Leadership for Quality Schooling

International Perspectives

Edited by
Kam-cheung Wong and Colin W. Evers

London and New York

Leadership for Quality Schooling

Leadership for Quality Schooling provides the latest thinking and research on school leadership from international scholars in the field of educational administration. It focuses on school-based management and links the key issues of leadership, school improvement, effectiveness and performance. Chapters include:

- Moral Authority, Community and Diversity: Leadership Challenges for the Twenty-first Century
- Regarding Principals: Leadership Effects and the Effectiveness and Improvement of Schools
- Culture and Educational Leadership
- Vision Building among School Leaders
- Embedding Leadership in Task Performance

The book is intended as a guide to the latest research on leadership, as well as a stimulus to further thought for those looking for alternative ideas to existing practices. It will be useful for practitioners, students, researchers, academics and policy-makers.

Kam-cheung Wong is Associate Professor in the Department of Education at the University of Hong Kong. His research involves the study of societal and cultural factors on schooling and leadership. **Colin W. Evers** is Professor in the Department of Education at the University of Hong Kong. His teaching and research interests are in administrative theory, educational philosophy and research methodology. Both authors edit *International Studies in Educational Administration*.

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Student Outcomes and the Reform of Education

General Editor: Brian Caldwell

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Student Outcomes and the Reform of Education is concerned with the reform of public education and its impact on outcomes for students. The reform agenda has gripped the attention of policy-makers, practitioners, researchers and scholars for much of the 1990s, with every indication of more to come with the approach of the new millennium. This series reports research and describes strategies that deal with the outcomes of reform. Without sacrificing a critical perspective, the intention is to provide a guide to good practice and strong scholarship within the new arrangements that are likely to provide the framework for public education in the forseeable future.

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Brian Caldwell and Jim Spinks

Designing the Learning-Centred School
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Preface

The various chapters comprising this volume offer a series of perspectives on the question of promoting quality schooling through the assorted activities that go into leadership. With authors from Australia, Canada, China, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, the coverage, while not extensive, is nevertheless international, and will provide some useful contrasts and novelties for general readers.

We have sought to provide a further source of breadth, cutting across international diversity, by including a range of theoretical perspectives. Some chapters also contain commentary on the ideas in other chapters, indicating that diversity can be fruitfully conjoined with dialogue.

Despite this breadth, we have aimed at gaining focus on certain specific contexts. For example, we assume the growing acceptance of school-based models of school management, and the priority of the resulting task of more fully achieving quality education within this increasingly commonplace administrative context. Moreover, we acknowledge the importance of researching and understanding connections between leadership and school improvement, effectiveness and performance, matters dealt with at length by some of our authors.

An overview of the contents of the book is given in the Introduction.

In assembling this volume we owe much to the work of others. In addition to the fine efforts of our authors, we are grateful for the support this project has received from the Centre for Educational Leadership (CEL) at The University of Hong Kong. A number of chapters were first presented at functions organized and sponsored by CEL. We are particularly grateful for the work of the Centre's Executive Officer, Cindy Wu, for handling innumerable drafts in the process of preparing the final manuscript, and Shen Jin, our research student who translated the chapter by Minyuan Gu into English.

Finally, the book is intended for a wide audience. Our belief is that the diversity of perspectives and the depth of treatment will prove both intellectually exciting and practically useful.

Kam-cheung Wong and Colin W. Evers
The University of Hong Kong

Introduction

Kam-cheung Wong and Colin W. Evers

The practice of associating leadership with quality schooling is not new. Since the 1960s when massive innovations in curriculum areas were introduced in the West, the role of principals in the change process had been increasingly recognized. However, this recognition has not been a straightforward one. Fullan (1995, p. 16) called the 1960s the naïve period for innovation in education because it was a time when change was introduced for its own sake, and it was believed that once a decision was made, change would readily follow. It was a time for bringing facilitators into schools to promote curriculum change, and where the role of principals could be discounted as long as there was someone who made the decisions for change.

The 1970s saw the emergence of a more careful focus on leadership in the implementation of change and innovation, with attempts to identify sets of critical factors, including the role of principals, as significant causes. It was found that the active support of principals was likely to bring success to an innovation. Moreover, Hall *et al*. (1980, p. 26) observed that the degree of implementation of an innovation was different in different schools because of the actions and concerns of the principal. Expectations of principals then began to increase. They were identified as initiators to lead the consequent implementation. As such, they were expected to coordinate interventions, develop supportive arrangements, work actively with change facilitators and give attention to results.

In the 1980s concerns about effective schools, school-based management, vision and strategic planning began to dominate the research and policy scene. While the developed West was still struggling with the effects of economic recession, many governments made drastic cuts in expenditure, and education was no exception. Increasingly, principals were asked to run schools more efficiently and effectively with reduced resources. Principals were expected to have strong visions and communicative skills, be able to support and motivate their younger colleagues and bring about effective changes. Perhaps the School Management Initiative (SMI), a scheme founded on the school-based management and effective schools model and introduced by the Hong Kong Government to all Hong Kong schools in 1991, is revealing of these trends. In the SMI model, much is expected of principals. A principal has to demonstrate his/her ability to lead through his/her:

- professional knowledge;
- organizational and administrative competence;
- ability to work out a good school policy and put it into effect;
- skill in the delegation of authority;
- ability to understand the professional problems of teachers, especially young and inexperienced teachers, and to give professional guidance; and
- ability to establish good working relationships with staff and parents.

The principal is increasingly cast in the role of a super human.

The present volume was initiated by The University of Hong Kong's Centre for Educational Leadership with an intention to engage in current debates over leadership and schooling. We have two additional aims for this publication. First, we are keen to see discussions of leadership reflect, to some degree, the theoretical developments in administrative theory that have occurred concurrently with the rise in interest in leadership research. And second, in line with the increasingly global dimensions of school reform policy, we wanted to see explored the nexus between the international currency of educational ideas and their more local value to the cultures and contexts of interpretation and implementation.

Since Thomas Greenfield (1975) delivered his first challenge to the traditional science paradigm at the 1974 International Intervisitation Programme meeting in Bristol, a range of theoretical perspectives in addition to the traditional science of educational administration, with its systems focus, has flourished. As well as extensions and refinements to Greenfield's influential subjectivist position, researchers have sought to develop alternatives that embrace values, politics, culture, gender, and recently to promote that most extended venue for harbouring diversity, postmodernism. And then there is the work of Evers and Lakomski (1991, 1996, 2000) which seeks to develop an inclusive account of educational administration that provides a framework for accommodating values and subjectivity within a broadened, coherentist, perspective on science. This volume provides a forum where the implications for leadership of these theoretical dimensions can be touched upon.

Similarly, up to the present, much academic research on leadership, albeit within a variety of different theoretical paradigms, has been Western in its origin and orientation, particularly in regard to the English-speaking West. Naturally, the resulting concepts of leadership are embedded in this intellectual and cultural tradition. Even scholars who are from other parts of the world often adopt similar paradigms to those developed in the West. This phenomenon is referred to as 'cultural borrowing' (Cheng, 1998; Dimmock and Walker, 1999). Very few writers from non-Western regions have tried to provide a different view of school leadership based on their own culture. This volume attempts to move one step towards bridging this gap.

Most papers in this volume, though diverse in their orientation, share a common feature. In various degrees, these papers express dissatisfaction with the research work on leadership based on traditional science methods that promise to

yield theories that will guide practitioners towards a uniform, and effective, administration. These writers, drawing on their different paradigms, propose different views that in some cases point us in entirely new directions.

Based on their persuasions, these papers can be grouped into three clusters. The first cluster includes the initial five chapters that tend to argue within a humanistic intellectual framework. Thus Sergiovanni, in Chapter 1, begins by criticizing three school management theories, namely what he calls Pyramid Theory, Railroad Theory and High Performance Theory. He argues that although each is an improvement over its predecessor, their main shortcomings lie in the fact that they all rely on 'outside' standards to decide for schools what schools are supposed to do. Sergiovanni advocates Community Theory where teachers, parents and students decide, on their own, what is worth doing, what outcomes are valued and what standards are considered important. Community Theory posits that schools are based on moral norms and that leadership requires shared ideas and common purposes. Leadership in this theory is considered as authoritative rather than authoritarian; it is moral and it must derive from agreement on ideas. This is a position Sergiovanni has been elaborating for some time. In the chapter, he argues convincingly that his Community Theory could survive even in a post-modern society. Like a mosaic that has a variety of shapes and colours held together by a frame and glue, schools are interconnected but maintain their local and individual uniqueness.

Drawing on the work of Janet Ouston (1999) and Hallinger and Heck (1999) Ribbins, in Chapter 2, questions the presumed causal relationship between leadership and school effectiveness as reflected in the effective schools literature. He finds particularly revealing the work of Janet Ouston who systematically queries the alleged influence of leaders and the value of top-down management styles. Ribbins advocates an ethnographic and biographic approach – the 'contextualized perspective' approach adopted by him and Peter Gronn in their studies of educational leaders. Ribbins is convinced that it is through context that leadership takes on both its meaning and the constraints that shape the actions of particular leaders in specific situations, and correspondingly our understandings of those actions. Ribbins has been trying to apply his theory of leadership in different cultural contexts. He reports his study in Malaysia and his satisfaction with the results. His more recent project is a study in the making of principals in four small islands including Malta, Cyprus, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Wong, in Chapter 3, explores aspects of Chinese history and culture to explain the marked difference between Chinese and Western cultures. China has a long history of cultivating ethical leadership that goes back to Confucius' period. The ancient Chinese, being pragmatic, were more interested in practising morality than articulating its meanings. For example, the virtues of Confucius were later developed into concrete moral codes that cohered with the tenets of Chinese feudal society, and were faithfully followed by Chinese. They have had a profound influence on character development. Although these moral codes have become obsolete since the twentieth century, the virtues of Confucius are still followed by

many Chinese today. Ethical leadership is not only a viable concept in Chinese community, it is possible that leaders in today's schools are still influenced by this cultural tradition to practise morality. He suggests that empirical studies be undertaken to investigate whether this is indeed the case, and to understand the nature of ethical leadership being pursued in schools. He proposes that exploring ways to practise morality could be a new direction for leadership theory in Asia.

Cheng, in Chapter 4, argues for visionary leadership, a position advocated in the New Leadership studies. Cheng sees usefulness in building visions from the dreams and aspirations of leaders. According to him, it is better to have dreams, or visions, than that these be absent. He argues that visions are not outcomes. They should be something one has always dreamt about, but never had the opportunity to realize. Drawing on his wide experience and research work, he argues that schools or school systems with visions, whether these schools or school systems are from Beijing, Shanghai, Singapore or Hong Kong, all work better. Visions should be ambitious, but they need not necessarily be costly. To be effective, visions must be realized. On this Cheng counsels the use of strategy and the building up of trust in schools. Unlike Fullan who is concerned with how visions could be established in schools while cautioning that visions could blind, Cheng's focus is the building of big pictures, suggesting that those who have big pictures could better lead and motivate others.

Barlosky, in Chapter 5, aims his critique at many targets. He find faults with the mainstream leadership studies promoted after the fashion of the Theory Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the traditional science approach that has also been criticized by other writers in this volume. Barlosky argues that leadership is a context-bound and shifting conception. He reviews the emergence of the values discourse in educational administration, and reshapes the arguments of Greenfield and Hodgkinson. His postmodern point of view shares some of the theoretical results developed by modern philosophy of science, interpretive social science and hermeneutics. Quoting Aristotle and Lao Tzu, Barlosky emphasizes a practitioner-oriented approach in leadership. He counsels against managing people through mechanisms of compliance, but prefers the management of process which itself is made visible through the shared insights of individuals at different organizational levels.

The second cluster of chapters – Chapters 6, 7 and 8 – comport most readily with the kind of coherentist perspective which Evers and Lakomski champion. In Chapter 6 Robinson comments on the weakness of traditional leadership theories which disconnect tasks with leadership performance. Instead she argues for leadership embedded in task performance. Obviously, this task-relevant leadership values the expertise of leaders over their position as leaders. She puts forward the view that when tasks are all well-structured, there is little need for leaders, at least in the traditional sense of the word. In well-structured tasks, the knowledge that is required for performance can be incorporated into the technologies and routines that are involved in its completion. In this way, leadership is only required in the conversion of ill-structured to well-structured problems, a situation in which the role of leadership can be diminished as our knowledge for forming well-structured tasks increases.

Evers, in Chapter 7, focuses on what is required in order to know how to train school leaders. He notes that training for the purpose of intervention, or even improvement, places a premium on being able to distinguish clearly between evidence for statistical regularities and evidence for causes. He suggests that one important marker of this distinction is the capacity of true causal claims to sustain counterfactuals – a type of conditional statement in which the antecedent is contrary to what has been observed. Evers argues that while empirical evidence alone is insufficient for supporting the distinction, such evidence when embedded in a broader theoretical perspective that enjoys the theoretical virtues of coherence can make for warranted inferences about causes. He then applies this set of coherentist constraints to a number of perspectives on principal training, noting the limits that complexity and uncertainty place on most candidates. He defends a view of training that promotes critical learning.

In Chapter 8 Lakomski also raises questions with regard to more traditional hypothetico-deductive accounts of mainstream leadership studies and their use of quantitative analysis. In particular, she points out the difficulties in the New Leadership theory which has assumed a model of knowledge representation in which language is deemed primary. The scope of this model is limiting because it assumes that what human beings know of practice exists only in symbolic form. In fact, human brains are not primarily symbol processors at all. Drawing on research in cognitive neurobiology and connectionist models of the brain, she proposes a different basis for explaining practical expertise that also promises to help account for the complexity of human behaviour in its contextual diversity. In the chapter Lakomski also reiterates the concept of 'dispersed leadership' that Robinson draws attention to in speaking of situations without leadership.

The last two chapters comprising the final cluster report the different practices in China and Australia on leadership and quality schooling. Australia and China offer in every way a series of contrasts. They are different in socio-political setup, in economic status, in population density and in culture, yet the concern for quality schooling is so similar that it is reminiscent of the familiar theme that the world is a global village and mutual influences are real.

China is a country with the largest population in the world. That the size of its student population is equal to, if not larger than, the size of many nations speaks significantly of its problems in quality schooling. This is complicated by the fact that while the coastal areas in China are becoming affluent, the inland cities are still very backward. To accommodate this diversity, Gu, in Chapter 9, reports that the Chinese education system adopts a rigid quality assurance scheme, the input-process-output model, which is centrally organized and administered by educational administrative departments at all levels. Gu expends some effort to explain details of the scheme. Such a scheme, argues Gu, provides China with a viable framework upon which comparison between regions could be made and remedial measures could be identified and, when resources are available, rectified. It is through this rigid scheme, claims Gu that standards, the central concern of educational administrative departments at all levels, can be maintained.

The last chapter contains a further expression of Caldwell's 'self-managing school' concept. Caldwell is aware that the literature contains evidence of unsuccessful school-based management (SBM) reform. One of the crucial factors identified is the failure of SBM to link with classroom learning and outcomes. In his chapter, Caldwell draws attention to the learning outcomes of 'schools of the future'. He cites a number of studies to support his concern for curriculum and learning benefits and shows how these schools could achieve them. In the last part of his paper he calls attention to strategic leadership, a theme he has been giving increasing attention to lately, and offers a recipe for strategic intentions as advice to school leaders.

While we see the various chapters in this book making individual contributions to the debate over leadership and school reform, we are hopeful that the added organizational dimensions of theoretical innovation and cultural diversity will provide new insights into the nature of school leadership and its effects.

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1 Moral Authority, Community and Diversity

Leadership Challenges for the Twenty-first Century

Thomas J. Sergiovanni

A long time ago we ran schools using something called the Pyramid Theory. This theory assumed that the way to accomplish school goals was to control what people in schools did. And the way to control people was to have one person assume responsibility by providing direction, supervision and inspection. As the number of people to be supervised increased, management burdens needed to be delegated to official managers and an hierarchical system of management emerged. Pretty soon rules and regulations were developed to ensure that all managers thought and acted in the same way, and to provide guidelines for teachers and others who were being managed by all the managers so that they too thought and acted in the same way. But schools and school systems became too complex and it was impossible to control things directly any more. So then we switched to the Railroad Theory. This theory assumed that you could control the way people thought and acted indirectly by standardizing the work they did. Instead of relying on direct supervision and hierarchy the emphasis was on anticipating all of the teaching, learning, curriculum, assessment, and management questions and problems that were likely to come up. Then answers and solutions were developed by higher authorities that represented tracks for all teachers and for all schools to follow to get from one goal or outcome to another. Once the tracks were laid out, teachers and schools needed to be trained to follow the tracks properly and monitoring systems needed to be set up to make sure the tracks were followed.

We put into place something resembling an instructional delivery system in which measurable outcomes were identified and tightly aligned to a set curriculum and to specific methods of teaching. Then teachers were supervised to ensure that the approved curriculum and approved methods of teaching were being followed. Students were tested to ensure that the approved outcomes were achieved. But in many places the Railroad Theory didn't work either. Teachers and schools did not like being put into strait-jackets, teachers complained of being 'deskilled', and everyone agreed that we needed to try a different approach.

