

Introduction

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*Kia ora from Aotearoa, New Zealand.
E nga mana e nga reo
huri noa i te ao
tena koutou katoa.*

(Greetings from New Zealand to those in educational leadership around the world.)

This issue of the *Journal of Educational Change* explores the complexity of *leadership and, for and in change* in schools. There is a large body of literature which focuses specifically on the influence of principal leadership and school improvement (see review by Hallinger & Heck, 1998) and increasing amounts recently that extend the focus to include governors, teachers, students and communities, as they explore leadership within change processes in schools (for example, Dimmock, 2000; Harris & Lambert, 2003). Professional learning communities and networking of leaders, nationally and internationally, working together to improve student achievement are common themes in the leadership literature today (for example, Stoll, Bolam & Collarbone 2002; Hargreaves, 2003). Distributed leadership is also a regular theme, with research indicating that it is in the “leadership practice” at various levels within a school, where change occurs (Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2006). A common theoretical underpinning in recent literature is that change in schools is a socio-cultural process (Sleegers, Geijsel & van den Berg, 2002; Wells, 1999; Wells & Claxton, 2002) and that it is through the *interactions* between members of the learning community that the construction of new knowledge takes place (Spillane, 2006). The contributions in this issue of the *Journal of Educational Change* focus attention on the socio-cultural nature of leadership, change and transformation in schools.

Researchers often write about the importance of establishing professional learning communities but at times their authority to talk from their own personal experiences of working within or leading such communities is tenuous. The majority of the contributors

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in this issue have spent the past 3 years negotiating, challenging and critiquing their own ways of working on, thinking about and constructing new knowledge concerning these socio-cultural dimensions of leadership, within a research community. In September 2003, an international network of researchers on leadership in education was established—an international professional learning community with its main purpose to debate, critique, synthesise and extend current thinking on leadership in education and to inform the work of the National College for School Leadership in England. In many ways this international networked learning community sought to mirror the leadership, culture and change process that its substance addressed. This research network was funded by the National College for School Leadership¹ and was coordinated from Boston College in the United States by Professor Andy Hargreaves. The network comprised 22 educational researchers from different parts of the world, including some of those regions where some of the most extensive research on leadership in education has been undertaken.²

This network of researchers met together over 3 years when they presented at national and international conferences, and at their own network meetings, in Pretoria, South Africa; Boston, USA and Nottingham, England. The goal was to share and discuss existing international research in the network's areas of interest, and to develop new research and writing, which has since been published in many different forums. Many participants have also been involved in making video resources, as well as publications for the National College of School Leadership. The wider purpose of the network was to share, develop and disseminate research that highlighted particularly the human and socio-cultural side of school leadership, in areas that included moral and ethical leadership, the emotional aspects of leadership, teacher and student leadership, distributed leadership, sustainability and social justice in leadership, and the relationship of leadership to issues of diversity and inclusiveness.

This special issue of the *Journal of Educational Change* includes articles, responses and reviews from many members of this professional learning community as they explore leadership *and, for and in* school change—the leadership *practice*—through different cultural, social and political lenses. There are five empirical articles which stem from funded research projects. Alma Harris outlines a DfES-funded project, in England, in which researchers gathered data over the course of 3 years, in eight schools which were located in exceptionally challenging circumstances. A recurring finding within the project was that the leaders' investment in the quality of relationships “generated high levels of commitment, energy and effort from those within and outside the school.”

Antonio Bolivar and Juan Manuel Moreno carried out a major study for the National Institute for Quality and Evaluation in Spain, and from these findings provide an in depth critique of the model of principalship and why there remains a lack of transformational leadership in Spanish schools.

¹ National College for School Leadership <<http://www.ncsl.org.uk>>

² Members of the Network were Susan Moore Johnson, Ann Lieberman, Richard Elmore, Andy Hargreaves, Robert (Jerry) Starratt, James Spillane and Amanda Datnow from the United States of America; Ben Levin from Canada; Alma Harris, John MacBeath, Pat Thomson and Geoff Southworth from England; Jan Robertson from New Zealand; Jonathan Jansen from South Africa; Hidenori Fujita from Japan; Kam-cheung Wong from China; Juan Manuel Moreno from Spain; Ciaran Sugrue from Ireland; Jorunn Moller from Sweden; Lejf Moos from Denmark; Bill Mulford from Australia; and Ken Stott from Singapore (now in Australia).

Bill Mulford describes an Australian Research Council-funded project, which involved over half the secondary schools in South Australia and all the secondary schools in Tasmania, over a 2-year period, and presents a model which highlights the complex relationships between multiple forms of leadership and student achievement, in schools.

