers to think about their future development, offering professional learning activities directed towards enhancing skills and knowledge, as well as strategies to improve self awareness thorough reflective practice and networking with other schools and agencies. At the professional capacity level, teachers were often encouraged to work in teams and develop as teacher leaders. Teachers were encouraged to examine their own teaching pedagogy and develop a school-wide approach. In terms of organisational capacity, principals often altered existing hierarchical structures and put into place more collaborative decision making structures and processes. In addition there was often a significant focus on building community support by developing networks and alliances with community and business groups, improving parent-school relationships, and actively encouraging greater community participation and ownership. It was clear that the principals worked closely with many others in the school and wider community. Whilst the leadership of the principals was important, it was evident that the success of these schools also involved considerable leadership from others, especially from teachers, but also from those involved in school governance, and, in some cases, students. In respect to "other influences", the principals were knowledgeable about current government policies and how these were likely to impact on their school, and had a sophisticated appreciation of the context and external challenges impacting on the school.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of the principal to the quality of education in a school. From a Victorian perspective, the principal remains an important and significant figure in determining the success of a school. The case studies showed the significant contribution of the principal to the school's educational program. The characteristics and qualities of the principal identified in the case studies showed a common and consistent set of personal traits and behaviours. Principals' values and beliefs and the contribution of principals in the areas of capacity building, and teaching and learning were important features of these successful principals.

APPENDIX 1: SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Schools (Pseudonym)	School Type	School Context	School Size	Principal Male/Female	Leadership team (size)
School A	5–11 Government Primary School	Inner suburban Low wealth	218 students Mainly Anglo Saxon. 20% of families have a background other than English. 15 teachers	Male	4 (Principal, assistant principal and two leading teachers)
School B	5–18 Government Special School	Inner suburban Low to high wealth	120 students Diverse cultural mix although predominantly Anglo Saxon background. 50 teachers	Female	5 (Principal, assistant principal and three leading teachers)
School C	5–11 Catholic Primary School	Outer suburban Low wealth	146 students Anglo Saxon. Only 2% from a language background other than English. 11 teachers	Female	5 (Principal, Deputy Principal, Religious Education Coordinator, Literacy Coordinator, Curriculum Coordinator)
School D	5–11 Government Primary School	Outer suburban Medium wealth	580 students Mainly Anglo Saxon. Less than 5% come from a language background other than English. 52 teachers	Female	5 (Principal, assistant principal and three leading teachers)
School E	12–18 Government Secondary School	Suburban Medium wealth	1000 students Mainly Anglo Saxon. Less than 25% from language backgrounds other than English. 70 teachers	Female	13 (Principal, 2 assistant principals and 10 leading teachers)

School F	5–11 Catholic Primary School	Suburban Low wealth	388 students 73% Italian 8% Asian 7% Arabic 4% Anglo/Celt 4% Greek 3% European 1% South American. 20 teachers	Female	8 (Principal, Deputy Principal, Coordinators of Religious Education, Learning and Teaching, Literacy, Mathematics, Information Technology)
School G	5–11 Catholic Primary School	Suburban Medium wealth	385 students Diverse cultural mix 51% Anglo (35% 3rd generation Italian). 11% parents born in Italy, 14% China, 8% other Asian Countries, and small numbers from 22 other countries. 18 teachers	Female	6 (Principal, Deputy Principal, Coordinators of Religious Education, Curriculum, Information Technology, Student Welfare)
School H	5–11 Catholic Primary School	Suburban Medium to high wealth	435 students Majority English speaking backgrounds. The rest from 20 different cultures with Italian being the major one 22 teachers	Male	5 (Principal, Deputy Principal, Coordinators of Religious Education, Curriculum, Information and Communication)
School I	3–18 Independent Boys' School Kinder-year 12	Suburban High wealth	1330 Students Mainly Anglo Saxon. 30 full-fee overseas students. 128 teachers	Male	9 (Headmaster, Deputy Headmaster (School Management), Deputy Headmaster (School Liaison), Head of Junior School, Director of Curriculum, Director of Daily Administration, Assistant to HM (Head of Computing), Assistant to HM (Student Leadership), Business Manager).

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CHAPTER 4

SUSTAINING SUCCESS IN CHALLENGING CONTEXTS: LEADERSHIP IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS

CHRISTOPHER DAY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports multiperspective research on 10 successful, experienced headteachers working in a range of urban and suburban schools of different sizes (with different school populations and free school meals indices of between 20% and 62%). All had raised the levels of measurable pupil attainments in their schools and all were highly regarded by their peers. A key characteristic among the heads was that, regardless of styles and strategies, all revealed a passion for education, for pupils and for the communities in which they worked, that this was recognised and appreciated by them, that they had translated their passion into practice, and that pupils' achievements had increased over a sustained period of time. The research revealed that the headteachers sustained their success by the application of a combination of essential leadership values, qualities and skills and that these enabled them to manage a number of tensions and dilemmas associated with the management of change.

The headteachers were selected on the bases that the Department for Education and Science improvement data for their schools for the last 4 years (1999–2002) showed a general upward trend and that in the most recent OFSTED[1] reports on the schools their leadership was described as being "excellent" or "outstanding". Further filters were applied relating to length of experience, gender, phase and socio-economic status (SES) of schools, pupil mix and geographical location. The schools in which the headteachers worked consist of one nursery/infant school, five primary schools and four comprehensive secondary schools, all of which are in what can be described as challenging urban circumstances. All the schools were located in neighbourhoods with relatively high levels of social deprivation, with the

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Table 4.1. The headteachers and their schools

School						Headteacher			
Type	*No. of Pupils*	*Age range*	*FSM %*	*Pupil ethnic mix*	*Catchment*	*Age*	*Sex F/M*	*Years in post*	*Previous headship*
Secondary	630	11-16	31	Mostly White	Suburban	40-49	M	5	N
Primary	465	3-11	62	Mostly Asian	Inner city	50-59	M	27	N
Primary	240	3-11	32	Mostly Asian	Inner city	50-59	M	22	N
Primary	212	3-11	52	Mostly White	Suburban	50-59	F	9	N
Primary	200	3-11	56	Mostly White	Inner city	50-59	M	14	N
Secondary	1500	11-19	42	Mostly Asian	Suburban	50-59	F	14	N
Secondary	799	11-16	20	Mostly White	Large town	50-59	M	10	N
Secondary	1830	11-18	20	Mostly Asian	Suburban	40-49	M	9	Y
Primary	330	3-11	36	Mostly White	Large town	40-49	F	4	N
Nursery/ Infant	183	3-5	43	Mostly White	Suburban	50-59	F	6	N

percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs being well above the national average (see fig 4.1). On entry, the majority of pupils were underachieving.

When they start, they are at a disadvantage … their language development and social skills are poor. (Teacher, Primary 10)

All of the schools were publicly owned and maintained by local education authorities in England. Three served communities which are predominantly Muslim. None of the others had a significant proportion of ethnic minority pupils. Of the headteachers, six were men (three primary, three secondary) and four were women (one nursery/infant, two primary and one secondary). All but four of them were over 50 years of age. All had been in post for at least 5 years and two have been in post for over 20 years. Only one had held a previous headteacher post.

When the heads had been appointed, the schools were either "sinking" or at best "struggling" (Stoll & Fink, 1996) in terms of their academic attainments and social ethos. During their tenure improvements in both pupil attainments and social ethos had occurred and had been sustained.

One primary school was located in a docklands area with 34% male adult unemployment, with "appalling" housing and some children subject to child abuse

and problems with social services. A secondary school which had been "losing kids in droves" when the present head arrived in 1990 now had increased numbers of pupils and was in the top 5% for pupil examination results when measured against schools in similar circumstances. All the heads had "battled" persistently to win over their communities and establish a "can do" ethos amongst staff and parents:

I think the most significant element that a headteacher brings to any organisation is the imprint on the ethos of the organisation. (Principal, Secondary 1)

Some heads had witnessed and worked successfully with an almost total change of pupil population. For example, one city primary school which was located in a Jewish community now had 80% of pupils who were of Bangladeshi origin, with very few bi-lingual. Another primary school with a predominantly white population was situated in a former mining community which itself had been subject to change over the years.

As well as documented evidence of sustained success through national pupil test and examination results, the headteachers' own views and the views of principal stakeholders were sought. Thus, students, governors, parents, teaching and non-teaching staff were interviewed in order to triangulate data as a means of establishing the trustworthiness of the accounts. Questions focussed upon the personal and professional contexts of, and influences on the heads and their schools – challenges of pupils, communities and policies; the school ethos; accounts of success; relationships, interactions, pupils results and reasons for the school's successes; and the heads' role in these.

The "Standards" Agenda

The endless government pressure to improve has become part of the fabric. It's what I've come to expect. I think that the problem is if you become dominated by that to the exclusion of everything else, then it does become a pressure … If you're successful the pressure's less than if you're under the cosh because your not successful. (Head, Primary 4)

The Government imposed "standards" agenda in the UK, with its focus upon the introduction and implementation of national strategies for measuring pupil achievement and compliancy of schools to externally derived standards of performance as illustrated by a national competency framework for principals (DfES, 2004) and external independent school inspection, has had the effect of (i) bringing into sharp relief the complex interrelated personal, academic and social growth purposes of schooling and (ii) highlighting the role of heads in ensuring that the government's targets for improving pupils' attainment in particular areas of the curriculum are met. The agenda's apparent focus upon rational forms of management planning with an emphasis upon "performativity" through target setting, assessment and measurable achievement has been found by increasing numbers of headteachers and teachers to be limited as a means of achieving success because its vision of what is needed to achieve better examination results fails to address the need to provide an education which matters both for the individual

and society, i.e. an education which serves moral as well as instrumental purposes and which promotes the democratic ideals of the society. For principals as leaders of leaders, the choice is to become part of what some have called a culture of compliancy (Ball, 2000), to take a more subversive role, or to mediate by making judgements about the way in which external agendas may be implemented in order to ensure that they are placed within their broader improvement agendas. The working lives of these successful headteachers were informed by core sets of values and practices which enabled them to work with but transcend current discourses of post-welfarist public service reforms characterised by a reduction in the educational breadth and schooling through emphases upon testing, competition, external evaluation of schools and entrepreneurship. They promoted care and social justice as integral rather than "value-added" components of service (Bottery, 2000). Sustained marketisation reforms had not caused them to become predominantly managerialist (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003, p. 45). Indeed, they were explicit in their "condemnation of the potentially corrupting effects of market values and market forces" (Grace, 2002, p. 197).

Previous research on successful school leadership in schools in England (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000) had revealed that existing theories of successful school principalship were unable to contain or adequately reflect empirically these complexities, and the dilemmas and tensions which characterised the working lives of headteachers in England. By seeking the perspectives of a range of participants (stakeholders) it found that dilemmas – choosing between courses of actions which are "to a greater or lesser extent mutually exclusive" (Clark, Dyson, Millward, & Robson, 1999, p. 170); and tensions – defined as specific sets of pressures experienced by leaders in certain contexts which involved choices which were not necessarily mutually exclusive – were endemic to headteachers' lives. The research identified three dilemmas (development or dismissal of staff; power with or power over staff; sub-contracting or mediation of external change initiatives); and seven tensions (leadership versus management; development versus maintenance; internal versus external change; autocracy versus autonomy; personal time versus professional tasks; personal values versus institutional imperatives; leadership in small versus large schools). What seemed to characterise the lives of successful headteachers in that study – in addition to a strong sense of agency, value-based leadership and a range of generic qualities and skills – was their ability to manage these successfully. The research concluded that whilst socio, political, economic and professional contexts were important influences, successful heads were driven primarily by individual value systems. It seemed that moral purposes, emotional and intellectual commitment and ethical and social bonds were far more powerful levers of leadership than extrinsic agendas.

The findings from the current research with successful headteachers in schools in challenging circumstances provide further evidence of the choices which successful headteachers seem to make. Three themes have emerged from the research which together indicate not only the intellectual, social and emotional complexities of successful leadership in schools in challenging circumstances, but also how these

ten headteachers sustained their success in leading and in managing the dilemmas and tensions of the work lives of all in their school communities sustain their success.

1. *Moral purpose and social justice.* Within this theme a number of related sub-themes were identified: vision and resilience; articulating and upholding values and beliefs; a focus upon moral purpose; and fostering an inclusive community.
2. *Organisational expectation and learning.* Within these, headteachers created expectations for high achievement of staff and students; built internal capital and capacity; and were "lead learners".
3. *Identity, trust and passionate commitment.* Here, headteachers demonstrated the importance of defining and maintaining individual and collective identities, renewing trust and their passion for the work of educating.

Moral Purpose and Social Justice

Leithwood & Jantzi's (2004) evaluation of school leadership in the context of the national Literacy and Numeracy Strategies suggests that the government practice of holding school leaders accountable, "not only for compliance … but also for improving student achievement … is highly unethical, since local leaders are being held accountable for things over which they have, at best, only partial control" (p. 29). The headteachers in this study were aware of the tensions in their roles in mediating government policies and were clear in their responses.

I do welcome the (accountability) agenda generally, it keeps us on our toes … but there is too much and it's affecting the quality of people's emotional lives and physical well being … the wear and tear on people is such that it does generate quite a bit of bad feeling as well. (Principal, Primary 3)

I think the school is successful in catering for each child's needs and hence the inclusivity. It is successful in having a broad curriculum base. It is not narrow English and Maths, a simple diet. It is very wide, lots of history, geography, trips, RE visits and visitors, pottery and so on. These are the things that we have put in place to turn the children on to education and I think it has a significant impact in the classroom in terms of literacy in particular. (Deputy Principal, Primary 1)

They both *accepted* their responsibilities to do the best they could for every pupil in reaching their full potential in terms of the government testing and attainment agendas – flawed though they found these to be – whilst simultaneously being highly critical. However, this was no more important to them than their *moral and ethical commitment* to ensuring pupils' holistic development.

We've taken children who've been permanently excluded elsewhere who are not causing major problems here. We've been involved with a special school for behavioural problems and getting children back in to mainstream. When they've been permanently excluded somewhere else they come back in here, and they've gone on to secondary school and they haven't been permanently excluded there. We've also had a few asylum seeker children more recently and they are a very positive influence. The parents of one family of asylum seekers were exceedingly ambitious for the children. We've had other children who probably didn't have access to state funded education systems in the country they came from and they were so positive that their children were getting an education here; it does send a very clear signal about how important the process is. (Principal, Primary School 4)

Heads purposes were enacted within an overarching agenda in which they were committed to principles of *equity and social justice* through building, "alliances between teachers and excluded constituencies of students, parents and members of the community on whole behalf decisions have traditionally been made either by professions or by the state" (Whitty, 2002, p. 77).

I think he does take positive anti-racist steps. The people he employs right through the school … are pretty representative of the local community … He tries to fit in with what's going on. For instance, it's Ramadan, so there's an arrangement for children to come in and say their prayers after their meal. (Teacher, Primary 10)

Parents weren't allowed in before at all … whereas they come and help in the office … use the staff room. They are treated like partners. (Teacher, Primary 11)

My role is to include everybody … so that you show if you value a parent with tattoos all over the place, who's not very clean … as part of our society … We've got several children in the school who should be in special schools, but the consensus is that this school is meeting their needs, which is good but didn't help our SATs results. I encourage them to stay because I think … we've got to respect our community. (Head, Primary 11)

They did not sit on the sidelines able to maintain a distance from the "swampy lowlands" (Schon, 1983) and messiness of the day-to-day struggles of trying to make a difference in challenging circumstances. Nor were they the romanticists of transformational leadership portrayed by Christie & Lingard (2001). They did not either unthinkingly adopt the glossy solutions provided by the "how to" texts of trainers and well intentioned writers.

The data in this study indicate that each of these heads had built capacity among the whole community which enabled them to sustain their vision for education. Teachers spoke of their own commitment to changes of various kinds in the schools, and more important, to the ethical, practical and value considerations which underpinned them. As in Hargreaves & Fink's (2003) discussion of sustaining leadership, people had been enabled, "to adapt and prosper in their increasingly complex environment" (p. 13). Short term initiatives in response to problems and externally driven innovations were eschewed. Instead, the heads looked ahead, building capacity for long-term growth and sustainability, building a collective memory of purpose, process and success.

But learning, in the broadest sense, is evaluated according to standards which are rooted in structures in society. Communities, therefore, matter for two reasons: first, they provide a wider context from which learners can draw guidance, motivation and meaning for what they are trying to learn. Second, the communities surrounding the schools … can provide resources for learning which are frequently untapped … . (Bentley, 2001, p. 131)

What these heads did was more than, "moving away from school-led change towards community-based action" as a means of survival (Nixon, Martin, McKeown, & Ranson, 1997, p. 122). The motive for the emphasis given to inclusiveness lay in the heads' broader moral purposes which transcended short term performativity agendas.

We have parents coming in to do community courses – science, literacy and numeracy – so that they could help with the children. (Teacher, Primary 2)

If you keep telling people how good they are they start to believe it and once they start believing it then you can actually change things because you can give them the realisation that they've got a lot to offer. They are the first educators of the children after all, and we only come in at a later date. (Principal, Primary 4)

There's a true community spirit here. (Governor, Secondary 1)

Organisational Expectation and Learning

These heads focussed upon setting and sustaining directions, developing people through informal and formal support and modelling, and, where appropriate, redesigning the organisational structures and nurturing cultures so that staff participation, collaboration and sense of individual and collective belonging and ownership of the organisational vision and strategies were fostered.

It's got the system, it's got the monitoring, it's got data on kids, it's got systems in terms of "pastoral care"; it's got monitoring in terms of standards, it's got lesson observation, it's got good practice; it's got INSET (in-service education and training) for staff. It is a matter of professional pride that we are technically a good school … a common and powerful culture is absolutely essential. A strong school culture makes it easier to value our diversity. (Head, Secondary 8)

There's a huge ethos of one team here. He works very hard at that ethos. (Deputy Head, Secondary 1)

All those in the study focussed upon teamwork as a means of drawing upon and building a fund of social capital, in order to create a store of shared experiences and foster individual and collective capacity to respond to change and emphasise mutual responsibility.

She has the ideas. She's the leader. She delegates. But you can't just say it's down to her because it's down to every single member of staff, because if she had a wonderful idea and the staff didn't fall for it and pull together, it wouldn't be successful. We all agree with her vision and we all think, "Yes, we can do it". We've all got the ambition. (Teacher, Primary 2)

What is clear from the data, however, is that such teamworking was not regarded as a replacement for individual knowledge, experience and judgement but rather a complement to these. Teams in these schools had both power and authority in conjunction with the head within an ethic of shared responsibility.

We work really hard at supporting each other and watching each other learn, modelling lessons and saying, "What did you think of this?" One of the things that was brought out was that we needed to aim higher at what we expected and we needed to take more risks in lessons and how we organise the curriculum … you might end up with egg on your face but every teacher, including me, knows that not every lesson is perfect … but at least if you're taking the risks, and your are organising and planning on that basis, you're going to raise the calibre of what you're doing … But you can't do it unless you've got a team of people who are willing to go along with you … people who share the view that standards really do matter. (Head, Primary 4)

The heads in this study placed huge emotional investment in what Southworth (2003) has called "learning centred leadership" – nurturing the capacities

and capabilities of students, teachers, ancillaries, governors and parents as equal partners in the enterprise of teaching, learning and achievement. In other words, their aspirations were to build and sustain their schools as communities of teaching and learning, to make their schools good at learning.

He is constantly asking for feedback in different ways. He will be involved in interviewing students, what they think of the work, what they think of the school. He gets feedback from staff. Anything we do as a school, we will sit down and say; OK. What went wrong? What went right? How can we improve for next time? Sometimes he will be overseeing it and so we're critical friends to him. (Deputy headteacher, Secondary 1)

She went on a leadership course. One of the things that came out of that was she wasn't giving staff the praise that they wanted. She's worked on that and she does that. She says, "I like that idea". You KNOW that you are appreciated. You KNOW that you are working hard. You KNOW that you're special in school, you're important, you're needed. (Teacher, Primary 2)

He gets feedback off pupils and parents. Teachers give him a lot of feedback. (Pupil, Secondary 3)

I get enough positive feedback from parents, from kids, from colleagues to feel that I'm probably doing a reasonable job and also people will tell me if I'm not. We keep saying to people that it's important that they're straight. If they've got frustrations, they've got to get it out on the table. We're good enough listeners to recognise that if we don't like what we're hearing, the best thing is to shut up and listen to it and then, rather than react defensively to it, begin to work out why is that person feeling the way they are, there's something there that isn't right. (Headteacher, Secondary 3)

In this school people feel they can come and talk to me and if they aren't happy that very clearly comes through either directly from the individual concerned or it's conveyed in another way and so I do tend to know what's going on and if people are not happy I'm usually one of the first to know. I change because I'm not the fount of all knowledge. (Headteacher, Primary 4)

Where there's been an oversight he'll say: "Sorry, we got it wrong" and he'll stand in the staffroom and say it to everyone. He admits mistakes to all staff. He writes to parents and welcomes any feedback from them. He's probably very self-critical himself. He responds to criticism in general by agreeing and saying, "Come on, what are we going to do about it? (Deputy Headteacher, Secondary 6)

He's done a lot of training on everything, psychology, how to deal with people. He's also done all the skills training. He hasn't just stopped when he came here and thought, "Oh! I can do it now". He's permanently going out and finding how to do things. (Support staff, Secondary 9)

Identity, Trust and Passionate Commitment

I get this feeling of passion, almost like a passion for the school. I sense a feeling that she feels something that when the school achieves that she has achieved in order for the school to be achieving … she has always had a strong desire to maintain or improve standards and to better the school … to see that people are able to achieve. (Parent)

All the headteachers committed significant amounts of time not only to building parental involvement in the school, their own, their staff's and their children's learning, but also to externally funded projects (e.g. with EAZs (Education Action Zones), in innovative LEA (school district) social-inclusion projects, Networked Learning Communities and links with local theatres, music schools and in "kitemarking" the school (e.g. Investors in People, Beacon or Specialist School Status), building networks, and pupil exchanges with schools in other countries,

sponsorship from charitable foundations, developing accredited NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications) and other programmes for parents).

I think that in terms of headship you have to be hungry for making a difference and having your own school, and I know it's the perennial trap of headship to talk about "my school". Yes, I can talk about our school, but there's only one me and it's not the buildings or the children, although they are variables you work with. You have to have that will to want to do it because actually the hours are often horrendous. I actually think it's the most creative job you can have, especially secondary 'cos it's like a big orchestra. But unless you've got that will to win, unless you've got that desire, unless you're prepared to put herself on the line you will never ultimately get the real rewards of success. (Headteacher, Secondary 3)

He is very challenging but he will not ask us to do anything that he will not involve himself in, were it needed of him, because I don't think that was always the case when he first came. People had to come on board really, and he is very challenging but will not ask us to do anything over and above . . . So I think that for me is a huge success, because I don't see many heads who do that. (Teacher, Secondary 5)

Mr . . . is the best thing that's happened to this school. (Before he came) we were in serious trouble and then we got a great report when the inspectors came round. He's so happy about it. Every time we're in assembly he always brings it up one way or another. He always says this is the best school he's ever been to. (Pupil, Secondary 6)

It's not just the pupils, it seems the staff are happy here too. He conveys strong leadership in everything. He's out there even after school, keeping an eye on things. He leads by example. He's got everybody's trust. He sort of relates that everything is under control and he's got his team well enthused. All the staff appear to be very happy and very committed. If it wasn't for his leadership, they wouldn't be. (Parent, Secondary 1)

The work of successful heads, especially in challenging school and community contexts, involves acting with passion. It requires commitment, courage and determination, and, "high levels of emotional energy, it demands that participants believe strongly in their convictions and have the best interests of the group clearly in mind" (Sachs, 2003, p. 149):

I suppose he's the anchor. The whole team of teachers work for him and he obviously holds it all together. He seems to have a lot of time for the staff and parents and the children. I just think he's very passionate about what he does. He wants the school to do well. He wants the children to do well. I think that's what drives him. (Parent, Primary 4)

Each school, each head, had their unique sense of communal identity – what Thomson (2002) has called the "thisness" of schools – within the discontinuities of the environment. Each head had constructed, with others, a coherent collage of the multitude of policy reforms, fragmentation and intensification of work, changes in society, and seemingly, "ceaseless rotation of elements" present in and around their communities of practice which threaten to corrode them; and each collage was nurtured and sustained by trust:

It's the way he manages to make us feel about ourselves. I trust him. I'd trust him with my life. When I go to him and say, "I haven't done this or that", he'll say "OK", but knows when he walks in to my classroom he's getting a reasonable deal. He's not wielding a big stick and saying, "you've got to do this and that". He's not a systems man. He's not a government man. He's a man for the locality, and he's a man for the children. He's a man for the staff. (Teacher, Secondary 4)

She lets people manage. People with responsibility, she lets them do their job with a minimum amount of interference. But, she's there if you get into trouble or you need advice etc. She's giving you a job and says: I expect you to do A, B, C, D and E because I think you're capable of doing that". So you think: "Well I've got to live up to that", and you do it. She takes responsibility obviously, but she basically manages by not managing. (Support staff, Primary 6)

Parents trust him. He knows when he says something it's going to get done and this level of trust is just cascaded all the way through, from parents, senior management, governing bodies. (Support staff, Secondary 2)

Bryk & Schneider (2003), reporting on work carried out in the mid 1990s in the top 100 and bottom 100 schools in Chicago, identified four qualities of "relational trust" in successful leadership of successful schools – respect, competence, personal regard for others and integrity. They noted that heads who possess all these facilitate, "the development of beliefs, values, organisational routines and individual behaviours that instrumentally affect students' engagement and learning" (p. 115) through their day-to-day behaviour; and they found that there was a correlation between relational trust and academic achievement such that:

Schools reported strong positive trust levels in 1994 were three times more likely to be categorised eventually as improving in reading and mathematics than those with very weak trust reports. By 1997, schools with strong positive trust had a one in two chance of being the improving group. In contrast, the likelihood of improving schools with very weak trust reports was only one in seven. Perhaps most telling of all, schools with weak trust reports in both 1994 and 1997 had virtually no chance of showing improvement in either reading or mathematics. (p.111, reported in Fullan, 2003, p. 42)

Trust is drawing upon and constructing social capital within the school and between the school and its local community. It is a hallmark which runs throughout the findings of this research.

CONCLUSION

Research across many countries shows that despite pressures from multiple policy implementation accountabilities, successful headteachers are those who place as much emphasis upon people and processes as they do upon product. What they do is not confined by the contexts in which they work. They do not comply, subvert, or overtly oppose. Rather they actively mediate and moderate within a set of core values and practices which transcend narrowly conceived improvement agendas. They remain constantly concerned with building and sustaining their schools as caring, values led, trustful collaborative communities rather than as quasi businesses. Within their management of competing tensions and dilemmas, they remain vision-oriented and people-centred (Blasé, & Blasé, 1999; Day et al., 2000; Hallinger, and Heck, 1996; Moos, 1999; Ribbins, 1999); and they place a priority on building trust through establishing cultures and decision-making systems that promote both "bottom up" and enable "top down" approaches to succeed within notions of "inside out" school improvements (Barth, 1990).

Such activist professionalism, trust, obligation and solidarity work together in complementary ways:

Trust in personal relations depends on an assumption of the integrity of the other . . . Trust in others generates solidarity across time as well as space: the other is someone on whom one can rely, that reliance becoming a mutual obligation . . . When founded on active trust, obligation implies reciprocity. (Giddens, 1994, p. 127)

Given the reform contexts in England and their impact upon the ways in which schools must now conduct their business, whether it be teaching and learning the classroom or management and leadership, it would not be surprising, if headteachers, like teachers, were tempted to act as a sub-contractors of government agendas and to focus pre-eminently upon the school effectiveness and improvement mantras of effectiveness and efficiency to the exclusion of the broader pupil development agendas. It would be tempting also for the external observer to subscribe to the critics' view, so ably represented in England by Ball's, (2000) work, that to succeed, leaders need to be compliant rather than reflective or critical. However, the research reported here provides empirical evidence that, despite the pressures and consequent tensions, successful headteachers, like successful teachers, are resilient, and have found "room to manoeuvre" (Helsby, 1999). None of them believed themselves nor were observed by others to be compliant. On the contrary, they were activist professionals. An activist professional's actions according to Sachs (2003), are founded upon nine principles: (i) inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness; (ii) collective and collaborative action; (iii) effective communication of aims and expectations; (iv) recognition of the expertise of all parties involved; (v) creating an environment of trust and mutual respect; (vi) ethical practice; (vii) being responsive and responsible; (viii) acting with passion; (ix) experiencing pleasure and having fun. To these may be added a tenth principle: (x) asserting the importance of both functional and personal relations and managing with care the tensions and dilemmas associated with these. These successful headteachers recognised that the economic was for the sake of the personal life: "an economic efficiency which is achieved at the expense of the personal life is self-condemned, and in the end self-frustrating" (Macmurray, 1961, p. 187, cited in Fielding, 2001, p. 12).

They were all concerned with values and achievement in leading in ways which built a sense of identity, community and achievement for all stakeholders. They also managed with integrity and care the emotions, tensions and dilemmas which are part of everyday life of maintaining and raising standards of teaching and learning in reform responsive schools of the twenty-first century.

NOTE

[1] The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) is an independent body which is responsible for conducting external inspections of all schools and reporting directly to Parliament annually.

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CHAPTER 5

SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP BASED ON DEMOCRATIC VALUES

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Abstract: This chapter aims at identifying the qualities and the characteristics of successful leadership practice within the Norwegian elementary and secondary school system. We used multi-site case study methods (Yin, 1989; Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000), including quite extensive observation in twelve selected schools. We have chosen a perspective that looks at leadership as grounded in activity and interaction rather than in position or role

Our findings demonstrate that successful leadership in our case schools is almost entirely practiced through collaboration and team efforts. A learning-centered approach is the focal point for the schools' philosophy as well as for its practice. Respect for the individual student and colleague in the building of professional communities of practice seems to be a guiding norm of conduct. It involves enabling others in a way that allows them, in turn, to become enablers (Foster, 1986). These democratic principles are also values included in the national policy documents for Norwegian primary and secondary education. These principles imply that one of the main responsibilities of a school principal is to build educational institutions around central democratic values, for example, promoting equity and social justice in school as well as in the wider community. Focusing on social justice implies a concern for the welfare of others and for the dignity and rights of individuals. Therefore acting in accord with democratic values set the foundation for recognizing leadership as successful in Norwegian schools

INTRODUCTION: THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Norway is comparable in size to Britain, but has only 4 million inhabitants. The population is both widely dispersed and largely homogeneous, for example, approximately 85% of the Norwegian population are members of the Lutheran State Church. Educational institutions are important for ensuring the survival of the many small communities. It is probably the many small, local communities that give Norwegian society its distinctive character.

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The structure of the school system is 10 years of compulsory primary and lower secondary education and three years of optional upper secondary education. School starts at age six and 90% of the students stay in school until at least age eighteen. The intention of educational policy has been to create both equal and equitable life conditions for all social groups, regardless of social background, gender, ethnicity and geographical location. More than 95% of the cohort is enrolled in ordinary classes in public schools.

Equity in elementary education means two things. The first is equal access to the educational system. Fairness is understood as the educational system's ability to distribute financial and economic resources in order to meet the needs of all the users in a way that provides equal opportunities. The second aspect concerns equity at the individual level. This addresses the diversities among students and therefore the necessity for unequal treatment in order to meet individual learning abilities (e.g. greater resources for greater needs).

The Education Act stipulates that all activity should be carried out in accordance with fundamental democratic values. It is underscored that education shall be based on fundamental Christian and humanistic values, and it should uphold and renew our cultural heritage to provide perspective and guidance for the future. The national curriculum emphasizes the importance of teachers functioning as role models for children and as a community of colleagues and working with parents, other professionals and the authorities. Trust in teachers' work has long been a tacit dimension of most principals' approach to leadership, establishing accepted zones of influence.

Norway's educational system is predominantly public. The private sector serves only 2% of students in compulsory school, and about 4% in upper secondary. However, recent legislature encourages a liberalization of the rules regulating private education, and in the future Norwegian education will probably see more differentiation and more privatization.

Norwegian educational policy is moving towards what Giddens (1998) has called the "Third Way", a combination of neo-liberal market reforms and neo-conservative government regulation. The municipal organization and governance of schools has been framed within the discourse of New Public Management – independent of the vision of collaboration and 'lived democracy' inspired by Dewey's (1937) thinking of democracy, mentioned in the national curriculum.

The government has recently launched accountability as a system of quality control for schools, where the schools' average results on national tests in Reading, Mathematics and English are published on a website. The improvement of schools was the government's rationale for such publication, but newspapers immediately started ranking the schools through informal league tables. Also, as a part of evaluation's growing importance, international comparisons like PISA[1] have been seized on. Teachers and school principals are now subject to pressure from government to improve national rankings in math and reading. Managerial models of administrative reform are making a strong claim in the definition of accountability, and language is becoming an agent of ideology in shaping understanding. These changes

influence the way administrators at municipal level comprehend and establish issues of accountability. There is a clear tension between the market orientation and the long valued ideals of a democratic school including democratic leadership practices.