The new reforms that are now sweeping across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and many other countries are based on something called the High Performance Theory. This theory differs from Pyramid and Railroad Theories by de-emphasizing top-down hierarchies and by

de-emphasizing the laying out of tracks that tell people how to do their jobs. Decentralization is key. Teachers and schools are empowered to make their own decisions about how to do things. And parents too are involved. Borrowing from the practices of efficient business organizations, this theory assumes that the way to gain control over things is by connecting people to standards rather than by connecting them to bureaucratic rules or to procedural work scripts. Though the standards are standardized into a one best system of outcomes that applies to all students, all teachers and all communities in a particular district, state, province or country schools are, none the less, free to decide how they are going to achieve the standards. Principals, teachers and parents can organize schools and make decisions about teaching that they think will best enable them to reach the required standards. Data are then collected to determine how well teachers and schools are doing and to encourage them to figure out ways to continuously improve their performance. Total quality management (TQM) and statewide student testing are often used to help accomplish this goal.

What are the problems with these approaches to managing schools? Both Pyramid and Railroad Theories separate the planning of what schools will do and how they will do it from the actual doing. The school district, state, province or nation are responsible for planning the whats and hows; principals and teachers are responsible for doing.

When the High Performance Theory is used, schools are provided with standards and are then allowed to decide how to achieve them. This is an important improvement over Pyramid and Railroad Theories. But because planning what to do is separated from planning how to do it, one has to ask, 'Just how different is this new theory?' When we separate means and ends are we compromising professional discretion? Are we being true to democratic principles? Are we being sensitive to local school community values, beliefs and requirements? From a practical point of view, since the ends to be achieved influence which means will be used to achieve them, does High Performance Theory wind up deciding both means and ends anyway? These are open questions but I wonder if parents, principals and teachers are likely to feel empowered for very long by being involved in decision-making processes that are limited to issues of how, but not what – of means but not ends.

Are Pyramid, Railroad and High Performance Theories compatible with what we know about good schools? That too is an open question. We do know that good schools improve one at a time. High Performance Theory gets good marks on this dimension by advocating site-based management, local school councils, and other school-based approaches to decision making. We also know that good schools improve on their own terms. High Performance Theory is helpful here too. But does High Performance Theory go far enough? Can schools really get better in the long term solely by deciding how they are going to do something that someone else wants them to do? Or will families and their schools also have to decide locally such questions as: what is worth doing? what outcomes are valued? what are the standards we believe are important? what standards best match our students' interests and needs? – if they are to improve on their own terms?

We know that good schools are unique (see for example Sergiovanni, 1996). They reflect the values of the communities they serve. They reflect the beliefs of the teachers who work in them. They reflect the needs of the students they serve. Why is uniqueness important? Because without uniqueness it is hard to get the connections schools need among teachers, students and families and between them and the school. Further, it is hard to get the commitment schools need from these groups in order to make schools work well. This, I believe, is the major shortcoming of High Performance Theory. If we really want high performance schools, then we will have to have the right connections and the way to get the right connections is by emphasizing, bonding and binding. Parents, teachers, students and their families need to be bonded together into a 'we'. They need to be transformed from a collection of individuals each with their own self interests to a collectivity with shared interests. But before this bonding can happen, everyone needs first to be bound together to a set of shared purposes, ideas and ideals that are important, that have substance, that really count. While being empowered to make decisions about how to implement someone else's policies and goals helps, I am not sure that over the long haul it will be enough to result in the needed connections.

I believe that the ties that bond and bind teachers, students and parents together in a moral community are important in the development of a Community Theory of schools that transcends High Performance Theory. Communities are different to traditional schools. As schools become authentic communities they begin to take on unique characteristics. Communities, for example, are defined by their centres – repositories of values, sentiments, and beliefs that connect community members together in special ways. As schools become communities they are less driven by bureaucratic characteristics such as hierarchies, mandates and rules, and they are less driven by the personalities and interpersonal skills of their leaders. Instead the driving force for what is done becomes the schools' values and purposes. As this happens, a new hierarchy emerges – one that places ideas at the apex and places principals, teachers, parents and students below as a members of a shared followership that is committed to serving these ideas.

Pyramid and Railroad Theories rely heavily on bureaucratic measures in the form of mandated goals and procedures as the sources of authority for leadership. In the High Performance Theory standardized standards that are accompanied by uniform accountability measures also provide leaders with bureaucratic authority. But this authority is muted by the administrator's personality and interpersonal skills as she or he works with faculty, parents and students to decide how mandated requirements will be met. Within Community Theory, by contrast, the sources of authority for leadership are embedded in ideas. Once ideas are agreed upon community members are morally obliged to follow. At its centre, leadership in communities is neither authoritarian nor personally persuasive but is authoritative.

Few experts in educational administration advocate a leadership based primarily on bureaucratic authority but the primacy of leadership based on personal authority remains popular. When personal authority and the authority of shared ideas are compared, which is likely to work best?

The following example is inspired by Wills (1994). Imagine listening to a speaker who you admire, enjoy being with and whose personal style you seek to emulate. The topic of her speech, however, is of little interest to you. You simply do not care about the issues she raises and discusses although you enjoy listening to her nonetheless. You then listen to a second speaker. You have never met this speaker before and do not care for her style of speaking or for her personality. But you do feel strongly about the issues raised and respond positively to the speaker's ideas.

Which of the two persons are you more likely to follow? Which of the two persons is more likely to motivate you to action? If it is the second person then it appears that admiration, imitation, style and affection may be less important to followership than agreement on ideas, values and goals (Wills, 1994). Leadership has four components: leadership, followership, shared ideas and action. Action, it appears, is more likely to result from leadership if there is agreement on ideas.

Figure 1.1 compares the effects of personal attractiveness with shared commitment on subsequent followership. As suggested in Figure 1.1 moral leadership, leadership based on shared ideas, is more powerful and enduring than leadership based on personality and interpersonal skills. Indeed in the presence of shared ideas, followership is maintained even when leadership is personally unattractive.

SHARED COMMITMENTS, PERSONAL ATTRACTIVENESS AND FOLLOWERSHIP

Though communities have several distinguishing features, at the centre they are communities of mind and heart – places where principals, teachers, students and

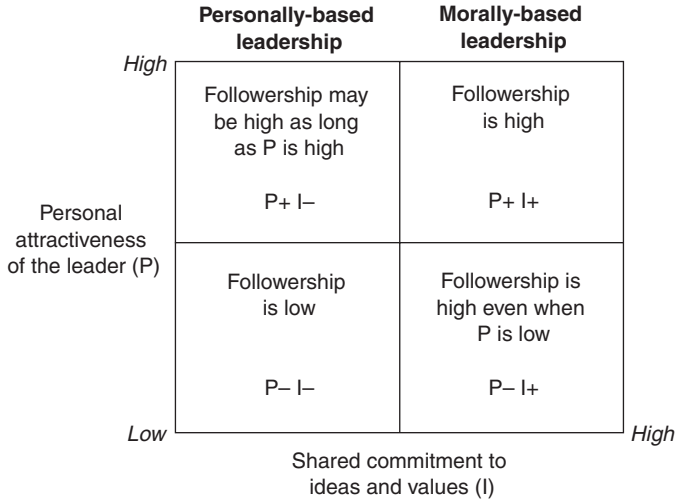

Figure 1.1 *Shared commitments, personal attractiveness and followership*

their families come together to form a community of relationships. This community of relationships not only provides unconditional acceptance and care but delineates the responsibilities that accompany various roles by creating ties in the form of a common web of meanings with moral overtones. Thus as a school becomes a community of mind and heart everyone feels a greater sense of responsibility to do the right thing, to try their best, to look after each other and to be mindful of the common good. Communities speak to their members in a moral voice, reminding them of their obligations and calling upon them to respond. Schools that are communities are much more norms based than rules based.

Community Theory is not without its problems. In *Moral Leadership* (1992) I wrote that such community ideas as moral authority, social bonds, emotions, duties and obligations were powerful ideas that if used properly could help us improve schooling. I also cautioned that these same ideas could lead to a leadership practice that was irrational, reactionary and oppressive. I stated:

> Social bonds, for example, can create norms within a school that become coercive, squashing individual thought and initiative and narrowing behavior by force of intimidation. Tapping emotion in seeking to motivate individuals and rally groups can give leaders an unfair advantage, if objective reasoning is sacrificed in the bargain.
>
> Covenants – initially struck by common agreement as means of serving students and thought to be resilient – can become inflexible ideological statements that comprise ends in themselves; autocratic and even despotic leaders may emerge who use covenants as bully pulpits. Worse yet, messianic leaders can emerge who through deft charismatic manipulation of emotion are able to cultivate blind followership on the basis of poorly conceived ideas or a personal aura.
>
> (p. 141)

I noted further that 'Although moral leadership is designed to bring people together in a common cause, for altruistic purposes, the dimensions of moral leadership may comprise the same ingredients that create "systems of blood" that divide people' (p. 14). The hard reality is that community, like fire, can be helpful or harmful. By its very nature community is both inclusive and exclusive. It can bring some people together with good results while at the same time leaving others out. Further, community can exaggerate differences with others causing fragmentation, disengagement and conflict.

These are serious issues because the world is a diverse place. Multi-cultural societies increasingly dot the human landscape in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa and other continents. This global expansion of diversity raises important questions for how communities should be understood, particularly as a construct for schooling. How, for example, do we reconcile the seemingly paradoxical problem of creating distinct school communities that are held together by common meanings and a shared sense of the common good within societies that are

multi-cultural (the United States, United Kingdom, Lebanon and Hong Kong are but four examples) and that are laced with strands of individualism (see for example Starratt, 1996; Etzioni, 1993, 1995). In schools, how do we identify a common purpose, develop a coherent practice, rally parents, teachers, students and administrators to common themes and construct a framework of shared norms when people are different, when parents have different expectations, when teachers bring different pedagogical philosophies and work styles to their practice and when the potential for conflict over basic and ancillary school purposes, school organizational structures, curriculum designs and assessments strategies is high?

More recently Furman (1998) raised the question of whether in a postmodern world the very definition of community must be changed. Claiming that definitions of community based on shared conceptions and ideals that function as a unifying centre are at odds with the purposes and practicalities of multi-culturalism and by implication denying the possibility that a productive moral leadership can emerge from this centre, Furman proposes a postmodernist conception of community:

> Postmodern community is community of difference. It is based on the ethics of acceptance of others with respect, justice, and appreciation and on peaceful cooperation within difference. It is inspired by the metaphor of an interconnected, interdependent web of persons engaged in global community.
>
> (p. 312)

But even in this definition, the postmodern community has a centre. Though postmodernists are pessimistic about the ability of groups of people to come together around common themes that provide a source of authority for what they do, the postmodernist community does just that. Furman (1998), for example, refers to 'the ethics for postmodern community – acceptance of others and cooperation within difference' (p. 321) as universal values needed to guarantee feelings of belonging, trusting others and safety that are essential to community building. Using ordinary community language, this postmodernist 'core value' places a high priority on building a community of relationships as a central part of the schools' community of heart and mind (see for example Sergiovanni, 1994, pp. 15–33).

A card-carrying postmodernist can only be card carrying if she or he buys into the same values, images, theories and ideas as do other postmodernists. With respect to community, postmodernism is comprised of a story that wittingly or unwittingly provides the talking points and the images of reality for those who want to build communities in a postmodern world. But when one digs deeper the notion of centre as the focus for community life seems alive and well. Any collective world view, according to Benjamin (1990) is composed of a complex and interlocking set of deeply-held beliefs about the nature and structure of the universe and one's place in it. The frameworks for world views of a traditional

society, modern society and postmodern society may differ substantially but structurally they are the same – they all revolve around core beliefs, values and images of reality. No group or society, I would argue, can be morally vacuous, can be devoid of values and ideas, or lack norms that frame the ideas for guiding action and still remain a group or society for very long.

Postmodernists may not like the substance that comprises the centre of modern society but all they can do is struggle to change this centre so that it is more consistent with postmodernist ideals. The centre remains if society itself is to remain. It was the eminent sociologist Edward A. Shils (1961) who concluded that not only communities but societies themselves are defined by their centres:

> The center, or the central zone, is a phenomenon of the realm of values and beliefs. It is the center of the order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which govern the society. It is the center because it is ultimate and irreducible…. The central zone partakes of the nature of the sacred. In this sense, every society has an official 'religion'…. The center is also a phenomenon of the realm of action. It is a structure of activities, of roles and persons…. It is in these roles that the values and beliefs which are central are embodied and propounded.
>
> (p. 119)

Starratt (Starratt, 1996; Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1998) argues that postmodernism needs to be substantively based on core values in order to sustain itself as a viable theory for schooling. Otherwise its tenets run the risk of disintegrating into factionalism and nihilism. For this reason he believes that community is a postmodern necessity.

Is it possible in schools to accept the idea of diversity in community building and still provide centres of shared values that connect people morally to each other and their obligations? Can we celebrate and build upon our differences as part of our community of heart and mind? Those who propose that schools should be understood as democratic communities think so (Starratt, 1996; Apple and Beane, 1995). By their very nature democratic communities are diverse.

> While the community prizes diversity it also has a sense of shared purpose.… Democracy is not simply a theory of self-interest that gives people license to pursue their own goals at the expense of others; the common good is a central feature of democracy.
>
> (Beane and Apple, 1995, pp. 10–11)

One problem that contributes to worries about creating stifling communities with rigid centres that divide and exclude people is the perception that centres and sameness are the same. Communities of relationships, heart and mind need not and should not be built upon all-encompassing, narrowly-defined carbon copy norms but on norms of caring and collaboration. Collaborative cultures share

common beliefs in the value of both the individual and the group (Nias, Southworth and Yeomans, 1989). Such norms as praise, appreciation, help, support, encouragement and viewing differences as learning opportunities are common in collaborative cultures. As Jennifer Nias (1995) points out, collaborative cultures 'should not be mistakenly viewed as conflict-free or cosy. Collaborative cultures are also built upon a belief in the value of openness, tempered by a respect for individual and collective security' (p. 9). Nothing in the social sciences or in moral philosophy prohibits a community from holding in common the view that differences can be assets and should be respected.

Etzioni (1995), relying on his analysis of Charles Taylor's work (1995), offers 'principled decentralization' as an antidote to possible divisions among different communities. Within a framework of principled decentralization localized communities are developed in such a way that they embody a responsibility to encourage a variety of different voices and interests, not as isolated entities, but within a larger sphere of a pragmatic coalition built around common goals and ideas where an overlapping consensus has been established and bounded by a framework of mutual respect. Etzioni (1996–97) offers the mosaic as an image of community with bounded autonomy.

> The mosaic is enriched by a variety of elements of different shapes and colors but it is held together by a frame and glue. The mosaic symbolizes a society in which various communities maintain their cultural particulars (ranging from religious commitments and language to cuisine and dance), proud and knowledgeable about their specific traditions. At the same time these distinct communities recognize that they are integral parts of a more encompassing whole. Moreover, they have firm commitment to the shared framework.
>
> (p. 23)

Etzioni (1996–97) continues 'the sociological challenge is to develop societal formations that leave considerable room for the enriching particulars of autonomous subcultures and communities, while still sustaining the core of shared values' (p. 24). Principled decentralization, when accompanied by layered loyalties, embodies the metaphor mosaic in practice. The fostering of layered loyalties allows a person to identify with several communities of mind and heart at the same time much as one identifies with the mosaic by appreciating both the colours and hues of artistic material as well as the frame and glue that holds everything together.

To the metaphor mosaic and the concept of layered loyalties I would add the metaphor 'neighbourhoods within a city' to show how nesting of communities within a broader community would work in schools. Imagine, for example, a 750 student grade 1–6 elementary school in San Antonio, Texas. There are five sections of each grade in this school. The school is organized into five families, each comprising one set of grades located in its own corridor and designed to keep the same 150 students and six teachers together as the students travel through all six

of their school years. The five families share the cafeteria, library and other school facilities, abide by a few general school-wide rules and participate in some school-wide traditions. At the same time each of the families operates much like an independent learning community or school within this larger school.

Though they share common elements, the families are unique in important ways. One of the families is a Spanish immersion school. The second has adopted the Core Knowledge curriculum as an organizing framework for what will be taught. A third family emphasizes African-American themes in its humanities curriculum. Still another family relies heavily on learning exhibitions, project learning and other progressive ideas. In this family the same teachers stay with the same youngsters for the first three years of their schooling, a pattern repeated in grades 4–6 as well. A fifth family spends Tuesdays and Thursdays out in the community visiting museums, conducting surveys, studying neighbourhoods, engaging in scientific investigation in local streams, and in other ways using the community as a classroom. They believe that schooling without walls is both motivating to students and pedagogically sound. The five families differ in how they handle the details of discipline, in subject emphasis, in how the work of students is assessed and in other important matters. While some learning outcomes are the same across the families, others differ family by family.