Camille Rutherford, working with Amanda Datnow, and a team of researchers, conducted an in-depth case study of one elementary school in the USA, over a 5-year period. She posits that changes in leadership structures are necessary to create new types of teachers—teacher leaders—who are “accountable for their own and their students’ learning, as well as assuming responsibility for colleagues’ learning and the profession as a whole.” This study was supported by a grant from the Institute of Education Sciences in the U.S. Department of Education.

John MacBeath, with a team of researchers, examined the process of change in 22 schools, in seven countries, over a 3-year period. Funded by a Swedish foundation, MacBeath’s article describes how members of the schools’ communities “professed to profound changes in their thinking and practice, ascribed to the reframing that occurred by being exposed to differing practices across cultural boundaries.”

Kam-cheung Wong’s paper describes how different the Chinese education system is from, in particular, the English-speaking West, through a case study of two schools. He explores possible explanations for these differences, and how they “define the practices of school management and leadership.”

Highlighting leadership from developing or eastern countries, as well as from indigenous leadership, has been an ongoing challenge for the research network, as well as for this journal, and continues to be so, as members grapple, not always successfully, with the issues of honoring diversity and exploring the effects of globalization on local issues. Ahnee-Benham and Napier (2002) would possibly critique that this special issue is yet another “typology of leadership theories that are to some degree incomplete and controversial” (p. 133). There have been some powerfully challenging debates in the Network and in journal board meetings about how to improve our work in this area. Effective professional learning communities and networks push people out of their comfort zones to consider other ways of working and different perspectives, and there remain a lot of challenges and professional learning.

The Big Change Question, in this issue, focuses around the socio-cultural framing of leadership practice. It has elicited responses from seven more of the research network’s members. Tondra Loder, with James Spillane, focuses on women and leadership, and how their personal and professional biographies interact with education contexts and influence how they manage their dilemmas and tensions. Ben Levin highlights “agency, situation and luck, and the interplay among them” as the three levers of organizational change. Pat Thomson’s response purports that it is leaders’ deficit theories, or the lack thereof, about students and their ability to learn, that is the “difference that makes the difference” in terms of changing teachers’ practices in schools. Her case study gives a very clear example of how this is so. Geoff Southworth challenges leaders to be “discerning and critical consumers of change” and to be “emotionally intelligent” about change, as they set direction for their schools. Jonathan Jansen, presents two principals as examples of leaders who “move against the logic of their own biographies” to challenge their traditional communities and radically transform their schools into inclusive communities. Hidenori Fujita puts forth that it is the “grass-roots, bottom-up reform initiatives” that make the biggest difference, and leaders who focus on building trust and empowerment, will enable teachers and students to have “wings of dreams and hopes.” Last, Susan Moore Johnson describes a disturbing case study of what is happening to the new generation of teachers in

many schools in the USA, and reminds us that supportive contexts do not happen by chance, but need an “investment” of “careful planning, the commitment of time and money and sustained leadership by principals and teachers.”

This issue ends with two reviews of Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink’s book “Sustainable Leadership” by Amanda Datnow, and by an invited Malaysian professor, Dato’ Ibrahim Bajunid, to present a non-Western perspective of the concepts in this book.

During a leadership development session recently, I overheard the following conversation between a leadership coach and a principal.

Coach: “Who are the leaders in your school?”

Principal: “Well, in the senior management team there are...”

The coach interrupted with “I asked, who are the *leaders* in the school not who is in the senior management team.”

Principal: “Oh, let me see ... well, definitely the physical education teacher ...”

Leadership in a school can be an elusive and generative quality, and if we want to see where and with whom the leadership lies within a school, we must research and study the different leadership practices to see who is contributing and how (Spillane, 2006). “Leadership” denotes transformation and change, and people working *on* the system rather than just *within* the system, but many reform efforts have failed to make any real impact on the school system as a whole (Fullan, 2005). Perhaps the only thing familiar in the world today to a 19th Century traveller, would be a school and a classroom. Practices in schools do need to change sufficiently to reflect the global world and to enable young people to critique, understand and contribute to the world they are venturing into. “If the main thing we know about the future is that we do not know much about it, then the key responsibility of the educator is not to give young people tools that may be out of date before they have even been fully mastered, but to help them become confident and competent designers and makers of their own tools as they go along” (Wells & Claxton, 2002, p. 23). In developing and developed countries the world over, if children are fortunate enough to actually be in schools, we still establish schools upon hierarchical structures, divide students into groups and levels, mostly according to age, and expect students to work at the same pace on the same subjects, which are taught at set times during the day and year, with the same teachers. Schools are located at particular sites in particular buildings. The world over, there are changes to our economy, our social structure, our access to the world and the knowledge in it, but very little change in our schools and education systems. Information technology is already changing the way in which we view society and community. The boundaries now regarding nation laws, cultures and identities are shifting. The workplace and relationships between workers are being transformed. How will living in this “virtual world” and “global world” affect our young people’s sense of selves and community? If they are to meet the needs of young people moving into this future, which is unbounded by the power and influence of information communication technology, school leaders have a key responsibility to debate the changes schools should make in response. The skills, attitudes, values, knowledge and practices that tomorrow’s young people will need, should be at the core of decision-making as schools move towards being more creative and responsive in facilitating the education of students today.