Currently in Norway there are few indicators for monitoring student success. Until recently the ongoing discussion has been concerned with what a worthwhile and valuable education based on democratic principles should look like, and what the consequences are for leadership in schools (Møller, 2002). However it is becoming more legitimate to talk about standards in education based on student test scores.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Within our research team we have had an ongoing discussion about what counts as productive analytical approaches for identifying successful school leadership practice. The paper developed by Leithwood & Riehl (2003) on what we already know about successful school leadership was a departure for our discussion. This analysis links leadership to broad functions and strategies such as building a vision, creating a professional community or redesigning the organization. But in order to capture more adequately the dynamic nature of leadership and school life, we agreed we needed an alternative approach. Hence, different theoretical perspectives were explored, including a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000), a micro-political perspective that allows for accounts of the daily subtle negotiations that occur behind the scenes (Anderson, 1996; Bates, 1990; Blase, Blase, Anderson, & Dungan, 1995; Foster, 1986), and a distributed perspective that builds on activity theory as a theoretical framework and has *leadership practice* as the unit of analysis (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001; Gronn, 2002). We decided upon a combination of a micro-political and a distributed perspective because it offered a grounded framework for studying day-to-day leadership practice, implied a relational view on leadership, and a focus on the ongoing interaction between people in the organization. Both perspectives required observation as a research method in our data collection in addition to interviews with different stakeholders.

Hence, our research has involved the interplay of induction and deduction, and it was the interaction of ideas and evidence that has culminated in our theoretically based descriptions of successful leadership in our schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

Selecting successful schools and leaders The Ministry of Education and Research has introduced a new system to reward schools systematically working to improve students' educational outcomes and the learning environment. These 'good practice schools' or 'beacon schools' receive a grant to continue and develop their good work. These competitive grants are awarded by the Ministry based on four criteria. Successful schools must:

- provide evidence of school improvement based on creative use of learning and teaching strategies.
- emphasize literacy in core subjects with the use of systematic student assessment and school evaluation strategies.
- have a systematic approach for developing a safe and inclusive learning environment, drawing attention to student participation in decision-making processes and a collaborative school culture.
- demonstrate "successful" leadership defined as efficient and flexible use of resources in relation to achievements, democratic approach to decision-making, and collaboration with internal as well as external stakeholders.

Twelve schools were selected based on two strategies. The first strategy included schools appointed as 'good practice schools' by the Ministry of Education using the four criteria above. This ensured the "international requirement" that the schools should have good reputations. Such selection focuses on *schools* that have received public acknowledgement, not on successful school leadership *per se*, although successful leadership is one of the criteria mentioned by the Ministry in their evaluation of the school. The second strategy was to ensure variation among the 12 schools in terms of school size, school structure, rural/urban, regional representation, principal gender.

The schools in the study included two primary schools (grade 1–7), three lower secondary schools (grade 8–10), four combined schools (grade 1–10) and three upper secondary schools (grade 11–13). Two schools were located in large cities; four schools were from towns, two schools from semi-rural districts, and four schools from rural districts. The schools were spread throughout Norway. Among our principals eight were males, and four were females. If we include all people within the leadership team the ratio between females and males is close to 50%. Half of the principals were recruited from inside their schools. All had teacher diplomas as a basic education, but most had taken further education in leadership, although this is not a formal requirement to become a principal. The profile of schools within the Norwegian sample is shown in Table 5.1.

Data collection The research team discussed the methods and the instruments developed and used in the international team during the spring 2003. The original interview protocols were translated, and we discussed their relevance in a Norwegian context. The funding of our project also allowed us to do fieldwork at each school during two weeks. Hence, we have collected data based on observation at the school sites in addition to data based on interviews.

FINDINGS

The schools vary a lot when it comes to geographical location, history, size, and student enrollment. These are important factors that can help us to understand the differences between leadership practices in our 12 schools. There are many studies which have underscored how both the context and the person are key variables in

Table 5.1. Profile of schools within the Norwegian sample

Schools and principals	Type	Context	Size
Langedalen, Male principal, inside recruited	Grade 11-13, Upper Secondary School	Large city	950 (students), 70% minorities, 32 nationalities, 80 teachers
Marivolden, Male, outside recruited	11-13, Upper Secondary School	Rural	160 students, 1% minorities 35 teachers
Ospelia, Male, inside recruited	11-13, Upper Sec. School	Semi- rural	500 students, 2% minorities 67 teachers
Dalsby Male, outside recruited	1-10 Amalgamated school	Large City	585 students, 9% minorities 60 teachers
Eikvik Female, outside recruited	8-10, Lower Secondary School	Rural	184 students, 1.5% minorities 22 teachers
Furuheia Male, outside recruited	1-10 Combined School	Small town	231 students, 1.0% minorities 30 teachers
Gard Male, outside recruited	1-10 Combined School	Semi rural	263 students, 1.5% minorities 28 teachers
Hov Female, outside recruited	8-10, Lower Secondary School	Suburban	450 students, 4% minorities 50 teachers
Flateby Female, inside recruited	8-10, Lower Secondary School	Small town	254 students, 2% minorities 30 teachers
Lynghei Male, inside recruited	1-7 Primary School	Rural	320 students, 2% minorities 30 teachers
Alm Female, inside recruited	1-7 Primary School	Medium sized city	280 students, 1% minorities 36 teachers
Brenna Male, inside recruited	1-10 Combined School	Rural	140 students, 0% minorities 25 teachers

understanding how a principal, a leadership team, teachers and students act and interact (Smulyan, 2000; Møller, 2005). No doubt there are different opinions about what counts as successful leadership among different stakeholders. In this chapter we will, however, highlight some aspects of educational leadership that our twelve schools have in common, and which can be labeled successful leadership based on democratic values.

TEAM LEADERSHIP

In using the term 'team leadership' instead of 'principalship' we want to draw attention to a striking feature of collaboration and teamwork in all our schools. As opposed to the earlier individualized approach to teaching we could observe quite a lot of collaborative planning and co-teaching. In comparing the teachers' present attitude with the former more traditional orientation one of the teachers at Lynghei Primary School framed the change like this: "We stand together" and "it's our students" as opposed to the earlier expressions of "my students" and "your job". Teacher teams on class level in primary schools as well as subject teams on secondary level were the normal organizational units.

In addition to the team organization among the teachers we found that in most of the cases the principal and the deputies had developed a close cooperative community that embraced both "the challenges of today" and the "visions for tomorrow". Principal and deputies walked in and out of each other offices during the day, discussing concrete matters that had to be solved, or shared ideas about the schools' long term development. These are clear examples of informal "co-principalship" (Gronn & Hamilton, 2004).

Using other concepts from Gronn (2002, p. 657) we can identify distribution of leadership practice as "spontaneous collaboration" in connection with specific tasks, or as "intuitive working relations" that emerge between people over time. Through the establishment of "institutionalized structures" like teacher teams responsible for all teaching tasks at one grade level, we can also talk about distribution of leadership tasks and functions as "structures of collaboration". The vice principal at Lynghei Primary School described how they had worked with the strategic document for their school:

We have our weekly meetings with the whole staff. That is where we work very actively to involve the teachers in school development issues. The work with our strategic plan has been a main focus over several years, and last year I felt we succeeded in bringing the different pieces together. We want each teacher to develop an emotional link to what it is our school stands for. Our strategic plan is an expression of our basic pedagogical philosophy.

Externally and according to the law the principal is the sole leader in Norwegian schools. Studied from the inside, this picture is altered. Leadership in the case schools can more or less entirely be described as a team effort. The variations are mostly due to the size of the school and the schools' traditions and history. All the schools have established routines with formal meetings where the leadership team comes together at least twice a week. There is a continuous informal cooperation within the leadership team, and the offices of the principal and the deputies are, as a rule, located next to each other. The doors are open and it is easy to stay in touch. The positive effects of the opportunity to complement each others as leaders within the team are stressed, along with the satisfaction of being able to learn from each other and to have someone in the same position with which to discuss and share responsibilities and experiences.

The principal of Marivolden Upper Secondary School commented on our question about the relationship between the formal routines and the informal leadership structure of the school. He said:

At this school teachers were used to having control, and authoritative systems had been established. I do hope this has changed now. I hope to push the teachers to make their own decisions. We certainly have a hierarchic structure, but to me it is not necessary a contradiction between the flat and hierarchic structure. It is possible to create co-responsibility within a hierarchical structure.

Structures are created in a way to make the schools function democratically; meetings are organized to guarantee everybody's voice being heard, and thus ensure a democratic practice in schools. Most of the case schools organize their teaching staff in teams, with one of the teachers in the team elected as a team leader. Relevant issues and ideas are discussed in the teacher teams, and then brought back to a

forum of team leaders. Students have legal rights to have a voice and to establish student's board, and parents have their council.

In addition Norwegian employees have for a number of years had a constitutional right to influence at their own place of work, and teachers' unions still have a rather strong position. In all the schools the principal organizes regular meetings with the union representative. Some of the principals also underscored that it was crucial to create relationships of mutual trust with the union representatives in order to be successful.

Historically teacher autonomy has been seen as the symbol of professional status. In many ways teachers are expected to be leaders within the school community, and the institutionalized practice in most schools acknowledges this. Teachers are expected to take significant responsibilities and decisions in their everyday work. During our fieldwork we observed that both teachers and students at many of our schools were engaged in numerous spontaneous initiatives concerning ideas for school improvement. The interaction and the communication were characterized by frankness and mutual trust, the tone was informal, and both minor and more serious proposals were put forward and implemented.

Based on her research in New Zealand and a review of the international literature Court (2002) suggests that perhaps the most significant factor for establishing successful shared leadership has to do with open and honest communication, both within the leadership team and between it and other staff, board members, students and parents. This seems to characterize also the relationship within the schools studied in this project.

A LEARNING-CENTERED APPROACH

A common element in the case studies is that students' learning is the focal point for the schools' philosophy as well as for its practice. This orientation is expressed through the overarching intentions of the school, the grouping of students, evaluation procedures, and the organization of curriculum units. Schools underline the importance of the social learning environment in order to obtain academic as well as social goals. In this sense they are in line with well established insights, expressed through concepts like a "positive classroom climate" (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1976, p. 24) or a "productive learning culture" (Fuglestad & Lillejord, 2002, p. 5). Another aspect of this learning orientation pertains to the community of professionals in the school (Wenger, 1999). To strengthen the collective professional skills and knowledge of the teachers, leadership carried out continuous evaluation and supported individual teachers in their professional development.

There is an "interactive" aspect of this focus on students' and teachers' learning process, individually and collectively. The teacher - student "relation" is the key relation in the students' learning process and frames the meaning of the teachers' work. To experience students acquiring subject knowledge, to follow them through stages of development and growth, is the joy of being a teacher. Quite often it is a mixed blessing, because the students' learning process is not a linear and smooth

process. Nevertheless, to be part of this process was regarded as deeply satisfying by many of the teachers in our schools. These findings echo Nias's (1996) analyses of the emotions of teaching.

The principal of Lynghei Primary School expressed the focus on students' learning like this:

The "moment of truth" in school is the encounter between teacher and student. In my work as a principal this is my main focus. To have the privilege to give this encounter the highest priority, is a great satisfaction.

This means that the leadership team took more responsibility for extracurricular activities than principals and deputies normally would do, in order, as he said "to protect the teachers' time and involvement for classroom work".

Also, there was intensity in the collaborative relationships of colleagues in our schools. A male teacher at Flateby lower secondary schools expressed how much the collaboration with a colleague meant for him, in this way:

I could not work without the possibility of talking to Trine, without being praised by Trine, without being criticized by Trine. She is good at criticizing, too. The teacher team means very much to me. The combination of teacher and team leader calls for all my energy and all my potentials. That's the good feeling. Almost all my talents are requested. It's a fantastic job to be a teacher when you have a good working climate and a competent principal.

There are three main elements in the learning-centered approach. One is the concern for the "individual students' learning process". The overarching idea is that every student has a right to learn and develop on their own terms. The second element is the values stated in the national curriculum, which obviously influence the schools' teaching practices. The third element is the quality of the relationships between teacher and students.

The developmental work that the case study schools have carried out over the years includes involvement in learning processes on individual, group and organizational level. Using a concept from Engeström (2001) this could be examples of "expansive learning". The stages in the cycle of expansive learning are clearly stages in an experience-based learning model. In most of the schools participating in our study the "experiential" aspect of organizational learning was dominant, and the leadership teams were participating in and leading the construction of new knowledge in their organization. By creating arenas for practitioners to share and reflect on their work related experiences, they created opportunities for a learning process encompassing the organization as a whole.

EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AS PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Many of our interviewees gave accounts that spoke of a strong emotional commitment to their profession. The expression from the principal at Lynghei was: "It is so exciting to be part of the development process at our school". And the focus of their work was the individual student, their learning process and the development of their potentials.

The vice principal at Flateby says:

One reason for being successful is that our principal has very high ambitions on behalf of the school. We had not worked that hard, so many long days, so many nights, so many weekends if it were not because we wanted the school to be good.

In the case of Brenna the involvement expressed itself also as a willingness to fight for the school, against politicians and local authorities that wanted to close the school down. The principal framed the story like this:

Then there were nothing else to do but mobilizing. We organized public meetings and called up local women's organizations, sports organizations and so on. I encouraged activism on behalf of the school. If they wanted to keep the school in the local community, they had to participate in fighting for their school.

In this case the principal, the teachers, the students and the people within the local community also were successful in working together for their school. It was worthwhile fighting for because the school was conceived as a vital part of the community.

We also met principals and teachers who shared with us their strong commitment for working for equity and social justice. For instance, the leadership team at Ospelia Upper Secondary School underscored that the main aim was to provide good learning opportunities so that students could become good citizens in the future. This had to be a continuous team effort, and they believed they could make a difference in their students' lives (cf. Hargreaves, 2002).

MANAGING TENSIONS AND DILEMMAS

Our case studies highlighted a dynamic process of negotiation that occurred on a daily basis. Tensions and dilemmas capture the immediacy of the continuing conflicts faced by many of the principals and the teachers. The same was demonstrated in an earlier study by Day et al. (2000). The dilemma is a concept which captures the contradictory orientations they experience, and where there are no right answers. The choices are mutually exclusive, and each course of action carries its cost and benefit (Cuban, 1996; Møller, 1996). Tensions may be understood as a psychological response to work strain and dilemmas.

Dilemmas of Evaluation

Our findings point, in particular, toward the overall dilemma of educational evaluation: what constitutes success or failure? What is the reference for interpretation of results? Our study showed how different stakeholders had different views of what should count as desirable outcomes for achieving the goals of schooling, and the principal sometimes had to choose between unattractive options and initiate and construct compromises.

Ospelia Upper Secondary School serves as a fine example of how some of the conditions on which democracy depends is established locally. The leaders and the teachers had worked for years with systemic school based evaluation for the benefit of school development. Such evaluation is a way of being accountable,

as they saw it. They were able to provide documentation of the work they were doing to the outside world, but first and foremost they gave priority to school based evaluation in order to develop their practice. Three teachers volunteered to take a lead in analyzing findings from questionnaires, of which some were developed at county level, some at national level, and some at local level. The evaluation team had interviewed colleagues and students in order to negotiate how to interpret the findings. They were pleased to learn that the evaluation showed that students and teachers agreed that most teachers provided good instruction and most students were highly motivated. These teachers demonstrated how both external and internal evaluation could be used as a tool for developing the school. However, they were quite critical of the value of publishing the test scores for each school.

The principal at this school valued the work these teachers were doing, but he was critical of the new accountability system. So were most teachers. According to them growing up in a society which more and more focuses on individualism raised new challenges. Many students had problems at home, and for them the school had a potential to make a difference. They underscored that a successful school is one that succeeded in taking care of *all children*, regardless of social-economic or cultural background and abilities. But they had to deal with living in a society which had become more dominated by market accountability (Leithwood, 2001).

The principal tried to be proactive, for instance, by educating the press so that they could understand what they were publishing when they were ranking schools based on exam marks. Journalists, however, were not interested in presenting such perspectives this principal learned. They seemed to prefer 'naming and shaming'. So, the principal continued to worry about changes in what counts as a valuable education. He feared that improving school ranking would become an end in itself, not the efforts to understand and discuss how schooling could be improved, and what goals were most important to achieve.

To some degree, leadership teams at other schools within the project agreed with this principal and tried to balance attempts to implement school change with recognition of the established culture of the institution. School leaders were all aware of the shortcoming of the new accountability system. At the same time they welcomed more external evaluation, because they looked upon it as a way of profiling the work they were doing for society in general. However, the main thing was putting weight on the internal work. As such the manifestation of successful leadership based on democratic values may differ in practice.

Dilemmas of Conflict and Cooperation

Most of our schools had clear intentions and strategies for development. Some disagreements seemed to be an integrated and significant part of the ongoing development (cf. Engeström, 2001), and collective learning followed the negotiation of meaning. Strategies included preliminary agreement with the teachers and the collective capacity to interpret and negotiate the meaning of new educational and political signals from the authorities.

We saw, however, considerable variation among the schools in how they dealt with contradictions or even disagreements. In some of our schools we observed how the implementation of a new element like Information and Communications Technology (ICT) was deliberately carried out in meetings where different questions were first handled individually, then in groups, and finally in plenary sessions. As long as the staff members felt they had a voice and were listened to, they were inspired to solve actual problems.

In an institutional context like this, differences in meanings among the participants were looked upon as a positive basis for development, generating a new dimension to the work. Consequently these schools seemed to be innovative with many parallel projects and the importance of discussions and disagreements were emphasized. They felt comfortable in nursing controversies which aimed at democratic solutions. At Brenna school the teachers expressed it this way:

After we have finished a project, we evaluate it, and then Baard [the principal] asks: Should we take the consequences of the tiredness and drop it next year? But we never want to do so; we shake our shoulders and are ready again.

During our fieldwork we had the opportunity to observe how the actors in the school openly discussed the decisions and the school development.

Not every one of our schools demonstrated such productive working relations. In one of our primary schools we observed how fragile the communication and interaction between staff members were. At this school the leadership team had decided to implement an ICT-project, but they did not want to open up a discussion about it. The decision was taken. Immediately insecurity and open conflicts between some of the staff members and the principal became evident. As observers we identified a rising conflict which for a while seemed to paralyze the development in the school. They argued about who had the right to decide, and what was fair. A hostile climate started to develop, and after a while disagreement became risky and was therefore suppressed by many teachers. In order to solve the conflict the school needed help from an external facilitator.

According to Engeström (2001), tensions, conflicts, and negotiation are aspects of development, and we have seen that this is true to some extent. But there is also a price tag attached to it. Historically, Norwegian schools have been managed harmoniously, and disagreements have been considered to have a destructive effect on life in schools. School leaders are now expected to handle disagreements in such a way that expansive learning will be the result. As demonstrated in the example above, it is certainly an ambitious goal to achieve in a school where teachers can represent a broad range of values, norms and interests.

POWER AND TRUST

Exploring successful Norwegian schools gives us stories that are a mixture of both 'power over' and 'power with' model[2] of leadership in which leading and following is a fluid, interactive and reciprocal process. School leaders in the study

recognized that they had power in their formal position, but at the same time they were conscious of the relative nature of power. The strategies they chose differed and were related to the local cultural context.

To see power as a relationship means that power relations are always two-way, even if the power of one actor in a social relation is minimal compared to another. Both the actions of subordinates and the actions of superiors influence the structures of domination. This was well demonstrated in our study. For instance, at one of our upper secondary schools we observed active and conscious students that both wanted and succeeded in having a decisive influence in decision-making processes. However, the students also underlined how important the attitude of the school principal was in this process. They needed his support.

Representative democracy is played out by means of a Student Council at a school. But a more important part has probably to do with the inner life in class rooms. The students at our schools told us that their participation in setting up the activities varied from teacher to teacher, but most teachers involved them in both planning and also in establishing criteria for evaluation in lower and upper secondary schools. Some students claimed that it was almost too much because it required hard work, and they had to be responsible. Sometimes they would prefer that the teachers decided the curriculum, but being involved in setting the standards was important. To them their interactions with the teachers were crucial. Our observations demonstrated how power and leadership were negotiated and shared also within classrooms. The students in upper secondary education were well aware of their own contribution to a successful school. If there were some students who didn't want to collaborate with the teachers, then they could make the work of teachers seem like hell. Just a few students could actually ruin a school culture, according to them.

Teachers highlighted the importance of building mutual trust between students, between students and teachers, and between teachers and leaders. Mutual trust and respect were at the core of what they thought should count as a successful school. It required faith in the collective capacity of people to create opportunities for problem-solving, which is an important condition for developing democracy in school (Beane & Apple, 1999). The leadership teams were probably crucial in building these conditions for encouraging democratic participation since trust and power within an organization are so closely interrelated. Trust creates the conditions and mobilizes people to action and collaboration. Trust is developed through trustworthy use of power.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have highlighted what emerged as important aspects of successful *leadership* in selected schools that have received recognition by the Ministry of Education and Research for being successful *schools*. First, leadership in our schools was almost entirely characterized by collaboration and team efforts. During our fieldwork we learned that leadership was an organizational quality in these schools,

and indeed a distributed practice (Spillane et al., 2001; Gronn, 2002). We observed how leadership practice was stretched over the work of various leaders as well as teachers and students. The leadership team captured institutionalized structures of collaboration as well as intuitive working relations and spontaneous collaboration on specific tasks. Teachers were also organized in teams, and teacher collaboration was a distinctive feature in our schools. Teachers were expected to take significant responsibilities and decisions in their everyday classroom-related work.

Second, learning was the focal point of the schools' philosophy as well as their practice. This focus on learning implied a concern for the individual students' learning process, guided by curriculum visions and goals. Also the development of a teacher-student relationship characterized by mutual respect, and the fostering of a conducive learning environment was a main concern in our schools. The respect of the individual student and colleagues in building professional communities of practice seemed to be a basic value and a guiding norm of conduct.

Third, our study demonstrated how both principals and teachers had strong emotional commitment to their work. They wanted to make a difference in their students' lives.

Fourth, leadership teams that were successful in fulfilling their democratic mission manage to deal with tensions and dilemmas that are at the core of working with people in a school. In this chapter we have exemplified these as dilemmas of evaluation, of balancing conflict and cooperation, power and trust.

Even though the municipal governance of schools recently had been framed within the discourse of New Public Management (NPM) and with a focus on managerial accountability, the discourse and the practice in local schools appeared to be of a different kind. The practice was not dominated by an instrumental rationality, which is so often closely linked to NPM. Both the leadership teams and teachers were working hard to fulfill a mission based on democratic values.

Our findings across schools demonstrated that successful leadership was an interactive process involving many people and players, and both the context and the persons involved were key variables in understanding what counted as successful. Not surprising, we found conflicting values and beliefs within each school, but the way conflicting values were handled seemed to be of importance for the way the school developed. At some of our schools we observed how crucial it was to put critique to the forefront in the organization and to create opportunities for open dialogue in order to stimulate learning environments where students could flourish and develop as persons and citizens. A focus on developing a democratic community acknowledges that schools are sites of cultural and political struggles.

We end by emphasizing that what counts as successful leadership should not be separated from deeper philosophical and political questions because education is essentially a moral enterprise. Success always requires that we ask: Success in or for what? Success for whom? Who benefits? And finally, success under what conditions?

NOTES

[1] The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) monitors the outcomes of education systems in terms of student achievement in reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy. The differences between the Norwegian and the Finnish students were striking and a great surprise to the Norwegian government. Finland was at the very top, while the Norwegian scores often were located at or below the OECD average.

[2] Cf. Blase et al., 1995.

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CHAPTER 6

SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPALSHIP – THE SWEDISH CASE

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Abstract: *Purpose:* In this article we present the general situation in the Swedish compulsory school system and explore hypothesis about the relationship between structure, culture and leadership as preconditions for successful principalship. We outline, on the basis of earlier research, arguments that a successful principalship depend on how principals acts on structure and culture with a purpose to contribute to changes that should lead to successful schools. A successful school is defined in Swedish law and policy documents as a school that show high performance both in academic and social goals

Methodology: Four different schools were chosen as successful schools. All schools have increased their academic results the last four years. If the social goals are reached, will be an empirical question in our analysis. The principals have been working in the schools for at least four years and are perceived by our informants as being successful principals

Findings: The findings support our hypothesis that successful principals contribute to the success in reaching academic and social goals of their schools by their strategic work with changes of structure and culture. The principals act on structure and culture with a clear link to the opinions and culture in the school district. We find that a school can be viewed as successful of parents, students and teachers even if the social goals are not fulfilled. In conclusion, to be able to understand and work with the culture and structure of the school district, is vital for successful principalship

INTRODUCTION – THE SWEDISH EDUCATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT[1]

Historically education has been highly centralized in Sweden. Until the middle of the 1980s the allocation of resources for each school was decided by the State Regional Boards of Education and principals throughout the country where appointed by the National Board of Education. Educational policy in recent years has been dominated by an active reforming process. The structure of responsibility and management has been altered.

The present School Act was established in 1985 by the Riksdag[2]. It introduced decentralisation of power from the state to municipalities. However, there remains

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a national curriculum, one that has been in place since 1994 with accompanying course outlines, timetables and grading system (Proposition, 1992/93, p. 220).

All children between the ages of 7 and 16 are both entitled and obliged to undergo education within the public sector school system, or at an independent school approved for compulsory schooling. Children in need of special support may go to special resource schools.

Education in Sweden has the dual task of embracing both the traditional knowledge mandate and a democratic 'citizenship' mandate. The School Act states that: "All activity in schools shall proceed in accordance with fundamental democratic values". The state also guarantees that international declarations and agreements in the field of education are applied in the school sector.

Since 1991 the municipality is the main authority responsible for primary and secondary education in Sweden. Municipalities act as an employer to school staff, and are responsible for teacher in-service education. Therefore today's compulsory schools can be organised in various ways but has to have a principal in charge and follow the national curriculum.

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL?

The point of departure for analysis of the four case studies of successful principals discussed in this chapter is the conflict between the demand for clearer structure and a better use of resources *and* the need for basic cultural changes regarding school development and school improvement in the learning of both social and academic goals. We focus on the relationship between structure, culture, leadership and authentic learning for adults and children in the schools of our four successful principals. The informants for our study are principals who are viewed as successful.

The first question to confront is: what is a successful school? The output from school as an organization needs a focus on if and what students learn, but it's not enough to think of learning as purely academic learning. Schools in Sweden also have to fulfill a civic mission, or what we call "social goals" for schools.

A way to start a discussion about how to define successful schools, is to argue that schools are positioned differently in relation to the two main goals of schooling most school systems try to achieve (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 above can be analysed from different ideological angles. In cell A of Figure 6.1 are schools that successfully combine both social goals and academic knowledge, is the only type that describes a successful school. These goals can only be fulfilled in schools that take the full responsibility for ensuring that pupils acquire and develop the knowledge that is necessary for each individual and member of a democratic society. This is the school enshrined in Swedish law and policy documents.

Others would prefer cell C schools arguing that the basic mission of schools is about learning academic knowledge and that schools should strive to achieve excellence in such learning only. In Sweden this view is quite widespread in spite of official policy. Yet again would argue that real success occurs when a school in

		Focus on Academic Goals	
Focus on Social Goals	**YES**	**YES**	**NO**
		Successful schools that combine social and educational goals	Fostering schools that try to create an environment for learning
		A	**B**
	NO	Schools with clear knowledge goals – schools of excellence in academic grades	Custody school – with no real hop that any education or social fostering can take place
		C	**D**

Figure 6.1. Schools with different positions in relation to academic and social goals

cell B can start moving towards cell A. Again others would argue that it is really a success to get the children to come to the school in cell D and maybe start a process of learning. This means that success is relative to the context and situation but in our research we looked for schools that fit into cell A and C in Figure 6.1. Our four schools can be in any of these two cells since they were selected because each had improved student achievement in the last four years and today rank significantly better than the average Swedish school.

STRUCTURE, CULTURE, LEADERSHIP: PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS?

Researchers have developed increasingly complex models of leadership (Lewin, 1939; Likert, 1961; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Yukl, 1998). The basic pattern of this development has been various combinations of leaders' approaches to the two orientations structure/task and relation/consideration.

In the most recently developed models, though, a leader's focus on change occupies a central position. This is a new dimension arising from demands from the world around school organisations. For example, when Yukl revised "Leadership in Organizations" he entered a passage with the purpose of integrating a framework for classifying leadership behaviour (2002, pp. 64–67). Based on research by Ekvall (Ekvall & Arvonen, 1991; 1994) Yukl introduced the change dimension as a third leadership orientation.

Arguably, the multi-dimensional conception of leadership attracting greatest attention over the past 15 years has been "transformational leadership" (Weber, 1964; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985, 1988, 1994; Leithwood, 1992; Mulford & Silins, 2003). This approach to leadership is defined as a method of managing activities based on the leader's ability to change and internalize organizational direction and work

methods. Transformational leaders do this by engendering confidence in co-workers and changing the culture of the organization, its values, norms, and behaviour. There is strong evidence that a transformational leadership style is a good predictor of organizational effectiveness in many different organizational contexts (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003).

Recent Scandinavian research on schools stresses leadership as a reflection of the democratic spirit. In other words, it is vital for leaders to learn about national goals for schools and to put these goals first (Johansson, Moos, & Möller, 2000). Such an approach focuses on the leader as an agent for change and standard bearer for individual, social, and comprehensive ideological goals for the school. Many researchers also stress the importance of values, attitudes, and actions in the creation of school cultures. These studies demonstrate that effective leaders are able to communicate values and create a common culture (Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992; Begley & Johansson, 1998).

Reflecting some of these recent views, we conceptualized leadership for our purposes as in Figure 6.2. According to this view, A leader's disposition to focus on cultural change, signifying a preoccupation with the personnel needs, values and views, may be combined with a leader's disposition to focus on structural change, which signifies a preoccupation with goals, routines, finances, and evaluations in his/her attempt to enhance authentic student learning.

Fullan (1999) writes about the importance of associating efforts to change the culture with the introduction of a new structure. In the Swedish context there is an ongoing discussion about the conflicts between a prescribed structure by governing bodies and the value-based opinions about schooling among teachers and other staff. These conflicts make it difficult for principals to create schools as they would wish and are obliged to according to national policy. In Table 6.1 we sketch some usual dilemmas when trying to develop schools, things that "the complete leader" should better handle by way of a transformational leadership.

Based on contemporary research in this area, we know that today's schools need leadership with a balanced focus on both school structure and culture. In spite of this, our experience as leadership trainers has shown that, in their daily activities, far too many principals focus on structure and stability rather culture

The Leader's Focus		***Works for STRUCTURAL CHANGE***	
		YES	**NO**
Works for CULTURAL CHANGE	**YES**	The complete leader	The visionary without an action plan
	NO	The administrator without vision and communication	The retreated or the laissez-faire leader

Figure 6.2. The leader's position regarding structure and culture

Table 6.1. Structure and Culture Contradictions in the School

Examples of the structure and culture contradictions in Swedish schools	
Participation; Swedish schools are supposed to foster democratic ideals through influence on school work	50 per cent of the teachers' don't think students can handle more participation.
Team work; Team work is a prescribed organizational form to promote a comprehensive view on students learning	Many teachers use teams to fortify traditional ways of working
Instructional leadership: The principal is expected by school authorities to be a instructional leader	In schools the principal often is expected to act as an administrative manager
It's important that all students reach the goals	The perception of students abilities often contain ideas that some of them are insufficient and lack fundamental capacities
In the Swedish governing documents there are plenty of "room" for alternative pedagogical forms	School class, classroom and time schedules still are predominant as the image of school

and change. This attitude is probably influenced by the surrounding political and administrative system, which, by and large, demands structure-oriented leadership. On the other hand, in their rhetoric, school ideologues and school politicians want leaders who reflect a democratic spirit and focus on pedagogical leadership and school improvement.

A successful school leader, by this view, would bring together, in a coherent manner, both the structures and culture of the school. There are too many examples of principals who have made changes in the working structure, for instance teamwork, but because they have not addressed the cultural aspects, the expected success have not occurred.

METHODS

Our case studies were conducted in four different schools. Two schools were situated in small municipalities and two in Sweden's largest cities. These schools were selected because they had good academic results on the last National Agency test for all schools in Sweden. These results in national academic tests had also improved over the last four years. The schools were also selected because they were said by our informers to have excellent principals who were engaged in the success of all children in the school.

At these junior high schools (grades 7–9) we interviewed the chairman of the school board, the school superintendent (CEO), the principal, and 6 teachers supportive of their principal. We selected teachers who were supportive of the principal because we wanted to map success. We also interviewed six students

from each school who were positive to the school and two parents of this group of students. Teachers, students and parents were interviewed individually.

RESULTS

We summarize our findings for each school in relation to the three concepts structure, culture and leadership.

River School

This school is located in a rural area, some 50 km from the nearest town. It is the only junior high school in the municipality and is currently flourishing after a few problematic years. These problems culminated a few years ago when some students lit a fire inside the school. The principal was, at that time, principal of a school in the neighbourhood, and he was asked to assume the leadership of the River School. Under his leadership there was a change of climate and the academic achievement of students has improved.

Structure The internal school structure was still too fixed, according to the principal, and he wanted to change it into an interdisciplinary structure. He argued that a good analysis of obstacles is important for the understanding of the structure:

Timetables, subjects and schedules determine everything too much … You have to put organisational and administrative hindrances to one side. I began by localising them, and then the staff and I discussed how things were to be organised, decision-making, case preparations … But the goal is for decisions to be based on staff participation and consensus. (Principal)

The teachers were satisfied with the development of teamwork. It was within the teacher team that the most valued communication and support exists. Teachers wished for more collaboration between teacher teams from different grade levels.