Each of the five families functions much as does a neighbourhood in a city by celebrating its unique purposes, habits, traditions, work patterns and culture. As parts of a mosaic they bring different colours and hues to a larger portrait of learning in the school. But as neighbourhoods in a city they are also integral and interdependent parts of a whole that share values and commitments common across the school. All of the neighbourhoods in this school as city are bound by certain beliefs: all students can learn if they try and if teachers work hard; caring and other virtues must be institutionalized into the culture of the school; teachers are members of communities of practice characterized by sharing, trust, inquiry and learning; parents should promise to accept their share of responsibility for making the school work; students are entitled to unconditional acceptance and have important contributions to make to the school; respect is not a rule but a standard that applies equally to everyone including parents, teachers, students and administrators – all are entitled to respect and all are expected to show respect; form should follow function while making decisions about teaching and learning; character education is important; and so on. Though each of the families adopts a different curriculum and a different pedagogy, all five families are expected to engage students in authentic learning. The curriculum itself must be constructivist by nature without compromising attention to basic skills of literacy and numeracy thought to be important.

This list of common standards might be prefaced by two or three school-wide rules such as not fighting, no drugs, no weapons. These commonalities seem sufficient to ensure that despite similarities that might exist within school families (communities) and differences that might exist between them, ample guarantees are provided to ensure levels of civility, decency and respect for everyone. Though

layered, shared ideas and moral authority remain the reason for what goes on within the five families and in the larger school. At the centre of this moral authority are shared conceptions about individual rights of community members and their responsibilities to the larger good.

Eight conditions seem necessary for Community Theory to evolve in this direction:

1 Schools need to be redefined as collections of people and ideas rather than remain defined by brick and mortar. Thus within any school building independent and semi-independent schools might exist side by side.
2 Shared values that lead to the development of tightly-knit communities of mind and heart need to be encouraged within schools while at the same time respect for differences between schools needs to be encouraged. The goal should be to create communities nested within communities, neighbourhoods within cities, schools within schools, across the educational landscape.
3 Whether functioning as schools within schools or as free-standing schools connected to a larger complex of schools, all schools need to be tied together by common foundational values, by frame and glue to hold everything together.
4 Layered loyalties to one's own school community and to the larger community of schools need to be cultivated.
5 Nothing in the concept of nested communities, neighbourhoods within a city or school within a school should compromise the individual rights that students, parents, teachers and other community members enjoy as part of a commitment to democratic values.
6 This emphasis on individual rights needs to be tempered by deliberately linking rights to responsibilities within a framework of commitment to civic virtue, defined as the willingness of members of the community, individually and collectively, to sacrifice their self-interest on behalf of the common good.
7 Within practical limits, students and their families, as well as teachers, should be able to choose the particular school, school family or school within a school they wish to join. This 'school' of choice should be part of a larger legal framework of school or schools and resourced at an equitable level.
8 Commitment to both individual rights and shared responsibilities that are connected to the common good should provide the basis for moral leadership.

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2 Regarding Principals

Leadership Effects and the Effectiveness and Improvement of Schools

Peter Ribbins

INTRODUCTION

School effectiveness as a field for study is a child of the 1960s. Although its origins lie in the West, some fine research is now to be found in the East. Like other aspects of that turbulent decade, school effectiveness has enjoyed an 'interesting' history. Since its earliest days the field has been riven by conflict on such issues as if, how far, and how, schools matter, and can be shown to matter, in determining levels of student achievement. A major subset of these general controversies has focused on if, how far, and how, school principals matter and can be shown to matter in determining levels of school effectiveness and student achievement. I will examine these, and related, themes and in so doing will consider if a knowledge of what makes schools effective helps in enabling a school to improve. This discussion will serve as a prelude to the next part of my chapter in which I will outline a three-level portrait-based approach for the study of school leaders and will illustrate its possibilities drawing on my twenty-five years of research into the life and career of the school principal.

DO SCHOOLS MATTER?

Three phases in the history of thinking can be identified on if, and if so, how much schools matter. These phases vary according to the contribution each accords to schools, as opposed to other contextual factors, in determining levels of pupil achievement; the range of variables sought to account for such differences; and the types and sophistication of the methods used to explore their nature and extent of possible variations.

The earliest studies, from the United States in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, were essentially pessimistic. Thus the work of Coleman *et al.* (1966) and Jenks *et al.* (1972) found the contribution schools made to determining levels of pupil achievement was vanishingly small when compared with the influence of general contextual variables, notably home background. These findings were viewed with considerable scepticism and 'stimulated groups of unbelieving researchers to

look for key variables which would demonstrate that school could make a difference…. Hundreds of studies were done – with negative or contradictory results. Pessimism was confirmed' (Lawton, 1994, p. 5). In summary, this phase was characterized by:

- pessimistic results;
- attempts to identify the specific influence of one or, at most, a small number of key factors;
- a high dependence upon survey methods often using small samples;
- a reliance on primitive statistical techniques;
- an apparent reluctance to engage in qualitative research.

The second phase studies began to emerge in the late 1970s and have continued to be produced ever since. Increasingly they report on research from Europe, especially the United Kingdom (Rutter *et al*., 1979; Mortimer *et al.*, 1988). More recently, a growing number of texts have reported on research undertaken elsewhere including a number of countries in East Asia (Cheng and Wong, 1996). Reflecting on this phase, Uline *et al*. (1998) conclude that during these years

> researchers began to apply increasingly sophisticated statistical procedures to large scale studies…. Central among these new procedures is hierarchical linear modeling. This method addresses previous gaps in the research. First, it is able to measure change over time and second, it accounts for and isolates classroom and student variables.
>
> (p. 464)

By and large, studies in this phase are characterized by the fact that they have:

- been much more optimistic than earlier research;
- abandoned as unproductive the search for the influence of single or small numbers of key factors and have tended to emphasize the significance of collections of variables whose influence was commutative;
- for the most part used survey methods often with quite large samples;
- employed increasingly sophisticated statistical techniques;
- sought to be able to distinguish the nature and influence of factors which determine variations in student achievement at individual pupil, class and group levels as well as at the level of the whole school;
- occasionally engaged in qualitative research.

The third phase, which overlaps with the continuing production and influence of much second phase research, can be seen as characteristic of the nervous 1990s. It takes the form of a growing number of critiques of the 'conventional wisdom' of second wave thinking. Two recent texts can serve to illustrate the nature of the concerns which have been raised by such critiques.

The first is an edited volume of thirteen chapters from Slee *et al*., (1998) entitled *School Effectiveness for Whom? Challenges to the School Effectiveness and School Improvement Movements*. Its most pervasive criticism takes us part of the way back to the early work of Jenks and Coleman. In doing so several of the chapters echo Angus (1993) in judging that 'Family background, social class, any notion of context are typically regarded as "noise" as "outside background factors" which must be controlled for and then stripped away so that the researcher can concentrate on the important domain of school factors' (p. 341). The strengths of this collection lie in its handling of school effectiveness. However, for a book which carries the term in its title, its treatment of 'school improvement' is cursory. As such, I found myself in substantial agreement with a reviewer who concluded that:

> This book admirably demonstrates the importance of context, which means that the process of school improvement needs to take different forms in different schools – there cannot be a 'one size fits all' model. I share the authors' concerns about the usefulness of the list of effective factors approach to school improvement and the idea that a 'failing' school is the opposite of an 'effective' school. Whilst I found parts of the book an interesting and necessary addition to the debate about school effectiveness, I do not think practitioners will find much here to help them with school improvement. [The main reason for this is that] although 'school improvement' is frequently used…very little attention is given to it.
>
> (Weindling, 1999, p. 214)

On this the second text, by, Janet Ouston (1999), a member of the Rutter group, is rather more encompassing. In 1998, in a paper which was given at a meeting of an ESRC seminar series on Rethinking Educational Management, she challenged the validity of much published research on differential levels of school effectiveness, disputed its worth as a means of enabling school improvement, and questioned the merits of its impact on education generally. For Ouston the existing canon of research on school effectiveness is dominated by a powerful conventional wisdom which rests upon a number of debatable propositions, notably that:

- schools differ from each other in their achievements;
- it is possible to 'adjust for' prior attainment, or social factors, and rank schools according to how successful they are in the promotion of students' progress;
- it is possible to relate these rankings to internal features of the schools.

If these conclusions are not valid, either conceptually or technically, then the whole of SESI (School Effectiveness/School Improvement) is in difficulties. If schools don't differ, or we can't measure these differences reliably, then the list of

the features of effective schools have little justification. Much of recent work in this area (e.g. Gray and Wilcox, 1995; Goldstein and Spiegelhalter, 1996; Croxford and Cowie, 1996) has argued that adjusted differences between schools are very small, that the majority of schools cannot be distinguished from one another (Ouston, 1999, pp. 168–169).

Drawing on these and other studies (e.g. Sammons *et al*., 1997) Ouston argues 'we are probably justified in concluding that:

- Differences between schools in raw scores can be considerable, and that these relate in the main to social factors and prior achievement.
- Adjustments reduce the size of differences between schools but may not change their outcome positions relative to other schools.
- The adjusted differences between the most effective and the least effective schools are relatively small. It should be noted that most writers on SESI accept this point, but go ahead as if they were much larger!'

(1999, p. 170.)

Against this backdrop, she asks why 'given that differences between schools in their adjusted outcomes are small, and that most schools cannot be distinguished from each other, how does it come about that many different research groups come up with similar list of features [of the effective school]' (pp. 170–171)?

This is a good question, but perhaps an even more important one would be to ask if a knowledge of the characteristics of successful schools is what is needed in enabling a less successful school to become more successful? On this, Ouston argues that 'there is no reason for the theory and practice of improving schools to be related to research in school effectiveness' (p. 72). She goes on to suggest that those who work within the school improvement paradigm tend to claim that the links are important, and even that they should be stronger. This may be so now but seen in historical perspective, relationships between adherents of the paradigms of school effectiveness and school improvement has been characterized largely by mutual incomprehension and antipathy. Only during the last decade have sustained efforts been made to bring the two fields together. In this development, 1988 and 1989 were important years with the inaugural meeting of the International Congress on School Effectiveness and Improvement (Reynolds *et al.*, 1989) and the founding of the journal *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. Whatever the success of these and related initiatives, it should be stressed that by no means all students of school effectiveness and school improvement believe that attempts to synthesize the two fields, should these prove successful, will necessarily have beneficial consequences. Ouston (1999) is one such sceptic. Reflecting upon her own early work on school improvement, she acknowledges that this assumed that:

> schools were rational organizations, that their processes were linear, and their feedback loops negative. Given these assumptions the implementation of

> change should have been straightforward. All that had to be done was to get less successful schools to look like successful schools and all would be well. The SESI movement has progressed since then, with researchers… appreciating that studying features of effective schools may not help. To use a medical metaphor: telling a person with bronchitis that fit people can breath easily and run up and down stairs doesn't help their current situation.
>
> (p. 172)

I have sympathy with this view although in making a similar point I have tended to quote the Confucian saying that 'No matter how often you weigh a pig, this does not make it any fatter'. Even so, I believe that even if it should turn out that research on school effectiveness can, at best, offer authoritative descriptions of successful schools rather than reliable methods of making schools successful, the value of such information ought not to be underestimated.

One feature of most of the lists in which such information on school effectiveness has been presented is the significance of leadership, most especially that of the principal, as a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of a school. On this, Ouston, reflecting upon the findings of the Rutter research, records her amazement 'that leadership is not discussed and headteachers are only mentioned in passing. This may be so, but the reference is made in strong and unqualified terms: "obviously the influence of the headteacher is very considerable"' (Rutter *et al.*, 1979, p. 203). This statement represents a view Ouston (1999) now rejects claiming instead that 'the SESI movement has over-emphasized the role of the head (or leader) and top-down management' (p. 175). So does leadership matter in determining school effectiveness and enabling school improvement?

DOES LEADERSHIP MATTER?

The idea that leadership, especially that of the principal, matters in determining levels of school effectiveness and of student achievement is widely accepted. It is true of many of the countries in which I have worked in recent years including Australia, Canada, Cyprus, the Yemen, Hong Kong and Malaysia. It is certainly true of the United Kingdom. Thus, for example, the Education Select Committee of the House of Commons, following a four-month investigation, fulsomely stressed its importance in determining the effectiveness of schools in the report 'The Role of Headteachers'. Government ministers, are on record as rating the quality of leadership which a school enjoys as a more significant factor in determining levels of effectiveness than even the kind of contextual factors described earlier. As Kenneth Baker, the minister responsible for piloting the Education Reform Act of 1988 through Parliament, put it:

> all too often educationalists (want) to explain away the poor performance of, say, an inner-city school by reference to the socio-economic circumstances of

> the area in which the school was located…one should not discount such factors entirely…On the other hand, even in these areas there can be very good schools with high levels of achievement. It depends essentially upon the leadership of the Head and the quality of the teaching.
>
> (Baker, 1993, p. 199)

Views such as this are by not restricted to politicians (Ribbins and Marland, 1994, pp. 2–3) nor to the United Kingdom. What do we know of the foundations of such claims?

Those wishing to explore this question should turn to an authoritative series of papers by Hallinger and Heck (1996a, 1996b, 1999). Taken together, this series represents by far the most comprehensive review of research on principal effects published internationally between 1980 and 1998 that I know of. Its purpose has been 'to understand what scholars have learned of the substance of claims that principal leadership makes a difference in school effectiveness' (1999, p. 178). In the paper which they gave at the set of ESRC Seminars in which Ouston also participated, Hallinger and Heck (1998) claimed that:

> since the emergence of research focusing on school effectiveness… some common assumptions have driven school improvement policy and practice. One is the belief that school leaders, especially principals, are critical to the process of improving educational outcomes. Internationally, policymakers have tended to accept this assumption as fact and then to seek confirmatory support via published research. When empirical findings have been ambiguous, policy makers (and many scholars) have tended to interpret the results liberally in the direction of positive leadership effects.
>
> (p. 1)

Even so, their reviews of well over forty research projects conducted within eleven different countries since 1980 have led Hallinger and Heck to be rather more positive about the current state of research into the relationship of leadership and school effectiveness than this last comment may suggest. This was so for three main reasons. First, they were surprised at the sheer number of substantial empirical investigations into principals' effectiveness that have been reported over the period. Second, they noted a growing tendency for later research to build upon previous work and to have regard to the recommendations of earlier critiques of it. Third, they observed a pattern of increasing sophistication in the research which enhanced their confidence in the reliability and validity of the overall findings.

This is not the place to attempt a comprehensive reprise of Hallinger and Heck's discussion and findings as a whole. Rather I will list what appear to be their most important conclusions as they presented these during the ESRC seminar series.

- Leadership, as measured in the behaviours of school principals, does *not* exert a measurable *direct effect* on school effectiveness and student achievement.

- Leadership, as measured in the behaviours of school principals, does exert a measurable *indirect effect* on school effectiveness and student achievement.
- Leadership, as measured in the behaviour of school principals, is itself influenced by the context of the school and its environment. (Authors' emphases)

In their chapter for the book from the seminars they give these points a somewhat different spin. Here they stress that:

> although the findings reinforce the notion that leadership makes a difference in school effectiveness, they do not support the image of the heroic school leader. Rather the image we draw from the review is that of leaders who are able to work with and through the staff to shape a school culture that is focused yet adaptable.
>
> (Hallinger and Heck, 1999, p. 185)

In summary, these findings are broadly sympathetic to the proposition that leadership can enhance school effectiveness and student achievements and to the belief that the quality of research in this field has improved in recent times. However, this cautiously positive assessment notwithstanding, Hallinger and Heck (1999) are aware of the substantive and methodological limitations of the body of research they have so painstakingly reviewed. To address limitations of the first kind, they urge four directions for future study: 'to untangle the conceptual confusion concerning how school leaders employ vision, mission and goals to influence school effectiveness' (p. 186); to 'broaden investigation of school leadership and its effects beyond the principalship' (p. 186); to 'incorporate the construct of the school as a learning organization into explorations of school leadership and its effects' (pp. 186–187); and to 'study leadership in its cultural context with an intention to explicate the influence of cultural norms on the conceptualization and exercise of leadership' (p. 187). If belatedly, all four have begun to attract increasing attention: most significantly, perhaps, the last. That this is so, notably in East Asia, can be variously demonstrated. For example, in a growing number of major conferences (e.g. the Eighth International Conference of the CCEAM held in Malaysia in August 1996 on 'Indigenous perspectives in educational management'), special editions of Journals (e.g. *School Leadership and Management*, and *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, April 2000), and articles and chapters (Bajunid, 1998; Bryant, 1998; Hallinger, 1995; Hallinger and Leithwood, 1996; Ribbins and Gronn, 2000; and Ribbins, 1999). I have at this point omitted references to the many studies relevant to my discussion which have in recent years emanated from Hong Kong, but will return to this theme later in the paper.

In reporting upon the methodological orientation of the work they reviewed, Hallinger and Heck (1996b) note that the studies which they identified overwhelmingly took a 'decidedly functionalist and positivistic' stance. In doing so, they acknowledge that this narrowness could, in part, be explained in terms of the fact that they chose to frame the review:

> in terms of administrator effects on school effectiveness (as opposed to, for example, descriptions of principals work). Consequently, our selection criteria weighed heavily towards identifying quantitative studies (whereas) a different approach… might have pointed us towards naturalistic inquiry (e.g. fieldwork, ethnography) which tends to be constructivist, holistic and process orientated
>
> (p. 729)

In summary, they conclude that:

> quantitative methods are essential for the first part of this research program – assessing the extent to which administrative effects seem to be present. The use of qualitative approaches, however, is also essential if we are to understand the more complex processes that underlie this set of observed interactions.
>
> (Ibid.)