Perhaps one of the most important starting points for leadership *and, for and in* school change is identifying and highlighting the pedagogical conceptual framework—the beliefs about how learning most effectively takes place—and on which the leaders’ practices in the school rests, whether this be the leader in the classroom or the leader in a senior manage-

ment position. Educational leaders articulate this framework of principles and beliefs about learning—their own and that of others—and create the conditions for them to take place.

If we want students to be responsible citizens, critical and creative thinkers, self-directed learners, collaborative team players and effective communicators—and all the other things national and school policies ask for the world over—then their leaders must model these in their practice. If we want leaders to be able to re-conceptualise and transform their practices and pedagogies, they themselves will require opportunities to experience new ways of working. These leaders will acquire and model the skills, practices and interpersonal relationships that young people will need in their future lives, if teachers are going to be leaders of authentic learning. Leaders will have to struggle with the uncertainties that these changes and challenges will bring. They need opportunities to develop new knowledge about students and learning, about teaching and about the curriculum they teach.

How might we continue to change our thinking around schools? What would happen if we changed the language that we currently use? In her article in this issue, Camille Rutherford uses words like “designers” and “teams”? In their four-year study of teachers’ work, Rutherford and her co-researchers found that the new organizational structure of teams enhanced the nature and scope of teacher leadership. Teachers were “empowered and participating and influencing the collective knowledge and practice of their school.” They found they had developed a “new type of teacher.”

Perhaps a new vocabulary and new structures, as Camille Rutherford describes in her article, are necessary, before we can begin to conceptualise a new kind of education where teachers work in different ways, and until we change the words, our cognitive frameworks around schools will not change. For example, what if, in educational institutions, instead of words such as: teachers, students, classrooms, timetables, curriculum, answers, examinations, schools—we used words like: Coaches, Designers, Innovators, Teams and Co-leaders, Learning spaces, Shared goals, Focused, Personalised learning (Hargreaves, 2003), Flexible learning (learning anytime, anywhere)? Schools could be the learning nexus in the community that linked to all of the other places of learning—virtually and in reality—and not think of themselves as the sole places of learning but connected across space and time within a local and global learning community. Students could be registered at one particular learning space, but have access to so many more. Many wonderful innovations around education and learning are labeled “alternative education” or “extra-curricula” or they happen in the community “outside of school hours.” Could they *be* “school”? As Alma Harris highlights in her article in this issue, such localized and community-based leadership actions are more likely to effectively impact on student achievement, particularly in schools in challenging circumstances, than the forces of accountability, choice, control and competition between schools.

Would this new vocabulary and change in thinking about the provision of education, change schooling practices from hierarchies of a multitude of differentiated power positions to innovation teams, such as in the Edison schools described in Rutherford’s article in this issue? Would the ethic of care and authentic learning (Starratt, 2004) be, then, at the forefront? Leadership could be rotated according to strength and need (West-Burnham, 1997). Or can competing discourses such as collectivity and independence, or discipline and empowerment, exist side-by-side as Kam-cheung Wong points out, in this issue, as they do successfully in the two case study schools in China? The highly centralized hierarchical system of China has many features reflecting Western theorizing on sustainable systems. The “tru”—the teaching and research units in each school—are just one example of such innovation around teachers

engaging in personal and professional development where trust and empowerment is present, in a system otherwise typified by discipline, obligation, responsibility and duty. Kam-cheung Wong highlights two Chinese principals who “knew the system well and exploited it for their own purposes.” These schools had teachers who had a sense of doing a job well and the importance of getting concrete results.

Effective working relationships would be paramount in these new places of learning. In his article in this issue, Bill Mulford purports leadership for change must focus on complex relationships and strong communities. His comprehensive study of school improvement found that relationships, shared norms and values, and critical reflective dialogue around learning and performance data was paramount. Perhaps there would then be leaders who were proactive members of the learning community, and who would move away from perpetuating the status quo to proactive transformative leadership practice in education, to where they feel they contributed to and developed the system rather than being an unthinking, reactive cog in the system’s wheel. Ruefully highlighting the lack of transformation in the Spanish education system, Antonio Bolivar and Juan Manuel Moreno, in their article in this issue, outline the situation in Spain’s schools, where principals are democratically elected by their teaching colleagues—a participatory model—but are operating in an increasingly neo-liberal education context of competition, choice and accountability to ‘clients’—the parents. Many of Spain’s principals are ill-equipped to operate effectively in this context and the authors put forth that they need appropriate professional leadership development. Bolivar and Moreno posit that there is a need to “move from representative democracy to a notion of deliberative democracy.”