It's within the teacher teams that most of the exchange of ideas and assistance of students takes place. There should also be developments between teacher teams and not just within them. (Teacher)

The teachers wanted a weekly meeting to exchange experiences and skills.

we need a forum where everyone can meet. (Teacher)

Teachers also engaged in creating structures to enhance good relations to parents and the local society.

According to the students, information about the school and their education was satisfactory.

Information works well … We have a really nice office for our student work that is centrally located and where students often visit. (Student)

Culture The principal claimed that the culture should reflect a congenial environment where teachers and students could interact.

This basic culture of confidence means that you won't be afraid to challenge the teaching and feel insecure in what you do, and won't be afraid to practice things you're not sure about. (Principal)

The school had to show results, but it was essential that real learning takes place.

The school must be able to show results, but marks and grades are an unreliable indicator. The students must perceive that they actually have learnt something. (Principal)

Teachers emphasized the need for an open and participatory school culture based on fundamental democratic values.

students should have moral values they can uphold and relate to. (Teacher)

Also students desired a good atmosphere among themselves and a good relation to the teachers.

good atmosphere amongst students and teachers are important for the learning process. (Student)

Leadership The principal's aim was clear and quite consistent with national and municipal goals.

as a principal you have to have a clear target, which is in line with the steering documents, and … thus introduce state and municipal goals, as a part of your own guiding of the school towards the school goal. (Principal)

The principal wanted to create an environment distinguished by positive and constructive thinking.

Successful principalship occurs when you can make people think on what's best for all children's learning. We have learnt a lot and people are no longer as dependent on my leadership as before. (Principal)

But still there was both managing and leading

The financial goals must be fulfilled, the social and academic objectives also, but teachers, parents and students must have the opportunity to become and feel involved. (Principal)

The teachers wanted a principal who sets clear goals and limits and also provides support and feedback. Teachers were also aware that the school's goals had to be reached within the financial limits of the school's budget. They believed that the principal was able to combine the different roles of principalship.

The principal is both manager and leader. (Teacher)

He had a dual focus on knowledge in subjects and school climate and on structure and culture and was a good communicator.

The biggest challenge in principalship is to use resources economically, being able to follow guiding documents using existing financial resources, putting the right person in the right place … Leadership legacy: Proximity, being there and being visible both for staff and students. (Teacher)

Students were of the opinion that their principal was running the school successfully through communication and troubleshooting.

He's glad, shows himself at school, is able to handle problems, not being like a "principal", says hallo to everyone. (Student)

Mountain School

There were less than 20 students in each class in this small school. Students had an identity right from preschool and knew each other well. Parents' education levels were quite low. Because of the size of the municipality there was a dependence and cooperation between the school and other parts of the municipal administration.

Structure The concept of structure for the principal included the local community in the school district. The school in a small municipality must collaborate with various social sectors but this was hindered by laws that restrict openness.

The school must be organized in cooperation with the school district so that all children's learning is supported and must be open for participation from the local society, the staff, students and parents. If we did not have those restrictions we should be able to build even better support structures for all children in need of extra help. (Principal)

Further the division of duties had to be arranged in a clear structure but a rotation of responsibilities was also arranged.

A successful school is one with a positive working climate. It must be a place where learning flourishes – for everyone. Schools must be characterised by great openness amongst everybody involved, all staff, students, parents … there is also a formal and ongoing responsibility for teachers to lead various activities. Responsibilities are swapped once a month. (Principal)

According to the teachers, sincerity must prevail and discussions and dialogue with other teachers, as well as with students, had to be perceived as necessary. Teachers were loyal to the standards that national and local curricula and syllabus introduced, although it was not easy to fulfil them.

The social structure and the working climate are also important; openness must prevail and there must be lively discussions. There are many different opinions that collide with each other – debates are in progress, in part formally scheduled … the students must be happy and motivated to study. (Teacher)

Culture The principal argued that the culture in school should have frames supporting students' initiative and questions. Of course the school strives for good marks but the relationships between teachers and students were more important. Colleagues deliberately moved from teaching to guiding the students.

The world is not divided into subjects, and neither should school be. Knowledge is a process of seeking and expanding. We try to be a learning organisation. (Principal)

The shift in language from teaching to learning has been very important for the pedagogical discussion in the school. (Teacher)

This change in the school culture and its effect on different structures, such as the timetable, was very visible for a visitor to the school.

Teachers suggested that greater participation by pupils in planning of activities would be worthwhile because it supported their curiosity and search for knowledge.

We should increase the opportunities for the students to make choices. (Teacher)

Teachers promoted interdisciplinary studies.

We try to adopt an interdisciplinary approach. (Teacher)

Students now worked within a student-participation model.

We have a more problem-based education. The fact is that we can make students more motivated to study, more "curious" and hungry for knowledge. (Teacher)

We work with the idea that everybody can improve their performance. (Teacher)

Students have a great responsibility in this process. (Principal)

The nice environment of the school contributed to the collaborative culture. Combined with the high levels of student participation, this made for good conditions to study.

A pleasant environment and not too rowdy. If things get unpleasant, then perhaps we will react likewise, resulting in poorer reports and an inferior education. (Student)

Leadership The principal claimed that she had been recognized as a good teacher. She believed that school leaders should be clear and permissive, and also express high expectations. This creates pleasure and good results.

I treat and support teachers in the way I would like them to behave towards the students. There are clear expectations from my side. (Principal).

According to teachers, the principal set the limits and frameworks for the work in school, but the reason why it was successful was the trust she demonstrated in teachers, students and parents. Objectives for the school were clarified by open discussions, contributing to communication and a positive social climate.

Have a vision and be open, sensitive to people's needs, clear and consistent … and everyone's opinion is important. Targets that are clear and have been discussed, so we can agree to some extent. The principal must also have the ability to create a good social climate, open communication and trust. (Teacher).

The principal is viewed as being present and visible by staff and students. They all know her vision and act to fulfil it even if she's not present. (Teacher)

According to the parents, the principal had managed to create stability and collaboration in the school.

She clearly has a way of communicating that helps her make people support her. (Parent)

Students like their visible principal, but emphasize the importance of her having something to tell that they can relate to when she tries to influence their way of thinking about learning.

Multicultural School

This school was situated in a larger urban area with a high proportion of immigrants and segregation. In the past, there had been social problems around and in the school, but at the time of our study a common notion was that this was a well-established immigrant district. The "everyday racism" widespread in the past, no longer existed. In order to achieve integration between different student ethnic cultures , the school had started a music class attractive for youth from the whole city.

Structure The new principal initiated structural changes to teachers work in school. She created teams of teachers . . .

I will liberate teacher teams, 7-9-grade . . . distribution of human resources: that was something I wondered a lot about when we formed new teacher teams. (Principal)

The organisation of the senior level and the construction of meetings for school leaders and the student-welfare team had been totally revised

We are working on a reshaping of the organisation completely. (Principal)

Steering and supporting should be as close to activities as possible. The principal's ambition was also to collaborate with external local municipal institutions.

Get the school to work in a more integrated way, e.g. with social welfare service. (Principal)

Teachers did not reflect on the radical changes of the school structure. It seemed to be the cultural questions that were most important to them.

Culture The principal thought that the good atmosphere in school was a result of her work. Teachers' took good initiatives and wanted to contribute

As a leader . . . I'm a good listener and a good communicator. I know what I want – you have to have a main thought . . . There is a great readiness amongst my staff to do something good and show that you're doing something well. (Principal)

Teachers commented on cultural issues a lot. They viewed the school as a learning organisation. Concerning didactics, the culture had changed from a non-discussion to a constant-discussion culture. The teachers also emphasised the syllabus and curricula as being important guiding documents.

Deal with it within the teacher teams, then we'll pass it on to the young people . . . We receive information, reflect and discuss. It's the "bible" I base things on. We've worked a lot on this in the working team in recent years. (Teacher)

Students valued the secure culture of the school. They also valued teachers who were good listeners and who encouraged them in their learning

Good relationships. Security . . . Students and teachers that listen to each other .. Important that students can say what is not good and that the teachers listen to the students opinions. (Student)

Parents were aware of the ways in which the school was organized and supported the way the teachers and the principal work and believed that they were good models for students.

Principal shows great respect for staff, which is … passed on to the students. (Parent)

Leadership The principal was convinced about her strengths as a leader, though aware that she had a lot to learn.

You're never complete … I've had to learn that everything takes a long time. You have to implement things carefully. (Principal)

Her teachers underlined the importance of a leader with the capacity to learn. A successful school needs a leader with visions and ability to create commitment for the school and its student.

is a leader with a clear vision … The principal contributes to the successful result by being the person she is … (Teacher)

The principal believed in a decentralized leadership framed with responsibility and distinctiveness. Parents also trusted the principal's work with improvement in the school.

The principal has administrated this well. (Parent)

Upper Middle Class School

This school was located in an upper middle class area in one of the largest cities in Sweden. It's a prosperous community with a culturally and economically homogenous population. The parents' opinions of what a good school is were traditional or conservative. For them it was important that the school give their children a good basic education and grades to be able to enter higher education.

Structure The principal claimed that a stable structure was important for a successful school. He applied the steering documents to the school but considered it sometimes problematic.

The state decisions and initiatives have an impact. We take them on board and apply them. What are most tangible right now are the value issues. Municipal decisions and initiatives have little influence at school. (Principal)

The teachers were not especially involved in structural issues.

There is a school plan, but I have no details … otherwise there is the financial situation – constant savings projects. (Teacher)

Parents echoed this view.

School plan – principal has demonstrated it, but the content? (Parent)

Culture The principal viewed the school as a system with commitment, abilities, social relations and experience as factors of importance for reaching its goals. Further, a successful school had good relationships with the local community.

Results in a broad sense are to achieving the goals. Other important things are of course that things work well socially … a successful school has good relationships with local community. It is also characterised by awareness and structure. (Principal)

Teachers, students and parents were satisfied with the school. Students and parents emphasised that the school results must be good. Teachers focused on effective instruction to support good academic performance, which students and parents expected.

Students and parents make stringent demands, they come from academic homes. School is important. The parents make demands … with regard to results and grades, traditionalists. (Teacher)

There was no support from parents for a greater focus on the social goals in the curriculum.

The social goals are second in relation to the knowledge goals. (Parent)

Leadership The principal had confidence in his staff and students and felt that they trusted and relied on him. He also believed that teachers did not see him as controlling their actions.

They understand that I want to improve the school and that my leadership actions should be viewed as support. (Principal)

Clear communication was another part of his leadership, it helped solve problems and for him to be seen as a leader.

You also have to remember a leader is a model for others in school and society. (Principal)

It was also important to understand that leadership included both leading and managing.

I feel confident … they rely on me. This means, they are not afraid of doing new things. I'm good at my job and am appreciated for that. They consider me to be skilled. There is great confidence in the school; they do not perceive that I need to have control. They see that I want to move forwards … Communication plays an important role in my leadership. (Principal)

The principal was appreciated among the teachers. They believed that his leadership was keeping the school together. He was working with formative evaluations and direct measures.

He makes things happen quickly, he has visions and ambitions, still standing with his feet on the ground. (Teacher)

He gets things to happen quickly, sometimes very quickly … the principal has visions and ambitions, and at the same time he's down to earth and concrete … has great confidence in us as the staff. (Teacher)

Parents also had positive things to say about the principal's leadership.

We notice that things are in order for him at the same time as he leads improvements at the school. (Parent)

It was also interesting that students in the school did not really know what the principal was doing. He was not visible – at least not to them – but that did not prompt them to think he was not providing leadership.

Our principal is not active with us but we know that he is working with our teachers. (Student)

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of our four case schools leads to four conclusions about Swedish principals. First, principals in all four schools were working to change school structures and culture by opening the school to the local society. The teachers supported these changes; they believed it would contribute to the students' academic development and give them opportunities for learning how to deal with different situations. Principals considered good relations with the surrounding community as a necessary resource in the improvement of the school.

Secondly, we found that our principals were very self-confident and outspoken, convinced of their capacity to implement school improvement through changes in both structure and culture. They showed high self-esteem and an internal locus of control which helped them to challenge problems. This meant they knew they had to act, being the one setting limits or drawing the lines with authority and coming to crucial decisions after a democratic dialogue with co-workers. This was a challenging leadership orientation. Upon first examination it may seem odd to combine the word democratic with authority. The school leader receives formal democratic authority upon appointment by the school district. But to be able to exercise leadership effectively, they also need to develop professional authenticity in their role and have the strength and will to have a continuing democratic dialogue with their staff.

In our case studies we also wanted to find answers to our two research questions. First, did our principals strive to achieve both academic and social goals for their students when they talked about their school's performance? Second, did they show an awareness of the relation between the structure and the culture of their school and did they work to bring those parts together to achieve success?

Three of the principals worked hard to convince teachers, students and parents to develop a twofold emphasis on academic knowledge, as well as on norms and values, the social and democratic goals for the school. This was all in accordance with the way a successful school is defined in Swedish law – a school with high performance in relation to both academic and social goals. Our principals adjusted to the culture in the school district and worked in accordance with the ideology and culture in the district. In three of our cases that meant expanding the social component of the schools' mission.

The fourth principal, though, was more focused on academic goals and the emphasis on social goals was weak. He was viewed as successful by our informants although he didn't work actively to accomplish the social goals of the curriculum.

This principal had the support of teachers, parents and students. He was very keen to adjust his leadership to the culture or ideology of the parents in the school district. You could say that this principal ran a school that was successful in our cell C in Figure 6.1. That school was a traditional school which did a good job in preparing its students for higher education in harmony with the wishes of the parents.

For our concerns about structure and culture, it was difficult to point to any specific situation where the separation of interest in structure, culture and leadership was apparent. In general there was a great interdependence in the schools between structure and culture and the principals' leadership. An obvious example, one evident among three of our principals, was the building of teacher teams in schools and ensuring that teachers think of teams as the organising principle for their school. The establishment of a cross-disciplinary structure based on teacher teams nurtured a democratic culture of participation. On the other hand, our fourth principal was working especially with changes of structure, arguing that an appropriate structure was needed to fulfil the school's learning objectives. Teachers, students and parents were concentrated on learning and achieving high academic results. In this case, an achievement-oriented culture, based on the desire of parents and the community, was already at hand and the principal was adjusting the structure to accelerate expectations embedded in the culture. In this context, he was successful, certainly in the eyes of the informants, but in the light of national policy, less so.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that the concept of successful leadership must be qualified in the Swedish context (and perhaps also in the international one) so that the notion of school performance is analyzed in accordance with the mission of schools defined by the local school community which may well deviate from national policy.

NOTES

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[2] A new school act will be introduced during 2007.

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CHAPTER 7

COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES AMONG SUCCESSFUL DANISH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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Abstract: This chapter aims at conceptualizing and investigating the meaning of successful school principalship within the context of Danish comprehensive schools. It presents findings from case studies of eight Danish schools with more detailed analysis from two schools

We outline the educational context for the Danish schools and give a short account of our point of departure for the analysis. Our perspective in this study is that leadership is about communication, decision making and community building at several levels in schools. At the beginning of the project we conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders in the schools. Later on we observed and interviewed a number of key stakeholders in the schools and that is the basis for our case studies

Our findings show that although there is a high degree of consensus amongst the schools and their stakeholders, there are also different points of view. Patterns of successful leadership communication are described

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT: DANISH EDUCATIONAL CULTURE IN TRANSITION

The 20th century Danish comprehensive school evolved out of the development of the Danish welfare state (a largely Social-Democratic project) and a consensus-building dialogue across political parties. The school was looked upon as a vehicle for promoting equal opportunities and as a place for acquiring knowledge, skills, and values to prepare students for life in a broader sense. That was done with reference to the concept of "Bildung", traditional, egalitarian and nation-building school ideas and inclusive welfare thinking.

Since the beginning of the 90s, however, the Danish comprehensive educational system has been undergoing a process of thorough transformation under the influence of strong international currents: neo-liberal currents have linked

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educational thinking very closely to the economy and to neo-conservative trends of back-to-basics, more subject-oriented teaching, re-introduction of testing at all levels of primary school, pressure to harmonize within the European Union, inspiration from and fear of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), individualization and so forth. The understanding of leadership, professionals, and learning are thus undergoing profound change (Krejsler, 2005; Moos, 2003)

For example the responsibility for finances and administration of the 'Folkeskole' (primary and lower secondary school, students aged 6–16) was devolved to municipalities and from there to schools. The traditional site-based management was redefined when schools were made financially autonomous and accountable.

The school leader now manages large parts of the budget in collaboration with School Boards, which have a parental majority membership. The Acts, and therefore the responsibility for objectives of the schools, remain in the hands of Parliament and the Ministry of Education but the interpretation and administration of the curriculum – which is fairly broad in its demands – is given to municipalities which often leave it unattended, and to the schools themselves. At present the New Public Management (NPM) tendencies that focuses less on processes and more on outcomes and on accountability, is gaining momentum. In Denmark, schools must post the results of school leaving tests on the Ministry's website. The government issues binding national 'goals' (usually every two years) that are much tighter and more prescriptive than the curriculum used to be; it has also introduced plans for more testing of students in grades 2, 4 and 6 in addition to the end-of-school test in grade 9. There is a focus on economic incentives like merit pay for teachers. In addition there is a focus on top-down management and decentralization.

School leaders, it seems, (Moos, Carney, Johansson, & Mehlbye, 2000) are caught in the cross-fire between: the national objectives for schools, which focus on liberal education (the 'Bildung/Dannelse' of children to become citizens in a democratic society); the local authorities' demands for financial accountability; and, the school culture – teachers used to be very autonomous and are therefore not eager to be managed or led by the 'new, strong, visible' school leaders described by Government and local authorities.

SELECTING SCHOOLS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

The Danish educational system does not yet produce league tables of national test results or inspection reports. Thus, to establish success criteria to use in selecting our case study of schools we asked superintendents from a number of districts to point to one or two principals whom they regarded as successful on the basis of the district's evaluation, student marks and peer acknowledgement. When we approached stakeholders in schools, we asked them to tell us what the characteristics of successful schools are, and how they would describe the successful principal in their school.

In the study described in this chapter, we were particularly interested in focusing upon rationality in communication as a decisive feature of legitimate leadership. A rational ideal of leadership calls on leaders, as well as staff and students, to develop communication on the ideal of the better argument that prevails without the use of coercion (Habermas, 1984, 1987). We explored communication and interactions in schools as they were described by stakeholders.

A school, however, does not only operate according to ideals of rationality. It is also an organization with a particular history, particular norms, and accepted, as well as contested, balances of power between principal, teachers, students, and external stakeholders.

By taking this approach to legitimate leadership, we aimed to uncover the tension between what is communicatively rational (legitimate leadership as an ideal) and a view of leaders as formal position-holders with the potential to dominate others through their positional power.

Eight schools were selected for study: six "folk-schools" (primary and lower secondary schools for 7- to 16-year-olds), one upper secondary school and one vocational school. We focus on one primary and one lower secondary school in this chapter. These two schools were situated in different local demographic and geographic contexts. The "North School" was located in an affluent suburb of a big city whereas the "Inner City School" was located in a challenging social area of the city. Those two schools were probably among those schools in Denmark that had been working most intensively and radically towards team structuring and the self-organization of teachers.

In the North School we interviewed the principal, department leaders, teachers, students, parents and superintendents. At the Inner City School we held a round of interviews with the principal, heads of departments, teachers, students and parents. We also observed or "shadowed" the principal, one head of a department, one teacher and one student for a working day, followed up by interviews with each of them.

In both schools we also observed the principal, the deputy, a teacher and a student for a whole day and then interviewed them on the basis of the observations.

North School

North School had a policy of qualifying pupils to take part in education at the highest possible level: "all kids should learn more," was the way the superintendent put it. The local authority's new policies for children stressed that "children and youngsters shall have responsibility and should participate" and that "children are entitled to comprehensive development." The school vision was very much in line with the visions of the other schools in our study: "respect, tolerance, and responsibility; curiosity and active participation; experience, happiness and self esteem; professionalism and competence," as formulated in the school's statement of values and this was in accordance with the municipality's general schooling policy. The chairman of the school board said that the education which children

obtain at school did not only prepare them for upper secondary school, which 80% of the children ended up attending, but also for life.

A picture of the local community The school's catchment area was characterized by upper-middle-class parents, typically young, well-educated, well-off academics working in the professions. The school was, like many Danish schools, a three form entry school with three departments: one for the introductory level, one for the middle level and one for senior level. There were approximately 630 pupils at the school and about 55 teachers. In the previous few years quite a few young teachers had come to the school.

In order to adapt the school's buildings to the new educational principles, a major rebuilding of the school had begun, aimed at separating the three teaching levels physically so that they each had their own "home area". At each level, teaching was organized by self-governing teams of teachers. Every single teacher did his or her entire teaching within the team. Once the teachers had chosen their teams, the choice was binding for a number of years.

Stakeholders' perception of success The school was considered successful by most of the stakeholders. The principal emphasized that they had succeeded in achieving a paradigm shift towards a new concept of learning. The school's direction was not questioned. A common language about learning complying with the municipality's learning philosophy had been developed. Another sign of success was that the school received more than 100 visitors per year. Finally, the organization of teachers into teams was considered a sign of success because it had given greater flexibility in the creation and composition of groups of pupils.

The teachers characterized the school as successful because children were happier than they were before. Pupils thrived at school in part because the school's new structure made it possible to provide more care and attention to each individual child.

Other evidence of success Several students mentioned the cooperation between classes as a sign of success. The superintendent considered the school's students having the second highest marks on average at the national level in 2002 and first grade reading tests showing only 4% insecure readers, a figure well below the national average as a sign of success. The chairman of the school board also mentioned the fact that 80% of the pupils continued to upper secondary school and some teachers mentioned that many pupils apply to the school from outside the school's catchments area. It was even said that families had moved to the municipality because of this school. These findings are what might be expected considering the area's socioeconomic conditions.

A picture of the principal The male principal was 52 years old and had been principal in this school for nine years. Prior to that position he was deputy principal in another school for 4 years. He was well liked and respected and had a great deal of authority even though he did not feel the need to "dominate the scene,"

according to the superintendent. He was described by a teacher as industrious, ("The principal works day and night") and he followed matters through. Some teachers however thought that although he did not make many mistakes, he might from time to time have some difficulty in seeing things through and remembering all his appointments. This might be due to the fact that he was juggling many projects at the same time. Usually he managed to get things done because of his excellent cooperation with the deputy head teacher.

The successful management of the reorganization process at the school gained everybody's respect. It was emphasized by the teachers that the principal had extraordinarily good relationships with the central administration and the politicians. He was also respected by teachers because he fought for the things he felt was right. He also expected others to do the same. Sometimes he might seem harsh because there was a feeling that there was no room for teachers who did not comply, one teacher said.

The principal was described as a 'distributing' leader. Some teachers described the school's leadership team as decisive in creating the positive climate at the school through their leadership example, initiatives and democratic disposition. The leadership team took initiatives and was also abreast of school development. The members were skilled at encouraging teachers without steamrolling them, teachers said. For example, the initiatives at the school were only carried out after the opinions of teachers had been taken into consideration. However, there were no doubts about what the principal wished for the school: "he is a pedagogical light-house" and "we live under pedagogical absolutism," teachers said. Nevertheless, there was widespread recognition of the principal's democratic disposition.

A teacher emphasized that this principal, who believed in his visions for the school and who dared to stand up and fight for them, had turned the school around. This was exemplified by his fierce involvement in the school development project right from the start, when he succeeded in obtaining such widespread support for the project that both teachers and leaders now stood up for it because they, too, believed in the project.

Many of the teachers mentioned that he had introduced a new form of leadership – he only interfered if things went wrong. The management team was described as competent, good at listening, goal orientated and good at negotiating. But the principal was also described as humble towards his job, good at delegating tasks, a nice person with a good sense of humour, and someone who made himself visible through precise visions and plans. There was no doubt that the principal was the one who set the pedagogical agenda for the school but his influence remained largely indirect.

Inner City School

This was a three-form entry school serving approximately 800 students. It had been built in 1973 and since then was touted as a model school because of both its stable management and its architecture. Buildings were open-plan with six houses, each containing a centre room with classrooms around it.

A head of department was connected to each block. Each department carried out its own planning with regard to teaching. However, "shadow-planning" also took place through school management in case anything went wrong with the block's planning. The whole budget was decentralised to the single blocks with the exception of the allocation of substitute teachers and the administration of salaries.

Roughly 30% of the school's students were bilingual and come from an immigrant background. They were distributed through the school with about 10% in the senior classes and up to 40% in kindergarten and the first grade, a clear trend toward children with an immigrant background becoming a greater presence in the school's daily life in the future.

Quite a few teachers had been employed at the school for a considerable amount of time – many since the school opened in 1973. Teachers emphasised that there was a strong sense of cohesiveness between them. This was supported by the block structure, which made it easy to get close to each other. The principal supported younger teachers and had become a "father" to them.

The School Management Team (SMT) had given teachers great freedom and trust. At the same time, however, SMT expected teams to keep discipline among themselves. Teachers accepted the responsibilities and the room for creativity that had been distributed to them and there was a marked feeling that the school was a democratic working place. People respected and treated each other as equals: teachers among themselves, and in relation to parents, students, and management.

Stakeholders' perspectives on success The school was described by teachers as successful because, seen through their eyes, there was great liberty of action in their daily work. Furthermore, the school was sought by twice as many students as the school building could accommodate. It was also seen as a sign of success that very few teachers had left the school.

The principal emphasised the success of the delegation of decision-making responsibility from the SMT to teachers in self-governing teams. This had given every single teacher real responsibility, in his view. He also drew attention to the fact that almost all the children either continued in the education system or got a job. He also saw it as a sign of success that there were 100% more applicants than the school was able to admit.

Students stressed that it was a good school because they were actively engaged in many activities. They believed that they were taken into consideration and respected as equals. They also felt that the fact that the teachers were able to make even difficult subjects exciting was proof of the school's success.

The principal The male principal was 63 years old and had been leading this school for 25 years. He was viewed as a charismatic figure who was very visible in the school. He did not take credit for initiatives, but gladly handed it over to the school's teachers and students: "I cast the bullets but I don't fire them" as he expressed it, a characterization confirmed by teachers, mid-level leaders and students. He was described as a warm person who cared for all categories of employees and students. He practised a democratic form of leadership, listening to students, teachers and parents.

The school appeared to be well-managed. It was a common observation that the principal was seen to be so deeply involved in the school that, "the school is as important to him as is his own family".

The principal had to cope with demanding parents who were difficult to handle. He acted directly, took charge of the children and parents and solved many problems. He was broad-minded, created a sense of confidence and worked loyally to find solutions; he also acted pragmatically. He was good at hiring secretaries who were capable of making the administration function efficiently. He was not interested in administrative details and might, from time to time, forget to follow up on them. However, he had sufficient administrative back-up to ensure that things were followed through when he did not take care of them himself.

The principal talked about "our school". This was an expression of a deeply rooted belief that the intention behind efficient reflective school leadership was to optimise the function of a team. This was carried out by the delegation of a considerable degree of decision-making responsibility to the individual teachers' teams, departments and blocks and partly to the single teacher.

The school was marked by a definite "us culture". This was evident from the fact that the principal emphasised that formal as well as informal leadership functions were distributed extensively to mid-level leaders and the teachers. It was important to him that the school was perceived as democratically managed and that the principal was not seen as *the* leader but as someone who encouraged the democratic processes and who also was the school's official face, representing it in the local community and vis-à-vis the municipality's directorate.

The principal had great influence on the students' learning and communication but this was exercised through indirect means. He was very visible in the school both by his presence and by his insistence on the school being a democratic organisation that took everyone seriously and treated everyone with respect. This permeated the climate at the school and hence the principles and practice of teaching. As for new undertakings, the principal claimed that they could come from various sources. This claim was confirmed by many others.

The principal's vision for the school was that it should always be at the forefront. School leadership, he emphasised, should be an open "landscape" where the door was closed only when very personal things were going on.

Shadowing the school The interplay between different levels in the school – the school as a whole, blocks and class and grade teams – was intricate and built on a network of meetings. There were meetings in the blocks (which department leaders participated in because they were attached to blocks), regular meetings of teams of teachers of the same grade, meetings between the chairs of blocks (elected chairs met every Wednesday with the SMT), and 'in-tray meetings' (the SMT met every Monday).

At the 'in-tray meeting' that we observed, there was a mix of information and agreements. Heads of departments and the principal developed strategies for dealing with external stakeholders. The heads of department talked and the principal nodded. One item was an agreement or strategy on how to react to the advice that the

Pedagogical Committee (advisory to the principal) was going to give on next year's work plan. What kind of advice would the SMT accept? The SMT group needed to be unanimous, said the principal. Heads of departments described the role of the principal as a sounding board who influences processes through dialogue – in this case with the rest of the SMT. For example:

The principal is a sounding board. We also want to hear if he has any more points and if our points are fair. We do not need approval, but we develop our strategy through dialogue and discussion. We always meet before we have a meeting with people from outside the SMT in order to find a common ground and a common strategy: What do we want to achieve at this meeting? This is very reassuring to us. (Head of a department)

The principal told us that often heads of departments and teachers approached him and presented ideas of their own in order to get his acceptance and have him give feedback. He sometimes wondered why they had to get this reassurance, because they could have made the decisions by themselves. This seemed to be a kind of reaffirming mechanism for them: they wanted to have a 'father's nod' for their ideas before they proceed to realise them.

He described his role in creating meaning in the school in this way:

I fertilise the ground or plant an idea in the right spot and let it grow and mature until the person with whom the idea was shared at one point sees it as his/her own idea. I then encourage him/her to follow up on it. Often I give the idea to the heads of departments to spread. In this way they seem even more genuine.

Teachers are used to being masters in their own right. They are very autonomous, and they must be so when they teach classes, so you cannot lead them like employees in a private enterprise. My basic attitude is that if you give people room to manoeuvre they will fill it out and increase their competencies.

There were many meetings in different groupings every week.

It is about keeping the creation of myths and gossip at a minimum and proceedings at a maximum. … We are responsible for different functions and tasks and therefore we need to communicate and keep one another up to date with what is happening so that all members of the SMT know about everything. (Head of a department)

In this short account we have focused on the relations between the principal, department leaders and teachers. The shadowing of a teacher and a student and the subsequent interviews with them, indicated agreement that they have room to make decisions and choices of their own and that the communication between stakeholders is very similar to what we saw and what was reported to us by heads and the principal.

RELATIONS

Managing relations and finding the right balance in distributing power to stakeholders within the organisation are key elements in exercising leadership. In doing this a clear view of strategies on how to set directions, to develop people and to redesign/maintain the organisation is crucial to successful leadership (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Day (2005), furthermore, draws attention to a number

of tensions that must be considered and balanced continuously in order to proceed successfully with managing relations: leadership versus management, development versus maintenance, autocracy versus autonomy, personal values versus institutional imperatives.

In our broader study of eight schools we found that a majority of successful principals were inspired by concepts such as the "learning organisation" and "distributed leadership", when responding to the above-mentioned conditions in relation to management of relations.

In a Copenhagen suburban middle-class school the principal was setting direction by demanding commitment from all stakeholders in order to accomplish the purpose of the school. Her vision was explicitly built on the concept of a learning organisation (Senge, 1990). Her vision also was built on a firm conviction that the exercise of one's professional role cannot be disconnected from sincere personal commitment.

This vision was implemented using a variety of tools and technologies to manage relations that make up a version of distributed leadership that is, on one hand, participatory and, on the other hand, forces employees to a high level of personal commitment (at times at an almost "confessional" level).

There are a number of internal technologies that firmly integrate all subjects within the organisation to a comprehensive vision that is continuously under further development and elaboration. At all ISSPP schools all teaching and administrative staff participate in educational days that help to create a mutually shared language about the purpose and targets of the school and foster a framework for interpreting the vision in the 'right' ways. The schools have action plans where school values and key priority areas are formulated. At a team level, meetings are held continuously to create shared ways of operationalizing the vision. The principal keeps up to date with team plans by having periodic group appraisal interviews, where she gets feedback from, listens to, approves, and enters into dialogue with the teams in order to be part of the process. At an individual level, the principal makes sure that she has employees that are committed by having individual appraisal interviews following a detailed interview schedule that both parties partake in. Here the task of developing people is at the centre. The appraisal interview is an opportunity for principal and employee to evaluate work during the preceding period and to express expectations and wishes for the next period. It is also an opportunity for the principal to assess the extent to which the employee is committed to the school vision because the employee is obliged to justify how she operationalizes the vision.

The principal stretches the network of managing relations much further by being very active with external stakeholders, being part of a principals' network in the municipality, holding information meetings, using the school web-site, and making public the school action plan. Furthermore, she encourages teaching staff to keep students and parents well informed.

There are variations among the schools and principals. The above-mentioned principal is, to a large extent, the driving force at her school. However, she works hard to keep up to date with the wishes, problems and understandings of almost

every individual at the school in order to make informed decisions. She is open to recurring reformulations of the vision and suggestions for implementation. At another city school the principal is much keener to ensure that a certain vision of the learning organisation is employed. At the Inner City School a much larger portion of relations management is distributed to teams, and the principal views himself as the one "casting the bullets", and expects his employees to fire them themselves with a large degree of autonomy.