Much of my research in schools has adopted such a naturalistic perspective. In doing so I have been influenced by, amongst other things, the criticisms which Peters and Waterman (1982) level at approaches to the study and practice of management and leadership that adopt a narrowly quantitative and rationalist perspective 'which takes the living element out of situations which should, above all, be alive' (p. 77).

A holistic approach to the study of the role of the principal as a school improver, one which takes these kinds of ideas seriously, entails accepting that schools and principals are complex and sometimes irrational. It also means assuming that any particular aspect of a school, such as school improvement, cannot be fully understood without some consideration of how it relates to other key aspects of the school and of schooling. Similarly, those activities in which a principal engages designated as school improvement cannot be fully understood without consideration of how they relate to other key aspects of the work of the principal. If this is what Hallinger and Heck mean by the need for a 'holistic' approach, I share their view. In what follows, I will say something about what this might mean for the study of the principal.

WHAT DO WE KNOW OF PRINCIPALS AND PRINCIPALSHIP?

As far as I know, like football, the idea that headteachers and headship are worth studying was invented in the United Kingdom. More recently, this idea has been taken up elsewhere. The literature is extensive, if patchy, and includes surveys, autobiographical statements, life histories or stories – 'diaries and journals, memoirs, profiles, sketches, portraits and portrayals, and the three most advanced forms: biography, autobiography and prosopography' as English (1995, p. 208) puts it – and case studies of schools which to a varying extent are concerned with

the role of the principal. Given this extensive, rich and varied literature, what is the case for yet more studies of principalship? I would offer three justifications.

First, because although, taken as a whole, there is a great deal of published research available on the role of the principal, there is also an embarrassment of riches in some areas and major gaps in others. Thus, for example, whilst in the United States the canon is richest in the case of the elementary school principal and poorer in the case of the secondary school principal, in the United Kingdom the reverse is true. In many other parts of the world much less has been published on either the elementary or the secondary principal. Finally, and in this context, I have been disappointed by my failure, despite much effort, to discover a literature anywhere which focuses specifically upon the role of the principal in special education (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999).

Second, because a great deal of what we know is out of date. Much of it is based upon research conducted in the 1980s and before – and times have changed and much of this research has dated badly. As David Reynolds, a leading authority on school effectiveness within the United Kingdom has concluded 'it would be very surprising if the effective headteacher of the 1980s bears more than a superficial relationship with the effective headteacher as we would now describe him or her' (Reynolds and Parker, 1992, p. 178).

Third, because much of what is written on management and leadership in schools seems very detached and abstract. In particular, the attention given to the people who do the leading is often superficial. Whilst such criticism is especially relevant to much survey-based research, other kinds of studies are not exempt. John Rae, formerly Head of a famous British public school, Westminster, has claimed that too many autobiographies and biographies of heads 'do not tell you much about what it is really like to do the job'. In his view fiction has [often] been more successful in 'entering the headmaster's mind' (Rae, 1993, p. 11).

However, despite his admiration for them, Rae believes that most fictional portraits of headship tend to be one-dimensional. In his view, only one novelist really

> understands how the master's personality influences the way he will play the role and how the demands of the role draw out particular aspects of his personality…. What makes the life of a… headmaster [sic] interesting is not just how he did the job but what the job did to him.
>
> (pp. 11–12)

Without such a concern, I am not surprised that the literature often seems unhelpful at the level of practice whilst apparently sustaining an impressive facade of theory and prescription. Since I have at some length developed my thinking elsewhere on what a such a 'new' approach might look like (e.g. Gronn and Ribbins, 1996; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999) in what follows I will restrict myself to an rehersal in outline of its key principles and features.

TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS AND PRINCIPALSHIP

In thinking about a new approach, I begin with the notion that the world of the school, and that of the principal within it, is a highly complex one in which, to an extent, there are as many 'realities' as there are individuals. Given this, I see no escape from the need for an approach which makes the study of an individual and his or her subjective interpretations of reality the 'foundation blocks' of a satisfactory account. In doing so, I follow Greenfield in his subjectivist critique of educational administration (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993). But Greenfield, both in our conversation and elsewhere, acknowledged the importance of Max Weber in influencing his thinking. However, in doing so, he concerned himself almost exclusively with issues of human agency, to the virtual neglect of social structure. Weber, of course, stressed the importance of both levels of analysis (Bates, 1994; Gronn, 1994).

Peter Gronn and I, following Seddon (1993), take this shortcoming in Greenfield's work as a point of departure and have proposed a 'contextualized perspective' for the study of educational leaders (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996). We advocate the need for approaches which have a concern for both agency and structure viewed within contexts shaped by the interaction of macro (societal), meso (institutional) and micro (individual) levels of leadership relationship. Reconceptualized as the sum of the situational, the cultural, and the historical circumstances that constrain leadership and give it meaning, context is the vehicle through which the agency of particular leaders in specific situations may be empirically understood. But what do we mean by context?

This, as Margaret Archer (1996) has shown in her full and detailed discussion of 'contextual dependence' (pp. 127–141), is by no means an easy question to answer. In summary, we mean those networks of hierarchically stratified forms of social formation which provide opportunities for the expression, and constraint, of human agency. Such institutional arrangements both pre-date and post-date the lives of the particular individuals who come to inhabit them, and are typically the outcomes of more or less coherent and deep-seated patterns of historical and cultural causation. In addition, these historically and culturally formed contexts are capable of endurance and modification over time. Seen in this way, the concept of context can help to explain the cause of social system reproduction and of change within it. Applied to the study of specific patterns of leadership, such an approach seeks to account for:

- the particular institutional forms of leadership dominant in any particular culture or historical epoch;
- why these forms persist or change;
- similarities and differences as between different cultures.

I have tended to illustrate my argument by drawing on studies mainly conducted

in the United Kingdom. How relevant is this to those who live, work and research elsewhere?

This is an issue probably better reframed as a broader question – one which asks what can those who live and work in different countries hope to learn from each other? Given that I am often asked to speak about aspects of the British educational system and what others might learn from it, this is a question with which I have struggled. In 1996, in a keynote address given at the Malaysia conference referred to on p. 18, I attempted to summarize my thinking (Ribbins, 1996). I cannot fully replicate that argument here, and in any case it is now available, if in a somewhat revised form, elsewhere (Ribbins, 1999). My general conclusion is it is practicable, indeed sensible, to employ similar kinds of approach (e.g. biography or ethnography), instruments and procedures (e.g. interviews, questionnaires, scales and interviews) and explanatory theoretical frameworks (e.g. leadership as a career in phases) across a wide variety of specific social, economic, political, historical and national contexts. However, how they should be employed and what they may find in practice is likely to vary more or less substantially in different cultural contexts. Given this, I believe the importation of substantive ideas from one national cultural setting to another (on leadership-making, identification, appointment or preparation and related topics) can be beneficial but is fraught with risk and should be undertaken with sensitivity and care.

As an aid to clarifying my thinking on this and associated themes, I have found a rich series of articles, chapters and books, which have been produced by a number of indigenous and Western scholars currently located in Hong Kong particularly illuminating (e.g. Cheng, 1995; Cheng and Wong, 1996; Dimmock, 1998, 1999; Dimmock and Walker, 1998; Walker and Dimmock, 1999a, 1999b; Wong, 1998). In addition, several of the papers presented at the Kuala Lumpur conference were also very helpful. Amongst these, a contribution from Cheng and Wong (1996), also from Hong Kong, on 'School effectiveness in East Asia', is highly relevant to the points I make above in-so-far as it claims that to understand school effectiveness in this part of the world, it is necessary to examine the concept within its specific cultural context and, having done so, to consider explicitly its implications for school improvement.

In pressing for new thinking on the study of the school principal, Gronn and I advocate greater use of two relatively neglected methodological approaches to researching leadership: ethnography and biography (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996). Since much of the rest of this chapter concerns the first of these approaches, I will make a brief reference to the second. In recent years, a number of attempts have been made to study headship as a career and the life of headteachers as a biography. Papers by Day and Bakioglu (1996) and by Gronn (1993) illustrate what is possible. In the former, Day and Bakioglu use a survey-based, quantitative and qualitative, approach to study the development of selected headteachers in post and in doing so to examine the effects which this has on the nature of their leadership and management of schools. From this, they identify four development phases labeled respectively 'initiation', 'development', 'autonomy' and 'disen-

chantment'. Whilst this work can be located in the tradition of 'career history' based approaches, it is not, nor does it seek to be, biographical in character. Accordingly it has little to say about the interaction of agency and structure in the production of the kind of contextualized portraits of leadership which I have called for earlier. For this to be possible, it is necessary to take the kind of approach which Gronn developed from his longitudinal, biographical study of the life of a famous Australian headmaster, Sir James Darling. He proposes a professional life history of four stages which seems to apply equally well to individual and specific cohorts of leaders: formation, accession, incumbency and divestiture. I and those I have worked with have found it helpful to combine, if in a modified form, the ideas of Gronn with those of Day and Bakioglu in our studies of heads and headship in secondary schools (Ribbins, 1997), primary schools (Pascal and Ribbins, 1998) and special schools (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999) in the United Kingdom.

With the agenda identified above in mind, over the last few years, I have been developing a framework of five propositions for the study of principalship relevant to periods of educational reform and to steady-state conditions (Ribbins, 1993). Such an approach requires data on:

1 the educational reforms within their particular historical, social, economic, cultural and values framework;
2 the contemporary scope, dimensions and character of the reforms;
3 the interpretations of, and responses to, the reforms of key national and local stakeholders;
4 the interpretations of, and responses to, the reforms by principals' associations;
5 the interpretations of, and responses to, the reforms by individual principals in particular schools.

The first two propositions constitute macro-level, longitudinal and comparative elements of the relational context identified above. The next three cover actors operating in a variety of interpretive contexts as macro (3), meso (4) and micro (5) levels. Much of the rest of my discussion will focus on proposition 5 and will argue for meso and micro level ethnographies of educational leaders. Three levels of interpretive contexts are implicit: situated, individual portrayals; multi-actor perspectives; and an analysis of multi-actor perspectives in action.

Level 1: a situated portrayal

Many accounts of principalship are based upon surveys which typically claim to be more or less representative of the views of principals in general. These surveys are often quantitative in character and typically employ a methodology based on the administration of one or more questionnaires. It is, however, also possible for such studies to adopt a qualitative approach which usually relies on one or more

interviews with selected principals. From these surveys researchers seek to extract composite glossed accounts of key issues which may represent more or less accurately the views of the sample as a whole or the ideas of a particular principal on one or more topics. These can be very fine. Some of the best focus on a small number of cases and for the most part make use of an essentially qualitative approach. Three examples, from the United Kingdom, illustrate the virtues of such research.

The first, from Day and Bakioglu (1996), identifies four development phases in the careers of headteachers:

- initiation
- development
- autonomy
- disenchantment

These phases, and the progression they prescribe, are derived from evidence which was collected from interviews, questionnaires and documents with some thirty headteachers. Although the data which my colleagues and I have collected from our own studies of thirty-four headteachers over the last seven years do not fully substantiate these categories, particularly the inevitability of the last, our work has nevertheless been much influenced by this research (see Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999). The second, is from Julia Evetts. It takes the form of studies of the ways in which primary and secondary female and male headteachers regard their careers and in doing so seek to trade off the various domestic, leisure and work-related demands which they face (1987, 1993). The third is from Valerie Hall. This is a vivid account of six women headteachers, three of primary schools and three of secondary schools (1996). My regard for *Dancing on the Ceiling* is such that as editor of *Educational Management and Administration* I felt that it unquestionably warranted a substantial Review Symposium (27, 1, pp. 99–116): one of only five or six books to receive such treatment in almost eleven years in office. Even so, much as I admire this account, and much as I can understand why it has been written up on a thematic basis, I still find it difficult to appreciate the six women on which the study is based as people each with her own distinctive life history and character and each exhibiting a more or less coherent set of values, attitudes, beliefs, actions and the like as individuals. As such, it lacks the kind of holistic character which a portrait-based account would have made possible.

Whilst, as I have acknowledged above, the best of such studies can be very good, many are rather heavy going and in a small number of the worst cases, the data from such research appears, as Harold Silver has so elegantly put it, to have been raided in order to demonstrate the validity of a thesis to which the researcher seemed committed before undertaking the study. But even where the data is treated with respect, it is still hard to see how such an approach can possibly offer a rich and comprehensive understanding of the perspectives which principals

bring to their work. For this to be possible the reader must be offered a much fuller access to their views across a representative range of issues.

Such an approach would present the reader with portraits of individual principals, each reported in some depth. Several such studies have been published in the United Kingdom over the last decade. This is not to say that they exhibit a standard pattern of research or that they are presented in uniform ways. On the contrary, some are on-the-record whilst others are not; some are derived from face-to-face interviews whilst others are obtained from a written account; and, some are wide-ranging whilst others are much more focused. Many of my own recent studies of headteachers and headship have taken this form. Before turning to these I will first say something about the work of others. Limitations of space mean that I am unable to attempt to be comprehensive. Accordingly, I can only note such work as that of Hustler *et al.,* (1995) on *Heeding Heads*, and must restrict my discussion to two cases.

One of the first and most interesting of studies of this kind was derived from research conducted by Peter and Joan Mortimer in the late 1980s and early 1990s – *The Primary Head* (1991a) and *The Secondary Head* (1991b). In this they invited seven primary and eight secondary heads to respond in writing to six or seven issues specified in broad terms by the researchers. In justifying their approach, the Mortimers claim that 'there are few books that enable heads to speak for themselves. Yet over the last twenty-five years… we have been struck by the eloquence and, at times, passion, with which headteachers speak about their roles and responsibilities' (1991a, vii). They accept that in a

> collection of such personal contributions, where heads and schools are identified by name, there is bound to be a certain amount of inhibition that affects what is written. On the whole, we think these heads have been remarkably frank but we are conscious, as were they, that the repercussions of too much openness could be severe.
>
> (1991a, p. ix)

In my view, they seem to be justified in making the last of these claims.

More recently, in *Living Headship: Voices, Values and Vision*, Harry Tomlinson, Helen Gunter and Pauline Smith (1999) attempt a study comparable in some respects with that of the Mortimers. In their opening chapter, entitled 'Introduction: constructing headship – today and yesterday' they set out the purpose of their study, describe how it was conducted and attempt a preliminary, and helpful, analysis of the data they obtained. The data itself is presented in the following fourteen chapters each of which is written by a single headteacher: six primary (five women and one man) and eight secondary (two women and six men). The brief given to each of these headteachers was to write about their experiences of headship. As might be expected given such broad terms of reference, different headteachers chose to focus upon very different themes and to discharge their task in notably different ways. Even so, many of them do so with remarkable openness and compelling insight.

My own work on more recent research on headteachers and headship has been reported mainly in a series of books published over the last five years: it includes *Headship Matters: Conversations with Seven Secondary School Heads* (Ribbins and Marland, 1994); *Leaders and Leadership in the School, College and University* (Ribbins, 1997); *Understanding Primary Headteachers* (Pascal and Ribbins, 1998); *Headteachers and Leadership in Special Education* (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999). It has given an emphasis to the need for greater spontaneity and a more open and shared process of agenda negotiation than seems possible using the methods employed by the Mortimers or by Tomlinson and his colleagues. With this in mind, I and those I have worked with have derived our accounts from face-to-face interviews. A group of heads has been identified and invited to take part in the project. We do not claim that the heads interviewed for any of my projects are representative. Instead we have sought to select headteachers who we believed to be interesting, who worked in a wide variety of schools, who were at diverse points in their careers, who varied according to gender, race and age, and who had different life experiences and views.

Once those approached had agreed, and few did not, we sent them a list of topics and asked them to indicate any they would not wish to discuss or to add any which they felt might be helpful. In an interview, it is, of course, always possible to renegotiate the agenda as the conversation progresses. Interview schedules have varied between projects in terms of agenda and according to the level of detail in which we set out individual themes. For the most part, the interviews explored such issues as family and local background; early and subsequent education; reasons for becoming teachers and headteachers; careers and career progression, planned and unplanned; preparation, appointment and initial experience of headship; vision for their schools; interpretation and enactment of headship; educational and managerial visions and values; and, the joys, tribulations, possibilities and problems of contemporary headship. All were interviewed once, some twice, for at least two hours and often a good deal more. Those involved knew that the discussion was 'on the record'. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and edited. The editing sought to create a text which was both as authentic and as readable as possible. Censorship was restricted to the deletion of possible libels or to cases which might cause serious damage either to the heads themselves or those to whom they might have referred. Names, for the most part, when mentioned by interviewees, were left in if the reference was positive or neutral but omitted otherwise. Each respondent was then sent a full transcript of the edited interview and invited to propose such additions and amendments as he or she wished to see included. The original letter of contact usually made it clear that they would be able to pull out at any time and that, should their interview be published, this would be in a form which had regard to their wishes for revision. We, on our part, have reserved the right not to publish any interview should we feel that, in its original or its revised form, it was dull or inauthentic. Some have made considerable use of their right to propose revisions, others very little. To date only one interviewee has withdrawn following produc-

tion of the edited transcript and no interview has been rejected. It is possible that the advantage of allowing respondents to have sight of the interview schedule and enabling them to propose revisions to the draft text might be gained at the price of some loss of spontaneity or authenticity. This seemed a risk worth taking and in any case was a price that had to be paid for an on-the-record interview. I do not feel that any of the published conversations lack colour or authenticity and, to date, most of those reading them and to whom we have talked have been reassuring.