Systems affect leadership practice but as the responses to the Big Change Question by the seven contributors in this issue suggest, leaders and leadership can also affect systems. There are many examples in this issue, from the respondents of the Big Change Question, from school systems across the world, demonstrating how leaders’ own lives influence the way they respond to the dilemmas and tensions they face. But leadership for what, as Jerry Starratt would ask? The priority for students, in this age of chaos, uncertainty, and complexity, may need to be *how to learn* and how to honor and celebrate diversity. Building confidence and agency, and enabling students to take their place in the world, and make a positive lasting contribution, could be the most important focus of our efforts. Hargreaves and Fink’s book and the thoughtful reviews in this issue by Ibrahim Ahmad Bajunid and Amanda Datnow bring out the importance of these points for sustainable leadership in our schools. “Sustainable educational leadership and improvement preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefit for others around us, now and in the future” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 17). Perhaps the most important thing is that leaders at all levels in schools—together—debate and articulate what it is they believe is important for young people to learn and then create the conditions for this to occur. Through this socio-cultural process of the construction of new knowledge, new methodologies may emerge. Through these processes new types of cross-cultural learning communities are developed (see, for example, Robertson & Webber, 2002; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). These are learning communities where students and teachers work together, building educational experiences which make a real *difference* to people’s lives. They are learning communities built on mutual respect where people are taught how to critically think about, create, interpret and organise information. John MacBeath’s article, in this issue, highlights the necessity of leaders being exposed to different perspectives to challenge them to think critically about their leadership practice, and the importance of principals growing in confidence to align practice with leadership for

learning. John MacBeath's findings also remind us that there isn't necessarily a blueprint for all schools to follow (as Harris also noted), but that schools need to focus on more contextually-specific forms of change and plan their own pathways of innovation. MacBeath states "...we had to travel the road together and from very different starting points, converging if not to the same end then at least to one from which there was enough will, and goodwill, to journey further."

Possibly the most important debates that leaders in schools can have on this journey are about the principles behind the leadership *practice* in their schools. Which principles and leadership practice do they believe underpin the most effective functioning of professional learning communities for teachers and students? Why are they doing what they are doing in their schools? What is the effect of their leadership practice on student learning? The five empirical studies in this issue focus in many different ways around this question as authors explore notions of leadership and school change through their research. They highlight many principles. These principles do not become part of the culture of a school simply because leaders say they should. For this to occur, leadership *practices* must model the principles, structure opportunities for them to occur, and articulate the reasons, purposes and importance of them to and within the learning community. The principles for the co-construction of knowledge are thus developed in our schools, one leader at a time, one day at a time, through the many interactions, the leadership practice, that occurs between everyone in that school community (Robertson, 2005). "Creating the conditions," for change in individuals, schools and systems, is the work of leadership as Harris, and many of the authors have reiterated in this special edition. Highlighted by the researchers in the network, throughout this issue, are principles and conditions that enhance the construction of new knowledge in a learning community:

- *INQUIRY AND SHARED LEARNING*—the importance of researching practice and seeking information to create and share new knowledge as part of daily work.
- *RISK-TAKING AND CHALLENGE*—active experimentation, within a cycle of reflection and action, with outside perspectives.
- *RESPONSIBILITY AND TRUST*—accountability and ownership of one's own practice and development.
- *RELATIONSHIPS*—between teachers, between teachers and students, and between school and community.
- *SUPPORT*—a commitment to "caring" for others.
- *BUILDING CAPACITY*—the ability to practice, create and sustain the vision and mission.
- *QUALITY*—the highest standards possible, for all members of the community, developed through vision and values.
- *INNOVATION, TRANSFORMATION, AND IMPROVEMENT*—the essence of leadership.
- *CRITICAL THINKING AND REFLECTION*—outside perspectives and feedback, and a focus on values, assumptions, beliefs, and how they affect policy and practice.
- *BELIEF AND AGENCY*—in oneself, in people and in ideas.

Leaders at all levels of the school have the responsibility, and the ability, to positively influence and create these conditions, and to work together on the school change process. We *each* have the greatest and most important challenge—we are the leaders of today, developing tomorrow's leaders. Each and every one of them will be important to our future.

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