COMMUNITIES, MEETING STRUCTURE AND POWER IN THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION

All our case study schools were increasingly organised around a division of the school in three levels: the introduction level 0 to 3rd form, middle level 4th to 6th form and 7th to 9th form. Some of them were in the beginning stages of the process whereas others had fulfilled the process and had a full departmental structure. There had also been, in some of the schools, rebuilding activities so that the school architecture corresponded with this form of organising – classes in the three levels concentrated in separate architectural units.

The organising of teachers, accordingly, meant that at each of the three levels education was organised around self-governing teams that mainly did their teaching within the team. Teachers typically chose their teams themselves, and the choice was obligatory for some years at some of the schools whereas it was possible to swap teams yearly at other schools. This structure meant that students were changing departments three times a day. There was a difference as to how long the schools had been at this change process, but all of the schools had, to varying degrees, begun a reorganising process toward departmentalisation and team structuring.

This way of organising seemed to be helpful. Working in permanent teams allowed teachers to become "expert or researchers of their respective levels". As a consequence of implementing this new structure, however, some of the teachers felt the cohesiveness among the staff had been damaged, a development they deplored. This was because of the splitting of the school into three levels or "home areas" and collaboration in teams which atomized the staff, according to some teachers. This structure of self-governing teams corresponds to what Mintzberg (1983) calls a "professional bureaucracy".

The meeting structure This organisational structure was matched by and followed up by the school's meeting structure. An example of a meeting structure resulting from this way of organising the school was evident in the North School (there were differences among the case schools in this respect, but the basic principles were the same).

First, there were meetings of *the school board* that consisted of parents, teachers, and students. The principal was secretary for the school board and a parent was chair. The school board met once a month and took decisions of a fundamental character.

Second, there were *meetings for the whole staff*, teachers and other staff members, four times a year in the "staff committee". In addition, there were development conversations between management and every employee.

Third, there were *meetings for the pedagogical personnel*: staff council meetings (3–4 years), meetings of the executive committee that planned the staff council meetings. The pedagogical development council coordinated the pedagogical development. The council had 6–10 meetings per year. There were also two media meetings.

Fourth, there were *meetings of teams of teachers*. These were held weekly and team conversations with management occurred once a year. There was also a reading conference about 1st and 2nd form reading capabilities that included the teachers' team, the management team, and the school psychologist where each child's early reading capabilities were discussed. There were at least twice a year curricular meetings in the respective teams.

Finally, there were *special centre meetings* with a psychologist and the teachers in the centre and there were four yearly coordination meetings in the special centre concerning the overall planning of the special centre's work. In these meetings the management team and the centre's personnel participated.

Power in the organisation The Senior Management Team (SMT) and/or the principal were represented in almost all of these meetings providing continuity and informing members of what was going on at the school. This privileged access to information gave principals a special power, not necessarily direct power but more indirectly, for example, as agenda setting power (Barach & Baratz, 1962), or consciousness controlling power (Lukes, 1974) or structural power (Foucault, 1976, 1994). But both the way the organisation was structured and the way the meeting structure was organised gave the management team rich possibilities to use both indirect, agenda setting power, and structural power.

Concerning the distribution of power it was not a simple matter to decide which groups in the school had power over whom. As professionals working in self governing teams, teachers had considerable power over how to perform their work. Management did not interfere in daily teaching matters as long as things were going right. It was not possible for the management team of a professional organisation to present effective leadership of Danish "folkeskole" if they did not have a minimum of trust from their professionals. Indeed, in reality it was possible for the staff to "sack" the management (Kofod, 2004), if the staff lost trust in the management.

Power relations in professional organisations work not only from top to bottom but also in other ways. The most important way power relations in the schools worked was through the structure and through the "conscience controlling" power; i.e. the possibility of being controlled even if this control was never exercised explicitly (Christensen & Jensen, 1986; Foucault, 1976, 1994). In our Danish schools, the organisation, the team structure, and the meeting structure left room for the exercise of all three kinds of power.

Couplings in the organisation We have focused on only one part of the organisation, thus far, namely teachers' relations with the SMT. The North School had almost as many other members of the staff as it had teachers. But for the sake of simplicity we concentrated on the relations between the management and the teachers.

The school's organisation and meeting structure had both loose and tight couplings. The decentralised structure with semiautonomous departments and self-governing teams of teachers pointed in the direction of loose couplings between the departments, and between departments and SMT. Taking into account that the complexity of the organisation was high with this type of organising, the solution of loose couplings was a clever answer to reduce this complexity (Weick, 2001a, 2001b). The SMT's control over what was going on in the classrooms was indirect and was exercised through the meeting structure. Coordination was accomplished through mutual adjustment and input of skills (Mintzberg, 1983). To be able to cope with fluid systems where parts work together in various constellations, as in these cases, the organisation must have an element of loose coupling to be able to act as a self designing system (Weick, 2001a, 2001b).

DISCUSSION

Our approach to studying successful principals in Danish comprehensive schools assumed that the conditions for non-coercive rational communication are crucial for the development of cultures that lead to success. We found justification for this approach and our data have disclosed essential aspects of what constitutes success. Students in the two case schools we described most fully stressed that their principals listened to them and that they thrived. Teachers also emphasized this characteristic as an important principalship trait.

In both schools there was emphasis on the conditions for students' learning which principals mostly influenced in indirect ways as well as on students' attainment and results. Results were mentioned more in the North school than in the Inner City or the other schools. The reason could well be that the school was situated in an affluent area where parents gave more support to their children and were more ambitious for them than parents in the less fortunate school districts in the Inner City. It could also be the influence of the local educational authorities in this school district. They had found substantial extra money for the schools over a period of four years and had communicated their intentions that all schools should restructure and reculture their teaching practices.

In the two schools emphasized in this chapter we find robust signs of what Beane and Apple (in Furman & Starratt, 2002) have labelled participatory democratic communities, i.e., the open flow of ideas, critical reflection and analysis, concern for the welfare of others and the 'common good' as well as the concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities. In many ways we saw schools that were striving to be good communities for the broad and comprehensive development of students' cognitive, personal and social competencies.

The schools and their leaders had different interpretations of how to lead in a democratic way (Blase, Blase, Anderson, & Dungan, 1995), but they all encouraged teachers' involvement in decision-making. Teachers encouraged students to involve themselves in decision-making at the classroom level. Leaders were all child-centred and committed to improving teaching and learning. They all trusted in teachers' motives, and they listened and communicated openly.

One aspect of democratic or shared leadership in these schools was making sure that the people who were to make decisions were able to do so in a competent way. The principals and the rest of the leadership teams showed great trust in teachers' teaching competence, and the principals showed great trust in the competence and commitment of deputy and department leaders. As demonstrated in the case of the Inner City School we could interpret the meeting where strategies were discussed as the principal's way of making sure the teachers were living up to demands and that they were doing so in ways with which he could agree. He was, in this way, educating the department leaders to become capable and intelligent leaders in their own right. In one instance he said that when heads of departments had learned to make the right decisions in the same way as he did, then they were competent to assume responsibility for those decisions.

Many teachers and heads of departments asked for the principal's advice or acceptance of their ideas. They often wanted a 'father or mother's nod' before they carried out their ideas in practice. Communication in these situations was often clear, transparent and elaborated, so both parties knew what was agreed on and on what terms. On the other hand, there seemed to be a tendency for teachers and department leaders to ask for acceptance from the principal as an authority and at the same time for reassurance from the principal as a person.

This led us to ask if there was a trend towards building relations in schools through affective as well as cognitive bases. There seemed to be a tendency for empowered employees to seek reassurance and acceptance from their leaders. Poul Poder (in an interview in Mehlsen, 2005) found that many employees have grown dependent on the emotional support of their leaders. The trend is a result of the decentralisation of power within value-led enterprises and institutions that rely heavily on the commitment of employees', their willingness to work according to the values of the institutions and not according to bureaucratic rules. Our case schools were, in many ways, examples of value-led institutions or communities and the principals were seen to be both good rational communicators of insights and ideas as well as emotionally intelligent.

There was thus both a psychological and a structural aspect to staff's dependence upon the principal's assurance. It was a matter of reassurance as well compliance within organizations that were subject to new systems of governance. The learning organisation, new public management and other modern organizational technology were thus characterized by the tension between a focus on strong leadership on the one hand, and on the other hand, an equally strong demand for committed staff that could work individually and flexibly within self-governing teams. This created a tension between compliance and autonomy.

NOTE

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CHAPTER 8

SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP: DOES CONTEXT MATTER AND IF SO, HOW?

DENISE BELCHETZ AND KENNETH LEITHWOOD

INTRODUCTION

Purposes

Using evidence about the practices of six successful school leaders, this chapter explores an apparent contradiction in the leadership literature. As our title suggests, this contradiction is about the effects of context on the nature of successful leadership. On the one hand, are widespread claims that context is an enormously important influence on the meaning of successful leadership. On the other, are convincing claims that some forms of leadership are key to success, no matter the context.

The claim that context matters is endorsed by much of the educational leadership literature (e.g., Johnston, 1996; Sergiovanni, 2000; also see most other chapters in this book). Indeed, it is a claim entirely consistent with models of "contingent" leadership, some of them almost a half century old (Fleishman, 1998; Halpin & Winer, 1957), although current adherents typically have something quite a bit more complicated in mind than the original two-dimensional ("consideration of people" and "initiation of structure") view of what contingent means.

A broader leadership literature also endorses contextually dependent views of successful leadership through its interest in cross-cultural leadership studies. This line of research aims to detect the effects of different cultural profiles on what counts as effective leadership practice often taking, as its point of departure, the results of Hofstede's (1980) research about such cultural profiles. As Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla and Dorfman explain:

> *In some [national] cultures one might need to take strong decisive action in order to be seen as a leader, whereas in other cultures consultation and a democratic approach may be a prerequisite. Furthermore … the evaluation and meaning of many leader behaviors and characteristics may also strongly vary in different cultures.* (1999, p. 225)

C. Day and K. Leithwood (eds.), Successful Principal Leadership in Times of Change, 117–137.

The apparently contradictory claim that some forms of successful leadership generalize across contexts has been made most visibly by those with an interest in charismatic and transformational approaches to leadership. Support for the widespread value of such approaches to leadership in non-school organizational contexts comes from a considerable number of studies carried out in many countries (Bass, 1997; Fiol, Harris, & House, 1999). Although based on much less evidence, Leithwood and his colleagues have found similar results in school organizations in a handful of countries, as well (e.g., Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003).

Of course, there are many "contexts" from which to chose, national cultural contexts being just one. And if context does matter, then the choice of contexts for inquiry is not a trivial matter. Results may very well differ depending on the choice. But one context that cannot be ignored by public school leaders is government educational policy. The effects of this context on successful leadership is the focus for this chapter. In particular, we ask: Do those highly accountable policy contexts created by most recent large-scale reform initiatives influence the nature of successful school leadership, and if so, how?

Possibilities

How might the context of leaders' work shape their practices, if it does? We explore four alternatives. First, the context might demand additional practices be added to the leader's existing repertoire, as with Goldring & Rallis's (1993) evidence that implementation of site-based management policies created the need for new community relationship-building practices on the part of principals. Second, a change in context might mean not the addition of new practices but changes in the way that existing practices are enacted. As Den Hartog and his colleagues observe, "Universal endorsement of an attribute does not preclude . . . differences in the enactment of such an attribute" (1999, p. 225). These two alternatives are not exclusive of one another. A policy context could demand both, the third alternative that we explore. The fourth alternative is that no – or only trivial – modifications or additions to a successful leader's repertoire are stimulated by accountable policy contexts.

The Accountable Policy Context for this Study

Evidence used for this paper was collected during the 2003 school year, in the Canadian province of Ontario, as part of a broader study (Belchetz, 2004). This was seven years into the mandate of a conservative government elected on a platform which it labeled "the common sense revolution". Modeled after other neoconservative government initiatives in, for example, New Zealand (Lauder & Hughes, 1999), Alberta, Canada (Levin & Young, 1998), and England (Finkelstein & Grubb, 2000), this platform aimed at the restructuring, downloading, and downsizing of public services and a series of ambitious tax cuts (Bedard & Lawton, 2000). For schools, this resulted in substantial changes in school

governance, financing, and curriculum and assessment policies during the first five years of the government's tenure.

With respect to school governance and administration, for example: school districts were amalgamated, reducing their numbers from 129 to 66, and, on average, doubling their size; the total number of elected trustees in the province was reduced from 1900 to 700; school councils having a majority of parent members were established but with advisory powers only; principals were removed from the teachers' bargaining unit; and a college of teachers was mandated to regulate the profession, monitor teaching standards, and to take responsibility for certification, and the review of preservice training and professional development programs offered by faculties and other agencies in the province.

Significant changes also were made by the government to education funding in the province. Education was removed from the local property tax base, for example, and boards of education were no longer allowed to set and collect local taxes, relying instead on grants from the province alone. Per pupil funding was reduced to something approximating the average for provinces in Canada; and students over the age of 21 were no longer eligible for funding as full time students but as continuing education students, regardless of their program.

Many changes were made in provincial curriculum and pupil assessment policies. New curriculum frameworks were written for all grades, this having the greatest effect on secondary schools where the program was reduced from 4 to 5 years. The government also mandated use of a common provincial report card in all schools aligned to the curriculum frameworks and student standards. Province-wide, every-student testing was initiated (initially in grades 3 and 6 in mathematics and English) giving the media the resources to compare schools and districts and to publish the ranking of schools within districts which, of course, they did.

These changes, and many others aimed at increasing the accountability of schools, were sweeping in scope, occurred at a very fast pace, and were carried out with very little attention to the advice or preferences of professional educators in the province. At least in these respects, the Ontario experience was very similar to experiences in many other jurisdictions subject to the performance-based reform efforts of recent governments.

Our Benchmark: A Synthesis of Successful School Leadership Practices

For purposes of this study, we identified a reasonably comprehensive set of leadership practices for which the label "successful" could be justified by a wide range of empirical evidence. This set of leadership practices served as a benchmark, or point of reference, for our study allowing us to ask: Do successful leaders in accountable policy contexts engage in these practices? How do they engage in them? Do they find it necessary to add other practices to their leadership repertoires? Are some of these practices unnecessary?

Our synthesis of successful leadership practices, previewed in Chapter One, combines features of the two most widely investigated approaches to school

leadership – transformational leadership reflected in Leithwood & Jantzi's (2005) recent review (see also Leithwood & Riehl, 2005) and instructional leadership represented by Hallinger's (2001, 2005) model of instructional leadership, the most widely researched version of this approach to school leadership. Transformational practices reflected in our syntheses include, in one form or another, practices found to be successful in both school and non-school contexts. But the suitability of transformational approaches alone for school settings has been criticized as not attending sufficiently to instructional improvement (e.g., Hopkins, 2003). Integration of Hallinger's model of instructional leadership with our transformationally-oriented practices was in direct response to that criticism. The resulting benchmark for our study consists of four major categories of practices – *Setting Directions, Helping People, Redesigning the Organization* and *Managing the Instructional Program*. A total of 13 more specific sets of practices are included in these four categories.

Setting Directions

Evidence collected in both school and non-school settings suggests that the three direction setting practices included in this category explain the largest proportion of variation across schools in a wide variety of leadership effects.

Identifying and articulating a vision This dimension of practice reflects Bass's "inspirational motivation", a dimension which Podsokoff, MacKenzie, Moorman and Fetter define as leadership behavior "aimed at identifying new opportunities for his or her unit.... and developing, articulating, and inspiring others with his or her vision of the future" (1990, p. 112). Bass (1985) has claimed that charisma and inspirational motivation are distinct sets of behaviors but empirical efforts to separate them (e.g., repeated factor analyses) have never been successful.

Fostering the acceptance of group goals While visions can be inspiring, action typically requires some agreement on the more immediate goals to be accomplished in order to move toward the vision. So this dimension includes leader behaviors "...aimed at promoting cooperation among employees and getting them to work together toward a common goal" (Podsokoff et al., 1990, p. 112). In school settings, improvement planning processes are one of the more explicit contexts in which these behaviors are manifest. We consider two dimensions of Hallinger's instructional leadership model to be part of this dimension – "framing the school's goals" and "communicating the school's goals".

High performance expectations This set of leadership behaviors is included as part of direction setting because it is closely aligned with goals; while high performance expectations do not define the substance of organizational goals, they demonstrate, as Podsakoff explains, the leader's expectations of excellence, quality, and or high performance..."(Podsokoff et al., 1990, p. 112) in the achievement of those goals. This dimension largely reflects Hallinger category "developing high expectations and standards".

Helping People

This broad category of practices, as a whole, is among the most studied set of school leadership dimensions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Versions of it can be found in many different leadership models.

Providing individualized support/consideration Bass & Avolio (1994) include, as part of this dimension, "knowing your followers' needs and raising them to more mature levels . . . [sometimes through] the use of delegation to provide opportunities for each follower to self-actualize and to attain higher standards of moral development" (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 64). This set of behaviors, claims Podsokoff et al., 1990), should communicate the leader's respect for his or her colleagues and concerns about their personal feelings and needs. We include, as part of this set of practices, Hallinger's "providing incentives for teachers".

Intellectual stimulation Behaviors included in this dimension include encouraging colleagues to take intellectual risks, reexamine assumptions, look at their work from different perspectives, rethink how it can be performed (Avolio, 1994; Podsokoff et al., 1990) and otherwise "induc[e] . . . employees to appreciate, dissect, ponder and discover what they would not otherwise discern . . . " (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996, pp. 415–6). Much of the importance attached to professional development, and to capacity development more generally, in models of instructional leadership is reflected in subsumed by this dimension. Hallinger's "promoting professional development" is included as part of this set of practices.

Providing an appropriate model Encompassed by this dimension is Bass's "idealized influence", a partial replacement for his original "charisma" dimension; Avolio (1994) claims that leaders exercise idealized influence when they serve as role models with the appropriate behaviors and attitudes that are required to build trust and respect in followers. Such modeling on the part of leaders " . . . sets an example for employees to follow that is consistent with the values the leader espouses" (Podsokoff et al., 1990, p. 112). Many different approaches to leadership attribute importance to being a good example, walking the talk, and other specific enactments of this leadership dimension. Hallinger's model refers to "maintaining high visibility".

Redesigning the Organization

Specific practices included in this category acknowledge that for many "first order" changes (e.g., instructional improvements) to have their desired impact, second order changes need to be made; this is the essential meaning of "alignment". This category describes leadership practices focused on three features of the school organization.

Creating collaborative cultures A large body of evidence has accumulated since Little's (1982) early research which unambiguously supports the importance of collaborative cultures in schools as central to school improvement, the development of professional learning communities and the improvement of student learning (e.g., Louis & Kruse, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989). Additional evidence clearly indicates that leaders are able to create more collaborative cultures and suggests practices that accomplish this goal (e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990).

Restructuring Organizational culture and structure are two sides of the same coin. Developing and sustaining collaborative cultures depends on putting in place complementary structures, typically something requiring leadership initiative. Practices associated with such initiative included creating common planning times for teachers, and establishing team and group structures for problem solving (e.g., Hadfield, 2003).

Building productive relationships with families and communities Shifting the attention of school staffs from an exclusively inside-the-school focus to one which embraces a meaningful role for parents and a close relationship with the larger community was identified during the 1990s as the biggest change in expectations for those in formal school leadership roles (e.g., Goldring & Rallis, 1993). Attention to this focus has been encouraged by evidence of the contribution of family educational cultures to student achievement in schools (e.g., Coleman, 1966; Finn, 1989), the increase in public accountability of schools to their communities through the widespread implementation of school-based management (Murphy & Beck, 1995), and the growing need for schools to actively manage public perceptions of their legitimacy (e.g., Mintrop, 2004).

Managing the Instructional Program

The subdimensions included in this category bring together managerial practices included in both Hallinger's instructional leadership model and some recent versions of our own transformational model. Evidence about the impact of this set of practices remains contradictory. Hallinger (2001) indicates that among the three major categories of practices in his model, this category has the weakest influence on measured outcomes. In contrast, practices in this category of our transformational leadership model have demonstrated significant effects on student achievement (Leithwood, Riedlinger, Bauer, & Jantzi, 2003).

Planning and supervising instruction This practice in our transformational leadership model overlaps but does not fully encompass, Hallinger's "supervising and evaluating instruction".

Providing instructional support This practice overlaps Hallinger's "coordinating the curriculum".

Monitoring the school's progress This subsumes the Hallinger model practice "monitoring student progress" extending to other aspects of organizational change.

Buffering staff from external demands unrelated to the school's priorities This would include Hallinger's "protecting instructional time" and included several different strategies leaders use for this purpose.

RESEARCH METHODS

Design

Our study used a qualitative "outlier" design similar to the design used in many qualitative school effectiveness studies. In our case, only outliers at the most successful end of the continuum were included, as compared with outlier designs which sample from both ends of the success continuum. Given fixed research resources, the design we selected trades off opportunities for comparing and contrasting successful vs. unsuccessful leadership (with the enhanced possibility of determining what is unique about either) against a larger sample of whatever is of interest at the successful end.

Outlier designs of either sort assume a logic of association. A complex, multi-dimensional object, such as a school, is selected based on only one or several of its features. It is then assumed that other dimensions plausibly responsible for that feature, are similar in status. Typically, for example, student test scores are the initial basis for identifying a "successful" or "effective" school, with suitable controls for student background characteristics. The nature of the instruction and/or organization and/or leadership, etc., that is then observed in the school is assumed to be the cause of such scores, thereby earning a "successful" designation, as well.

This is by no means an iron clad logic. But field-based research often demands compromises and this is a compromise design. So the results of individual studies using this design, this study included, should be treated with considerable caution. Nevertheless, accumulation of similar results over multiple studies using this design can begin to create a convincing causal argument. Furthermore, most outlier designs typically include, as well, selection criteria in addition to student test scores in order to bolster the causal claims to be made and our study was no exception, as we explain next.

Sample

The study was carried out in six elementary schools in one large school district in Ontario, a district serving suburban, urban and rural populations. Four criteria were used to select schools and principals for the study:

- *Student achievement on the province's grade 3 and 6 reading tests had to have consistently improved over the two or preferably three years preceding the study.* As with many other leadership studies using outlier designs, our claim

to be studying "successful" principals depended on being able to demonstrate that their work, directly or indirectly, results in significant positive impact on student learning. The province's reading test results represent only a small slice of what such learning entails. But they are a quite important slice for two reasons. First, there is fairly widespread agreement that reading is the most fundamental of the academic tool skills required for school success (Stringfield et al., 1997). So while we might claim that reading is not a *sufficient basis* for judging a student's academic success, it is at least a *necessary basis*. Second, success on these tests is the primary outcome for which schools and principals are held publicly accountable in the province; it is often how principals' success is defined, whether they like it or not, and so has potentially powerful steering effects on their leadership.

- *Principals must have been at the school over that same three-year period.* Outlier research designs typically rely on the logic of association that we explained above. Applied to our study, this logic suggests that if we can find successful schools (based on their test scores) we will likely find successful leaders. This criterion at least creates the possibility that the work of the principals in those schools was a significant part of the explanation for the schools' improved test scores.
- *The work of selected principals must have been viewed by senior administrative colleagues as critical to the schools' improvement processes.* This criterion adds a bit more weight to the still contestable claim that selected principals were a significant explanation for increased test scores. To the extent that superintendents are close to their schools, they have observed the results of principal's work and formed an opinion about it. By itself, this criterion would be of questionable value. But it has some value as part of a "suite" of criteria, none of which would be sufficient standing alone.
- *All schools had to be in a similar size range*: School size is a powerful explanation for variation in student achievement. Students in smaller or moderate sized schools typically achieve significantly better than do students in large schools (e.g., Howley, 2002). From the perspective of leadership research, school size is a powerful mediator of leadership effects; the same leadership practices can have very different effects depending on school size. Controlling for school size allows us better to determine those leadership practices that are successful under similar organizational circumstances.
- *All schools had to serve a similar student population*. This criterion was used in the selection of schools and principals for the same reason we outlined for school size. We know that the nature of a school's student population is a powerful mediator of leadership effects (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996). So studying leadership in schools with the same type of population increases our chances of finding leadership practices successful under similar organizational circumstances.

Selecting schools that satisfied all five of these criteria turned out to be difficult, in practice. Although we asked the district to identify at least 10 schools and principals

using all criteria, only four could be found. In this district, as soon as there was clear evidence of student achievement improving, successful principals were moved on to needier schools. Dropping the requirement for principals to be in their schools for the past three years, to the past two years, produced six schools eligible for our study.

In addition to the principal, we collected data from two teachers and one parent in each of the six schools. Teachers and parents were selected through a nomination process carried out in consultation with two senior district administrators close to each of the schools. People were nominated who were believed to have detailed knowledge of the principal's work, clearly not a random or "unbiased" sample. This, too, is a methodological compromise, one that trades off close knowledge of the principals' work against the potential for a more "disinterested" or "objective" perspective on that work.

Data Collection and Analysis

Student achievement and student background data used in the selection of successful schools and leaders were collected from the district's files including files containing schools' performance on the provinces annual literacy tests.

Interview data for the study were collected over a two month period during the fall of 2003 through interviews with the principal, two teachers and one parent in each of the schools but one (one teacher had to drop out for health reasons). The 23 interviews lasted from one to two hours, typically longest for principals and shortest for parents. Fourteen of the 23 interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Detailed, hand-scripted, verbatim records were made during the interviews for the nine respondents who declined to be audiotaped. All other interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. A verbatim record of all interviews were returned to each interviewee for comment; six people returned transcripts with minor edits or further comment.

Questions asked during the interviews were derived directly from the framework for the study with a modestly different set of questions asked of each of the three respondent groups. Transcripts were read and reread many times, initially guided by our conceptual framework and eventually unrestricted by the framework. This was an iterative process associated with the development of grounded theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). For example, small samples of the text were analyzed line by line, key emerging phrases were underlined and potential themes were identified and tested against larger samples of text. Responses for each category of participant were maintained separately in a chart that enabled cross-role comparisons.

RESULTS

Tables 8.1 to 8.4 summarize the results of relevant portions of the more extended interviews conducted for a larger study. In each table, the left column lists the benchmark leadership practices identified through our synthesis of transformational

and instructional leadership research. The next three columns paraphrase responses to questions about leadership practices in Ontario's highly accountable policy context provided by the principals (column 2), teachers (column 3) and parents (far right column). When two or three interviewed groups offered similar responses, these responses appear adjacent to one another in the columns.

Three features of the subsequent text explaining the tables should be noted. First, after each paraphrased response in the tables is an indication of how many interviewees of each type offered this response; these numbers will be of interest to some readers but are only occasionally referred to in the text. Second, for readability sake, we will refer to the results in the tables simply as what the principals did, although our data obviously capture what they were perceived to have done. Third, because we report qualitative data, the reader may expect a good many quotations illustrating our findings, a convention typically associated with qualitative research. But our purposes for this paper are not descriptive or illustrative and so do not require such illustration. We use our allotted space to focus directly on the goals for our paper.

Setting Directions

Table 8.1 summarizes what the six successful principals did to establish a shared set of directions for their schools. Half of the principals indicated that creating a *shared vision* involved making sense of provincial and district initiatives on their part, a practice the majority of teachers thought of as seeing the big picture. What parents

Table 8.1. Setting directions

Setting directions	Principals N = 6	Teachers N = 12	Parents N = 6
Vision (*framing the school's goals*)	Makes sense of provincial and district initiatives (3)	Sees the big picture (7)	Student focused (6)
	Is a self starter – initiates new ideas (1)		Motivates staff, students and parents (5)
Group goals (*communi-cating the school's goals*)	Has clear goals arrived at through school planning process (6)	Provides clear priorities for student improve-ment through the school plan (11)	Focuses school activities on clear priorities (5)
High performance expectations *(developing high expectations and standards)*	Sets high expectations for student achievement (6)	Has high standards (9)	
	Keeps up with advances in technology (3)	Clear expectations (8)	

saw the principal doing was providing a student focus for the schools' vision and using the vision to motivate all those involved to help accomplish it.

All respondents believed that the principals were successful in developing support for a *clear set of short – to – intermediate term goals* to serve as a focus for the school's actions. All principals and the majority of teachers perceived the principals to demonstrate *high expectations* for both students and staff; parents, however, seemed not to be aware of this aspect of the principals' practices. Three of the principals counted their efforts to keep up with advances in technology as a key part of what holding high expectations meant to them.

Helping People

Table 8.2 summarizes what principals did to help people accomplish the directions established for the school. *Individualized consideration* amounted to providing "soft" help (as distinct from such "hard" assistance as providing technical support, money, or materials). All groups of respondents indicated that individualized support consisted of being a good listener, providing psychological support, showing appreciation for peoples' contributions to the schools' goals, and celebrating successes/being a cheerleader. As part of individualized consideration, teachers also noticed their principals' encouragement, treating them as professionals, acted in ways to reduce their stress, and improved their morale. Four teachers mentioned their principals' respectful treatment of teachers, students and parents.

Intellectual stimulation was provided, all groups agreed, through the provision of professional development opportunities. Teachers also received from their principals, occasional advice and the sharing of effective teaching and evaluation ideas.

Respondents provided information about how *modeling* was done by the principal. This was by being very visible in the school and classroom, including taking some share of the lunch and other "duty", and interacting with students and teachers as opportunities arose. What was being modeled included: general expectations; a passion for learning; enthusiasm for, and pride in, the work of the school; and the importance of ongoing professional learning or "keeping abreast of issues", as all parents and several teachers viewed it.

Redesigning the Organization

Table 8.3 summarizes what principals did to redesign the school organization. To *create collaborative professional cultures* in the school, they acted as members of various work teams (e.g., the school improvement team). Principals also were actively involved in other ways in both the school and community generally encouraging teachers and parents to get involved in decisions about the schools' work. To encourage such involvement (*build structures to foster collaboration*), principals gave staff and parents, generally, as well as the school council, in particular, significant decision making roles in the school. Principals also shared leadership with

Table 8.2. Helping people

Helping people	Principals N = 6	Teachers N = 12	Parents N = 5
2.1 Individualized consideration/support (*providing incentives for teachers*)	Listens carefully to issues and concerns (6)	Good listener (10)	Listens well (4)
	Celebrates successes (4)		Celebrates student success (2)
	Provides support to teachers (3)	Supports staff and acts as the team "cheerleader" (11)	Supports teachers (6)
		Encourages students and staff alike (11)	Encouraging and affirming (4)
		Treats teachers as professionals (10)	
		Reduces teacher stress (7)	
	Shows appreciation to staff as needed (4)	Shows appreciation for teacher effort (5)	
		Improves morale (4)	
		Is respectful to staff, students and parents (4)	
2.2 Intellectual stimulation (*promoting professional development)*	Supports teachers professional development (6)	Provides professional development opportunities for teachers (11)	Provides ongoing learning opportunities for all in the school (5)
		Offers advice (7)	
		Shares effective teaching and evaluation ideas (6)	

2.3 Modeling *(maintaining high visibility)*	Is visible in the schools (5)	Is visible in the school and classroom (11)	
		Is a respected role model (9)	
	Has a passion for learning and models enthusiasm (4)	Models expectations (5)	
	Interacts with and knows students (4)		
	Involved in learning with teachers (4)	Well informed on educational issues (8)	Keeps abreast of current issues (6)
	Walks the talk/knows that actions speak louder than words (4)	Knowledgeable about district and provincial issues (2)	
		Assists with duty (7)	
	Instills pride in learning (1)		

Redesigning the organization

Redesigning the organization	Principals N = 6	Teachers N = 12	Parents N = 5
3.1 Create collaborative cultures	Builds a collaborative school culture (6)	Fosters a collaborative and supportive school environment (10)	Is collaborative and involved (5)
	Acts as part of the school team (5)	Is actively involved in the school and community (11)	Active on the school team (2)
		Encourages and shares alternative approaches (9)	
		Seeks to improve the school climate (6)	
3.2 Build structures to foster collaboration	Involves school council (6)	Involves school council (4)	Involves school council in collaborative relationship (6)
	Arranges time for teachers' professional dialogue (5)	Provides time for professional dialogue (6)	
	Builds relationship to support student learning (5)	Fosters supportive relationships (10)	Builds positive relationships (6)
		Shares leadership (2)	
		Involves staff and parents in decision making (7)	
3.3 Build productive relations with parents and the community	Knows the community 3	Involves and supports families 5	Supports the community (4)

Managing the instructional program

Managing the instructional program	Principals N = 6	Teachers N = 12	Parents N = 5
4.1 Planning and supervising instruction (*supervising and evaluating instruction*)	Has strong management skills (4)	Is well organized (7)	
	Monitors teaching practices (3)	Reminds us that testing should not drive teaching (7)	
4.2 Providing instructional support *(coordinating the curriculum)*	Is the leader of instruction in the school (5)		
	Aligns school initiatives with school plan (4)	Provides human and learning resources to support student learning (10)	
	Modifies structure of school day to maximize learning		
4.3 Monitoring the school's progress *(monitoring student progress)*	Bases decisions about student learning on clear evidence (5)	Supports the school plan (3)	Knows the students (3)
4.4 Buffering staff from excessive and distracting demands *(protecting instructional time)*	Ensures school runs smoothly so teachers can teach (3)	Buffers staff from new initiatives from the province or district	Buffers staff from district initiatives (5)
	Fosters a safe learning environment for all in the school (5)	Manages discipline (4)	

others, fostered productive working relationships, focused on student learning and provided time for teachers to learn and plan together.