When used to explore a particular theme, such an account might seem to differ little from what takes place in more traditional studies. But there are at least three important differences. First, the headteachers are named. Second, since the whole of each of the interviews is available, the reader can check the context within which any comment quoted by the researcher is made. Third, the reader can also relate any such comment to the views of the head on other issues concerning her or his personal and professional life. Such a reader is in a better position to make an informed judgment on whether and to what extent a quotation represents a 'raiding' of the text than is possible under circumstances where his or her access is more restricted.

Along with local colleagues, I have found it possible to use this approach, modified as necessary, in the study of the school principal in other parts of the world. Two such projects illustrate the point. In the first, following some earlier work (see Ribbins, 2000), in 1995 I was invited by the Director of the Institut Ammudin Baki to assist a group of its staff led by Dr Siti Aishah Mohd Elias to undertake a study of primary school headteachers and secondary school principals in Malaysia based upon the approach I had been using in the United Kingdom. Pilot interviews which I undertook with four headteachers and principals indicated that the approach was viable but also that it would be necessary to make some revisions in the interview schedule and in the details of the organization and management of the research process. Preliminary discussions by correspondence, and over a number of days face-to-face, with staff from the Institute and with selected headteachers and principals resolved all outstanding difficulties and interviews were arranged with eleven headteachers and fourteen principals. The texts of the two books, one of which is on primary headteachers and headship and one on secondary principals and principalship, has been completed and now awaits publication.

The second project is at the time of writing still in process. The organizers of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management Conference to be held in Tasmania in September 2000 have agreed to incorporate a major Symposium on *The Making of Secondary Principals: Some Small Island Perspectives* into the programme. This symposium is to be convened by Dr Petros Pashiardis and myself. It will report on studies of the making of secondary principals based on Peter Gronn's book *The Making of Educational Leaders* (1999) and my interpretation of some of his key ideas in *Understanding Primary School Headteachers* (Pascal and Ribbins, 1998) and *Headteachers and Leadership in*

Special Education (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999). At the Symposium Petros Pashiardis of the University of Cyprus, Joy Chew and Ken Stott of the Institute of Education, Nanyang University in Singapore, Ho Ming Ng of the University of Hong Kong, Chris Bazzina of the University of Malta, Peter Gronn of Monash University, Australia and Peter Ribbins from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom report on our individual and collective research on the making of the secondary principal in Cyprus, Hong Kong, Malta and Singapore. Taken as a whole, the project represents a demanding cross-cultural test of the methods which I have described above.

Level 2: multi-perspective

Traditional reports of the principal and principalship often decontextualize in the way described above, and tend not to locate what principals say in the context of the views of significant others (staff, pupils, parents and governors) within the community of the school. A contextualized perspective would give the reader access to such information.

Level 3: multi-perspective in action

Relatively few studies explore what principals say in the context of what they do. To achieve this, the researcher must do five things:

- collect relevant documentary evidence which touches upon the role of specific principals within particular schools;
- observe such heads as they enact their role in practice in relevant situations;
- discuss with heads what they are trying to do and why;
- set this account against the views of significant others;
- compare and contrast all the available evidence.

Ethnographic research of this kind can offer an enhanced understanding of the principal and headship in a variety of settings. The following examples are classified into three categories according to the degree to which the head is their principal focus and his or her status in undertaking the research.

Category 1 studies

The studies treat the principal as one amongst a number of key actors to be studied and as a subject for research not as a research partner. In what follows, I will attempt to illustrate what I mean and, in doing so, to suggest what an ethnographic approach might look like, by reporting upon a particular case of research in which I was involved some years ago.

Rivendell School, at the time of this research, was a large, co-educational, comprehensive located in the south-east of England. Our intention had been to engage

in an ethnographic study of pastoral care at the school (see Best *et al.*, 1983, Chapter 8) but soon found it was necessary to engage in a wide ranging examination of education, order and welfare at the school if we were to hope to understand pastoral care in context. We were fortunate enough to encounter three headteachers at Rivendell and this encouraged us to attempt an account of the characteristics of three successive regimes of headship over a twenty-five year period at the school. In undertaking our research we drew upon a model which postulated that individuals within social settings of all kinds can be located along a continuum of power and authority and in terms of their policies the degree of their attachment to, or rejection of, the status quo. This means that the extent to which a principal can manage either continuity or change along lines which they prefer, is to an important extent dependent upon the accuracy of their appreciation of these configurations and on their ability to mobilize support and minimize opposition. In analysing these three regimes of headteacher we wished to explore the educational and managerial values espoused by 'Mr Barber', 'Mrs Sewell' and 'Mr Lucas'; the extent to which and how they sought to enact these values in practice and with what outcomes; and the responses which all this engendered from other members of the school community. As will be seen, each of these three heads had a conception of what an effective school would look like and they all had ideas of how they might go about the business of managing change and improvement.

As an illustration of the praxis of three educational leaders some may find the case of Rivendell makes for uncomfortable reading. It tells us of Mr Barber, who espoused a coherent and comprehensive set of egalitarian and democratic egalitarian philosophies which were at variance with the often calculating and manipulative managerial strategies which he employed with such telling effect to achieve his purposes. It also tells us of Mrs Sewell, who had no coherent educational philosophy or if she did was unable to make clear what this was and who lacked the will or the ability to be manipulative. Thus, while Barber merely espoused democratic managerial ideals, Sewell made a real effort to introduce democratic structures and processes, only to be accused of a lack of leadership and a poverty of philosophy. Seen as unsuccessful by others, she came to share this view and within a couple of years gave up headship. Rivendell teachers, it seemed, preferred strong leadership and a semblance of democracy from their principal, even when they knew this to be largely a sham. From Mr Lucas, they got strong and honest leadership without much manipulation and little attempt at even a facade of democracy. Again, they were not satisfied. However, Lucas was in a hurry and successfully drove through many major changes during his first year at the school yet, despite much passionate talk of opposition, very little came of any of this.

Category 2 studies

These studies focus on principalship and are characterized by their concentration on the perceptions and actions of particular principals. One of the first ethnographies

of this kind, and still one of the best is Wolcott's (1973) study of 'Ed Bell', an elementary school principal. His research has inspired others. In *Looking into Primary Headship* Southworth (1995, p. 1) reports on research in which he studied 'a headteacher by observing him at work inside the school…. I investigated the idea of producing a portrait of the subject and saw parallels with biography'. As the book title suggests, Southworth set out to look into and not just at headship and in doing so sought not just to 'describe one head's work, but [to delve] into what this meant for the individual himself' (p. 2). The subject of his case study is 'Ron Lacey, headteacher of Orchard Community Junior School' (p. 2). It deals with Lacey's background and context, what he did as a head, how he controlled what happened in the school, a portrait of his headship and his response to the case study of himself. But Lacey is described as 'the informant' and Southworth emphasizes 'Ron was the native I was studying and the research was aimed to elicit his vision of his world' (p. 38). Lacey is clearly the subject of the research and not a partner within it. It is this which makes this a Category 2 and not a Category 3 study of headship, albeit an unusually full and interesting one.

Category 3 studies

These studies would identify the principal as both the main subject of such an ethnography and, critically, a co-researcher in its conduct. Since 1989 I have been involved in such a third level research project at Great Barr Grant School in Birmingham, which, with 2,400 pupils of between eleven and eighteen, is the largest school in the United Kingdom. At first, this study was informed by ideas developed at Rivendell and refined elsewhere. As such, it was planned to investigate how a large urban comprehensive school was responding to the reforms initiated by the 1988 Education Act and was clearly Category 1 research. But as the research progressed I became increasingly interested in the role of the principal as an interpreter and enactor of change. As a 'biography' of Brian Sherratt at Great Barr, during this phase, it had much in common with Southworth's study of Ron Lacey at Orchard Community School and could be classified as Category 2 research. Since 1992, however, with Sherratt's active involvement, I have been developing a novel third level approach to the study of principalship (Ribbins and Sherratt, 1992). In this version the principal becomes both the principal subject of the research and a full partner within it. For this reason the research we are jointly engaged in is autobiographical, in so far as it requires and enables the head, as internal researcher, to reflect systematically and critically upon his praxis during a period of intense reform. Sherratt has done this in a variety of ways, including over forty interviews and many other conversations with me over the last eight years, the production for part of the time of a frank diary of his everyday life as a headteacher and the systematic collection of relevant documentation. The study is also biographical to the extent that I, as external researcher, have recorded interviews with over 200 significant others (teachers and other staff, pupils, parents and governors) and have observed and made extensive field notes on a wide vari-

ety of events related to the exercise of his leadership in practice. After ten years, we have recently brought the field research to a close and have commenced the process of writing it up. This is not proving straightforward: as a Category 3 ethnography of headship, we know of no close precedents on which to draw in resolving the difficult theoretical and methodological problems entailed. But I believe it is worth doing. Reflecting on the potential advantages of this approach, Sherratt suggests that:

> unlike other research into headship, you get much more than just the view of a researcher; you get the view of the headteacher as well. Traditional research into headship can be irritating to practitioners because it sometimes does not sufficiently take into account the dilemmas of headship as these are experienced by principals themselves in situ. There are things as a manager practitioner I can speak on from personal experience. On the other hand, the rigour and detachment which you as a professional researcher bring to bear offers an important corrective against any tendency I might give too much weight to my own views about aspects of the school and how its people see these which are highly questionable.… It is these kinds of things which are all too often missing in the general run of research into headship within schools. They will be the stuff of our research.
>
> (Ribbins and Sherratt, 1992, pp. 158–159)

I need also to stress that it is worth engaging in research into principals and principalship at each of these three levels. They can also be regarded as a comprehensive programme of three levels in which the second level subsumes the first and the third level subsumes the second and the first. You will have to suspend judgment on the merits of a Category 3 Level Three approach in its most complex form until the publication of Brian Sherratt at Great Barr School at some time in the future. However, by reading Best *et al.*'s account of Barber, Sewell and Lucas, and Southworth's portrait of Ron Lacey, you can already consider what is entailed by Category 1 and 2 Level Three research. It is also possible to examine what a first level study looks like, since several are listed above.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has been concerned with the study of the school principal. In its first part, this concern is set in the context of a discussion of contemporary research in so far as such research seeks to examine if, how and how far schools determine levels of pupil achievement and if, how and how far principals determine levels of school effectiveness and pupil achievement. From a survey of the literature, and drawing on recent work from Janet Ouston on school effectiveness and from Philip Hallinger and Ronald Heck on the effects of principals, it warns that claims about how much either schools or principals matter need to be advanced with due

circumspection. In doing so it stresses that a knowledge of school effectiveness, and of the effects of principals, however well founded, will be of limited value in understanding how schools can improve and the ways in which principals can enable this to happen.

The second part of the chapter opens with an exploration of possible alternatives to the traditional positivist paradigm for research into leadership in education. In doing so, it considers the merits of a three level approach which is designed to enable contextualization in the study of the principal as a person. The key merit of such an approach is that it allows this to take place having regard to the need to consider aspects of agency and structure in the study of leadership in education. Furthermore, level three is differentiated into three sub-categories of ethnography according to the place and role of the principal within the research. In its most refined form, such an ethnography makes the principal both the main focus of such research and a full partner in undertaking it. In conclusion, it is claimed that such an approach, whatever its inherent difficulties and limitations, represents our best hope of achieving a worthwhile theoretical and practical appreciation of the role of principals in the improvement of schools.

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Note

All the names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

3 Culture and Educational Leadership

Kam-cheung Wong

In the field of educational administration, societal culture is becoming a significant theoretical construct. That a recent issue of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* was devoted in its entirety to societal culture and school leadership is a case in point. The guest editors, Walker and Dimmock, draw attention to the increased use of societal culture as a lens to examine school leadership. They argue for a comparative cross-cultural perspective where the role of societal culture in understanding educational administration is researched and compared across societies and cultures. Other writers have also argued for a similar framework (e.g. Cheng, 1995, 1998; Hallinger and Leithwood, 1996; Bajunid, 1996; Cheng and Wong, 1996).

However as Walker and Dimmock (2000) point out, the current scene in educational administration in East Asia is full of 'cultural borrowing' from the English-speaking world that pays little attention to the culture behind these borrowed ideas or practices. Nor has sufficient attention been given to local culture, its history and politics. As a result, shallow surface comparison is common. To avoid such comparison, one needs a better understanding of local culture and history. Hofstede (1996) has it right when he draws attention to both:

> In attempting to understand institutional differences, one needs history, and in understanding history one needs culture…. Thinking is affected by the kind of family they grew up in, the kind of school they went to, the kind of authorities and legal system they are accustomed to. The causality between institutions and culture is circular; they cannot be separated.
>
> (p. 531)

Chinese culture, like other great cultures of the world, is rich in history and content. It has a long history of valuing leadership and preparing leaders on moral grounds. This paper draws on Chinese cultural history to understand the influences of cultural practice on educational leadership. It focuses further on moral leadership, a mode of leadership that has also received considerable attention in the English-speaking world (e.g. Sergiovanni, 1992, 1995; Starratt, 1994, 1995). The paper intends to contribute an indigenous perspective to educational leadership theory.

The paper is divided into two main parts. The first part traces the root differences between the Chinese and the West within the Chinese culture. The second part initially explores value and moral leadership in the West, and then examines the meaning and characteristics of moral leadership in traditional Chinese contexts. The approach adopted in the paper is descriptive and exploratory, rather than prescriptive and judgmental.

DIFFERENT VALUES BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Many writers have pointed out the marked differences between the work values of the East and West. Hofstede (1980, 1991, 1996) is well known for his contribution in the past fifteen years in building up inquiry into culture and management. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997), in their recent empirical work, surveyed over 30,000 middle and senior managers from some fifty-eight countries to explore their work-related values. They found that Western managers are competitive, individualist, concerned with achieved status, believe in universal law and are motivated from within. On the other hand, managers in the East are more willing to negotiate and compromise, more ready to cooperate, concerned with status, believe in the uniqueness of each situation, and are driven by exterior motives. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars further argue that the East Asian managers are capable of reconciling alternate values. In this they appear to be aided by their cultural norms, such as Confucian and Buddhist philosophies, which teach the complementarity of all human values. The fact that many Asian managers are graduates from universities in the West further reinforces this phenomenon. However, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) observe that the same does not appear to hold true for American and European managers.

Differences between Chinese and Western values can be traced through culture, history and philosophy. Wong (1998), at the risk of over-simplifying the issue, categorizes the differences from philosophical/cultural perspectives (see Table 3.1), and offers a fairly comprehensive analysis for differences based on Chinese cultural history.

In Table 3.1 'Western culture' represents chiefly the characteristics of a scientifically oriented modernity and in particular, the empiricist and positivist outlook that became increasingly important after the Enlightenment. 'Chinese culture', on the other hand, is based largely in neo-Confucianism. It is well known that Chinese culture has been influenced equally, if not more, by Buddhism and Taoism, which are therefore discussed in this analysis.

THE CULTURAL ROOTS OF DIFFERENCES

Chinese are known for their pragmatic approaches towards life. When asked about spiritual being, Confucius (551–478 BC) answered that if we did not yet

Table 3.1 Comparison of Chinese and Western cultures

Philosophical/cultural aspects	*Western cuture*[1] *(objective; idealism)*	*Chinese culture*[2] *(subjective; realism)*
Thinking methods	Logical–analytical	Synthetic–dialectic
Epistemology	Empirical Knowledge-based	Metaphysical Morality-based
Ontology	Nature	Life
Culture	Individual ability	Community-related effort
Religion	Monotheism/Christianity	Indifferentism/ Taoism and Buddism

Notes
1 The table represents chiefly the school of thought of empirical positivism.
2 The arguments here are based on Neo-Confucian school of thought.

know about life, we could not know about death (Lau, 1992). Confucius' teaching focused on human activities. His overriding concern was to establish a moral social order. When Fan Chih, a disciple, raised a question concerning the nature of wisdom, Confucius replied: 'Devote yourself earnestly to the duties due to men; respect spiritual beings but keep them at a distance. This may be called wisdom', (*The Analects*, 6: 20, in: Chan, 1963, p. 30). Keeping spiritual beings at a distance and giving full attention to human activities have become distinctive characteristics of Chinese culture (Chan, 1963; Kung and Ching, 1989).

Early Chinese scholars did not have much interest in pure abstract thinking. When they came across abstract ideas, they expressed them in concrete or visual terms. Instead of saying 'fast', they would say 'thousand mile horse'. For the concept of 'old', Chinese had three different ways of expression: one was aged 60 years, another was 70 years, and a third one was aged 80 or 90 years. Instead of using an abstract word such as 'death', Chinese used five concrete expressions to reflect a hierarchy of death: for the king, royalty, officials, intellectuals and common folks. This habit of conceptualizing ideas in concrete objects may have constrained the Chinese mind for a long period of time (Xu, 1991).

Chinese scholars, such as Lao Tzu (571–? BC), were known for synthetic and dialectical thinking. In *Tao-te ching*, Lao Tzu frequently couched statements in seemingly contradictory phrases:

> To yield is to be preserved whole.
> To be bent is to become straight.
> To be empty is to be full.
> To be worn out is to be renewed.
> To have little is to possess.
> To have plenty is to be perplexed.

> […]
> It is because one does not compete the world cannot compete with him.
> (*Tao-te ching*, 22 in: Chan 1963, p. 151)

The appreciation of opposing poles as a driving force, or seeing opportunity in contradiction, is considered Taoist wisdom of the mature mind. The Chinese word for 'danger' is illustrative. It consists of two characters. The first character stands for crisis or danger while the second one means opportunity. It shows that the Chinese always see opportunity in crisis or danger.

Both in subject content and in method of thinking in philosophy, the ancient Chinese were at a great distance from the ancient Greeks, who developed an early interest in the universe and in logic which laid the foundations for the development of the Western worldview. Logic remains essential in Western philosophical training to this day (Russell, 1961). Not so for the Chinese. Another example of the lack of interest shown by of Chinese philosophers in purely logical and analytical thinking can be seen from the example of Hsun Tzu (298–238 BC),[1] one of the early philosophers of Confucianism, who came closer to the Greek perspective with his emphasis on nature and use of logic. Hsun Tzu's writings were ignored after the Han Dynasty (after 200 BC), and it was not until the turn of the century that some modern writers, amazed by the originality of his work, began to seek a fuller understanding of him.

The Chinese philosophical tradition does not include a religious belief. Many scholars argue that the Chinese are not religious. Hu Shih, the cultural leader who led the New Culture Movement in the early twentieth century, claimed that educated people in China were indifferent to religion (Hu, 1934). Confucianism is not a religion, nor was Taoism when it was formed. However, throughout the centuries of Chinese history people did follow superstitious beliefs and magic cults. When Taoism was institutionalized as a religion at the end of the Han Dynasty, it inherited a lot of superstitious folk practices (Kung and Ching, 1989). As a religion, Taoism did not enjoy a high status among Chinese scholars. Indeed, it was looked down upon by many of them. Liang Chi-chao, one of the cultural leaders at the beginning of the twentieth century commented:

> Taoism is the only religion indigenous to China… but to include it in a Chinese history of religion is indeed a great humiliation. Their activities have not benefited the nation at all. Moreover, down through the centuries, they have repeatedly misled the people by their pagan magic and disturbed the peace.
> (Liang Chi-chao, 1929, quoted in: Yang, 1991, p. 5)

Chinese culture was strongly influenced by Buddhism which had its origin in India. Compared with Taoism, Buddhism is, as a religion, more theoretically complex and employs a more sophisticated analytic reasoning. Both in content and in the way its theories were posited and defended, Buddhism was fresh to the

Chinese. Historically, after the Han Dynasty China entered a period of chaos. The country was divided into south and north and each region went through a succession of different small states. Confucianism as a philosophy was forsaken by the scholars, who instead turned to Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu of Taoism. After Buddhism was introduced to China at the end of the Han Dynasty, it gradually came to dominate the Chinese worldview and culture. The massive translation of Buddhist literature over the long period from late Han (200 AD) to Tang (around 750 AD) helped to spread Buddhism both as a philosophy and a religion. During the period of the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the influence of Buddhism was at its highest, completely dominating the Chinese worldview.

It is interesting to note that despite the influence of the many strands of Buddhism imported from India, the only strand that finally survived and became prominent in China, is Zen (*dhyâna*).

Zen Buddhism was known for its 'appeal directly to the human mind' and 'seeing one's nature to become a Buddha'. Anything which prevented the cultivation of the mind, like reading scriptures, making offerings to the Buddha, reciting His name, or joining a Buddhist monastery, were all considered unnecessary. This practice of Zen Buddhism almost wiped out the mainstream Buddhist organization, creed and literature (Chan, 1963). The ways in which Zen Buddhism sought to understand Buddhism were most revealing. These included raising questions with puzzling answers. For example, when a pupil asked what the Buddha was, the Master answered, 'three kilos of flax'. Another technique was shouting and beating. Behind these methods of inquiry lay the belief that truth is mysterious, irrational or paradoxical, and that only an illogical answer could reveal it. These unorthodox ways were to awake the pupil from the comfort of his mental habits and preconceived opinions. Zen Buddhism aims to broaden a person's vision, sharpen their imagination and sensitize their mind to enable them to see and grasp truth instantly at any time and any place. Chan (1963) has contrasted the Chinese and Indian ways of meditation: the Indian mind 'tries to avoid the external world, ignores outside influence, aims at intellectual understanding, and seeks to unite with the Infinite'. Chinese meditation (in Zen Buddhism), on the other hand, 'works with the aid of external influence, operates in the world, emphasizes quick wit and insight and aims at self-realization' (p. 429). In the words of the Japanese Zen scholar Suzuki (1953), the Zen movement in China demonstrates how, 'the Chinese mind completely asserted itself, in a sense, in opposition to the Indian mind. Zen could not have risen and flourished in any other land or among any other people' (p. 40). It was Zen Buddhism that greatly influenced Chinese intellectuals and caused the revival of Confucianism after the Sung Dynasty (960–1279).

As philosophy, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism share similar features. All three emphasize the consciousness of mind. All stress subjectivity and subject freedom. All believe that reality and manifestation (or substance and function) are one. All focus on life, contrary to Greek culture and tradition. Mou (1991) describes them as philosophies of 'intensional truth' a term he borrows from

Bertrand Russell to mark a distinction from 'extensional truth' in science and mathematics.

Despite these similarities, each philosophy has its unique view of life. Confucianism believes human nature is intrinsically good and has the 'innate ability' to do good. It seeks to build a moral order in life. Taosim makes no assumption about human nature but believes life is void. Unlike Confucianism, it detests rites and customs, seeking a true self in living harmony with nature. Buddhism regards life as empty and false. It believes life is full of pain and misery, and seeks to negate life and escape from it (Chan, 1963; Lo, 1995).

Mou (1991) suggested that in the past two thousand years, the founding scholars such as Confucius, Mencius, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tau (399–295 BC), of Chinese philosophy spent their efforts in understanding life. The later scholars focused their energy on reinterpreting the teaching of the founding philosophers and did not pay attention to other issues or possibilities. The geographical isolation of China, the stable agrarian society, and the closed-door policy of the last two dynasties kept China intact for over two thousand years, until the nineteenth century, when China was forced to open its door by the imperialist West.

If examined under the domain of ontology, epistemology and axiology as understood in the West, one can see Confucianism (and neo-Confucianism[2]) as related to axiology more than to epistemology. But even in Confucian axiology, the concern is not to understand what is good or right. Knowledge of good or right is not the major issue. How good or right could and should be done is. The cultural belief that good is within one's nature is shared with Zen Buddhism (Buddha is in one's nature). Unlike Judeo-Christian culture, which believes in the Saviour who comes from without to save mankind, 'salvation' in the Chinese perspective comes from within and is within one's ability. This is the source of the Chinese belief in one's own effort.

Although Chinese philosophy did not emphasize logical–analytical thinking or a theory of knowledge, this did not hinder the technological development of Chinese society. In fact, the ancient Chinese developed a great deal of technical skill and knowledge. They invented silk- and porcelain-making, printing, gunpowder and the compass well ahead of European societies. Up to the fifteenth century, Chinese technology was the most advanced in the world (Needham, 1986). Subsequently, however, Western Europe went through more rapid evolution: the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the scientific revolution, the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism. With military and economic power, modern Western civilization began to exert its influence on the rest of the world. Other civilizations, including the Chinese, became marginalized. This remained so until the last decades of the twentieth century when the East Asian economies began to catch up with the industrialized West. Confucianism and Taoism were not close philosophies. They were not, however, exclusive in their doctrines, but were able to reconcile alternate values (Lo, 1995). The integration of Buddhism into Chinese culture was a case in point. Over a long period of time, the Chinese developed tolerance towards different faiths. Many Chinese held that all religions

were of equal validity. This ambivalent attitude towards religion is quite remarkable. Most Westerners find it hard to comprehend this. How could one be a believer of both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Church? Yet this is a common practice among Chinese in East Asia.[3] In fact, this ambivalent attitude affects other aspects of Chinese life. Liu (1988) comments that these cultural differences are as if created deliberately by God for a contrast.

VALUE LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

There have recently been calls for strong leadership in running organizations (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Bottery, 1992; Fullan, 1995; Yukl, 1994). In Hong Kong, the Government has just completed a review of its education system which also placed a great deal of importance on school heads in the reform and called for their proper preparation to this end (Task Group on Training and Development of Heads, 1999).

Distinct from this voice, there is a school of thought which questions the concept of strong leadership in schools. The advocates of this school argue against the over-reliance on structure and control in leading modern organizations. They employ the concept of values to critique traditional leadership theories (Greenfield, 1987; Hodgkinson, 1991, 1996; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni and Corbally, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1996). Sergiovanni (1992) calls for a theory that emphasizes emotions, group membership, sense-making, meaning-making, morality, duty and obligation. Others (for example, Cunningham and Gresso, 1993) argue that it is the informal rules and norms – the culture of the organization – that best explains how people conduct their work-lives in organization.

Sergiovanni (1992, 1995) comments that traditional leadership theory could achieve only moderate success in schools. It falls short in its capacity to bring about excellence. The reliance on efficiency, specificity, rationality, measurability and objectivity has created a myth that good leadership is necessarily 'tough-minded'. Leaders, in this view, are great heroes who rise to the fore in crises, and who, like the captains of the cavalry, lead 'the charge to rescue the settlers from the attacking Indians' (Senge, 1990, p. 340).

Hodgkinson (1991, 1993, 1996), in line with the Western tradition, has laid down a theoretical foundation for value leadership. He sees the differences between value leadership and traditional leadership as a distinction of axiology from epistemology, affection from cognition, value from fact, ought from is.[4] Value leadership theory relates more to motivation, attitude and will. In the theory of value, there is an ontological distinction between the right and the good. The deontological right can be further classified into Type I, II (A and B) values and the good into Type III values.

Hodgkinson's Type I values refer to the transrational values, conviction, or faith, which are often based on religious orientations. Type I values are superior to, more authentic and better justified than Type II. His Type II values are divided

into Type IIA and IIB. They are the rational postulates based either on the consensus in a given collectivity (Type IIB) or upon reasonable analysis of the consequences entailed by the pending value judgement (Type IIA). Likewise, Type II are superior to Type III. Type III values refer to individual preference or self-justifying values. Value conflicts are often resolved at this level of hierarchy in administration (Hodgkinson, 1996, pp. 114–132).

A value could be placed at different levels. For example, education can be expressed as a mere preference – Type III; a result of peer group pressure and conformity – Type IIB; a conclusion of cost-benefit analysis – Type IIA; or a passion commanding lifelong sacrifice and commitment – Type I. It is important that school administrators know these differences (Hodgkinson, 1993). One could assume, based on this paradigm, that a value could also be held on two levels. One's educational commitment (Type I) could be based on rational grounds, such as cost-benefit analysis (Type IIA).

A typical position held by the advocates of value leadership is that schools are different from other modern organizations (Hodgkinson, 1991; Greenfield, 1986; Sergiovanni, 1995).

Greenfield (1986) regards schools as unique entities and emphasizes the 'humanness' of school life. He believes schools could be better captured in the notion of culture than by depiction in terms of structure and policy. They are better understood in context, from a set of concrete events and personalities, than from a set of abstractions or general laws (p. 143). Hodgkinson (1991) sketches a brief history of Western civilization to trace the different emphases in the education development. He identifies three purposes in education: aesthetic, economic and ideological. Aesthetic purposes are concerned with self-fulfilment and enjoyment of life, realized in a curriculum of liberal arts and humanities, that also includes literacy, numeracy, sports, arts and adult education. Economic purposes refer to vocational education. And ideological education aims at transmitting the culture of a society to its learners.

There is a persistent desire, reflected in different cultures, to inculcate a nationalist ethos into the young generation. Schools are, under this desire, operated with both hidden and overt curricula in the prevalent cultural values. It is this all-inclusive quality which makes education special and human. Education does lay on its administrators and leaders a subtle kind of moral charge. It follows that educational leadership ought to be special and moral (Hodgkinson, 1991).

The size of schools, in particular primary schools, is often smaller than corporations. Corporations lend themselves to bureaucratic management while schools allow a more personal approach in leadership. In schools, the head interacts regularly with teachers. Their exemplary behaviours are more readily observed which makes ethical leadership a viable proposition.

MORAL LEADERSHIP

Moral leadership is a concept that has been developed by a number of authors (Etzioni, 1988, 1993; Greenfield, 1986; Hodgkinson, 1991, 1996; Starratt, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1995, 1996). Heifetz (1994) argues that a leader must 'take sides' in the exercise of leadership. Leadership is subjective and normative. In his book *Moral Leadership*, Sergiovanni (1992) recounts stories of successful school leaders who are intimately involved in classrooms with students and teachers. He develops a hierarchy of leadership, namely, moral, professional rational–technical, psychological, and bureaucratic modes of leadership.

Sergiovanni (1992, pp. 30–40) offers a critique of bureaucratic, psychological and rational–technical modes of leadership. Bureaucratic styles of leadership, he claims, rely too much on mandates, rules, regulations, job descriptions, expectations and outcomes to control staff and students. Psychological leadership, which draws its authority mainly from motivation and human-relations skills, is transactional in nature. It focuses on control and advocates 'what gets rewarded gets done'. The leadership of technical–rational authority assumes expertise based on scientific knowledge. But teaching practice is too idiosyncratic, nonlinear, and loosely-connected to student outcomes to be standardized in a rational–technical leadership model.

Sergiovanni (1992) contends that the highest level of leadership authority is to be found in the professional and moral domains. When professional authority becomes a driving force, leaders rely on professional norms as reasons to appeal to teachers for action or change. Moral leadership calls for attention to right and wrong. One could compare this proposition from Sergiovanni with Burns's (1978) transformational leadership and Maslow's (1954) highest level of needs. One of the conditions underlying transformational leadership is that the leader elevates followers to a higher moral level (Burns, 1978; Sergiovanni, 1992). Indeed, the sources of leadership authority in Sergiovanni's (1992) theory, in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and Burns's (1978) leadership model could be integrated into a cohesive picture, as in Table 3.2. This moral position of leadership coheres with the latest management thinking, which calls for participation, collaboration, collegiality, enablment and empowerment and above all, building a trusting relationship within organizations.

Moral leadership under this argument carries dual implications. The first suggests that the leader must appeal to the followers' sense of righteousness, obligation and goodness as motivations for action and work. The second is that the leaders themselves must also possess a sense of righteousness, obligation and goodness. Without this, it is difficult to conceive how followers could be motivated to follow a moral path. Hence, to argue for a moral dimension of leadership implies a moral standing on the part of the leader.

Table 3.2 *Integration of hierarchy of needs, sources of leadership and leadership model*

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs		*Sergiovanni's Source of Leadership*	*Burns' Leadership Model*
High level needs	(Righteousness, obligation)	→ Moral authority	Transformational
	Self-actualization		
	Esteem	→ Professional authority	
Low level needs	Love	→ Technical–rational authority	Transactional
	Safety	Physiological authority	
	Physiological	→ Bureaucratic authority	

MORAL LEADERSHIP FROM THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE

China, since Confucius' time, has had a long history of preparing leaders on moral grounds. In comparing the differences between China and the West on morality, Lo (1996) suggests that the West has been predominantly concerned with theories and abstract ideas in understanding the nature of morality and in defining what 'good', 'right', 'ought' or 'obligation' are. Although Chinese philosophers also spend time on the meaning of moral value, they are more interested in the practical aspects of morality, and spent their time developing ways to do good.

The concern for morality goes back to very early in the history of China where it was expressed in the form of ethical humanism. China as a civilization did not seem to pass through a childhood of dreams and heroic exploits. Rather it has appeared from the beginning with a full-grown humanistic face starting with the Chou Dynasty (1111–249 BC) (Kung and Ching, 1989). Chan (1963) asserts that Chinese philosophy was dominated by ethical humanism and placed great emphasis on people and their activities in the world. Following the Chou dynasty, the spiritual force was replaced by the Mandate of Heaven, a moral law whose constant factor is virtue. In this light, man's destiny is linked, not to the existence of a soul, nor to the whim of a spiritual force as in the Greek tradition, but to his own good words and deeds. The founders of the Chou Dynasty justified their right to rule by asserting that the prior rulers of the Shan Dynasty (1600–1028 BC) had forfeited their mandate to rule by failing in their ethical duties to their subjects. The mandate therefore passed on to the Chou, who deserved it because of their virtue. The future of the Chou dynasty would depend on the capacity of the Chou rulers to live up to this ethical mandate (Chan, 1963). In later history, losing the ethical mandate to rule became a very convenient reason and excuse for overthrowing dynasties.