Productive relationships with the community required principals to know their communities well – which they did – and to actively support the efforts of individual families, as well as the larger community, to contribute to their children's' education.

Managing the Instructional Program

Table 8.4 summarizes what successful principals did to manage the instructional program. As this table suggests, the managerial activities of principals were largely invisible to parents although about half of the parents believed that the principals knew the children well. With respect to *planning and supervising instruction* principals and teachers both valued the principals' management and organizational skills. Half of the principals also referred to their monitoring of teaching practices and the majority of teachers stressed their principals' commitment to a broader view of learning than was reflected in the provincial achievement tests alone. From their perspective, principals provided instructional support by visibly acting as leaders of instruction and by aligning activities in the school with the school's improvement plan. Principals mentioned their efforts to revise the organization of the school day to maximize opportunities for student learning and most teachers mentioned the principals' efforts to find resources to support student learning.

Successful principals *monitored school progress* using systematically collected evidence (principals' view), providing ongoing support for the school plan (teachers' view) and knowing individual students well (parents' view).

The majority of teachers and parents noticed the principals' efforts to *buffer the school* from district or provincial distractions to teaching and learning. Managing discipline also was a buffering strategy according to teachers, as were principals' efforts to ensure the school ran smoothly and to foster a safe learning environment for all.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our aim in this study was to drill down into the often voiced claim that successful school leadership is highly dependent on the context in which it is exercised. Using, as a benchmark, a synthesis of leadership practices found to be successful across a wide range of contexts, we collected evidence about what 6 successful leaders did in a highly accountable policy context. This context included many specific policies aimed at having schools demonstrate public accountability for student performance including, not surprisingly, every-student annual achievement testing and the public reporting of results. Of course, this is but one of many contexts in which to examine the role of context in successful leadership (although a very common one), and results from this study might well not transfer across other contexts.

How might context influence successful leadership? We reasoned that there were four possible answers to this questions:

1. generally successful leadership practices might suffice without any context-specific modifications;
2. generally successful leadership practices might suffice but their enactment would vary by context;
3. additional, context-specific practices would need to be added to the generally successful set; or
4. some combination of 2 and 3.

Evidence from this study seems generally consistent with alternative 4. The primary change in how successful practices are enacted is to be found in the *Setting Directions* category of practices. The highly accountable policy context in which our sample of leaders found themselves focused their direction-setting practices of "building a shared vision" and "developing clear goals and priorities" sharply (but not narrowly) on student learning. Now this may seem an unsurprising focus given the overall purpose of schools. But in less accountable policy contexts it is quite common for school visions and goals to be largely about educational means (e.g., improving instruction, providing more professional development, altering the timetable, increasing parent participation in decision making) not ends – such as significantly increasing the proportion of Aboriginal students reading at grade level by the end of grade 3.

Admittedly, a focus on educational means is usually accompanied by the assumption that implementing the chosen means will be good for students. But when visions and goals are about the means of education, two closely related problems arise. First, the choice of which means to implement is often justified on philosophical or ideological grounds, rather than on actual experience or systematically collected empirical evidence of what actually fosters greater student learning. Second, philosophical or ideological grounding of the choice of educational means seriously diminishes the disposition of a school to respond flexibly and adaptively to the real needs of its students and community as they become apparent over time.

Philosophies and ideologies, in spite of their considerable value for some purposes, tend to immunize their adherents against "contamination" from the actual consequences of the practices which they suggest. Ideological adherents become hermetically sealed against the potentially destabilizing effects of external criticism. As a case in point, most of those who adhere to market ideologies as a foundation on which to build greater school efficiency and effectiveness stubbornly cling to greater school choice as a key part of the solution to inequitable access of students to high quality education; they do so in the face of overwhelming evidence, by now, that most school choice alternatives actually exacerbate inequities (e.g., Hughes & Lauder, 1999).

When visions and goals are about educational ends, school staffs are free to chose what works to accomplish those ends. Although this focus on student learning does emancipate educators from the constraints of ideology, it brings with it a different set of challenges that should not be minimized. These are challenges about evidence: How do we determine where to focus our improvement efforts? What counts as relevant evidence that our improvement efforts are having their desired

effects? How can we get such evidence? Once we have this evidence, how do we interpret it properly?

These are challenges that come with data-based decision making and there is considerable evidence that many school administrators and teachers still have much to learn if they are to be successful in meeting these challenges. For example, Earl & Katz (2002) propose three sets of "capacities for leaders in a data rich world" (p. 1009) including the development of an inquiry habit of mind, becoming data literate, and creating a culture of inquiry in the school. Timperley (2005) has recently described the difficult but ultimately successful journey of one school staff to improve student literacy skills partly through becoming more data literate.

Evidence from our sample of leaders working in a highly accountable policy context demonstrates the need for one additional set of practices as part of *Managing the Instructional Program.* These are practices involved in school improvement planning (SIP) and might best be added to the subordinate practice *Planning and supervising instruction*. The plans and the processes used in their development and implementation were referred to in the responses of principals, in particular, suggesting that planning was a useful management tool for them but less visible or top-of-the-mind for others. Not only did the province's educational accountability context focus principals unambiguously on student learning, it required them, with their staffs, to develop explicit plans for how weaknesses in student learning would be addressed. This provincial requirement was further reinforced, as well, by the importance the district awarded to school improvement planning.

Administrative rhetoric about the importance of school improvement planning predates the accountable policy context in which this study was conducted by many years. But the now-common annual province- or state-wide student testing programs, with their public reporting of results, create much greater incentive for principals not just to improve student achievement on these tests but also to have plans they can point to as evidence to parents and supervisors, for example, that their schools are working on the problem.

While empirical evidence about the effects of school improvement planning on student learning is mixed (e.g., Flinspach & Ryan, 1992), conditions in the province and the district where our study took place were likely to enhance the chances of it having a positive impact in the principals' schools (MacGilchrest & Mortimore, 1997). Research about effective SIP associates it with the collection of comprehensive evidence, authentic stakeholder participation, the production of actionable goals, processes for monitoring progress, periodic assessment of the SIP process and regular communication of the planning process and its outcomes to all stakeholders (Leithwood, Aitken, & Jantzi, 2001). Successful leaders will need the capacities required to have these tasks carried out in their schools.

This study provided modest support for the claim that successful leadership is context dependent. Our evidence supports this claim because, in the context for this study, the enactment of one set of our benchmark leadership practices (vision) became more narrowly focused (on student learning) and one new set of practices (school improvement planning) had to be added. We consider this support to be

modest, however, because our generally successful set of benchmark leadership practices encompassed the vast majority of what the sample of school leaders in the study did. Notwithstanding the well-known limitations of a small qualitative study such as ours, many claims about the importance of context in the practice of successful school leadership would seem to be greatly exaggerated, at least in a highly accountable policy context.

What might account for such exaggeration? We conclude by speculating on two possible reasons. One possible reason is distance. The closer one gets to any object – leadership included – the more prominent in one's view become its details and the less visible its general shape. From an orbiting space station the coast of Italy looks like a boot. But from a distance of 10 metres it is a unique and largely unpredictable configuration of sand and water. Which raises a key question for leadership researchers; Is there an ideal "distance" from which to view and describe what it is that successful leaders do?

A second possible reason for exaggerating the importance of context is leadership "style". For example, such personal antecedents of successful leadership practices as beliefs, values, energy and communication skill have a significant effect on leadership behavior. But that effect, we argue, is not to influence *what* leaders do (their practices, as we have described them in this paper) so much as *how* they do it (e.g., aggressively vs. subtly). Claims about the contribution of context to the explanation of successful leadership practices may sometimes be based on confounding differences in style for differences in context. Such claims also raise an important class of questions for further inquiry – how important to the effects of leadership practices is the form of their enactment (or style)?

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CHAPTER 9

SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPALSHIP IN SHANGHAI: A CASE STUDY

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OVERVIEW

This study of successful school principals in China begins with a description of some unique features of the Chinese educational system that both support and constrain principals and their management of schools. Due to their personalities and leadership skills, the two principals described in this chapter were successful in creating the setting for dramatic improvement in their schools. These two schools, both in Shanghai, were at opposite ends of the quality spectrum when the principals arrived. Eastern Senior High School, a municipal "key" school, was one of the best schools in Shanghai. But the school was at a "low tide" when Mr. Pang arrived. Through some innovative ideas in sport and music, Mr. Pang succeeded in revitalizing the school and moved it from the bottom five to one of the top ten of the 26 municipal key schools in Shanghai. At the opposite end, Northern Junior High School was a failing school in the 1980s. Mr. Lo arrived in 1994 and in subsequent years completely changed the school. The concept of "Successful School" developed by Mr. Lo and his team was simple: create continuous success experiences for students. What was impressive were the measures and strategies employed by Mr. Lo to make this a reality.

I began visiting schools in Shanghai in 2001 in order to observe classes, see how teachers prepare lessons and how lessons are evaluated. The two schools on which this chapter is focused were selected because of their contrasting academic achievement as well as characteristics. In June 2002, I talked to both Mr. Pang and Mr. Lo, the school principals and later invited them to join the international research project described in this book.

Formal interviews with the principals, teachers and students were conducted in May 2004. The interview with Mr. Pang was done in two mornings. Because Mr. Lo

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had written a number of articles and published books on Success Schools, I read his work before the interview, which lasted a whole morning. I came back to Mr. Lo later in the year for some minor clarifications about the interview data. Most of the interviews with teachers and students in the two schools were done in groups.

The National Context

Government policy From 1949 to the late 1970s China maintained a closed door policy. The education system, except for the influence of the Russians in the early 50s, went its own way. This isolation was at its height in the 10 years of the Cultural Revolution starting in 1966. After the purge of the Gang of Four and the restoration of Deng Xiaoping, China returned to its pragmatic model of reform and adopted an open door policy. Since then, China has enjoyed a steady, and robust economic growth and has now become the production house of the world, a very dramatic change. In the early 1980s, a number of researchers from other countries visited schools in China and began to realize that much had been achieved by the highly centralized Chinese school system, which had evolved since the 1950s.

In different writings,[1] scholars extolled such qualities of the Chinese educational system including:

- a focus on academic learning;
- career paths for teachers;
- a mentorship system for new teachers;
- district support for teachers for instruction.[2]

These authors also noted, with approval, China's professional development system for teachers at the school level (demonstration lessons, group preparation for lessons and peer evaluation); discipline of students whose basic routine was observed and enforced; and the support of parents for education. Some of these features have been strongly advocated for western schools as well (e.g., Fullan, 2005).

The teaching and research unit and teachers' professional development In 1956, China established the Teaching and Research Unit (TRU) based on the Russian model. It was a centralized network for the professional support of teachers. In each district, the educational bureau organized professional development opportunities for teachers in schools (Yau, 1984; Ding, 2003; Pang, 2003). In the early days, the main task of TRU was to provide training for inexperienced teachers, typically through the use of demonstration lessons given by experienced teachers.[3] Since then, demonstration lessons have become a an institutionalized feature of Chinese education reflecting the culture's respect for experience. Paine (1990; 1992 and Paine et al., 1993) has described this model as 'virtuoso' teaching.

More recently, each school has established its own teaching and research unit (tru) to work with its district TRU. All teachers belong to the 'tru' in their respective schools. In each 'tru,' teachers meet regularly to plan teaching schedules, decide the content of each lesson and set assignments, tests and examinations. The 'tru' is

where young teachers learn from their more experienced colleagues who often serve as their mentors. Each year young teachers are required to observe lessons, mostly in their own schools, but sometimes in others organized by the TRU. Teachers may even observe lessons about subjects other than their own. The school 'tru' also organizes post-lesson discussions (peer evaluation) for teachers. Teachers' professional development is thus enhanced.

Teachers are able to participate in all these activities because their teaching loads are light by Western standards. Light teaching loads was a policy begun in the 1950s to create employment opportunities for more people. Today, the teaching loads in primary schools are still set at 15 to 18 40-minute periods a week, and in junior and high schools, twelve to fifteen 45-minute lessons a week. Classes are normally quite large in China; Cortazzi & Lixian (2001) observed that the majority of Chinese teachers prefer trading off large classes for fewer teaching periods per week.[4]

The basic routine[5] Traditionally, discipline and collectivity have been major concerns of social life in China. People generally accept these values. Children are taught desirable behavior in a group, and the Chinese concept of the "group" is linked concepts of order and responsibility (Tobin et al., 1989). One is reminded of the washroom episode given in Tobin's ethnographic study of the Dong Feng preschool in southwest China. When questioned by the researchers why she made all children go to the washroom at the same time, the kindergarten teacher replied, "Why not? Why should small children go to the bathroom separately? …as a matter of routine, it's good for children to learn to regulate their bodies and attune their rhythms to those of their classmates" (Tobin et al., 1989, p. 105).

While this washroom episode was seen by many American and Japanese preschool teachers as disturbing, the comment from most of the Chinese teachers was that it was an unremarkable example of collectivity. Tobin et al. (1989) also observed that Chinese teachers are not interested in giving freedom to young children for its own sake (p. 121). It is perhaps this requirement of regulating and attuning one's rhythms to those of other classmates from kindergarten onwards which has molded the behavior of children and made classroom teaching in many schools orderly and efficient.[6]

Merit pay When China expanded its schooling after the 1980s, it faced a severe shortage of funds. Schools asked to find ways to generate some of their own funding, adopted such new practices as running factories and lending out school premises (Ng, 2001). Today, many schools, particularly the key schools, are able to secure their own funding to pay part of teachers' salaries.[7] School management then developed an elaborate system to reward teachers. In Shanghai, teachers were paid twice a month – at the beginning of the month from the government funds according to the teacher's qualification, experience, responsibility and teaching load, and at the end of the month from the school's own funds based on individual performance. As part of the end of month payment, all teachers get a basic bonus. Teachers who succeed in bringing up the performance of students in public tests

or examinations and in non-academic activities are given additional and sometimes generous bonuses, China's version of merit-pay.[8]

One might well ask how the China mainland education system could develop such a highly supportive teacher professional development scheme on one hand, but at the same time set teachers up to compete with one another? One plausible explanation is that the Chinese are pragmatic in their approach to solving problems (Wong et al., 2004). This is clearly shown in the economic reform since the1980s. The guiding principle for the reform is a quotation of the late Deng Xiaoping, "Never mind the colour, the cat that catches mice is a good one." Another expressive saying which sums up the experience of this period is, "To wade across the river by touching the stone along the river bed" which suggests that the way to overcome difficulties is by examining each step forward carefully, or "practice is the only standard to test truth". When new methods are tried, they will be examined carefully and judged by their effectiveness in addressing the issue and solving the problem. The seeming contradiction in education could be seen in this light. Further research about how this works in China would be useful. In the west, this would likely be termed "evidence-based" practice.

The role of principals under this system Recently, the Chinese government has diversified the education system by introducing more private schools and by loosening its control. Despite this, Chinese education is still highly centralized and the government still has a major influence on funding, teachers and principal employment, and curriculum design. Principals of secondary and primary schools are hand-picked by local governments from senior or special teachers, helping principals to have the same values as the system.

Organizational structures making up the relatively centralized system of education in China include the teaching and research unit at both district and school level to support teachers in teaching, and a bureaucratic structure with stress on position responsibility to carry out management tasks. With the major tasks of the schools are taken care of, principals devote more time to setting up the long term direction of the school, although many of them still spend time looking for additional resources for their schools.

Evidence for the two case studies pointed to the dominance of pragmatic reasoning and attitudes among principals and teachers. The concern when discussing a new idea was not so much its definition or meaning, but often the question, "how does it work in real situation?" In the interviews with principals and teachers, the words 'discipline', 'obligation' and 'responsibility' were much more frequent than 'democracy', 'trust', 'empowerment' or 'enabling'. Nevertheless, trust and empowerment were noticeable in the career-building of teachers and their professional development but this does not seem to be their major concern.

Eastern Senior High School

Eastern Senior High School was founded in 1915 in the north of Shanghai. The school's mission was to educate the young to love their motherland. After

1949, the school was made a "key school" by the municipal government of Shanghai.[9] In 1992, the junior high section of the school was taken away leaving only the senior high section with 16 classes in each of three levels, about 2000 students and over 120 full-time teachers. In Shanghai, the government provides 9 years of education for all children. At the end of junior high education, all students sit for a graduate examination, the results of which are used for entering senior high schools. Municipal key senior high schools require students to have the highest passing scores for entry, but for a number of years Eastern accepted students with lower passing scores than many other key schools. Also, the rate of students entering universities from Eastern, particularly key universities was far from satisfactory.[10] This was the situation when Mr. Pang arrived.

Mr. Pang Rengu, the principal Mr. Pang completed a 2 year program in the Chinese Language Department of Shanghai Normal University in 1956. After graduation, he taught language in a secondary school. In 1961, Mr. Pang came to Shanghai and worked in the district teacher college. When the district TRU organized demonstration lessons, Mr. Pang was one of the experienced teachers invited to participate. His ability in developing language teachers was gradually established. After the Cultural Revolution, Mr. Pang returned to college and became a research staff member in language, and was later promoted to deputy director of the district TRU. He continued to observe many classrooms, identified good language teachers and promoted good practices. Mr. Pang was appointed principal of Eastern Senior High School in 1986. By that time he was a Senior Grade Teacher.

The 'Mission' of Mr. Pang When Mr. Pang came to Eastern the school was doing poorly, something he was aware of through his work in the district office as deputy director of TRU. He did not change much the first two years. For example, he continued to allow subject teachers to stay home when they had no teaching duties, a legacy of the Cultural Revolution when life was hard and people needed time to stand in queue for daily necessities. He also handled the elderly teachers in Eastern with care. Eastern had a number of teachers who stayed ranked at the 2nd or 1st grades for many years and were considered by others to be using outdated teaching methods. But Mr. Pang emphasized their strong sense of responsibility and care for students. Looking back, Mr. Pang thought he did the right thing because Eastern was suffering a crisis of confidence and he wanted the teachers to face the crisis together.

In early 1988, he established his first 3-year plan. The plan was discussed and endorsed by the teachers in August 1988. On reflection, he said:

In teaching I asked the teachers to build on what the students had learned. I wanted them to help potential students to excel. For the weak students I asked the teachers to focus on their non-academic abilities. Among other things, I proposed to strengthen our volleyball program and to build a new school choir as ways to build up school character. Students who were outstanding in these two activities in the junior high schools were given special consideration to enter Eastern.[11]

Mr. Pang made volleyball and choir central to the long-term plans of the school. His strategy paid off when the volleyball team began to win prizes, including the championship of the Shanghai high school contest for two years. Eastern has remained a strong competitor ever since and, at the time of writing this chapter, was a training ground for second level national athletes in volleyball. The school choir also achieved outstanding results, winning the first national champion senior high school singing contest in 1995, a title they continue to hold. These outstanding results helped Eastern gain back its reputation as a municipal key school and attract more able students. In the early 1990s, the school's entrance rate into university began to rise. In 1986, the entrance rate was slightly over 90%, near the bottom of the 26 municipal key senior high schools. But by the late 1990s, the rate had risen to 98%, making Eastern one of the top 10 key schools in the district.

Mr. Pang retired as principal in 1999, was made the Honorary Principal, and worked in the school as a language teacher until September 2003 when he was appointed principal of a nearby private senior high school.

Mr. Pang thought of himself as a lenient person and he recalled two instances that reflected best his approach to staff management. In the first instance, he had just become principal of Eastern when a female student sent him a complaint letter and asked for an interview. The girl revealed that she was not allowed to participate in a physical education demonstration lesson because the teacher feared she would bring down the performance of the class. This was a serious mistake, but Mr. Pang understood that the teacher was under pressure to perform. He consoled the girl and promised to talk to the teacher. He waited for an opportunity to talk to the teacher and let him know that it was wrong to exclude the student from the lesson. He then asked the teacher to explain to the student and send her an apology. The teacher listened to his advice and the problem was resolved.

A second example of leniency concerned an English teacher. In the mid-1990s, the teacher had just been promoted to 1st grade teacher. At the end of the school term she informed Mr. Pang that a friend had invited her to study abroad, so she wanted to quit her job. Mr. Pang agreed and she left. But Mr. Pang later learned that her plan had not materialized so he invited her back to teach. The teacher returned and stayed for another year, but this time she was offered a scholarship to Australia. She once again approached Mr. Pang and once again he agreed to let her go. Some senior teachers were not pleased with the decision, thinking that he was spoiling the teacher. Mr. Pang explained that he knew the teacher well and that she wouldn't give up until she succeeded. Two years later, after she completed her studies, the teacher rejoined Eastern and has stayed at the school ever since, recently having been promoted to senior teacher. Because of Mr. Pang's "leniency", a short-term loss turned into a long-term gain for Eastern.

The views of teachers Seven teachers were interviewed at Eastern as part of the case study, most in a focus group. Except for the deputy principal, who was invited

to the school, the others (one Biology, one Language, one English Language and three Mathematics teachers) joined Eastern because of its key school status. Five of the teachers had joined Eastern five years prior to my study. All seven had good feelings about the school. They believed the school provided them chances to succeed. The young teachers confirmed that they were being mentored by two experienced teachers; one in their subject matter and the other in class-teacher relations. When asked what they liked most about the school, the English language teacher replied she was impressed by the self-management work of the students. Student self-management committees were set up at each level to look after basic routines and the general hygiene of the corridors and the canteen. In fact, students took turns daily to clean the school.

When asked about the practice of admitting students with lower scores having special talent in sports and music, a few teachers felt it affected the general academic quality of the school, though not seriously. The teacher who taught the final year of Mathematics added that she felt pressure maintaining student performance in the public examination. She noted that another key school had overtaken her students' math scores two years earlier. After the results were known, the official in charge of 'tru' and the deputy principal of academics met with her to discuss ways to better prepare her students.

The problem of maintaining high passing rates into universities had a cost at Eastern – the stress it placed on teachers, an issue worthy of further study.

Northern Junior High School

This school was founded in 1963 near the railway station in the northern part of Shanghai. It was in a district in which most families lived in poor housing conditions and had very low average levels of education resulting, in turn, in high levels of semi-illiteracy and crime. In 1987, when there were still primary-six graduation examinations, scores in Language, Mathematics and English Language for students recruited by Northern were among the lowest in the district. When the examinations were abolished in 1996, and recruitment was based on students' neighborhood, scores improved, but were still very low. Indeed, the school had most of the characteristics of a failing school: low teacher moral, poor equipment and facilities, low academic standards and poor student behavior. Parents regarded Northern as a camp for the worst students.

When Mr. Lo took over as principal of the school in 1994, there were 45 classes, about 2100 students and more than 100 teachers. About one third of these teachers were close to retirement. Today, the school has 36 classes, 1625 students and 92 teachers (14 senior grade, 50 at either 2nd or 1st grade and 28 junior grade teachers).

Mr. Lo Binkai, the principal and his successful education project Before he became principal, Mr. Lo, who was in his mid 50s at the time of my study was involved in the improvement of schools. He had taught in another low standard school from 1970 to 1980. In 1980 he was appointed Deputy Principal of Northern

Junior High School. An incident that happened to a former student shocked him. As Mr. Lo explained:

It was early 1980 when I had just come. A past student came back to visit the teachers regularly. I met him several times in the campus. Then for a period he did not return. I asked his former class-teacher[12] *about him. The teacher told me the student was involved in a fight and he killed the other guy with a knife. He was sentenced to death. I was shocked. The student looked very decent to me. How could he be so violent? Could we help him before if we knew? Could we help those like him? How many are in our school? I have a lot of questions in my mind but I had no answers. In 1980 other than Deputy Principal, I was also a class-teacher and I visited the families of the students every term. I thought I knew some of their situations. Still I had no solution to the questions.*

In 1983, Mr. Lo had a chance to study for a full-time diploma in East China Normal University. With the student in mind, he wrote his dissertation based on a survey of over 900 students' social activities in the district. He wanted to find out the problems these students faced and how they might be helped.

When he graduated in 1985, Mr. Lo was not sent back to Northern Junior High School. Instead he was transferred to the district education bureau to head a research project to support low ability students. Among the 36 secondary level schools in the district, 12 were identified as low standard. He visited the 12 schools, observed classrooms and teacher practices, and talked to teachers and students. The students showed neither confidence in their own abilities nor interest in learning. One of their shared experiences was repeated failure. It was from this common experience of students that Mr. Lo and his team developed their intervention strategy. Repeated failure was the cause of their problems, and the intervention was simple and direct – create repeated, successful experiences for students.[13]

In 1987, with the support of the district education bureau, Mr. Lo started his intervention in Northern Junior High School. From 1987 to 1990, he was given two classes to test his scheme. The scheme had three elements:

- Provide positive expectations and realistic requirements and a firm belief that every child wishes and has the potential to succeed;
- Provide chances for success which involve four features: low starting point; small step in progress; varied activities and; quick feedback;
- Provide positive encouragement and teach students to master their own evaluation.

Work to implement the scheme in classrooms proceeded through three stages. First, teachers stimulated their students in the learning activities. This was based on the belief that every student wishes and has the potential to succeed. Teachers then built up realistic expectations and goals for each student from a low starting point based on the student's foundation and ability. Teachers encouraged and supported students to achieve these goals through hard work.

Mr. Lo believed that, at the outset, teachers would be worried that low starting points would further lower standards. But the 'low starting point' strategy would stimulate interest and enable students to have successful experiences. Once students had achieved early success, they would be more willing to try again. The teachers'

task was to support students in working toward new goals until the students reached or exceeded the required level. It became the teachers' task to adjust the goals and provide continuous support and new challenges for students.

In the second stage, once early success had been attained, teachers then put more effort into creating situations that encouraged students to participate even more in the learning activities. The aim was to help build students' self-confidence. It was a very challenging task for teachers, one Mr. Lo felt he still had to work on a lot.

Because teacher training and development is central to the scheme, teachers were given opportunities to develop their potential and desire for success. They attended seminars on Success Education, with follow-up actions. They learned self-analysis. They studied their own strengths and weaknesses to aid self-growth. They were encouraged to believe that every child has the potential to succeed and to appreciate each and every student.

The third stage of the scheme was an extension of the second. As students experienced more success, they were encouraged under the guidance and support of their teachers to raise their expectations and strive for greater success. They also learned how to adjust goals when they encountered difficulties or trouble.

Implementation of the scheme fairly went smoothly; Mr. Lo recalled that teachers were keen to implement the plan, feeling that they were doing something for the students. After 2 years, about a dozen students in the two classes showed major improvements, while the rest also showed progress, though not as spectacular. Mr. Lo and his team felt that it was the right strategy and, based on their recommendation, the Bureau decided to extend the scheme to the whole school before it was applied to the whole district.

It was one thing to bring change to one or two classrooms, but a very different story to bring success to a school when all the teachers were involved. A new principal was appointed to the school in 1990 to push the reform, but he had little success over the 4 years of his tenure. Mr. Lo recalled that the school faced one big problem: the teachers' mind-set which gave them a negative attitude towards the students. The new principal did not fully grasp the concept of Success Education, according to Mr. Lo, nor was he able to change the views of teachers about their students. Mr. Lo was asked by the Bureau to take up the principalship again in 1994 and to continue the reform.

Success education today: Some outstanding results Before 1990, Northern Junior High School was regarded as one of the bottom schools in the district. The school had been trying to make improvements in the passing rates of the six subjects[14] in the district test. Before 1994, the passing rate was below the average standard among the 12 lowest standard schools. But by 1996, 2 years after Mr. Lo took over the school for the second time, the passing rate in Form 1 was above the average standard of the 12 schools for the first time. Since then, Northern has maintained an above average standard, particularly in Math, but also in English Language and Language. In 1994, 6.9% of students repeated Form 1 and 5.3% repeated Form 2. By 1995, the repeat rate for Form 1 was only 3.5% and Form 2 – 2.4%. And

since 1996, the school's continued efforts with the Success Education strategy have reduced the repeat rate to near zero.

Northern documented its experiences. Since 1989 some 200 essays and papers have been appeared in journals and books, published not only by the school but also appearing in district and national level journals. These publications share the experiences of teachers from different subjects in curriculum redesign. Northern is now the base of Success Education and organizes regular seminars and workshops for teachers and principals in schools outside the district.

At the classroom level, Ms. Yang, a language teacher, discussed improvements in a class which she taught for the three years (Form 1 to Form 3). She recalled that when students entered Form 1 in 1997, a few parents placed their children in another school and never showed up. Some other parents resisted Northern, but since they had no other practical options, they were resigned to it. But Ms. Yang firmly believed something could be done with the students. In the 1st year, she organized activities during the class-teacher period to let students talk about their 'shining' experiences. In a supportive atmosphere, she saw most students were willing to share their success. She worked with other subject teachers to practice low starting point and small steps of progress. She worked closely with parents in the first year. There were monthly meetings with parents organized by the school. She visited individual students in their homes. Most students showed progress at the end of the 1st year. Ms. Yang remembered that each successive time she met parents their hostility towards Northern dropped a bit more.

In the 2nd year, parents were no longer the problem, but the behavior of a few students was. Despite this, by the 3 year, among the remaining 42 students, 18 were awarded the '3-good students' title in the district, 150 students (in accumulation) gained merits in good behavior, two-third of whom had been praised individually, and not even the few difficult students had committed serious crimes.

Continuous reform After Mr. Lo took over as principal the second time, his major task was to re-build the teaching force by focusing on two issues: the capacity of teachers and successful experiences for students. Since he was no stranger to the school, he was able to gather a group of teachers who shared the spirit of Success Education and were willing to be the class – and subject teachers of Form 1. As he recalled

In early 1994, I realized that I desperately needed the support of the teachers. But the teaching force in 1994 was in poor shape. About one third of them were waiting to retire, a number had difficulty in teaching and the rest did not know how to move forward.

Mr. Lo knew that teachers would not object to the spirit of Success Education, at least not openly. He began to set up the framework for Success Education and required teachers to implement it in their classrooms. To build up the teaching force, he made use of group preparation, demonstration lessons and evaluations after lessons to promote the framework. In organized supporting workshops for teachers, he applied his early experience to help them go through self-development and self-analysis. In this way, the practice of Success Education was regularized

and he asked teachers to internalize it in their teaching. He knew it would take years before teachers could do so and he did not leave it to chance. When asked about the main difficulty he faced, he replied, "Teachers." Not only did he need to boost teacher morale, he had to deal with some difficult teachers. Looking back, he was certain he did the right thing.

In 1995, he adopted the framework of Success Education as the criteria for teacher evaluation. The evaluation was done by the 'tru' twice a year and he took part in it. When a good teacher was identified, his or her classes were videotaped and shown as an example to others. He made use of a bonus system introduced in the 1990s to reward teachers. He made tough decision about teachers who received continuous complaints from students and parents.

He also took tough action against teachers who received poor evaluations. First, he removed them from class-teacher duties. If there was no improvement, he reduced their teaching duties. In some cases he even moved the teachers to other schools, a measure introduced in Shanghai in the early 1990s to break the iron hold of the teaching profession. Teachers who were moved continued to receive a salary from the school for a year. A year later, it was up to the receiving school to decide whether the teacher would be kept. If it did, the new school would then pay the teacher. From 1994 to 2003, some 30 teachers were moved and another 27 retired.

Mr. Lo used this opportunity to recruit new teachers, although this was not a straightforward matter because Northern still had a notorious reputation, and few teachers from Shanghai wanted to work there. He had to turn to other provinces for teachers. Of all the teachers he hired after 1994, two-thirds came from outside Shanghai, a phenomenon that gradually changed after 2000.

By the late 1990s it was apparent that Mr. Lo relied on new teachers for his Success Education reform in Northern. For example, in 1995 he recruited Mr. Wang, an experienced Math teacher from outside Shanghai. Mr. Wang was quick to embrace the spirit of Success Education. In Mathematics, he developed varied activities and levels to suit the abilities of different students. Mr. Wang became a highly visible example of Success Education and his lessons were videotaped and analyzed for others to study and follow. Within three years, he became a Senior Grade Teacher. Now, besides teaching, his main job was to mentor young Math teachers. Having experienced teacher mentoring young teachers was one of the strategies Mr. Lo pursued.

At the time of data collection for this chapter, Mr. Lo said, with a sense of satisfaction, that he had built a teaching force with substantial experience in bringing change to students. His next task was to deepen the reform in different subject areas inside the classrooms.

The teachers' assessment The five teachers I interviewed were all supportive of Success Education. This group included Wang, the Math specialist; Lin, a young Math teacher then under the mentorship of Wang; Yung, a language teacher and Woo, a English language teacher. They agreed that their work at Northern was demanding, but that it was also most rewarding to find individual students who

struggled and improved. When asked how it was possible that the students grade retention rate was close to zero, Ms Lin told this story:

There was little Ng in my class and I was the class-teacher. Little Ng suffered from polio and his brain was affected. When he came to Northern from the primary his mom said to me that she wouldn't mind if little Ng did not learn much. But I decided to give little Ng my support. I practiced low starting point with him. Seeing this was not sufficient I gave him extra-lessons after school. Little Ng loved to come to me for extra lessons. Probably he didn't have much attention before. He showed eagerness in learning. After a term, he got some improvement in both Math and Language. But he was not passing.

In the promotion meeting at the end of Form 1, little Ng's case was brought up. I and the Language teacher praised him for his good attitude and efforts. Though little Ng had tried, he was still below the passing standard. Other subject teachers raised the concern that little Ng would pull down the average scores of the 6 subjects in Form 2. I realized the concern but I argued that little Ng has tried his best. I argued also that in Success Education we promoted success, and retaining little Ng would not help him or the school. The 'tru' in charge stepped in to reiterate similar themes of Success Education and I saw the other subject teachers reluctantly gave in.