Every human can succeed

Ethical humanism reached its climax in the teaching of Confucius. Confucius focused on human activities, paying little attention to spiritual beings. He was the first to open the door of education to all. For him, education had no class distinction. This was a real revolution since prior to Confucius, education had been confined to nobles and controlled by officials. He would never reject anyone who wanted to learn, even someone who came with as little as a bit of dried meat in exchange for tuition. Among his pupils were commoners, merchants, nobles, and dull as well as intelligent people.

Confucius laid great emphasis on learning. 'Is it not a pleasure to learn and to practise from time to time what has been learned?' (*The Analects*, 1: 1, in: Chan, 1963, p. 18). He believed that by nature men were alike. It was through learning that they became differentiated. This theme was further developed by Mencius who held that by nature men were able to do good. This laid the foundation for the neo-Confucian philosophy developed in the Ming and Sung Dynasties.

Confucius' pragmatic attitude towards life and his emphasis on learning have had tremendous influence on the Chinese worldview. The Chinese have subsequently become known for the value they place on effort and education. Behind this emphasis lies the assumption, expounded by Confucius and Mencius, that everyone can succeed in learning.

Moral aspect of learning

However, for Confucius, learning does not serve a primarily vocational purpose. Its function lies in character training: learning to be faithful (*chung*) and altruistic (*shu*) (Chan, 1963, p. 17). It is insufficient if one just keeps learning to himself. 'Man of ethical humanity must also practise what he has learnt. When he wishes to establish himself, he must at the same time establish the others. When he wishes to be prominent, he must also help others to be prominent' (*The Analects*, 6: 28, in: Chan, 1963, p. 31).

This is the Confucian golden rule. Hence learning for Confucius carries two purposes. The first is to learn to be an upright and moral person. This is the ideal of the gentleman (*Chun Tzu*), or the superior man. Being a moral person, the scholar needs to acquire benevolence, duty, observance of rites, wisdom, courage and reliability (Lau, 1992). The scholar must link learning with wisdom, humanity and courage (the *Doctrine of the Mean*, in: Chan, 1963, p. 105). After the first purpose of learning has been served, it is possible to apply what has been learned to serve the people. Learning for Confucius always had an external motive – to serve the people (via the states). When Tzu-Lu, (a disciple of Confucius) asked about the nature of a gentleman, Confucius said: 'the gentleman is one who cultivates himself with seriousness'. Tzu-Lu replied, 'Is that all?' Confucius said, 'He cultivates himself so as to give the common people security and peace.' Tzu-lu said, 'Is that all?' Confucius said, 'He who cultivates

himself so as to give all people security and peace' (*The Analects*, 14: 45, in: Chan, 1963, p. 43).

Confucius himself had spent part of his early life travelling to persuade the states to accept his ideas but without much success. To be able to serve the state is considered a moral obligation of the scholar. Serving the state follows an order that links the two purposes of learning. The order starts first from the self, extends to one's family, and then to the states. This is well put in *The Great Learning*:

> The ancients who wished to manifest their clear character to the world first bring order to their states. Those who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. Those who wished to rectify their minds would first make their will sincere. Those who wished to make their will sincere would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things.
>
> (*The Great Learning*, in: Chan, 1963, p. 86)

Under the influence of Confucianism, many Chinese scholars considered it their obligation to serve the state to realize their scholarly ideals. This grew partly out of necessity. The states during the Han dynasty developed a system that absorbed the scholars into the civil service. After the Tang dynasty, this further developed into a sophisticated examination system. For a very long period of time, joining the civil service was the main recognized outlet of scholarly expression. David Johnson (quoted in: Fairbank, 1994, p. 83) commented that in the Europe of the past a man could rise to a position of high social status through a career in law, medicine, commerce, the church or the military. In China there was only one significant occupational hierarchy, namely the civil service.

The emphasis on practice

Confucianism took life as given. It did not seek to analyse or challenge it, but to accept and live with it. Confucianism believes fate is something beyond the control of oneself. There is no guarantee of success in life, even if one tries very hard. Even Confucius himself failed to have the opportunity to serve the state. But to do good and be a morally upright person is a certainty because it is in one's nature to be good. It requires no outside assistance but one's own will. This process could be nurtured through education (Mou, 1991). The belief in doing good as a certainty is a distinct feature of Confucianism.

As mentioned earlier, the two important virtues in Confucian ethics are faithfulness (*chung*), and altruism (*shu*). Like conceptualizing abstract ideas in concrete objects, the Chinese developed these virtues into concrete behaviours. They became faithfulness of subordinates towards superiors (emperors), sons and daughters towards their parents, and wives towards husbands. In the past,

faithfulness was narrowly defined as loyalty to one master. The sons must pay filial respect to the parents. The wives who remained widows after their husbands passed away were publicly praised. Scholars who served one dynasty would hide themselves after the dynasty changed, instead of coming forward to serve the new one. Faithfulness was extended to friendship. Life could be sacrificed for the sake of friendship. To die for a dynasty was an honour. This would gain a great deal of respect from others even after one's death. Death is regarded here as a means to a meaningful end. Chinese historians adopted moral codes as criteria to judge faithfulness.

The story of Zhuan Zhu in the *Records of the Historian (Shiji)* (145–86 BC) by Sima Qian (1962), which described faithfulness in friendship, is revealing. Zhuan Zhu was a fighter. He had great filial respect to his mother. He was introduced to Prince Guang who was in rivalry with his cousin Wang Liao to succeed the sovereign of Wu. Wang Liao inherited the sovereignty illegally from Prince Guang's father, the late emperor of Wu, and Prince Guang was looking for someone to assassinate Wang Liao. Prince Guang helped Zhuan Zhu and his mother generously in finance and otherwise. Later Prince Guang told Zhuan of his intention to assassinate his cousin. Seeing Zhuan Zhu was anxious that no one would look after his mother afterwards, Prince Guang promised Zhuan Zhu that he would take care of his mother and son.

Wang Liao was a cautious person. Afraid of assassination he did not let any stranger near him without a thorough body search. But Wang Liao liked eating grilled fish. So Zhuan Zhu learned to cook grilled fish and became known for it. On one occasion Prince Guang invited Wang Liao to a feast, and Zhuan Zhu was asked to be the cook. Zhuan Zhu prepared a dish of grilled fish and hid a sharp knife inside the abdomen of the fish. He finally managed to get close to Wang Liao and had him assassinated. Zhuan Zhu was also killed by his guards. After Wang Liao's death Prince Guang took back the sovereignty of Wu. He kept his word to look after Zhuan Zhu's mother and his son.

Obviously the social background upon which these moral codes were based and developed has disappeared. But the cultural influence of the past is still alive in present Chinese communities. Faithfulness and altruism all acquire much broader definition today, and are still considered high virtues in modern Chinese societies. The concern for practical morality is still apparent.

Educational leadership: a practical moral art

Earlier I mentioned the position held by the advocates of value leadership that schools are different from other modern organizations. Goodlad *et al.* (1990) refer to schooling a moral endeavour. Hodgkinson (1991, 1996) calls educational leadership a moral art. From the Chinese perspective educational leadership is more than a moral art. It is moral art in action.

There are numerous instances in which school heads and teachers are called upon to make decisions that have moral implications. For example, schools

decide whether to suspend a student from lessons because of disturbing behaviour in the classroom – a rather common event in some schools in Hong Kong. Here the student's behaviour is at stake. In the local context, the school has a duty to educate the student to behave well.

Decisions of this nature have implications for both students and teachers. The student is expected to learn from the mistake and improve. When punishment is due, partly because of fairness, helping students understand that it is necessary and often beneficial for them is crucial to the process. To begin with, the school must judge whether or not such a decision is likely to benefit the student. They must have the benefits of the students at heart. They must gain the trust of the students. A school which is able to build up trust among its members will find it easier to exercise this obligation. Building up an environment of trust in a school is a conscious moral act of the leaders in schools.

In 1991, the Hong Kong Education Department (ED) launched a scheme entitled the School Management Initiative (SMI), which adopted a school-based management strategy based on the effective school model in all Hong Kong schools (Education and Manpower Branch and Education Department, 1991). Up to then, the Hong Kong education system had been highly centralized. Issues such as the promotion of teachers in public sector schools were closely monitored and approved by the ED. Public sector schools were largely bureaucratically managed. SMI meant that decisions over teacher promotion would be left in the hands of schools. On top of this the SMI also proposed eventually to give schools greater flexibility to manage their own budgets including teachers' salaries. These proposals met a great deal of resistance from teachers.

In 1992, we undertook a research project to understand the implementation of the SMI scheme (Wong, 1993, 1995a, 1995b). We discovered that there was a big gap between teachers and school heads. With some exceptions, there was a lack of mutual trust between teachers and school heads. The teachers did not trust the school management committee, of which the school head is a member, to be fair in carrying out the new responsibilities. As a result, the implementation was hampered.

Looking back, the findings suggest two lessons. First, the case reinforces the concern that central policy or directives, though formulated with good intentions, must take local factors into consideration and allow a great deal of flexibility to schools in implementation. Second, the recommended policy may have drawn from the latest literature and experience from abroad, but they are by themselves insufficient to bring about changes in schools.

Unless individual schools can build up a trusting relationship among teachers, educational reforms at the school level, which often require additional efforts from teachers, will be difficult. This is not to say that other strategies or skills are unnecessary or unimportant. When pressed by the central authority, school leaders often resort to different leadership strategies to engage teachers. But the effects of these strategies are often temporary and short-lived (see Sergiovanni, 1992, 1995). On the other hand, if school heads are faithful to the cause of educating the young, they will gain respect from teachers and students; if they are

honest and truthful to their fellow teachers, they will build up trust among them, and the impact would be long lasting.

Exploring ways to practise moral leadership would be meaningful for local schools, and could be an indigenous contribution to modern leadership theory. It could be a new direction for educational leadership in this part of the world for the twenty-first century.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has attempted to connect a theme of moral leadership in schools as discussed by Western analysts with a longer tradition in Chinese culture. In focusing on this issue, I have sought to demonstrate how the construct of moral leadership, which places great emphasis on practice, has a strong grounding in the intellectual traditions of China.

Towards the end of the paper, I have raised the issue of exploring ways to practise moral leadership in schools based on Chinese culture. This new leadership direction may have two main implications. First, there may be the need to gather more data from the field to understand the extent to which moral leadership has been practised in local schools or in schools under the influence of Chinese culture. It may require the reinterpretation of some of the existing data in this new light. The second implication concerns the education of new school leaders. At the moment, few local leadership programmes hold discussions on ethical leadership. How this new direction to leadership programmes may be incorporated is an issue requiring further examination.

Scholars from cross-cultural perspectives may be interested in exploring how Chinese culture fosters moral leadership in its school administrators. This analysis, using a cultural frame, may inform both management developers and theorists concerned with understanding forms of leadership in schools. It may lend new insights and even lead to a revaluation of normative practices in the local culture, and provide a new lens through which local scholars may reassess and revalue traditional practices.

Notes

1 Hsun Tsu held an opposing view regarding the nature of human beings from Mencius (371–289 BC), a loyal follower of Confucius. Hsun Tsu argued that humans were by nature evil and hence needed to be educated while Mencius believed that humans were intrinsically good and the individual had to preserve the goodness in himself.

2 Neo-Confucianism refers to the school of thought in the Sung (960–1270 AD) and Ming (1368–1644 AD) Dynasties, which developed further the philosophy based on Confucius, Mencius and other related writings.

3 The Japanese have similar practices. Many Japanese, though not Christians, would attend Catholic mass on Christmas Eve. Both young and old would come out during holy communion to receive the blessing from the priest, a sign acknowledging the value of a foreign religion.

4 For further elaboration between 'fact and value' see Hodgkinson's 'The epistemological axiology of Evers and Lakomski: some un-Quineian quibblings', in *Educational Management and Administration*, 21, 3, 1993: 177–187.

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4 Vision Building among School Leaders

Kai-ming Cheng

INTRODUCTION

While it is admitted that successful leaders are those with visions, little is written about whether or how such visions could be developed. This chapter, based on my practical experience, is an account of the various attributes of a school vision. Implicitly, it argues that it is possible to develop vision through a designed process by taking into account such attributes.

VISION AS A DREAM

What is vision? Owens (1998, p. 213) sees vision as 'a new and better state in the future'. Vision is what one aspires to. In the case of a school, it is an imagination of what the school could become. It is the picture of the school when it is successful. In other words, vision is a dream. The school is perceived as successful when this dream comes true.

The first question I usually ask during vision-building sessions is, 'What is there that you have always dreamt about, but are never given the opportunity to realize?' Answers are diverse. It is not important what the answers are, but it is essential that school leaders are given the opportunity to ask themselves: 'Do I have a dream?' and 'What dream do I have?'

Once, I was visiting a new school where a retired education officer was appointed the principal. 'What is there that you would like to achieve most?' I asked. 'Follow me', he said, and led me to the playground where he showed me the classrooms above us, 'Most of the rooms are not in use, yet lights are not switched off. I will have an over-expenditure in my electricity bill. What I would like to solve most is to find a way to reduce such wastage'. Apparently, he had taken problems for visions. Anybody who has taken over as principal in a new school would agree that there are a lot of things to be settled and to be started, and that the electricity bill is only one among minor problems. Solving the electricity bill problem could not possibly be a major goal to achieve.

This is one of the examples I used to provoke discussions during vision-build-

ing sessions. The question is 'What is the problem?' The following are some of the answers:

'He has to find a way to discipline those who do not switch off the lights.'

'He has to set up a system such that lights would be properly switched off.'

'He has a poor staff.'

'He has to sack the janitors.'

'He is not good at management.'

Only a few would say 'The problem is in the principal himself'. This could be seen as a typical case of 'no vision', or a case of 'poor vision'. The principal's vision hardly went beyond the electricity bill. With the electricity bill blocking his mind, perhaps with other management routines, it is difficult to conceive that he could pay more attention to student learning, innovations in management, development of school culture and so forth.

Hence it is not always valid to assume that every school leader has a dream of the school. This is particularly true in a public (non-private) school system where schools work in a bureaucracy, with funding to be spent as specified and where they are expected to operate according to set procedures. Following rules and regulations may easily become the objectives of the school leaders, with little reference to the educational goals of the school. Indeed, any deviation from such rules and regulations may well lead to negative appraisals from above. In many such systems, the school is to serve the managerial or political masters above the school, rather than students and the community at large. Such systems are often unfavourable for the development of visions among school leaders.

Under such circumstances, vision-building is not only a matter of working on the individual school leaders; it is also necessary to work against a larger culture that does not favour vision development within individual schools.

VISION MAKES A DIFFERENCE

It is implied in the above discussion that vision is a matter of individuality, of school characters. Even in a public system with a high level of uniformity in terms of funding and procedures, schools perform differently, and achieve differently. Even in a collective culture such as China or Japan, where uniformity and conformity prevail, schools carry different characters. Meanwhile, in many societies where private schools excel, they excel with characters, and such characters are reflected in their visions.

In this connection, it is interesting to observe how school leaders' visions work in more uniform and conforming systems such as those in Mainland China. Even before the system began to diversify in the 1980s, in a Chinese system where

schools were expected to conform to national goals and visions, schools did differ. On the one hand, the Chinese system displays the highest uniformity in goals and objectives. On the other hand, the Chinese system has always been very good at publicly recognizing schools with outstanding performance. Even within a uniform larger umbrella, schools excel because of their particular visions.

One school in Hong Kong has become known for its students' activities. There is no homework in its early primary classes, which is rather unusual in Hong Kong. In a study about the school (Chan, 2000), it was revealed that the principal has happiness firmly in mind as a major vision for the school. It is indeed a very happy school. However, the students have also achieved highly in academic studies. The notion of happiness, to the school principal, derives from a deep-rooted belief that learning is nature's gift to students. Only when such a gift is treasured and facilitated by the school environment can children achieve real learning. And, when they can learn happily, they learn much more and much better.

A school in Hong Kong appointed a new principal. He found that a neighbouring school, with students of the same background and founded at the same time, performed much better than his own school in almost all areas. He decided to pay full attention to public examination results first. He announced his intentions in a staff meeting, saying that for the foreseeable future he would not organize swimming galas or athletic meetings. 'They are secondary', he said. In about three years' time, the examination results in his school rose to be on a par with the neighbouring school.

Another school, a secondary school in Hong Kong, is known for the quality of its graduates. I interviewed its alumni and their employing firms or institutions. The descriptions were consensual: the graduates are often seen as 'distinguished' and 'presentable'. When I studied the school, there were simply no school regulations for students. This was consistent with the school vision, which was written in the school philosophy, that placed high values on individuals. Hence, rather than setting regulations for students to follow, the school had expectations that formed the consensual norm among the students. Different from regulations, the expectations are seen to be from the students and of themselves, rather than from an authority and for the students to follow. Within such an environment, the students gain high esteem and the alumni shine. There was therefore an obvious consistency between the school vision, the expectations, and what the graduates demonstrate.

We can come up with several observations from these examples. First, different visions lead to different characteristics of schools. Of first and foremost importance is whether or not there is a vision, whether or not there is something to look forward to. Second, whether or not the vision is a 'good' vision is a matter of the culture and a matter of value judgment. While in China there is the call for visions to move away from examination-oriented education, in India there are visions that 'a good school principal should be examination-oriented'[1]. Third, the appropriateness of the vision is perhaps tested only by the achievements of the school. Fourth, nonetheless, whether or not the vision is effective (that is, whether

or not it brings about results) is a real concern and is an indicator of successful fulfilment of the vision. How the principal can articulate the vision is of less importance.