When asked why this did not seem to affect the six subjects scores, Ms. Lin said the learning atmosphere in Northern was much improved. She guessed that a sizable number of students who had made considerable progress might have carried the weak students along. As for little Ng, she said that he was continuously promoted and left school last year after Form 3. Although he did not get his graduation certificate, Ms. Lin was happy that little Ng had had a relatively pleasant life in Northern and she attributed it to the result of Success Education.

Today, Northern no longer has the reputation of being a failing school. Although many parents still prefer former key junior high schools, when their children are sent to Northern, they are not as concerned as before.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the past two decades, researchers have pointed out the different core values held in Asian organizations (Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Hallinger, Walker, & Bajunid, 2005). While we are fully aware of the differences, our knowledge of how these values played out in the different Asian contexts is still limited. The present study is one attempt to fill this gap.

The two principals studied were both "successful" by most definitions and had much in common with other successful principals described in the chapters of this book. But the ways they worked through the problems in the context of the Chinese educational system was very different. First, the two principals, though serving schools of differing quality, were placed as a result of meritocracy, which has a rich tradition in China. They were put in different positions to prove themselves before being appointed to the principalship. They both knew the system well and shared the same values.

Second, they were both "top-down" managers. Although consultative processes were used to involve teachers in major decisions, involvement was typically a response to the initiative of the principals. Once decisions were made, deputy principals and teachers in middle management were charged with implementing

them, which is known in China as position responsibility. This is consistent with an expectation of how schools should be managed in China. This is also how the 'high power distance' organizations described by Hofstede, (1980, 1991) works best, i.e., clear leadership direction and effective implementation from subordinates.

But the two principals were very different in their styles of leadership. Mr. Pang was conservation when he entered Eastern school, not pushing for rapid change in the first two years. This probably was the right approach since there was no immediate crisis to resolve in the school. He handled staff relationships well, which gained him trust. On the other hand, the problems faced by Mr. Lo in the failing Northern school, were very severe. Mr. Lo had to act fast and he was committed and resolute in his actions.

The two principals knew the larger school system well and they exploited it in the interests of their schools. Mr. Pang used the privilege enjoyed by municipal key schools to recruit potential talent to build up the school volleyball team and choir as ways to revitalize the school and successfully gain back the confidence of parents. Mr. Lo exploited the new measures introduced in Shanghai to reward good teachers and move unsatisfactory ones. This enabled him to recruit and build a new teaching force around the Success Education framework. What was most impressive about Mr. Lo was his ability to effectively implement the framework that completely changed the status of his school in a few years.

It is clear from these two cases that successful principals engage in many of the same practices and share many of the same values. But different school circumstances require them to enact those common values in dramatically different ways, often "leveraging" conditions created outside the school in ways that further their purposes.

NOTES

[1] Paine, 1990; Paine & Ma, 1993; Cheng & Wong, 1996; Cortazzi & Lixian, 2001; Wong, Law, Wang, Ewu and Wu, 2004.

[2] Hong Kong shares three of these features: focusing on academic learning, general discipline of students, and parents' support to education which are culturally related. But in student discipline, we do not have the basic routine requirement as in China mainland schools. This aspect, together with the other features, were largely developed within China since the 1950s.

[3] Teachers in China are ranked under five hierarchical titles:

- 3rd Grade Teachers: Beginning teachers
- 2nd Grade Teachers: Intermediate teachers, promoted from 3rd Grade Teachers after 3 to 5 years service by internal evaluation
- 1st Grade Teachers: Advanced teachers, promoted from 2nd Grade Teachers after 4 to 5 years service by internal evaluation
- Senior Teachers: promoted from 1st Grade Teachers after 3–5 years service by external evaluation. Senior Teachers need to have one or more publications before promotion
- Special (model) Teachers: An honorary title given to experienced teachers who are outstanding country-wide

[4] The Shanghai Education Bureau, due to a drop in population, has recently introduced small class (24 students) teaching in some schools.

[5] Teachers have their basic routine which refers to the desirable ways of doing their duties. Position Responsibility which requires the teacher in charge of certain activities to follow through the work is one of them.

[6] Cortazzi and his colleague (2001, p.124) when observing a lesson in Wuhan, reported the following interaction activities in teaching the Chinese language:

- the teacher reads or explains, students listen, one student reads or comments;
- several students read in a pre-set sequence (reading a paragraph or dialogue);
- the whole class reads in chorus;
- half the class read in chorus (by seating rows);
- the whole class reads aloud but each student reads at his or her own pace;
- students read silently (usually with a pre-set task).

[7] Recently, with increased revenue, some local governments (e.g. Shanghai) have begun to regulate these self funding activities and have attempted to centralize the additional funding for equal distribution to schools but part of a salary is still based on one's merits.

[8] Another development in Shanghai is the attempt to break the life long contract of the teachers. Teachers are now subject to evaluation by the school through their public lessons, self evaluation and appraisal. Each year, the few teachers who are in the bottom of the evaluation will be asked to improve. If the same situation continues, their teaching is reduced or they are moved to take up minor duties.

[9] Today, municipal Shanghai has 19 districts and in addition to municipal key schools, there are also district key schools.

[10] Despite recent reforms to move away from examinations, high rates of students entering universities and key universities remain key criteria of parents and students choosing senior high schools. A young scholar commented: The voice of reforming the existing examination-oriented education to quality-oriented education is very high these years. But the proportion of students entering university is still the senior high schools' lifeline and a very important criterion for parental choice. (Tian, 2003, p11).

[11] For example in 2003, Eastern set the entrance composite scores (six subjects) in the Junior high examination at 480. But for students of volleyball and music (singing), the required score was lowered to 460.

[12] There are two main categories of teachers in schools in China, the class-teachers and subject teachers. The class-teachers look after the welfare of students and their academic progress. They meet parents and visit students in their homes. Often they stay with their class for more than a year and establish bonds with the students. These jobs are done mostly by 3rd and 2nd grade teachers, teachers who are young and usually energetic.

[13] Their ideas were later published in a book titled: *Difficulty in learning for the students*. In the book, the difficulty of finding one solution to a problem created by multiple causes was discussed. Lo and his team adopted the method used in Chinese medical treatment: locate and focus on treating the main cause of the disease. The rationale is that when the main cause is solved, the related issues are addressed. Success Education, according to Mr. Lo, has two phases. The first phase is academic improvement as shown by improved test scores. The second phase is to build self-confidence even when improvement is not yet up to the required level.

[14] Each year unified tests are held in six subjects: Language, English language, Math, Science, Social Science and Political Studies at Form 1 and 2 levels for all schools in the district (this also happens in other districts). Though these tests are not formal examinations, since they do not affect a school's internal promotion of students, every school knows the results of the tests. The total scores of these six subjects are used as a crude yardstick to judge the overall standard of schools and students. For this reason, raising scores on these tests became the target of teachers and the principal. It was, therefore, a major issue when students at Northern Junior High School achieved above average scores in the 6 subjects, particularly in Math, Language and English Language.

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CHAPTER 10

AGAINST THE ODDS: SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPALS IN CHALLENGING U.S. SCHOOLS

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter is based on case studies of seven challenging schools located in Western New York State, U.S.A, and the leadership practices their principals employed that contributed to the success of these schools. The chapter is presented in three parts: first, a brief overview of the governance, policy setting, funding and social context of public education in the U.S.A. Second, a description of the case study sites, the principals and the criteria used to select these schools. Third, a two stage analytical framework is then outlined, initially based upon the core dimensions of leadership identified by Leithwood & Riehl (2003), followed by a more detailed emergent framework of enabling 'principles of practice' that were evident to varying degrees in all seven schools.

SETTING THE CONTEXT: THE GOVERNANCE, POLICY AND FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The United States has probably the most decentralized approach to the governance, policy setting and funding of public education of all the countries depicted in this book. Despite increasingly high profile federal legislation, education in the United States is the responsibility of 50 similar, but constitutionally autonomous, state systems. State education departments (SED) delegate considerable power and responsibility to local school districts that, in turn, are overseen by elected school boards. In 2000 there were 14,700 school districts serving 47 million children in the United States from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with Hawaii operating as the only unitary district (2000 Census). New York State, the location of our case

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studies, has over 700 districts, although the number continues to gradually reduce through consolidation and annexation.

The funding of education in the United States follows a similar decentralized pattern. On average, school districts receive 48% of their resources from state coffers, and 45% from local taxes.[1] Although the federal government provides only 7% of educational funding on average, its influence upon accountability policy through legislation seeking higher standards of student achievement has been profound. For example, in 2002 the federal "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act requires states to administer annual benchmarked proficiency tests in reading and math to all students in grades 3–8. Schools failing to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) over a two-year period toward 100% proficiency are deemed in need of improvement, and become eligible for additional federal school improvement funding. Continued lack of AYP triggers progressively severe sanctions, including reconstitution, replacement of staff, or designation as a charter school. Parents also become eligible for the right to choose an alternative school for their children within the district.

In a New York "Learning Standards" initiative that has since been strengthened by NCLB, the State Education Department publishes annual school report cards that track student performance on state standardised tests in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics in grades 4 and 8. Results are then compared with similar schools elsewhere in the state, and receive considerable attention from the state, local administrators and, not least, a readily critical media. Consistently under-performing schools, such as the Hamilton case discussed in this chapter, are named a School Under Registration Review (SURR). Failure to improve can lead to rigorous inspection, state take-over or dissolution. Although SURR status attracts additional technical and financial support, districts, schools and principals can become stigmatised to the extent that parents often move their children to other districts. The exercising of parental choice can lead to decreased tax revenues and diminished property values that severely compromise a district's ability to deliver its educational mission. Thus, the marked social and economic disparities that already exist between high poverty urban districts and their more affluent suburban neighbours, the so called 'savage inequalities' (Kozol, 1991), are exacerbated by accountability mandates that are particularly damaging to the education opportunities of children that remain in high need schools.[2]

Hence, the focus of this chapter is to examine the practices of school principals who successfully, and at times 'against the odds', improved student achievement in challenging socio-economic environments – an area that others have indicated is underrepresented in the leadership literature (Bizar & Barr, 2001; Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000; Hopkins, 2001).

THE CASE SITES, THE PRINCIPALS AND THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Since the focus of the US study is on principal leadership in challenging environments, purposive sampling was used to select six high need schools from five different school districts in Western New York State based upon NYSED data.[3]

In addition to need, the selection of schools was also determined by evidence of improvement during the tenure of the current principal, specifically, improved student performance on standardised tests, with four of the schools selected having been recognised as being among the state's 'most improved' during the principal's tenure. The seventh school, a suburban elementary, although not listed as high need, was included in the study because it had maintained high academic performance even as the SES status of the surrounding community has declined.

Our sample included five elementary schools (of various grade groupings), one middle school (grades 5–8) and one high school (grades 9–12). Three schools come from the same large urban district (one of New York State's so-called "Big Five"); two schools from small city districts (one that has primarily urban, and the other with more rural characteristics); one comes from a first-ring suburban district; and one from a rural district.

We also sought diversity in terms the personal and professional characteristics of our principals. Among the seven studied there were five women and two men, three African Americans and four Caucasians. Two principals had doctoral degrees; five have more than thirty years experience as educators, three with 19 or more years in administration including principalships at more than one site, while four were newcomers to the role. Key characteristic of the schools and principals that we selected are summarised in Table 10.1.

FRAMEWORKS FOR ANALYSIS

Our case analyses began with a determination of whether our seven principals exhibited the three core leadership practices that Leithwood & Riehl (2003) contend are necessary conditions for school success, regardless of context. Specifically, these core practices include:

- Setting directions, i.e., helping develop a set of shared goals that encourage a sense of common purpose. To set a clear direction, a leader must be able to articulate a common vision, create high performance expectations and then communicate the vision and expectations effectively.
- Developing people, i.e., influencing behaviour towards the achievement of shared goals through intellectual stimulation, the modelling of desired behaviours and the provision of individual and collective support.
- Redesigning the organisation, i.e., facilitating the work of the school community in achieving shared goals may require a leader to reshape a school's culture and structure to match its objectives.

Initial data analysis revealed that all seven principals utilised these core practices, in varying degrees, to improve the performance of their schools, with Fraser Academy being the exemplar.[4] But, as Leithwood and Riehl's review of the literature would suggest, demonstrating the existence of these core practices was insufficient to reveal the unique and complex role played by principals in improving their respective schools. As suggested elsewhere in the literature, the ways in

Table 10.1. U.S. Case Study Summaries

School Grade Levels Community type		Costello PK-6 Small city – (urban)	Hamilton PK-8 Urban	Crockett K-5 Rural	Coleman K-5 Suburban	Fraser K-8 Urban	Kelly M.S. 6-8 Small city – (rural)	Pershing H.S. 9-12 Urban
Student Characteristics	Enrol. (Ages)	857 (4-11)	397 (4-14)	459 (5-10)	505 (5-11)	519 (5-14)	697 (11-14)	883 (14-21)
	Need	High	High	High	Low	High	High	High
	(%) FR Lunch	74	82	62	15	90	32	41
	Exp. Per Pupil	$12,800	$12,200	$12,400	$10,900	$12,200+	$10,800	$12,200
	Race/Ethnicity	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
	Caucasian	33	2	97	95	1	88	25
	African-	53	94	1	1	98	9	55
	Hispanic-	5	3	1	1	1	2	3
	Native-	3	1	0	0	0	0	17
	Asian-	6	0	1	3	0	1	0
Principal Characteristics	Age	50s	50s	50s	50s	50s	40s	50s
	Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female
	Race/Ethnicity	African-	African-	Caucasian	Caucasian	African-	Caucasian	Caucasian
	Yrs Educator	35	14	34	33	38	17	36
	Yrs Admin.	12	4	24	19	28	7	14
	Yrs Principal in School	8	4	22	6	10	4	8
	Qualifications	M.A.	M.A.	M.A.	Ed.D.	Ph.D.	M.A.	M.A.

which these practices emerged and how they interrelated was neither linear nor formulaic (Gronn, 1996; Portin, 1999). Each principal accommodated instability in their internal and external context by adapting their core practices to the nature and degree of change experienced over time. In this way, they were able to maintain a sense of purposeful directionality (Reitzug, 1994), whilst building the capacity necessary for continuous improvement (Harris & Chapman, 2002). As a result of contextual instability, improvement over time can come in fits and starts and is, unfortunately, neither consistently incremental nor always in a positive direction. We also found that what our seven principals did and when they did it was, as others have argued, not only contextual, but contingent upon self as well as setting (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Sarason, 1972). The relative success of the leaders that we studied depended on a school's social organisation, the goals that had been developed (whether externally mandated of internally agreed), the resources made available and the timeframes established, as well as the personalities and characteristics of the individuals involved (especially of the principal).

In attempting to 'unpack' the three essential core practices that form the necessary foundation for success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), our case studies helped us to identify several interrelated 'enabling principles' that consistently shaped the beliefs and actions of successful leaders as they confronted the challenges of high need schools. Data exemplifying three of these enabling principles, namely: accountability, care and learning, will now be discussed in turn.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY PRINCIPLE

Even though our principals were subject to common NYSED performance standards, what we term 'the accountability principle' was strongly evident in almost all seven schools, especially in the urban settings, and across all three core leadership practices. Rather than viewing external pressure as an obstacle to improvement, principals were learning to use accountability mandates as a means of raising stakeholder expectations for improved student achievement – leveraging a directional goal that they were already pursuing. Principals were able to capitalise on this directional clarity by shaping the school's discourse around the achievement of more sharply defined learning goals – particularly in relation to literacy and mathematics.

Accountability data, available from the local BOCES[5] 'Data Warehouse', or district, were widely used by principals to overcome initial obstacles to improvement such as professional denial, unnecessarily restrictive union practices, and poor teaching. Data-driven school improvement planning helped to stimulate collaborative dialogue, shared learning, the recognition of the importance of professional development, and the monitoring of progress toward the achievement of shared goals. Leveraging externally imposed accountability mandates also helped many of the principals to breath new life into traditional 'quality assurance devices' such as teacher observation and evaluation, teacher record keeping (such as the computerised replacement of mark books and hand-written report cards), and the alignment of lesson plans to state standards.

Like their principals, young to mid-career teachers generally not only welcomed the clarity of focus that accountability-driven state standards brought to their classroom practice, but also valued the professional support of their principal. As instructional leaders, some principals were particularly adept at supporting teachers in maintaining their focus upon improved instruction (Coleman, Fraser, & Hamilton). Others variously supported their schools by garnering additional resources, building coalitions and partnerships with their local business and higher education communities. All supported their teachers by maintaining their approachability through an 'open door' policy, were willing to 'run interference' between teachers and often violent and abusive parents, and created a safe, nurturing and welcoming work environment. In other words, in these schools, accountability helped the principal's direction setting to move beyond being just a necessary condition for success, to becoming a broadly-based enabling condition for future school improvement.

That said, the success of principals at influencing direction setting through the support of external accountability mandates did not receive universal support. A core of veteran teachers, particularly in our most challenging schools (Costello, Fraser, & Hamilton)[6] were critical of their loss of professional autonomy, and a lack of time, to impact affective as well as effective (and increasingly mandated) student learning (Hargreaves, 2003). In several cases we evidenced some professional retrenchment or disengagement or, more rarely still, open hostility to, or fear of, the principal. Special education teachers were particularly frustrated, even angry, at the potential for "psychological" damage that high stakes testing had created, and the extent to which their ability to motivate students was constrained by having to "teach to the test". In more than one school, special needs teachers felt marginalized and "ignored" by principals who they perceived as concentrating upon improving test scores at the expense of their needy students.

Against this formal backdrop, informal accountability norms, driven by peer pressure, also emerged in those schools where principals' were successful at facilitating a collaborative vision and shared goals, most notably Coleman, Fraser and Hamilton. Peer pressure was more evident where principals had high professional expectations, yet nurtured strong relationships through the care and support of teachers.

We also found that teachers felt more informal accountability pressure in the company of principals who were knowledgeable, engaged, and student-centered instructional leaders. These principals variously engaged with their faculty in collaborative learning in relation to new program initiatives; taught classes or individual challenging students, and established programs for parents that applied 'covert pressure' to support their children's learning at home. As one respondent from Fraser told us,

Let's say I was a reluctant teacher, the pressure of seeing your peers working is going to get to you. The pressure of having your supervisor saying, 'what's going on,' is going to get to you. So, this is not the environment for someone who just wants to lay back.

Whether student-centered school goals were determined collaboratively (which was most often the case), or principals' acted unilaterally, the message from one of the principals was clear, direct and representative of the high expectations of her fellow administrators: "... if they [teachers] had any problem with the goals, they may need to consider going somewhere else because that was going to be my direction and my commitment to this community".

THE CARING PRINCIPLE

Accountability through high expectations, whether externally mandated or internally nurtured, was tempered by our principals' sustained belief in the principle of care. In much the same way that accountability enabled direction setting, we found that for the principals in our study, their ability to develop and influence people was enhanced by the reciprocal, caring relationships they created with faculty, students and parents (Mulford, Silins, & Leithwood, 2004).

Such a "long-term" view of how to create and sustain positive school cultures – supporting and responding to the professional and (often) personal needs of their constituents, contrasts sharply with traditional principal-centred images of leadership that rely upon positional power, bureaucratic administrative structures and formal 'arms-length' professional relationships (Gronn, 1996).

In our most challenging schools, where discipline had broken down, vandalism was rife, parents alienated, and teachers embittered and isolated, having a strong, caring principal was a sea change. The first priority of the principal at Fraser, one of two exemplars for the caring principle, was to earn the trust and respect of her students, teachers and parents (see Giles, Johnson, Brooks, & Jacobson, 2005). To do so, she quickly re-established discipline and created a safe, orderly and attractive school environment conducive for learning. These small, but significant steps not only signalled to the community that their children deserved a better education, in better conditions, but that she cared enough to be an advocate on behalf of students' parents.

With a faculty where trust and respect of students, parents and each other had eroded, her actions signalled that she cared about their safety, and wanted them to have the working conditions necessary to teach to their full potential. To this end, the principal articulated and consciously modelled behaviours that teachers could emulate, specifically asking them to view their interaction with students through the eyes of parents who wanted nothing more than for their children than to have a chance of a real education.

Coleman Elementary provided a second example of how the caring principle enabled a principal to develop people. The school was a mature, long-established learning community working to capacity, yet fearful of a new administrator making unrealistic demands upon their already over-extended professionalism. The principal won them over at their first faculty meeting when she announced, "Your family comes first; this job does not come first." By establishing a family-focused sense of community, teachers were comfortable approaching the principal with their personal

as well as professional problems because she evidently valued and cared about them as individuals, not just as employees. In extending the now popular notion of professional learning community (Louis & Kruse, 1995) to include 'personal need', the faculty quickly allied themselves with the principal and were willing to help in collaboratively developing new goals and objectives, where previously these may have been resisted.

In all our schools, principals also used the principle of care to 'recapture' a presence in the hallways, classrooms and the community. In our more challenging schools, where former administrators had retreated to their offices, this too was a sea change. At Costello, the principal modelled care and commitment by positioning herself in the front hall, greeting parents and students at the beginning and end of every school day. Similarly, at Crockett, the principal 'leads by walking around', and demonstrates caring by greeting parents and students, regularly attending parent meetings and encouraging parents to volunteer in the classroom. At Fraser, the principal works closely with the local Block Club[7] and her parent action committee to deal with community issues such as poverty, drug related crime, and dangerous road crossings, that impact student safety and their readiness for learning. Her evident caring stance and strong relationship with, and development of, parents had a positive effect upon the success of her school.

One last example of how the principle of caring enabled the development of people was found at Hamilton, a school where, declining enrolment, a transient population, the threat of closure, and SURR status, called for decisive action by this first time principal. She demonstrated how much she cared about her students, faculty and school community by adopting a positive stance, restoring discipline, reassuring parents that standards would improve, and taking a very active role as an instructional leader (Blase & Blase, 1999). When a replacement Math teacher could not be found part way through the year she decided, "... to get in there and help them myself ... I would have to figure out the best way to help these kids learn the math standards ... and quickly."[8] Not only had the principal quickly earned a reputation for treating teachers, students and parents fairly, but respect for the fact that she didn't hesitate to "roll up her sleeves" to get difficult jobs done, and was a role model that others wanted to emulate. As one teacher noted,

You can't ask people to do things that you're not willing to do yourself. If you're not willing to stay after and come in on Saturday, and if you're not willing to sit in the office and help a kid who's after school, then don't ask anyone else to do it. Those things have happened. Leading by example, especially a willingness to do the hard work of teaching is the biggest thing that's made a difference. She's going to stand out on the street corner with everybody else in the rain to make sure the kids all get outside. I think if you honestly look at it, it's made all the difference in the world.

In each of these examples, the principals' behaviours demonstrated their beliefs and ideals for students through their relationships with people. Most have an 'open door' policy, a visible social as well as professional presence in the school and community, are "never too busy" to listen to their constituents, and are consistent in their personal beliefs, behaviours and expectations of others. In return, they expect, but individually support, *everyone* (students, teachers and parents) to perform at

high levels, even though their schools confront seemingly overwhelming constraints and challenges. For these high expectations to become realizable, the leaders in all seven cases had to look deeply into their current situations to focus attention upon people, rather than test results, as a higher moral purpose for change. When in the past, particularly in our most challenging schools, there had been mostly neglect and despair, caring relationships connected purpose, meaning and people through their shared hope for a better future, (Starratt, 2003).

THE LEARNING PRINCIPLE

Finally, we examine the learning principle, which places learning – of students, faculty, parents and the organisation itself, as central to everyone's work. Although, common to all three core leadership practices, we will concentrate on how the pursuit of the learning principle assists principals in the organisational redesign of their schools.

The difficulties of motivating and sustaining learning in challenging contexts can often seem insurmountable to principals and teachers alike. Racial stereotyping, inflexible structural and pedagogic arrangements, a mutual distrust between administrators and teachers, and an energy sapping undercurrent of misbehaviour and even violence by students, all contributing to the creation of defeatist cultures at many of our sites. Not surprisingly, the success of our seven principals' in overcoming these and other contextual barriers varied considerably. What did remain constant was their fundamental belief in the centrality of learning. Several practices emerged that help to demonstrate how school redesign was informed by the learning principle, especially in relation to faculty learning: the de-privatisation of professional practice, modelling and mentoring, and the development and use of collaborative organisational structures.

Teachers in several of our challenging schools had long withdrawn into the isolation of their classrooms as a means of coping with the dysfunctionality that they saw all around them. Previous principals had been remote bureaucrats, detached from instruction and rarely seen outside their offices. All seven of our principals were active in de-privatising professional practice in their schools. No longer remote entities in their schools, they routinely scheduled large parts of their day to be present in hallways and in classrooms. Although formal classroom evaluations were still part of union contracts, teachers became used to regular classroom visits from their principal, to the opening-up of professional dialogue, and a new emphasis upon support, rather than compliance. In time, and with the active encouragement of their principals, teachers began to learn both individually and collaboratively, making best practice a public resource. For example, the principal at Kelley Middle School regularly shares research findings at faculty meetings that might help his teachers improve teaching and learning. At Hamilton Elementary, teachers collaborate with a reading initiative developed by a local university, welcoming professors and student teachers into their classrooms and openly share their learning with colleagues. Professional book clubs were evident in several of our schools.

At Coleman Elementary, teachers regularly shared their reading in team meetings and in scheduled meetings of the whole faculty. At Fraser, the principal goes a step further by using peer coaching to encourage teachers to share experiences by observing and discussing each other's teaching methods and philosophies. In schools where the principal is recognised as a knowledgeable and caring instructional leader, with high expectations of fellow professionals, teachers seem to be more willing to learn about 'best practice', share their knowledge "in public", as well as listen to the effective strategies used by others.

We were also struck by the importance of appropriate professional learning through modelling and mentoring to the success of our schools. The majority of experienced teachers in our elementary cases decried their isolation in previous schools or under different administrators, were critical of the inadequacy of their college preparation for working in a challenging school, and yet proud of how their new-found learning had brought success 'against the odds'. In schools where 'learned failure' was the norm, the willingness of principals to act as instructional leaders able to model and then to also mentor success, profoundly influenced professional practice. At one time or another, all of our principals purposefully lead by example in this respect – participating in workshops, reading and discussing professional journal articles, and researching ways of improving student learning, alongside their teachers.

Several of the principals promoted teacher leadership (Muijs & Harris, 2003) – mentored teachers to assume leadership responsibilities for committee work or specific teaching or learning initiatives. Although less common, some even encouraged selected teachers in their school to pursue leadership preparation programs. At Coleman, for example, the principal acknowledged that she "scaffolds teachers into leadership", particularly other women, by providing resources and support. More than one of her teachers described her as "my guiding force, my inspiration, who has pushed me beyond belief . . .". This mentoring of women teachers into leadership has made a contribution to the pool of certified women administrators, particularly minority women, in at least two of districts covered by our study. For example, the principal of Fraser was the mentor of the principal of Hamilton, before she became an administrator. The Hamilton principal has, in turn, also encouraged teachers in her school to pursue school leadership opportunities and careers.

In addition to modelling and mentoring, principals were adept at eroding teacher isolation in some, but not all of our schools, by changing organisational arrangements to facilitate whole-school collaboration, team building and new learning. This was more difficult to achieve in our two non-elementary schools (Pershing and Kelly), where traditional balkanized departmental structures meant that cross-curricular cooperation was largely lacking. At Crockett, Kelly and Pershing, state mandated site-based decision-making teams were more symbolic gestures than functional entities. Grade level collaboration was weak at Costello, Crockett, and Kelly, and at Costello, Kelly and Pershing the committee structure was poorly integrated – with some of our respondents lacking even basic knowledge of how their school functioned.

In contrast, the principal at Fraser facilitated a very democratic and sophisticated set of interconnected committees, with both executive and advisory functions. Teachers, parents and students were not only represented, but also empowered to make decisions aimed at improving student learning. Vision-making, goal identification, goal delivery and evaluation were seamless, but carefully tended by an attentive principal as a broadly-based learning opportunity. Although precluded by the traditional administrative arrangements at our middle school and high school (Kelly and Pershing), at Coleman, Crockett, Fraser and Hamilton the principals' all facilitated common planning time so that grade level and cross-grade level teams could meet to address whole-school learning issues on a regular cycle. In the high need urban elementary schools – Fraser, Hamilton and Costello, committee work began with a focus on school safety and beautification that, through small successes, created a readiness for learning and change. In the later stages of their evolution, committees in these schools focused more directly on the improvement of teaching and learning through collaborative activities such as achievement gap analysis and the facilitating of professional development opportunities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter is based upon data obtained from a U.S. research project that studied seven schools and their principals. Although varying in enrolment size, grade level and context, our schools were selected because they had several features in common: (1) they were all subject to the same New York State accountability standards and pressures; (2) with the exception of the suburban elementary school (Coleman), they were all dealing with impoverished student populations; and (3) since the arrival of their current principal, they had all shown measurable improvement of student achievement on state standardised tests.

Although the principals that we studied were also a diverse group, varying in gender, race, experience and education, they too shared some common characteristics, most notably, a demonstrated facility with direction setting, developing people and redesigning the organisation – core leadership practices that Leithwood & Riehl (2003) contend are necessary, but insufficient, for school success in any context. The necessary leadership practices that these principals exhibited were enhanced by three principles that enabled their schools to improve, namely: accountability, caring and learning. In other words, success also depended on the consistent and persistent pursuit of core principles – inherent beliefs and characteristics common to the very different personalities of the principals involved in our study.

Cross-case analyses revealed that our principals were leaders who managed to set and maintain a sense of purpose and direction for their schools that generally motivated and inspired students, teachers and parents to follow their lead. In the face of often challenging conditions, they established safe, nurturing environments for children and adults, set high expectations for student performance, and held

everyone – students, faculty, parents and themselves - accountable for meeting those expectations. Sometimes high expectations were centred round the collaborative determination of goals advocated in the school improvement literature (Fullan, 2001). In other schools, practicality dictated that goals were selected by principals to achieve some early indications of success, where previously any change had led to yet more failure. Although differing in their individual approaches, all of our principals leveraged the external pressure of high stakes standardised testing to focus their school's performance objectives. While high expectations for student achievement would have been the principals' goal anyway, having the weight of the New York State standards and NCLB accountability requirements helped bring clarity to their schools' mission.

However, the core leadership practice of setting directions is insufficient to realising the goal of school improvement. People working in toxic and highly stressful workplaces need to be nurtured, developed and cared for if they are to develop both the willingness and capacity to produce at high levels. Rather than relying upon positional power, traditional administrative structures and formal 'arms-length' professional relationships, our seven principals, particularly those in the elementary schools, were not only exemplary at modelling the behaviours and practices they desired, but adept at building a sense of caring into their practice. Their efforts led to reciprocal caring relationships developing with and between their students, teachers and parents. How deeply this was felt, and how much it influenced people's behaviours, was best expressed by the parents at Fraser, who told us they would do anything for the principal because, they "... didn't want to disappoint her". Her words and deeds had shown them how committed she was to their children's education and, in return, they committed themselves to helping her in her efforts.

Most importantly, the principle of learning helped to "centre" our schools. That is not to say that teachers were inattentive to the possibility that an emphasis on the improvement of test scores, at the expense of all other forms of learning, could have a detrimental effect on their students. As with colleagues elsewhere (McNeil, 2000), the particular concerns of veteran teachers, and those who teach special needs students were evident in our data. But a focus on learning, especially when couched in terms of core beliefs as to what is "good for kids" so that "all kids can and will learn", provided a centrality of purpose that eroded and marginalized existing cultures of failure and blame. Beginning with children, but then including adult learning, this implicitly agreed to professional norm made it easier to identify the obstacles to learning, and thus begin the process of structural redesign necessary to assist in the removal of barriers to improvement. In some cases it was poor scheduling that didn't allow for common planning time; so schedules were changed. In other cases, professional development was provided for teachers who needed help updating their skills in order to improve instruction. A small number of faculty who were resistant to change, or unwilling to accept the idea that children in poverty were capable of higher levels of academic achievement, were encouraged to transfer elsewhere.[9] By redesigning structural arrangements to

focus upon context specific learning needs, small, but continuous improvements were more likely to emerge and succeed. While not all principals' actions led to consistently positive outcomes, on balance all seven schools have improved during their tenure.

The findings for these cases have important implications for the practice and preparation of school leaders in high need, challenging communities. First and foremost, these individuals need to be committed to the very serious task at hand. This is not work for the faint of heart. Since resources may be in relatively short supply, school leaders must be adept at using most effectively what resources are available. As these cases show, it is the human resources of faculty and parents that must be developed and the principle of caring can enable this.

The need to prepare knowledgeable school leaders, those with both a short and long-term view of the possible, also emerges from this study. In high need, challenging communities, there may not be the time at the outset of a difficult principalship to achieve consensus in terms of directionality or to cultivate shared, let alone distributed leadership. Knowledgeable instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 1999) was a significant factor in the improvement of our elementary schools. Yet the particularly effective leaders at Fraser and Coleman also adopted leadership styles that were transformational of the organisation (Hallinger & Heck, 1996) and transformative, both personally and professionally, of individuals (Giles et al., 2005; Quantz, Rogers, & Darthy, 1991). With the exception of Coleman and Fraser, distributed leadership, i.e. in the form of teachers taking responsibility for leadership initiatives in a spontaneous and self-actuating, was comparatively rare (Copland, 2003). Indeed, in the majority of our schools, the lack of attention to leadership development and succession planning as a motivational and capacity building strategy (and necessity!) was noticeably lacking. This raises questions at the district level as to the long-term sustainability of successful challenging schools that are, by necessity, relatively undemocratic, or those where distributed leadership opportunities are in their infancy (such as Costello and Hamilton), when their principals retire or are inevitably rotated to other schools by their districts (Fink, 2005).

Finally, when working with a sample of only seven schools, it is difficult to reach conclusions that can be readily generalised to other settings, or even to get a clear sense of some of the potential intervening effects in the existing sample. For example, we cannot determine from this limited number of cases the extent to which enrolment size affected school performance, although it appears that the smaller schools did better. Nor can we tell whether a principal's level of education affected his or her practice, although it appeared that our most successful principals were the two women who had doctorates. Neither do we believe that the three enabling principles of accountability, caring and learning are an exhaustive list. As we expand the scope and data obtained from the ISSPP project, further study of the nuances of the fluid interrelationship between enabling principles, contingency and context, may reveal other factors that enable school improvement. Nevertheless, we feel confident that this is a very important line of research; one that needs to

be expanded to more cases in more locales, because improving the educational opportunities and life chances of youngsters living in high need communities is a task too significant to ignore.

NOTES

[1] An increasingly 'tax-phobic' local electorate vote annually to accept, or reject, school district levied tax increases. Thus, state and federal funding, particularly 'earmarked grants' have a significant influence upon local policy – particularly in large urban districts where the formerly prosperous industrial tax based has decayed.

[2] A quarter of American children are living in households living below the poverty level, with 59% of these children belong to single parent families where the head is female. Statistically, three quarters of all children in poverty will belong to African American, Hispanic or immigrant minority groups, and live in decaying urban areas. Despite considerable gains in the past 20 years, Hispanic and African-American 17 year olds score 20% less on Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading than their white counterparts. Similarly, only 75% of Hispanic and 87% of African-American 19 year olds graduate from high school in comparison with 92% of whites.

[3] NYSED categorizes a school as 'high need' based upon several socioeconomic factors including the percentage of the student body eligible for free and reduced lunch.

[4] For more details about this case see Giles, Johnson, Brooks, & Jacobson (2005).

[5] In New York State, outside of the 'big five' cities, Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), provide technical support, professional development and other services to often very small school districts.

[6] For more details about these three cases, see Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson, & Ylimaki (2004).

[7] Block Clubs are groups of citizens who volunteer to raise and advocate for solutions to neighborhood issues on behalf of the community.

[8] Principals in the U.S. rarely teach classes and when they do, it is more likely to be a special topics course than a subject that will come under direct public scrutiny.

[9] As in other jurisdictions it is difficult in the U.S. to terminate weak or ineffectual teachers. However, teachers', as part of their contract, can apply for a 'voluntary' transfer to another school in their district.

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CHAPTER 11

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPALSHIP: KEY THEMES

CHRISTOPHER DAY AND KENNETH LEITHWOOD

The case studies reported in this book present a fascinating mosaic of successful elementary (primary) and high (secondary) schools in different cultural, geographical and socio-economic contexts. Whilst the cultural lenses used by the principals, the contexts in which they work, and the external criteria for their success appear to differ between countries and groups of countries with different social and policy histories, and whilst they demonstrate different identities in relation to these, what is striking is that the values, aspirations, qualities, achievements and ways of achieving and sustaining success are startlingly similar across all countries and all school phases, regardless of size. Where there are differences, these relate to the application of initial short term strategies designed in order to remedy long term problems which these principals inherited which relate, for example, to the socio-economic status of the school or student or staff expectations and behaviour which have prevented the school from improving. Such strategies were selected in order to create the conditions for improvement. Whilst there are, therefore, differences in context, style and initial management strategies, there are also important similarities across the case studies and countries in both the values which the principals hold and in the core strategies or range of behaviours they use consistently in order to embed and sustain sets of common values, almost regardless of context.

Five key "themes of similarity" have been identified (see Table 11.1):

1. sustaining passionate commitment and personal accountability;
2. maintaining moral purpose and managing tensions and dilemmas;
3. being other centred and focussing on learning and development;
4. making emotional and rational investment
5. emphasising the personal and the functional.

C. Day and K. Leithwood (eds.), Successful Principal Leadership in Times of Change, 171–188

Table 11.1. Five combinations of principles and practices in building and sustaining processes of successful school principalship

1. Sustaining Passionate Commitment *and* Personal Accountability High expectations; strong self-esteem; persistent; assertive; achievement oriented; learning centred: open communication; concern for educating the whole person based on clearly articulated values; rooted in the rights of students, inclusivity, social justice and democratic principles
2. Managing Tensions and Dilemmas *and* Maintaining Moral Purposes Able to manage ambiguities and conflicts in ways which enhance individual and school improvement which go beyond instrumental rationality
3. Being Other-Centred *and* Learning Focussed Continuous improvement, individual and collective communication and capacity building, collaborative learning cultures; dispersing leadership, decision-making and responsibilities, encouraging trust; intervening strategically in ways which are relevant to personal and system contexts through community involvement, deprivatising professional practice and nurturing teacher leadership
4. Making Emotional *and* Rational Investments Emotional understanding; empathy; trust; being courageous; staying close to the action; interacting on both cognitive and emotional levels with key stakeholder groups; creating safe teaching and learning environments; being innovative
5. Emphasising The Personal *and* The Functional Building person-centred communities which are functionally successful; modelling values; respecting others; exercising care with accountability

These suggest that successful principalship requires a combination of cognitive and emotional understandings allied to clear sets of standards and values, the differential application of a cluster of key strategies, and the abiding presence of a passion for people and education. It is the identification of these multiple but coherent combinations of values, understandings, key strategies and commitments internationally which is the unique contribution which this research makes to knowledge of successful principalship. Principals had different starting points but the same visions.

DIFFERENCES IN CONTEXTS AND KINDS OF PRINCIPALSHIP

Responsive to context but not dependent There are differences in the social and political contexts in which principals work. Some must increase the measurable attainments of students or face closure whilst in policies in other countries (notably Norway) the promotion of democratic values is fundamental to the process of schooling. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that these situations are static. On the contrary, globalisation of education is increasingly promoting marketisation and competition, driving governments to impose new forms of accountability in schools particularly if the pace of improvement is perceived as too slow; so the tensions between decentralisation and recentralisation grow. Thus, in all countries in this study managerial models of reform are making a strong claim in definitions of accountability (cf. Norway) with the focus now on both social *and* academic goals (cf. Sweden).

There was in all schools in all countries a mix of co-operative responsibilities and dispersed leadership within hierarchical structures, a mix of "power with" and "power over". This mix is indicative both of the importance of the personal in the professional and of the need to respond in different ways to the management of contexts in which principals find themselves. In other words, the strategies they pursue for change and improvement, are based not only upon their common beliefs, values, visions, passion for improvement and emphasis upon both the personal and the functional, but also are moderated by the organisational context and cultures of the society. Leaders within and across the case studies also differed both in personality and style, from the "paternalistic nod" of some principals in Denmark, and the "high power distance" principals in China to those in the United States, England, Norway and Canada who worked in close-up collaboration with their staff, often leading by example. There were, too, examples of principals who had no hesitation (in China, Denmark and the United States) in finding ways to move staff out of the school who did not share the principal's vision for the school.

The Canadian and Swedish case studies in particular raise the issue of the relative influence on success of both the kind of leadership and the influence of specific external (policy) and internal (school) contexts, following earlier research in England (see Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000 for examples of "values led contingency leadership"). Although in all eight countries, there is, as identified in the Danish cases, a trend within schools towards, "decentralisation of power within value-led enterprises" through dispersed leadership and participatory decision-making processes, the extent of this decentralisation is both context and person dependent. The former relates to the history, and culture of the school within local and country values and cultures and the growing demands by governments to increase current levels of "performance" of the school. These inevitably create tensions among staff with different histories, identities and routines. Indeed, the countries represent a range of government initiated reforms which, it might be argued, require increasingly complex responses from principals according to their kind and intensity. Since the expertise needed to respond successfully to such interventions cannot be vested in one person, increasingly complex accountability scenarios demand that principal power is shared. Thus, whilst team planning and building are important features of educational ideologies, they are also practical expressions of the need to respond to new accountability contexts. The high stakes accountability contexts of England, the United States and Ontario, Canada are further illustrated by the courage displayed by successful principals in exercising their broad educational ideologies, purposes and practices within the results driven policy agenda prevalent in their countries. How they do, however, also reflects the biography, values and beliefs of the individual principals as expressed through their style and management of personal, professional and organisational lives.

Belchetz & Leithwood's chapter on work with six successful school leaders in Ontario, Canada illustrates the "contradictions" in the leadership literature on the effects of context on the nature of successful school leadership. These six principals worked in policy contexts which demanded new forms of public accountability

and the study provided evidence that successful principalship is, "responsive to context but not context dependent". Principals in high poverty schools seemed to demonstrate that some of the qualities, strategies and skills in combination played a greater role in the success of their schools than in those located in areas of advantage (Day; Giles et al. in this book). This would support the notion across all the participating country cases that different leadership strategies may be effective in different circumstances but also that the principals' purposes and the way they act out their beliefs, values and visions in the contexts in which they work make the difference between success and failure.

Courage or heroism? All the principals in these studies were "heroic", but not in a classical sense. In this research, principals across all countries exercised a combination of personal styles; strategies which related to context, culture, and beliefs (e.g. that successful leadership is an interactive, communicative process involving many people and players); and courage relative to the perceived and actual pressures (e.g. of high stakes accountability). For example, the case studies show clearly that principals in Australia, Canada, England and the United States have been and still are subject to greater external pressures from government over a longer period of time than those in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In these latter, though external demands for results-driven curricula and other forms of bureaucratic accountability are increasing (e.g. national testing and greater public access to results), they are not yet at the same level of intensity as those in the former (e.g. national testing, external school inspection, annual school improvement planning, performance management reviews for all staff) who, therefore, may require a greater degree of courage in maintaining moral purpose and the personal as well as functional emphases in education. It may be argued that relationships with the local community, parents, teachers and students will be much more complex and that sustaining passionate commitment is more difficult for principals in these countries. Thus, whilst courage is a feature of successful principals across all countries, since it is required by all who engage in change, it is an essential quality for those in high stakes accountability contexts.

It is, therefore, important to dispel the twin myths that (i) being a "heroic" or "charismatic" principal is necessarily good or bad because it will lead to dependencies such that any success achieved will dissipate should that principal leave; and that (ii) unless principals commit to distributed leadership and collaborative management of all staff in decision-making processes they will not meet with success. The examples of success in these countries illustrate that both kinds of principalship can lead to success which is sustained. A more important question concerns how "charisma", "distributed leadership" and "collaborative management" are used and for what purposes. In fact, the strategies which these principals adopted to achieve success reflected both a range of "styles" or "kinds" of leadership and management, were applied for both functional and personal purposes, and in ways which were responsive to but were not dependent on context. There is a sense in which this is a self-evident truth. How can success be achieved unless context

is taken into account? Strategies for success will need to be applied in different ways to schools which are "failing" than to those which are merely "coasting". Also, in schools in economically challenging circumstances, (Australia, Canada, England, the United States), it is likely that, "as a result of contextual instability, improvement over time will come in fits and starts." There will, then, be different sets of imperatives which influence both principals and staff. This is demonstrated in cases in each of the countries. For example, principals in Scandinavian countries appear to prioritize citizenship and social relationships whereas those in the United States, Canada, Australia, China and England appear to have a more instructional (teaching and learning), results-driven orientation. Both the former and the latter are, however, important to all principals. Where and when one or the other is emphasised relates to context.

SIMILARITIES

Sustaining passionate commitment and personal accountability To date, the literature on school effectiveness and leadership by and large has emphasised either the application of strategic rational management and leadership approaches or the primacy of emotional understandings and high levels of interpersonal qualities and skills. Although, for example, research on effective schools has identified their principals as being purposeful, strong, persistent and achievement oriented (Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995) these kinds of commitments do not quite capture the presence and application of "cognitive flexibility" (Leithwood, 2005) and "sustained passionate commitment" (Day, 2005) of the principals in this study. In the Australian studies, there was a "remarkable degree of commonality" among the 14 principals in their honesty, empathy and commitment, what Gurr et al. term, "innate goodness and passion". In China, the two principals "revitalised" their schools, in the one case (Mr. Pang) by exercising patience with existing staff, and building success slowly; and in another (Mr. Lo) by bringing in new teachers who demonstrated a passion for high standards which went beyond the traditional academic curriculum.

Passion is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "any kind of feeling by which the mind is powerfully affected or moved". It is a driver, a motivational force emanating from strength of emotion. People are passionate about things, issues, causes and people. Being passionate generates energy, determination, conviction, commitment and even obsession. Passion is not a luxury, a frill or a quality possessed by just a few principals. It is essential to sustaining successful leadership. Often what drives passionate feelings is unconscious; behind the ordered control and professional calm of principals' bubble lie:

> *deep, potentially explosive passions, emotions bringing despair, elation, anger and joy of a kind not normally associated in the public mind with work.* (Nias, 1996, p. 226)

Such sustained passion is evidenced in the studies of successful principals in this book. Their passion was expressed both through their enthusiasm for people and

performance and also through principled, values-led leadership (Day et al., 2000). Like effective teachers, these principals had a passion for their school, a passion for their students and a passionate belief that who they were and how they led could make a difference to the lives of staff, students, parents and the community, both in the moments of leadership and the days, weeks, months and even years afterwards. Passion was associated with enthusiasm for achievement, caring, collaboration, communication at all levels with all stakeholders, commitment, trust, inclusivity and courage, with are themselves key characteristics of effectiveness in teaching. As in all the cases reported in this book, their passion is demonstrated by their insistence on daring "to stand up and fight" for their vision for the school (for though the vision was shared in these schools, it was the principal who had led the way initially). As one Australian teacher said, "You need a passionate person in charge".

Passion was also associated with fairness and understanding and with the qualities that effective principals displayed in everyday social interactions – listening to what staff and students said, being close rather than distant, having a good sense of playfulness and humour, encouraging staff and students to learn in different ways, relating learning to experience, encouraging all to take a collegial responsibility for learning, maintaining organised school and classroom environments, being knowledgeable about their work, and creating learning environments which engaged both staff and students and stimulated in them an excitement to learn.

it is so exciting to be part of the development process at our school. (Norwegian teacher, p. 78)

Passion was expressed by principals in different ways. In the case of Mr. Pang, it was a passionate belief in the longer term benefits of supporting long serving teachers who found change difficult; in contrast a "charismatic" Danish principal, "casts the bullets" but doesn't fire them. In Norway, "team-centred leadership" dominates. Despite the apparent "top-down" nature of the Chinese cases, it is clear that they, like others, constantly engaged in "non-coercive rational communication" with stakeholders – recognising that this was crucial for commitment to the development of successful learning and achievement cultures. All, as part of their passion, exercised trust in teachers.

Such an exercise in trust implicitly if not explicitly represented a choice which these principals had made to resist "organisational professionalism" and to maintain "occupational professionalism" (Evetts, 2005). In the former, associated with Weberian models of organisation, the discourse of control is used, alongside hierarchical structures of authority and decision-making, managerialism, standardised procedures. In the latter, associated with Durkheim's model of occupations as moral communities, discourse is constructed within professional groups, there is collegial authority, discretion and occupational control of the work and practitioner trust by clients.

Sinclair's (1995) distinctions between five different kinds of accountability also help to explain the importance of the sustained passionate commitment shown by the principals in the context of externally imposed changes and the close correspondence

between passion and personal values which is a key common characteristic. The five are political, public, managerial, professional and personal accountabilities. It is this last which expresses values which are "sacred" to a person. Moller suggests that it:

concerns fidelity to personal conscience in basic values such as respect for human dignity and acting in a manner that accepts responsibility for affecting the lives of others. (2004, p. 91)

Rather than avoiding or using forms of accountability for the purpose of "discipline and subjugation" (Bolet, 1999, p. xxiv) these principals exercised personal accountability. This can be seen all the case studies but is especially evident in those in England, Canada, Australia and the United States where instrumentalist reform, which potentially threatens personal functions of education and demands political and managerial accountabilities of a much higher order than other countries in this research, is at its strongest. In Denmark, Sweden and Norway, also, school leaders are, "caught in the crossfire" between conflicting demands for accountability from different stakeholders, though not to the same level of intensity. They are expected to be "new, strong, visible" and this is in tension with the ideal of minimising the exercise of dominance within institutional relations. There is, "a clear tension between the market orientation and the long valued ideals of a democratic school including democratic leadership practices". (Möller et al., p. 73) As in the Canadian cases (and England and Australia) the principals in Sweden, Denmark and Norway emphasise student learning and achievement through team and whole school improvement planning. However, alongside these are clearly articulated and recognised sets of values: care, respect, and a passion to, "fight for the things he feels are right" (cf. England, Australia, Norway, the United States).

Maintaining moral purposes: managing tensions and dilemmas The cases in this book are time-related, at best,extended snapshots. Yet because of this, they do capture a continuum of concerns, which may go some way to explaining the relationships between the values and beliefs which drive decisions which successful principals take, over the short term, the influence of policy contexts on these, and the ways in which principals exercise their influence longer term upon the communities which they lead as they engage with tensions, conflicts and dilemmas in order to ensure the enactment and experience of core moral purposes.

An issue which runs through all the cases is the principals' abilities to manage, in different ways, internal and external tensions and dilemmas. Dilemmas, are defined as choosing between courses of actions which are, "to a greater or larger extent mutually exclusive" and tensions are defined as specific sets of pressures experienced by leaders in certain contexts which involve choices which are not mutually exclusive (Day, p. 62).

In Norway, there was a variety among schools in how principals dealt with contradictions or disagreements, "without feeling too uncomfortable". In other words, because they were confident in their own beliefs and because these were supported

by school cultures which were characterised by shared values and regular interaction they were able to handle internal disagreements and help others to manage the pressures of external accountability demands which, for some, disrupted present values and practices.

Education was, for each of these principals, essentially a moral enterprise in which all students' entitlements to be taught well and to learn and achieve to the best of their abilities were at the centre. Their agendas, and the ways they managed internal and external tensions and dilemmas, were always broader and less temporal than those of policy makers in their countries. Though the latter were never ignored, they were accommodated rather than allowed to become the only agendas. Thus, for these principals, moral purposes *included* the acceptance of responsibilities for applying the performance oriented agendas of governments as representatives of the needs of society in general (as in the England case studies) together with acceptance of responsibilities as professionals to exercise the right to be critical of these where appropriate; to exercise their responsibilities to parents and students for the education of all aspects of the students' selves (physical, cognitive, affective, behavioural and spiritual/humanistic); and to assert their longer term responsibilities for promoting democratic principles for the well being of society through promoting educational opportunity for all, regardless of race, religion, gender or disability (equity, care and social justice). These were integral components of their understandings and enactment (interaction and communication) of leadership.

In all cases in this book, it seems that teachers themselves understood that their principals had to combine different roles relative to externally driven academic and internally desired social goals. The "bottom line" for them was to be engaged actively in dialogue so that these could be clear and to be provided with support and feedback in their work in pursuing these. As with Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Australia, England and the United States, dispersed leadership and student participation (albeit at different levels of intensity) were key features: "Everyone's opinion is important"; a high level of trust was exercised in teachers through dispersed leadership; and principals were highly visible around the school, close to the action. In the schools in challenging socio-economic circumstances across all countries, however, relatively greater emphasis was placed upon fostering collaboration with and close involvement of external agencies and the local community, and building trust with parents. The Swedish case provides an illustration of the applications in practice of the longer term influence of principals on the structures and cultures of their schools in ways which were consistent both with their beliefs and values and contemporary performativity policy scenarios.

Being other centred and learning focussed Implicit in the beliefs and practices of principals – and often under-represented in the literature on leadership – are the high self-esteem and internal locus of control which, together with moral purpose, "feel for context" and a passion for learning and achievement, feed the ability of successful principals to sustain motivation and commitment of all in the school community and to involve them in making decisions with regard to the direction

and management of the schools. These personal commitments to exercise equity, what the Australian case studies term "innate goodness" and being, "other-centred" (p. 20), underpin and reach to the heart of successful principalship as exercised in all countries in this study:

It's a matter of getting the best out of your staff and understand how they tick and being to support them and showing the right kind of leadership at the right sort of time, it's all that . . . judgement and compassion and understanding of the stresses that staff experience here, and how they need to be supported in different ways and how the community needs support in different ways. (Australia)

The reason for these principals' success is that they understood the nature of the interaction between authority, democratic dialogue and the active participation of all stakeholders. They also understood that the way these are exercised and to what degree depend not only upon desire and belief but also on policy, organisation and individual professional and personal contexts if change for the better was to be a possibility. They exercised faith in the collective capacity of staff to create new ways of working which did not compromise existing values – whether through formal or informal dialogue (interaction and communication) and widening participation (e.g. Denmark, Norway); the introduction of a formal planning framework (China); or dispersed leadership, building individuals' capacities (e.g. Sweden, Australia).

The principals understood, also, that successful change demanded that those involved would need to have a strong sense of ownership of the change decision(s) and that change often requires strong and sustained emotional as well as intellectual commitment. This is implicit in all the cases but explicit in those drawn from England, the United States and Australia – perhaps because it is schools in those countries which are experiencing the most radical centralist imposition of results-driven cultures within decentralised governance. These three sets of case studies, like those in other countries, illustrate that principals worked for long term change by first analysing, understanding, and then addressing the key personal, organisational and administrative hindrances to change, always with a focus on the students' learning.

The school has to show results, but marks and grades are an unreliable indicator. The students must perceive that they actually have learnt something.

Issues of equity and social justice were actively debated and principles applied throughout these schools. Although both the person and the context, therefore, are key variables in understanding how school principals achieve their success, it is clear from all the cases in this research that in the interplay of person and context it is the person who is the key variable, if only because of the identification with clear and consistent sets of beliefs, values, visions and practices which each of the principals demonstrated, and was seen to be demonstrating, by all the stakeholders. However, it is instructive to note that principals were prepared to encourage staff who were unable to adapt to change to move on to other schools.

Making emotional and rational investments Emotions in leadership have been the subject of much writing, particularly in recent years. As "performativity" agendas (Lyotard, 1984) have focussed attention upon measurement and comparison of pupil

achievement as output and as a means of control and judgement of the worth of individuals and schools, so the need for school leaders who are able to exercise emotional understandings within a vision for the emotional, as well as the social and cognitive well being of all in the school community has grown. Blackmore noted that in times of economic rationalism, mutual trust between principals and teachers is endangered and lack of trust gives way to suspicion, anxiety, fear (2004, p. 451). She claims, with others, that in times of rapid and radical change, leadership has become, "more about managing ideas, people and emotions" and that, "Educational polices, values and emotions are intertwined". Rationality and emotion are clearly not bipolar opposites. (Harris, 2004).

we want each teacher to develop an emotional link to what it is our school stands for. Our strategic plan is an expression of our basic pedagogical philosophy. (Norwegian principal, p. 76)

Successful leadership of schools in times of change and challenge was clearly recognised by all principals to be much more than a technical-rational project. Leadership is an emotional practice requiring emotional understanding (Denzin, 1984), and because reform strategies often cause stress, vulnerability, anger and frustration among those who must implement them (Dinham & Scott, 1997; Troman & Woods, 2000; Kelchtermans, 1996; Roulston, Darby, & Owens, 2003; Sutton, 2002). Emotional investment is a key feature of successful principalship. As Hargreaves notes:

Emotional change initiatives do not just affect teachers' knowledge, skill and problem-solving capacity. They affect the whole web of significant and meaningful relationships that make up the work of schools. (1998, p. 3)

They can also affect self-esteem, motivation, commitment and effectiveness (Day et al., 2005). These principals recognised, perhaps instinctively, that being consistently dispassionate, to ignore or deny their feelings and those of teachers, parents and pupils would be dysfunctional to their purposes and practices. This required them to engage in regular dialogue with all these groups. These successful principals seemed to be prepared to work what one principal in England termed a "horrendous" number of hours. They had a reputation of not asking of their staff anything which they themselves were not prepared to do:

He's out there even after school, keeping an eye on things. He leads by example. (England, p. 67)

A principal in Canada took, "some share of the lunch or other duty and interacting with students and teachers as opportunities arose" (p. 127). Principals in Australian schools exercised judgement and compassion and understanding of the stresses that staff experience; in Sweden, they were always, "visible both for staff and students" (p. 95); and in Denmark ensured, "care and attention to each individual child". In the United States, as in other countries, principals were distinguished not only by their willingness to become involved actively working alongside staff, students and community, but by their reciprocal, caring relationships as exemplified by this statement by one principal, "Your family comes first, the job does not …" (USA, p. 160).

What seems apparent with many of these principals is that their high energy allows them to work "horrendous hours" but to be fully engaged and focussed when they are together with their families: they are not too tired to give time to their families. Principal I in the Australian study typifies this. It is also true, that some work long hours but are very good at protecting family time – leaving at 6.30 pm to be home with the family (as did Principal A in the Australian study).

One Australian teacher summed up the effects of their principal's emotional investment:

How you're treated creates the culture … if your leaders are consultative and they look after you and they listen to you … it tends to flow down.

Beatty suggested that, with few exceptions, "emotional matters in school leadership have been largely considered only as they pertain to motivation, stress and burnout of teachers", and that they, "have remained marginal to mainstream educational administration discourse" (2001). Her work is part of a growing number of research studies which reposition emotion and identity – two key themes in our own findings – at the centre of new understandings of principals and their work. It is more than a corrective to mechanistic models of school and principal effectiveness, for it suggests the need for both the functional and the personal to be located within understandings and expressions of the power of emotion. As Beatty reasons:

Being in the same place and time is not enough. In order for functional relationships to exist, there must be … emotional understanding. (Beatty, 2001)

Emotions are integral to life in schools, to relationships and to processes of reasoning and decision-making, whether in the classroom, staff room or team meeting. It is important, then, to understand and manage them in oneself and as expressions of how others feel:

When consciousness is available, feelings have then maximum impact, and individuals are also able to reflect and to plan. They have a means to control the pervasive tyranny of emotion: it is called reason. Ironically, of course, the energies of reason still require emotion, which means that the controlling power of reason is often modest. (Damasio, 2000, p. 58)

There are many examples of the ways in which all principals sustained their emotional investment. In a school in Australia, change had not been rushed, but rather was, a process that's deliberately set out over a period of time. Principals in schools in Victoria were, "persistent, determined and assertive … (and) … none were content with the status quo" (p. 44). In Sweden, a principal had had to learn that, "everything takes a long time" (p. 97); and in a Chinese school the principal, "knew it (improvement) would take years". In Denmark, principals believed in standing up and fighting for the achievement of their visions. Perhaps the most obvious expression of their sustained commitment was, in all cases, the investment which principals made in the time they devoted to working "close-up" with their staff and with the community outside the school gates. Case studies are replete with examples:

then there were nothing else to do but mobilizing. We organised public meetings and called up local women's organisations, sports organisations and so on. I (the principal) encouraged activism on behalf

of the school. If they wanted to keep the school in the local community, they had to participate in fighting for their school. (Norway)

he maintains his knowledge and interest (in the curriculum) whilst many principals let this go … he is aware of what's going on and speaks about the curriculum with passion. (Australia)

he's glad, shows himself at school, is able to handle problems, not being like a principal, says hello to everyone … there and visible for both staff and students. (Sweden)

worked close up with teachers who had lost enthusiasm. (China)

fights for the things he feels are right … works day and night … being very active with external stakeholders. (Denmark)

These principals variously engaged with their faculty in collaboration learning in relation to new program initiatives: taught classes or individually challenging students, and established programs for parents that applied "covert pressure" to support their children's learning at home. (USA)

Parents' weren't allowed in before at all … whereas they come and help in the office … use the staffroom. They are treated like partners. (England)

Maintaining an awareness of the tensions in managing emotions is a key feature of the successful principals and a key part of their success. In different ways, each of the case studies illustrate their use of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995); their recognition that the emotional and cognitive health of all individuals in the school were crucial to establishing and sustaining organisational health; their understandings of how personal histories, school cultures and external policies contribute, positively and negatively, to emotional well-being; and the ways in which this relates to motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and, ultimately to overall functional and personal performance as professionals. Successful principals are, by definition, those who are able to promote development and change. Axiomatic to their success is their ability to understand, manage and nurture emotional understandings in themselves and others across all the social groupings and systems, which together constitute the school community. For too long much leadership literature has by and large focussed upon delineating approaches which are essentially grounded in rational models of development and change (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Emotions have been "written out" (Fineman, 1993). Our research suggests the need for a fundamental shift towards a more formal recognition of the important role in successful leadership played by emotional understanding.

Emphasising the personal and the functional. Most importantly, the principals in this research achieved their success because they were able to enter into two kinds of relations with their worlds – the personal and the functional:

(i) *functional relations which are essentially instrumental in nature*
(ii) *personal relations which have no purpose other than to enable us to be ourselves* (Fielding, 2001, p. 11)

Drawing upon the work of Macmurray, a Scottish philosopher, Fielding constructed a powerful discussion about the purposes of education as expressed through these two kinds of relations. Both are necessary, but for Fielding – and for the successful principals in this study – the personal is the more important of the two:

In Macmurray's view, the meaning of the functional lies in the personal, not the other way round. The functional life is for the sake of the personal life: 'an economic efficiency which is achieved at the expense of the personal life is self-condemned and in the end self-frustrating. (Fielding, 2001, p. 12)

Fielding's suggestion that instead of seeing schools as "high performance organisations" we need to see them as, "person-centred communities" (2001, p. 12) and that, "this line of argument points to the necessity of a radical break from the still dominant … paradigm of school effectiveness" (2001, p. 12), is reflected in the way principals in this study express their purposes and the way others experience their practices. Although this is regardless of the phase or extent of the impact of the performativity cultures in each country, it is noticeable among the cases that the more extreme the external demands for performance, the more the principals were prepared to assert, express and communicate their values – the more they displayed their courage. It is not that they ignored the functional, but that they insisted on the personal. As Fielding notes:

For Macmurray, the interdependence of the functional and personal is both inevitable and desirable. The functional provides the concrete, instrumental means by which the personal expresses itself … (Fielding, 2003, p. 3)

He goes on to suggest that, "not only is the functional for the sake of the personal, and the personal achieved through the functional, but the influence of the personal on the functional is transformative of it: the functional should be expressive of the personal" (2003, p. 5); and he suggests a four fold typology of schools, as shown in Table 11.2:

Table 11.2. The organisational and communal orientation of schools

Schools as impersonal organisations	Schools as affective communities	Schools as high performance learning organisations	Schools as person-centred learning communities
The Functional Marginalises the Personal	*The Personal Marginalises the Functional*	*The Personal is Used for the Sake of the Functional*	*The Functional is for the Sake of/Expressive of the Personal*
Mechanistic Organisation	Affective Community	Learning Organisation	Learning Community
Community is Unimportant/Destructive of Organisational Purposes	Community has No/Few Organisational Consequences or Requirements	Community is a Useful Tool to Achieve Organisational Purposes	Organisation Exists to Promote Community
Efficient	Restorative	Effective	Morally and Instrumentally Successful

(Fielding, 2003, p. 6)

This is a useful heuristic which helps to explain, in terms of the ISSPP project as a whole and the reports of the country studies in this book, the distinctive features of the work of "successful" principals (perhaps in comparison with others who strive principally for "efficient", "restorative" or "effective" schools).

Fielding's initial thoughts on the characteristics of a person-centred approach to leadership are strikingly similar to our own empirical data: creation of an inclusive community; emphasis on relationships and the ethic of care; creation of shared meanings and identities through the professional culture of the school, staff development programmes and arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment which encourage dialogue; a discourse of the personal; reciprocity of learning; encouraging new approaches to learning; remaining restless about contemporary understandings of leadership and management.

CONCLUSIONS

The application of the success criteria in selecting the principals from each country and research design and protocols enabled the identification of the key elements of successful principals' work in each school in each country. This in turn allowed us to identify differences and similarities in the kinds of leadership and the personal, professional, local and national contexts in which these were exercised. This phase of the research has three limitations: (i) the identification of "success" in all its forms is at present based upon reported experiences of a number of stakeholders.[1] The triangulation of these perspectives provide a number of powerful collective testimonies concerning leadership conditions, contexts, qualities, actions and results. However, periods of observation of principals at work over extended periods of time, over a number of years would add immeasurably to our knowledge. Schools are dynamic organisations, and change in ways which cannot always be predicted; our work to date provides extended "snapshots". (ii) We were not present when the principals were appointed to witness how they analysed what needed to be done, directly and indirectly, to improve the life and achievements of all in their schools; (iii) We were not able to take into account the individual professional histories of each principal; and when we met them and members of their communities, they and their organisations were in different phases of their development. Thus, for the most part (with the possible exception of Denmark and Norway which conducted limited real time observation) we must treat our findings with some care.

Yet the innovative design of our research has enabled us to clarify two important aspects of the lives and work of successful principals as well as providing new understandings and insights. First, the different strategies used by principals in the early days of their work in school were "first steps" designed specifically to establish "benchmarks" or "springboards" for longer term developments. The establishment of security, safety and order in the the United States case study schools is a particularly useful illustration of these. The early strategies used in schools in and across each country related both to the new principals' analyses of needs, their own style of leadership and management, and their determination to respond slowly

or quickly, incrementally or radically to the situations which they had inherited. However, when we analyse the values and longer term strategies within and across schools in each country, we see a picture of startling similarity, regardless of style and context. It is this latter analysis which enabled researchers in each country to reach empirically grounded conclusions about what makes principals successful and how they sustain their success.

These principals, as lifelong learners themselves, recognised that success in leadership and management will always be relative. It can never be fully achieved, since contexts are always changing and innovations will not always be welcomed by staff (c.f. ICT in one Norwegian school) and so were always striving to improve. All our data indicate that successful principals:

- emphasise both the functional and the personal, combining the pursuit of academic and social goals for the benefit for the personnel.
- hold onto and express clear moral purposes as they manage tensions and dilemmas and these are expressed through building an individual and collective sense of identity To achieve this requires a strong sense of identity and this implies an awareness of self – "the extent to which people are conscious of various aspects of their identities and the extent to which their self-perceptions are internally integrated and congruent with the way others perceive them" (Hall, 2004, p. 154, in Gronn & Lacey, 2004)
- sustain a passion of commitment with contexts of personal accountability
- have a strong understanding and appreciation of the importance of emotional understanding and investment
- recalibrate contextual conditions and constraints in order to use appropriate change strategies to continue to create the conditions necessary for school improvement; such conditions and constraints vary over time depending upon changes in internal and external contexts; the frequency of change varies according to internal and external contexts
- prioritise genuine care for all in the community and the building and sustaining of professional trust and mutual respect e.g. dispersed leadership, collaborative structures

They indicate, also, that:

- success is relative, dependent upon the school's structure, culture (social dynamic), socio-economic setting *and* the beliefs and biographies of the principal, staff and students; and
- external changes are used by successful principals as a means of raising teacher and student expectations for learning and achievement *as well as* satisfying external accountability criteria
- continuing professional development of different kinds appropriate to purpose is a key part of the development strategies used by successful principals e.g. de-privatising practice, modelling, mentoring
- the ways in which core practices emerge and how they interrelate over time is neither linear nor formulaic.

Leading successfully in schools across the eight countries in this study seemed to require the presence and exercise, differentially, of clusters of similar "enabling" principles and practices.

These go beyond those classic core leadership functions described as necessary but insufficient conditions for school success regardless of context i.e. setting directions, developing people, and re-design of the organisation (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). They involve

- a focus upon both social *and* academic goals;
- changing structures *and* cultures in order to open schools to their local communities;
- understanding and working with the tensions and dilemmas inherent in personal, social and policy contexts; and
- the ability to respond to these but not be dependent upon them.

In many of their schools it is likely that these combinations of beliefs, qualities and strategies may be seen also in the staff. Together, they represent different combinations of the exercise of democratic principles *and* traditional forms of positional power. All principals in all countries, in one way or another also demanded total commitment of all staff to a shared vision for the school's development which they saw as their responsibility to initiate and move forward. For example, in Denmark, principals exercised, "pedagogical absolutism", but, "democratic disposition" (p. 107) in terms of their distribution of leadership through regular team meetings. All principals in all countries had as their goal that decisions should be based upon staff participation and consensus. Though some were closer to achieving that goal than others, all had achieved success.

The data on successful principals in the schools in these studies thus clearly demonstrate that they achieve and sustain their success and that of their schools through the exercise of a combination of both professional beliefs, personal qualities and use strategies which complement and reinforce these.

There are messages here for principals themselves, for those involved in formulating school improvement policies and for those involved in recruitment, selection and training. It is the hope of all involved in this ongoing project that all principals will reflect upon the issues raised and the ways in which these successful principals lead and manage schools; and that they will find both support and challenge to engage in further professional development. For those policy makers, employers, and educators outside schools, we hope that the messages will be equally clear: that leading schools in times of change is cognitively and emotionally challenging and complex. It follows the recruitment, selection, education and training of aspirant principals and principals themselves must take as its focus, alongside the findings of existing research, the understanding, acquisition and application in different contexts, of the five combinations of qualities which this research has identified (Table 11.1) as being essential to the building and sustaining of processes of successful school principalship.

NOTE

[1] Denmark and Norway have conducted limited observations which have not yet contributed significantly to the study as a whole.

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CHAPTER 12

WHAT WE LEARNED: A BROAD VIEW

KENNETH LEITHWOOD AND CHRISTOPHER DAY

INTRODUCTION

In this concluding chapter we revisit the main themes addressed in Chapter 1, synthesizing evidence about these themes reported in the intervening nine chapters. In many cases, this new evidence confirms the results of earlier research. But new insights have been uncovered by our evidence, as well. Broadly framed by Figure 1 in Chapter 1, these themes concerned successful principal leadership practices, factors giving rise to such practices, along with features of the principals' environments that both mediate and moderate their effects on student learning. In addition, our research was intended to clarify similarities and differences in the beliefs and behaviors of successful school principals across national cultures, especially in response to the pervasive accountability policies in which most principals find themselves.

The Nature of the Evidence

Chapter 1 concluded with a discussion of the strengths and shortcomings of qualitative leadership research. To what extent, we asked, is this form of research *pursued on a large scale*, as in the case of our project, capable of addressing the limitations of qualitative research as it is typically pursued (i.e., on a small scale and often without much coordination across studies). We return to the five limitations of such research identified in Chapter 1 and consider how well the chapters in this book, as a whole, have addressed those limitations.

Is the work cumulative? Often qualitative leadership research consists of "one-off" studies guided by unique perspectives which are not revisited in subsequent studies by the original researchers or others who might follow. The chapters provide encouraging signs of progress in addressing this limitation. Such progress seems

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primarily due to the development of multiple cases, over time, by each country team. This has allowed for ongoing refinement of ideas and data collection techniques, eventually resulting in the cross-case reports appearing in the book chapters. These chapters have provided some indication, as well, that researchers are beginning to build on the work of their colleagues in other countries. Reference to a similar frame for describing leadership practices in most of the chapters is an example.

Qualitative research is often justified as "grounded theory" development, thereby lessening the pressure to build on previous evidence. Indeed, such evidence sometimes is actively put aside because it is viewed as a constraint on conceptual progress. But English-language research has now produced at least some useful evidence about many key aspects of principal leadership, as well as its causes and consequences. Does the research reported in the chapters build on this evidence? We are making progress on a broken front on this matter. Several chapters primarily draw on frameworks and ideas from other fields to make sense of their data (e.g., see the use of "communicative rationality" in Chapter 7). This can have significant advantages to a field of study when more established frameworks in the field are explicitly considered, self-consciously put aside and reasons for adopting quite different frameworks and ideas are provided.

Perhaps the most obvious limitation of typical forms of qualitative research is its lack of external validity. A major justification for the ambitious number of cases included in the first phase of our international project was the possibility of producing combined results strong on both internal and external validity. The number of cases developed by some of our country teams begins to approximate sample sizes not uncommon in quantitative research. This is most obvious for the English team. So we are "nibbling" at the lower edges of external validity *within countries*. But "representing" school leadership within even one country is not something most quantitative leadership research does very well, either. In combination with the large-scale quantitative evidence we are in the midst of collecting as this book is being completed, we will be in a better position than most other projects, to depict the general tendencies associated with successful leadership within and across the countries included in the international project. But achieving very high levels of representativeness or generalizability is likely an unrealistic goal unless we are surprised by the lack of variation in our data.

Have key variables been appropriately manipulated? We cannot claim to have broken new ground on this typical limitation of qualitative leadership studies. The number of cases that are possible, even in a large project of this sort, does not permit the degree of manipulation required to form conclusions considered "robust" by conventional quantitative standards, in any event. The chapters do, for example, identify many potential leadership antecedents and moderators, as we point out below. Indeed, the chapters even explicitly inquire about the consequences for leadership of variation in some of these factors. But systematic manipulation of variables has been very difficult to do largely because of the number of cases. It may be more productive in future qualitative leadership studies to sample leaders and schools, holding the status of key variables (such as school level) constant rather

than sampling in order to represent variation. The type of large-scale quantitative research which we have now begun in the second stage of our work is better suited to this task.

No realistic amount of qualitative leadership research seems likely to address all the limitations of such research as reviewed here. However, the evidence reported in the nine central chapters of this book do quite a good job of overcoming many of them.

Successful Principal Leadership Practices

Chapter 1 summarized evidence concerning successful leadership practices. This evidence, we argued, provided considerable support for the value of four broad sets of leadership practices and some 13 more specific practices within those categories. Most of the chapters in this book find evidence of successful principals engaging in all four categories of practice and several chapters (Chapters 8 and 10) explicitly frame a portion of their findings around those categories.

Table 12.1 identifies these practices (in plain text) along with others that have surfaced in our research (in italics). The right hand column indicates which chapters report evidence of each practice; italicized practices are additions to the starting set.

In the Direction-setting category, these additional practices include a version of *problem solving* (from research in four countries), as well as *articulating a set of core values* (identified in the research of two countries). As part of the Developing People category, our studies recommend adding *trust building* and *being visible in the school* to the core set of successful leadership practices. *Building a safe and secure environment* has been added to the Redesigning the Organization category of successful leadership practices. And to Managing the Instructional Program, our evidence suggests adding *introducing productive forms of instruction to staff*.

The most significant addition to the original set of core leadership practices is a broad category we have labeled Coalition Building. This label reflects Bennis' claim, based on evidence about political and corporate leaders, that:

> *coalition building is one of the essential competencies of all leaders – in some ways, the defining one … [A]uthentic leaders know, even if they do not bruit it around, that their power is a consequence of their ability to recruit the talent of others to the collective enterprise. The lone ranger has never been as dead as he is today.* (2004, p. 335)

Specific initiatives undertaken by our successful principals to build coalitions entailed making connections with, and influencing, agencies and groups external to the school (government, professional groups, community groups and district staff).

The amount of data available through our research in support of the newly identified (italicized) practices pales in comparison to the amount of evidence in support of the original set. Nonetheless, most of the newly identified practices are by no means new to the field. Previous research can be found in support of them all. The results of our research amount to a recommendation to reconsider their inclusion among the core practices useful to leaders across many different contexts.

Table 12.1. Successful leadership practice

Successful leadership practices	Countries
Setting Directions	
Builds shared vision, sense of direction and clear goals	2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Sets and continuously raises standards and expectations;	3, 6, 8, 9, 10
Analyzes context, clarifies problems that need to be addressed; establishes improvement plans	3, 5, 8, 9
Articulates a set of core personal values	3, 10
Developing People	
Provides individual support & consideration	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10
Provides intellectual stimulation; builds individual capacity and commitment; challenges current teaching practices	2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10
Builds trust	2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Facilitates school-wide professional learning	2, 3, 5, 9, 10
Models values and practices	3, 6, 8, 10
Visible in the school much of the time	7, 10
Redesigning the Organization	
Encourages collaborative decision making, teamwork and distributed leadership	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10
Builds productive (open, participatory) school culture	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10
Helps create safe, secure environment	3, 6, 10
Creates supportive structures/environment for collaboration	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10
Builds productive relationships & networks with a range of stakeholders outside the school	3, 4, 6, 8, 10
Managing the Instructional Program	
Monitors progress and engages faculty in critical reflection on their practices	2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10
Hires appropriate staff	7, 9, 10
Provides adequate resources	3, 5, 8, 9, 10
Buffers school and class from outside distractions	3, 5, 8, 10
Introduces productive forms of instruction to staff	3, 9
Coalition Building	
Participates in government decision making organizations	3, 4, 9
Participates in professional organizations and networks	3, 4, 7
Builds coalitions with groups in community	3, 4, 5, 10
Establishes good working relations with district staff	7

Factors that Mediate Successful Principal Leadership

As we have pointed out several times by now, the effects of successful principal leadership on pupil learning are largely indirect. To improve the learning of their students, principals must exercise some form of positive influence on the work of other colleagues, such as teachers, as well as influence on the status of key school and classroom conditions that have a direct and demonstrable influence on pupils.

While there is a considerable body of evidence about classroom and school conditions directly influencing student learning, much less is known about how principals successfully influence those conditions. Providing such evidence is one of the important contributions of the chapters in this book. Among the large list of classroom-level mediators listed in the first chapter, our intervening chapters have provided new evidence, from a leadership perspective, about six, including:

- Time on task: This is among the strongest variables to emerge from the teaching effects research (Smyth, 1987). The actions of successful principals in Tasmania in relation to time on task are explored in Chapter 2.
- Quality of instruction/instructional climate: This variable has well known and positive effects on student learning (Biddle & Dunkin, 1987). Results reported in chapters 3 (New South Wales), 5 (Norway) and 10 (United States) touch on what successful principals do about instructional quality.
- Curriculum: A curriculum rich in ideas and engaging for students has a significant influence on their learning (Brophy, n.d.). Chapters 3 (Victoria), 5 (Norway) and 10 (United States) explore what successful principals do to help develop such curricula in their schools.

School variables found to be mediators of principals' effects in the country reports and supported by substantial previous evidence include:

- Safe and orderly climate: A "charter member" of the effective schools correlates (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993), the work of principals to influence this variable is examined in the Victoria (3) and United States (10) chapters;
- Staff participation in school-wide decision making, is a variable which has attracted considerable research interest for decades (e.g., Conley, 1991). The chapter exploring successful principal leadership in China (9) illustrates the importance of such participation even in a "high power-distance" (Hofstede, 2001) culture and how principals can successfully promote it;
- School culture: This mediator has widely reported effects on students (Deal, 2005). How principals successfully develop cultures based on norms of collaboration is explored in all of the chapters in the book and is one of the central themes in the Swedish (6) chapter.
- Teacher's organizational commitment: What successful principals can do to influence this variable is a key part of the English (4), Chinese (9) and Danish (7) chapters. Such commitment on the part of teachers has been strongly endorsed as important to school effectiveness by a considerable amount of previous evidence (Dannetta, 2002).

Most of the chapters, in sum, reinforce the importance of a sub-set of mediators found in previous research. The evidence in these chapters, in addition, extends our knowledge by describing what some successful principals have done to enhance these mediators in their schools. Of course, the mediators included in these chapters are not the only potential mediators to which principals might productively attend, as Chapter 1 made clear.

Factors that Moderate Successful Principal Leadership

The nine chapters provide evidence about six leadership moderators. These are moderators earlier evidence, described in Chapter 1, has suggested are significant. Evidence about student background factors are reported in four of the seven country chapters. The English (4), Danish (7), Chinese (9), Australian (3) and United States (10) chapters described the school's location (e.g., rural, urban). The United States (10), Danish (7), Chinese (9) and Norwegian (5) chapters included attention to school size and the extent of mutual trust and respect to be found in the relationship between leaders and teachers and/or teachers and students. The government vs. non government designation of schools is addressed in the English (4) and Victorian (3) chapters. And the United States (10), Danish (7), Chinese (9), Tasmanian (2), Victorian (3) and English (4) cases briefly report the moderating consequences of school level (elementary, middle, secondary).

The nine chapters, in sum, usefully draw attention to at least a substantial sub-set of important leadership moderators. These moderators ought to be accounted for in the design of future school leadership research. In our view, as well, principals should be sensitive to the effects of these moderators on their work and begin to consider how their practices might be adjusted to minimize any depressing influence some of these moderators have on their impact. School size and teacher trust, in particular, can be altered by those in leadership roles, potentially enhancing the effects of their work.

Antecedents of Successful Principal Leadership

In Chapter 1 we argued that factors influencing the principals' choice of leadership approaches and practices were both internal to the principal, and located in the external environment. Our nine chapters explored both types, sometimes incidentally and sometimes quite purposefully. Among those internal factors, our research found evidence of both traits and dispositions, as well as values and beliefs.

Traits and dispositions (internal antecedents) We noted in Chapter 1 that school leadership research has not yet devoted much attention to the study of leaders' internal lives, with the exception of their values and cognitive processes. We also pointed out, however, that evidence gathered over the past fifteen years in non-school contexts makes a strong case for attending to leaders' dispositions, even though this focus had been actively discouraged many years earlier

(e.g., Stogdill, 1948). In this section, we describe our own results and briefly compare them with evidence from non-school contexts. A majority of the chapters in the book, as Table 12.2 indicates, begin to fill gaps in our knowledge about the traits and dispositions either giving rise to, or associated with, successful principal leadership. The left column of Table 12.2 lists the traits and dispositions uncovered by this evidence while the right column notes the chapters in which this evidence was reported.

From the evidence in Table 12.2, two conclusions are possible. One conclusion is that some traits and dispositions incline principals to engage in practices widely considered to be successful. Just as warranted, however, would be the conclusion that when a principal's colleagues judge her traits and dispositions to be attractive or desirable, they have a strong inclination to interpret her leadership practices as successful. Either way, this evidence indicates quite strongly that leaders' traits and dispositions, whatever they may be, figure prominently in leadership attributions.

Affective traits and dispositions described in Table 12.2 are organized using Zaccaro's (Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004) classification system – cognitive abilities, personality, motivation and social appraisal skills. Zaccaro and his colleagues report strong and consistent evidence linking a variety of *cognitive abilities* to successful leadership. Promotion to higher levels of leadership and greater impact of leaders on their organizations are strongly linked to higher intelligence, greater problem-solving expertise and more domain-specific knowledge. Our evidence, limited to research in only one of our countries, associates cognitive flexibility, as well as creative and lateral thinking capacities, with successful principals.

Table 12.2. Successful principals' traits and dispositions

Traits and dispositions	Countries (chapter numbers)
Cognitive Abilities	
Flexible	2
Creative or lateral thinking	2
Personality	
Openness, frankness	2, 5, 6, 7, 8
Self confident, internal locus of control	6, 9
Innate goodness	2
Other-centred	2
Humble toward job	7
Motivation	
Inspiring and visionary	2
High energy level	3, 4
Determined, persistent, industrious	3, 4, 7
Passionate, enthusiastic, strong emotional commitment, highly motivated	2, 3, 4, 5, 9
Achievement-oriented: self and others	3, 5
Social Appraisal Skills	
Listens well	2, 5, 6, 7, 8
Sense of humor	7

Both of these capacities have been identified by evidence from research on leaders in non-school contexts. Bennis argues, for example, that "When we speak of exemplary leadership, we are often talking about exemplary, creative problem solving – the discovery of new solutions to unprecedented problems" (2004, p. 334). Research on school leaders' problem solving also demonstrates significant differences in the manifestation of these traits on the part of more as compared with less successful principals (e.g., Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; Allison, 1996).

Table 12.2 associates five *personality traits* with successful principals. Mentioned most frequently was openness and frankness. Openness is part of a cluster of five personality variables (emotional stability, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) around which much of the leadership personality research in non-school contexts has focused in the last decade. Its contribution to leader success, while not unambiguous, is generally positive (Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004). Openness is also associated with a participatory leadership style. Of the other personality traits included in Table 12.2, self confidence and internal locus of control also find support in the wider research on leaders' personality.

Motivation is the third category of leadership traits and dispositions listed in Table 12.2. Zaccaro et al. (2004) claim that the motive states examined most by non-school leadership research has been the need for dominance or power, achievement, affiliation and responsibility. While respondents described in two of our chapters were reported to have strong achievement needs, there was no obvious evidence among any of them of a need for dominance, power or affiliation.

Respondents providing evidence for five of the nine chapters in the book reported successful principals to be passionate about their work, highly committed emotionally and highly motivated. Principals in two and three country reports, respectively, were perceived to have high energy levels likely to be motivational to others, as well as being determined, persistent and industrious. These motivational states have no literal counterparts in the motive states identified in the Zaccaro et al. review, although need for responsibility might be viewed as very weakly related to passion and commitment.

The final category of traits and dispositions listed in Table 12.2 is *social appraisal skills* which Marlow defines as "the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of persons, including oneself, in interpersonal situations and to act appropriately upon that understanding" (1986, p. 52). Zaccaro et al.'s review links variation in these skills with significant differences in leadership success. Five of the nine chapters reported evidence of successful principals being good listeners and one mentioned principals having a good sense of humor, which could be a sign of good social appraisal skills in some circumstances (e.g., a strategy for defusing conflict or reducing tension). Our explicit evidence does not reflect the wide range of social appraisal skills uncovered in the wider leadership research. It is tempting to infer quite extensive social appraisal skills on the part of our successful principals based on indirect evidence, however. Social appraisal skills included in non-school leadership research includes self-monitoring skills, as well as both social

and emotional intelligence. Expanding research into this more comprehensive set of social appraisal capacities among educational leaders seems like a productive direction for future inquiry.

Values and beliefs (internal antecedents) Evidence reported in the nine chapter also describes some of the most explicitly notable values and beliefs of our successful principals, another type of potential internal antecedent to their successful practices. These thirteen specific values and beliefs are listed in Table 12.3, organized into the same categories used earlier to report the results of a series of empirical studies about the role of values in principals' problem solving summarized by Leithwood and Steinbach (1995, Chapter 8). Respect for others (Chapter 5) and happiness, specifically the need for teachers to be happy (Chapters 3, 9, 10) are classified as *basic human values*. The evidence summarized by Leithwood and Steinbach also included in this category the importance of knowledge and survival about which we found no explicit evidence. Among *general moral values and beliefs*, empathy and care (2, 9, 10), along with equity and social justice (2, 4, 5, 9) were most evident in our chapters. Although no explicit mention was made of courage, a value reported by Leithwood and Steinbach, it would be plausible to attribute courage to our successful principals working in highly accountable policy

Table 12.3. Successful principals' beliefs and values

Beliefs and values	Countries (chapter numbers)
Basic Human Values	
Respect for others	5
Happiness (teachers' happiness and feelings of being valued is critical to their work)	3, 9, 10
General Moral Values	
Honest	2
Empathy, care	2, 9, 10
Catholic values	3
Equity and social justice	2, 4, 5, 9
Professional Values and Beliefs	
Role responsibility (Principals can and should make a difference)	3, 4
Consequences for students	
• Students best interests should be the focus of the school	3, 5, 9, 10
• All children can learn, succeed and have a right to learn	2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10
• All children matter/have unrealized potential Consequences for others	2, 3, 5, 9, 10
• All stakeholders should be supported	3
Social and Political Values and Beliefs	
Dispersed knowledge and shared responsibility	2, 4, 7
Participation of all stakeholders	2, 4, 7, 10
Community should have a shared vision for the school	2, 4
Commitment	2, 4

contexts who continued to buffer their staffs from external demands which they believed would not be helpful to act on in their schools.

Within the category *professional values and beliefs*, evidence from our studies closely approximates the findings of Leithwood & Steinbach (1995). Two chapters (3 and 4) reported role responsibility values on the part of principals. Evidence in four to six chapters indicated a concern on the part of successful principals for the consequences of their work especially on students: a schools' focus should be on the best interests of students (3, 5, 9, 10); all children can learn and should succeed (2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10) and; all children have potential that should be realized (2, 3, 5, 9, 10).

A substantial amount of evidence indicates that our successful principals' values and beliefs were *social and political* in nature, as Leithwood and Steinbach defined these terms. These principals were concerned about community involvement in the school, especially in its vision (2, 4), had high levels of commitment to that vision (2, 4), and believed that capacities possessed by people throughout the school should be used for the good of the students (2, 4, 7). Many of our successful principals also valued the participation of all stakeholders in school decisions (2, 4, 7, 10).

Previous research in non-school contexts has suggested that the influence of leaders' values on their actions typically increases as leaders are faced with fewer organizational and policy constraints on those actions (Hambrich & Brandon, 1988). In practice, this has usually meant that the actions of senior-level leaders are more consistent with their own values than is the case with middle-level leaders. According to the evidence about our (mid-level) successful principals, however, there was a very strong relationship between their actions and the values they espoused and were perceived to hold by staff, parents and others. This willingness to work toward such value-action consistency may be one of the more significant characteristics distinguishing their work from the work of their less successful peers, an intriguing hypothesis for subsequent inquiry. It is also a hallmark of what is now being called "authentic" leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

External antecedents Research described in all nine chapters inquired about successful principal leadership in state or national policy contexts preoccupied with holding schools more publicly accountable. This preoccupation was in its relatively early stages in the three northern European countries (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) but in very mature stages in Tasmania, Victoria, England, Canada and the United States (2, 3, 4, 8 and 10). Perhaps not surprisingly, successful leaders in the more mature accountability contexts were less consumed with, or had become desensitized to, worries over the sometimes negative steering effects of many accountability initiatives - reduced autonomy and public shaming through publication of league tables, for example. These principals had become more intent on harnessing government accountability initiatives to their own school's priorities. The United States chapter also mentions the "stage in a school's capacity for improvement" as a potential external antecedent.

In the more mature accountability contexts, a large proportion of the successful principals even used external demands for greater accountability as a tool for

overcoming longstanding resistance to change on the part of small numbers of their teachers. But in Norway, for example, the more recent development of accountability policies introduced substantial tensions into leaders' external contexts because of a long history of teacher autonomy and the widespread celebration of democratic values in both schools and their wider communities.

The nine chapters, in sum, indicate that successful principal leadership cannot be fully understood by examining only their overt behaviors, even though such behaviors are the direct source of principals' influence on their organizations. Principals' traits, disposition, beliefs and values would seem to be critical stimulants of successful behaviors. Furthermore, while there are many other elements of principals' contexts that are likely to serve as antecedents to their practices, these chapters offer a reasonably rare look at how a roughly similar policy context influences principals' behaviors across very different school and national cultures.

Explaining Our Findings: Working from a Different Metaphor

The synthesis of our research results to this point has been restrained by our empirical evidence along with the boundaries of a conceptual framework initially described in Chapter 1. This framework has helped us systematically to describe similarities and differences in principal leadership and related issues across countries; it has kept us close to our evidence and, we think, should reassure readers that our knowledge claims are grounded in what we actually saw and heard in our samples of schools.

In this concluding section, we attempt to further explain our empirical findings: we "dig below" our detailed empirical evidence in search of underlying phenomena which would give this evidence even greater coherence and meaning. This search for greater understanding is focused specifically on the nature of our successful principals' work in their schools. Now, the evidence we uncovered about the (potential) internal and external antecedents of principal practices already offers some explanation for the nature of our successful principals' work. A disposition to be open to ideas from others strongly inclines one toward collaborative decision-making processes, for example. And deeply held beliefs in both the right and the capacity of all children to learn strongly predisposes one to hold high performance expectations for both staff and students, as another example.

We take yet a further explanatory step "back" when we ask how people with dispositions of the sort we have described came to be principals to begin with. This question prompts a search for explanation in the processes through which first teachers, and then administrators (almost always selected from the teacher pool) are selected. Considerable evidence tells us that people chose to be teachers because they are strongly committed to the welfare of children. If the evidence were available (it is not), we would expect it to tell us that teachers, as an occupational group, also have higher than average emotional intelligence, to use Goleman's term (1998); it isn't much of a stretch for most people to believe that a high degree of sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others is more than just a little helpful if

one is to work productively with an energetic, diverse group of twenty-five seven year-olds, day after day.

But we want to dig a bit a bit deeper below the surface of our empirical evidence than do these explanations. Such digging has led us to the view that our empirical evidence about the nature of successful principal leadership can be partly explained by the basic metaphors leaders and their colleagues hold about their organizations. This is actually an old idea given a fresh and quite compelling face by Margaret Wheatley, most recently in her book *Finding Our Way: Leadership For An Uncertain Time* (2005). While we draw on Wheatley quite liberally here, very similar ideas appear in many other sources including for, example, Mintzberg (1973), Sergiovanni (1994) and Bolman & Deal (1991). Two competing metaphors - "organizations as machines" and "organizations as living systems" – are featured in Wheatley's explanation for both organizations and leadership that differ radically in their functioning and outcomes. The work of our successful principals strongly suggests that they thought of their organizations as living systems, not machines.

The "machine" metaphor, by Wheatley's account, encourages a view of organization as a fixed structure of some sort, a structure consisting of parts that need to be "oiled" if they are to function together smoothly. From this view, organizations require effortful monitoring, coordination and direction by someone, typically a "leader". Furthermore, this metaphor:

> *has led to organizational lives where we believe we can ignore the deep realities of human existence. We can ignore that people carry spiritual questions and quests into their work; we can ignore that people need love and acknowledgement; we can pretend that emotions are not a part of our work lives; we can pretend we don't have families, or health crises, or deep worries. In essence, we take the complexity of human life and organize it away … People can be viewed as machines and controlled to perform with same efficiency and predictability* (2005, p. 19).

Machine metaphors of organization bear a family resemblance to some descriptions of schools as bureaucracies; Mintzberg (1973) actually includes "machine bureaucracies" in his organizational typology. Schools organized in this manner have been described, for example, as having precise and closed-ended goals, balkanized cultures based on norms of individual achievement and competition. Structures in such schools are hierarchical, with individually-centred decision making guided largely by beliefs in the primacy of rational processes. Policies in such schools are extensive, specifying roles and responsibilities in great detail. In addition, relationships with the wider community are distant and only minimally responsive (Leithwood, Aitken, & Jantzi, 2002).

Wheatley notes that "…in the past few years, ever since uncertainty became our insistent twenty-first century companion, leadership strategies have taken a great leap backward to the familiar territory of command and control" (2005, p. 4). "Command and control" begins to capture the approaches to leadership that are encouraged by a machine metaphor of the school organization. Such leadership, aiming to increase employees' certainty about their work (and increase the school's level of accountability to government and the public) is mostly transactional.

This means that, in the case of school organizations, teachers are assumed to be motivated by the promise of such extrinsic, positive rewards as money and status and such extrinsic, negative rewards as school reconstitution and public shaming through the publication of league tables.

Transactional, command and control forms of leadership on the part of principals further manifests itself in the close supervision of teachers, specification of the one best model of instruction which all teachers must use, centralized decisions about how time in the classroom is to be used, and very long lists of curriculum standards or expectations which teachers are required to cover with students. Teachers are allowed little autonomy over their work in classrooms, their voices are heard weakly, at best, in school-wide decision making and yet they are held almost entirely accountable for student achievement.

A "living systems" metaphor encourages a view of organization as a process, one of constant adaptation, growth and becoming that occurs naturally and inevitably in response to a strong desire for learning and survival. As Wheatley describes it:

> *the process of organizing involves developing relationships from a shared sense of purpose, exchanging and creating information, learning constantly, paying attention to the results of our efforts, co-adapting, co-evolving, developing wisdom as we learn, staying clear about our purpose, being alert to changes from all directions.* (2005, p. 27)

A description of organization-as-living-system bears a strong resemblance to accounts of schools as learning organizations. Schools of this type have been described, for example, as having clear but evolving missions, collaborative cultures built on norms of continuous problem solving, with structures not fixed but dependent on tasks and contexts. These schools engage in team-based decision-making and have minimal policies; those policies that do exist are designed to enhance learning and avoid limiting the use of talent. These schools are also highly responsive to the wider community viewed as a partner in the education of children. Leadership in such organizations is transformative, based on facilitative power with substantial emphasis on self management. Schools which act as learning organizations focus on meeting the esteem and self actualization needs of their members and assume that learning is active, constructive and aimed at personal sense-making in a social context (Leithwood, Aitken, & Jantzi, 2002).

One of the more remarkable results of our research was that even in the highly accountable policy contexts intended to deal with such uncertainty, successful principals assiduously avoided a command and control form of leadership. Even the two principals in Shanghai, working in a culture which supported and expected command and control, nonetheless frequently acted with compassion and considerable sensitivity to the human dilemmas faced by their students and staff. Our successful principals, on the whole, appeared to hold a deep, if tacit, conception of their organizations as organic, living systems, rather than as machines. So what they believed was required of them as leaders, we infer from our evidence, was the provision of help to their colleagues in finding meaningful direction for their work, protection from the harsher elements of the schools' wider environments, nurturance, attention, excitement and stimulation. If the organization needed "oiling", it

was increased mutual trust, not more policy and regulation, that was applied. These principals, furthermore, displayed quite noticeable emotions about their work; there were no disinterested, decision making "functionaries" among them. Their passion, enthusiasm, commitment and excitement were evident to everyone with whom they worked. Perhaps "family" rather than "living system" would come closer to the word some of these principals would chose themselves to capture the nature of their relationship with their schools. But it amounts to about the same thing.

Wheatley's account of organizing encompasses, in the abstract, much of the specific behaviors of our successful principals in their schools. From a living systems perspective, organizing is neither a linear nor a neat process. Our principals, we imagine, would deeply appreciate Wheatley's claim that "Life seeks organization, but it uses messes to get there" (2005, p. 18). In sum, then, part of the explanation, an important part in our view, for the work of the successful principals included in our study is simply that they viewed their schools as something like Wheatley's "living system" or a "family" or perhaps a "learning organization" and crafted a role for themselves that was designed to nurture such a system. Remarkably absent from virtually all of their work was any sign of a machine-like view of schools. There was little preoccupation with policy. While they all had clear priorities for their work and the work of their colleagues, these priorities were allowed to evolve over time. Furthermore, these principals were highly protective, even parent-like, in their efforts to buffer their schools from unhelpful aspects of the wider environment and both staff and students were treated with great care. Our evidence does not allow us to comment on the organizational metaphors held by less successful principals. But we suspect that machines figure strongly in them. These are testable suspicions and explanations that deserve some attention in future research.

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