The corollary, however, is that things will not happen if they are not in the vision. If the leader is not looking forward to a goal, it is difficult to expect such a goal to be realized. For example, if the school did not consider happiness as a vision, the school would never tackle the issue of homework, and would most likely have regarded homework as an unchallenged natural routine. If the other school did not follow the tradition of respect for individuality, most likely school regulations would have been imposed unchallenged, again as a natural necessity.

In this context, we may also say that vision is not only something to look forward to, but is also something that requires some effort in the implementation. Vision is also something to strive for.

VISION AND RESOURCES

In 1998 a Quality Education Fund was established in Hong Kong with a sum equivalent to 600 million US dollars for schools to apply for non-routine activities that would raise the quality of education. In a meeting to mobilize schools, facing several hundred kindergarten leaders, I started by asking a simple question.

'If your school is suddenly given a thousand dollars[2], what would you do with it?' The audience laughed. 'Peanuts!', they said.

'What about ten thousand?' There were whispers among the audience. They began to exchange suggestions.

'What about a hundred thousand?' The audience became noisy. Many shook their heads in disbelief. This was not a sum of free money they had ever encountered.

'But now we are talking about one million or ten million, or even more!' There was dead silence in the audience. People were frozen with open mouths. This was beyond their imagination.

A number of observations could be made. First, although vision is very much a dream, like a dream, vision is bounded by reality. If a school is funded by public money all with earmarked purposes, it may have a leeway of only a few thousands of dollars, and would never dream of using a million. Even a private school, if its income leaves it with only a small surplus margin, would never have a dream of using a million. Hence, vision building is to develop one's thinking beyond what is warranted by the reality. The questions I raised brought to the kindergarten leaders what would be unimaginable in reality, hence raising the horizon of visions.

Second, vision is very often an ambition. That is, vision is something beyond the reality; it is something yet to be realized. If the reality is 'here', vision is 'there'. Vision therefore also represents the gap between 'here' and 'there'. Vision building is then defining the gap between what is desirable and what is existent.

School leaders often complain: 'It is not that I do not have a vision, but there are so many constraints that I am not allowed to have a vision.' This is a vivid demonstration of the lack of a vision. A vision is exactly about how to overcome the constraints and move beyond the reality. Complaining about the reality is limiting oneself to what is possible now, and is a reflection of the fact that the leader is being overwhelmed by the reality. The leader therefore becomes a passive acceptor of the reality. In other words, they have no vision. Or, more accurately, their vision is blocked by what is under their noses. They are not able to look at the road ahead of them, let alone to create a road for themselves.

There could be a modified version of such passivity. 'I would like to have more resources', is a 'dream' that comes up quite frequently. This is perhaps not unexpected, because for many the dream is 'to have more money'. However, for a school leader, this answer itself begs a question: 'More resources, for what?' Underlying such an answer is the reality where much that should be done is not done, and resources are the usual constraint. However, vision is not about overcoming constraints. Vision is about what to achieve. Resources may constrain achievements, but resources *per se* are not achievements.

From another perspective, unless the school leader has something to aspire to, there would not be much incentive to develop more resources, either through bargaining with the funding body or by fundraising. Even in heavily subsidized school systems, or with schools in poverty areas, successful schools are always capable of raising extra resources to achieve what is beyond the standard practice. Those leaders who lament the shortage of resources have to visit poor villages in China or India, in order to realize that resource constraints should not become an excuse for lack of visions.

VISION BEYOND RESOURCES

However, vision is not always about resources. The above cases concerning school homework and school regulations are two typical examples where a vision is realized with no resource implications. Many admirable visions of schools are not about resources. They are about how a school is perceived as successful.

In 1986, sixteen primary and secondary school principals from Singapore visited twenty-three best schools in the United Kingdom and United States. They were sent by the Ministry of Education in anticipation of bringing back success stories and best practices in school management (*Towards Excellence*, 1987). The principals came back with much satisfaction, but to the surprise of many, the best practice they brought back had little to do with what was normally in the management literature. They were deeply struck by the fact that principals of famous schools were able to play a role in a school drama, were able to play basketball with the students and so forth. This inspired the Singapore government to create the category of Independent Schools where the best public (non-private) schools were given the greatest autonomy with adequate public funding.

In No. 4 Secondary School in Beijing, there was a move in the late 1990s to reduce the teaching hours for school subjects. They have gradually reduced the weekly teaching periods of Physics in senior secondary classes, for example, from five periods to two periods. Students who were taught Physics with fewer periods achieved even higher scores in the public examinations. This has proved a very important breakthrough in the reform of education. This was soon followed by reform in many other cities. In the curriculum reform in Shanghai, launched in 1999, only two weekly periods were allocated to each of the major science subjects. In the revised curriculum in Shanghai, Physics, for example, is taught only in Senior Secondary 2 and 3. All these reforms would not have happened without the vision that students should be given more room for learning; that learning is not exactly teaching; and that less teaching with good design may actually lead to more learning. Such a vision may involve less rather than more resources.

VISIONS, BENCHMARKS AND VALUES

The discussions above have already revealed that there may be a whole spectrum of types of visions. Different school leaders have different visions, pertaining to different aspects of school success, or different ways of looking at school success. In other words, different visions pertain to different core values. The following are some of the more frequent types.

'We will become No. 1 in Asia!'

Such a vision may best fit a university, but primary and secondary schools may take a smaller locality: 'The best school in town', 'No. 1 in the city'.

Such a vision implicitly puts the school onto a league table of some kind, hence using the benchmarks on the league table as its target goals. In such a vision, the core value is competition.

The 'No. 1' vision may take on many meanings. It could mean academic standing, such as indicated by university entrance. It could mean students' all-round development, as could be indicated by all kinds of prizes won by students. It could mean popularity, demonstrated by parents' choice.

In practice, such a vision takes on the school as the eventual unit of concern. All achievements – student results, sports prizes, competition victory, campus development, technologies, and so on – converge as ways and means towards achievements of the school or even brand-building of the school.

The notion of No. 1 often carries the connotation that the school looks for something tangible and quantifiable as its target goal. In reality few, for example, would use the No. 1 notion for humanity, spirit or student behaviour.

'We will achieve 100 per cent pass in the public examination!'

In Hong Kong, this is often initiated by the school board whose members know little about education and only understand public examinations as the objective benchmark. Such visions are often seen in new schools, particularly schools that are situated in a rather under-developed area.

This is a vision which is examination-oriented. Examination-orientation is often seen as inappropriate or wrong in an education system. Indeed, China has been trying to tackle the problem of examination-oriented education since the later 1980s, and called for its replacement by 'quality education'. Hong Kong, in its major education reform launched in 2000, also proposed reduction of public examination pressure as one of its major goals. However, when I visited Bangalore, India in 1999, I found that in a most respected Principal's Manual, the most eye-catching motto was 'An effective school principal should be examination-oriented'. Indeed, most schools in India displayed in the most visible way their achievements in public examinations. In some cultures, examinations, which are seen as the major and fairest ladder for social mobility, are perceived as a decent vision for schools.

'We will be the school for tomorrow!'

This is a type of vision where the target goal is conceivable but not tangible. The vision casts the concept of innovation into new directions. It implicitly presumes that schools in the future should be different from schools today, and that the goals of the school should aim at future goals.

Many such visions are translated into physical facilities, and technologies in particular. In the late 1990s, many schools in different systems 'wired' their schools. That is, they connected the schools to information networks by, for example, optical fibres. This was a bold and forward-looking vision, because the vision led to a firm foundation for connectivity among schools, which would prove essential for students' preparation for a knowledge society. Similarly, quite a few universities, in the late 1990s, started equipping their students with personal laptop computers.

Such visions are not without limits. One, technologies change quickly, and soon become obsolete. For example, wired school systems are soon challenged by wireless connectivity. Two, emphasis on facilities and technologies may lead to neglect of educational visions that are essential to the real success of a school.

However, it would be unfair to equate the vision for 'tomorrow's school' with new technologies. There are indeed schools that foresee future developments and aim at target goals that look beyond what exists. Jian Ping school in Shanghai, for example, in the 1980s, foresaw the trends in the society, and required its graduates (who are students with high examination scores) to obtain at least one skill-related public certificate beside the public examination diploma. This became very popular later.

'Our school will have the highest value-added.'

This is a rather common recent vision, particularly among school districts or groups of schools run by the same school board. The underlying concept is that the school may or may not attract good students, but all of them will learn more and be better after studying in the school.

Such a vision could be very educational, because it believes that regardless of how the students perform or are perceived in the past, they will grow and develop in the school. It is positive and constructive. However, such a vision is nonetheless still based on an external benchmark. The dimensions in the vision may or may not be the direct concern of the students and teachers in that school. For example, substantiating the 'value-addedness' is inevitably the improvement in examination scores in one way or another, but such a dimension may not be the prime concern in a school where student scores are extremely low.

Value-addedness also tends to pay more attention to the tangible and measurable. Although it is conceivable to measure human dimensions such as students' self-confidence, the ability of self-learning, or creativity, such measurements are seldom employed in a real account of value-addedness.

The above cases represent a particular type of vision where the school is the focus of success. In other words, the visions are about the school. One may argue that a successful school is conducive to successful student learning. Nonetheless, the primary concern in the above-mentioned visions is the well-being of the school. They are school-centred visions. They are rather different from student-centred visions, and these we discuss below.

The types of vision mentioned above also reflect a sense of competition. They carry a sense of 'winning the competition'. This is quite different from visions where the competition is within the schools themselves rather than with other schools. One major difference is perhaps the former may see success in the championship, the latter never sees anything as 'good enough' (Collins and Porras, 1994: 10).

In vision-building exercises, I would avoid judging the core values underpinning the various visions, but would definitely make sure that the participating school leaders could make a distinction between school-centred visions and student-centred visions, such that they are conscious of the nature of their visions.

VISION AND STUDENTS

When I ran my own school in the 1970s, it was a school that was able to attract only students with the poorest academic performance. One of our visions was that there should be an opportunity for each student to be appreciated: 'Every student should be applauded at least once'. The teachers developed the vision through their perception that all students were capable, but their capability might not be appreciated by the norms that the society accepted. By society norms, they were

all failures. Our specific task was to allow the students to realize that they were not failures, and that was essential for their entire life. For that purpose, we made a lot of effort to provide opportunities for students to develop all kinds of talents, and to create opportunities for them to demonstrate such talents.

In the now famous Zhabei No. 8 School in Shanghai, the motto is 'let every student succeed'. The vision is that every student should be able to succeed. The principal of the school is known for his philosophy that students fail mostly because they are perceived as failures, and are told so. Hence, what he did is to provide easy starts, small steps, yet rapid progress. The net effect is that the students taste the fruit of success from the very first day they are in the school, and are guided to have confidence in themselves in mastering their studies. In the end, most of the students in the school achieved above average after three years of junior secondary study.

In a few secondary schools that I studied, most of the students who perform poorly academically came from families under very difficult conditions. Either the parents were separated, or, in extremely difficult cases, the father old and the mother young, having been 'bought in' from nearby poorer countries. In these circumstances, the children have never been given a normal family life, and hence personal life, in their early years. Where the schools are successful, the principals' visions often include restoration of normal lives for the students. They believe that only then can they properly engage in real learning. In one of the schools in my research, punctuality was given high priority among new entrants to the school. The school made a lot of effort to ensure punctuality, and through such efforts solved many life-organization problems among the students.

Such school visions may not place the schools anywhere higher in any league table. Yet they are performing a noble task of enabling students to re-construct their own future. They have a noble vision. Given the fact that school leaders in a pluralistic society may have divergent visions, it is nonetheless important to remind them that schools as schools serve the students, not *vice versa*.

Moreover, in such cases, the visions entail ambitions that do not 'think big' as one might expect. It is a vision where learning becomes a normal and delightful life experience, and the principal as a member of the community is part of that delightful experience. Such a vision is admired by all educators, but does not involve grand achievements normally on the agenda of school boards.

VISIONS AGAINST THE TIDE

Student-centred visions do not apply only to academically poor students. In the example of No. 4 School in Beijing mentioned earlier, teaching time is reduced but students achieve better. The vision is to restore the central position of learning, rather than teaching, into school lives. They have achieved the vision of 'less teaching, more learning'. This is against the common belief that students learn more if they are taught more.

Likewise, in one of the Hong Kong schools mentioned above, where homework is reduced to the minimum, there is the vision of giving students the greatest autonomy in their after-school lives. This is against Hong Kong parents' belief that homework is not only necessity, but is also a symbol of students' diligence in study. Parents also believe that anything besides 'study' is a waste of time. The school has convinced parents with real practice that such beliefs are not valid.

This echoed my experience in a village school in the north-eastern province of Liaoning in China (study reported in: Cheng, 1991). Among others, one dimension of the school's vision statement was to give students 'autonomous evenings'. Most students in East Asian societies do not enjoy that autonomy. They have to fulfil heavy homework requirements, prepare for frequent tests and, often, to attend private tutorials. They never have the autonomy to organize their own lives in the evening.

About twenty-five years ago, a veteran kindergarten leader in Hong Kong started introducing an approach that delayed children's learning of writing Chinese characters. Based on very professional judgments, she introduced only a little writing in the second year for the four year olds, whereas all other kindergartens started a large amount of writing at age three. She went as far as debating with parents who challenged her approach, but succeeded in demonstrating that her students wrote much better when they finished kindergarten. Her kindergartens later became very popular.

VISIONS OF NON-ACTION

Although vision is meant to be an ambition, it sometimes does not sound like an ambition in the normal sense of the term.

When I became a warden of a students' hall of residence, I gradually developed from my experience the following visions of a students' hall of residence in a university.

'The best regulations are not written.'

In my hall of residence, there are 376 students, all top students from secondary schools. The hall is not only a place of accommodation. It is a place where young intellectuals from diverse backgrounds learn to live together. As such, they have to learn to develop, consciously, the way to live together. They have to observe social norms from the heart, rather than by regulations imposed from the external. Maintaining order in the hall with no written regulation is a vision. This is not unique to university residence. This is also the vision of many schools of good traditions.

'The best learning is not planned.'

The hall of residence is the best place for students to develop their social capacity

or social competency. It is through interactions that they learn, and they learn in the course of problem-solving in community lives. Such a learning process is not planned and cannot be engineered. However, such learning is the most effective and impresses deeply on young people's minds. In the long-run, such learning has a more far-reaching effect on students' future lives than planned learning in their academic studies. Such a vision is also shared by many successful schools. People tend to mistake good schools as those only with good examination scores; they tend to ignore the fact that most schools with good reputations are also successful human communities. It is mainly through community lives that students learn. This reminds me of a remark about Jennifer Nias, who is known for her research about schools:

> In her study, the emphasis throughout was on making relationships, communities, and group identity, with the most powerful educational aims and experiences being described in terms such as 'organic' or 'oneness'. The emphasis on wholeness led them to conceptualise teaching not as 'imparting knowledge' but as 'building relationships'.
>
> (Fraser *et al*., 1988, p. 61)

'The best warden does nothing.'

A hall of residence is a place for students to learn self-organization. They grow only when they are in charge. The best warden is therefore one who does little, if not nothing. 'If you do little, why should you be there', as the usual challenge goes. 'I am here to make sure I do nothing'. Once I interfered, students would listen to me and would become used to my guidance. They would then lose the opportunity to experience problems, difficulties and to learn to solve such problems and difficulties. Normally they are very clever and innovative in solving problems. That I should minimize my action has become another vision.

My vision of non-action or non-interference was developed when I taught in a school with a long history in Hong Kong, in the late 1970s. It was a school where tradition prevailed. The principal did the minimum to manage the school. Teachers adjusted themselves in their relations, such that conflicts seldom occurred. Teachers were mostly hard-working, responsible, and maintained their own personal characters. Most of the routines that would appear in a management textbook were not visible in the school. There was little interference with the students, either. Little was done on discipline. In the end, when the students became university students, they emerged as the most active and self-confident when compared with those from schools that were seen as better 'managed'.

In most of the vision-building sessions, therefore, I am also keen to alert school leaders to the importance of non-action as well as actions. I often confront school leaders with a question: 'What are those things that you do everyday, yet are not quite necessary?' This often provokes deep thinking among the school leaders. In conjunction with 'what to do', it is also essential to ask 'what not to

do'.

The non-action notion also has a specific meaning in times of competition. When schools face ever-increasing yet competing demands from society, the successful school is one that is able to identify what need not be done and overcome the inertia of unwillingness to give up doing things that are no longer meaningful. Only then can resources and energy be used for newer and more meaningful endeavours.

REALIZATION OF VISIONS

School leaders' visions are not useful if they are unable to realize such visions. Although it is not possible to elaborate on the realization of visions in this short chapter, it is necessary to highlight the essence of so doing.

Vision has to be translated into missions. While vision is a dream and a future of the school that we aspire to, mission is what should be achieved in order to fulfil the dream. In other words, a vision is not a vision if the leader does not understand the implications of the vision. Typically missions are also translated into plans, preferably with vague three-year plans and more concrete annual plans. Only with such plans can one safely say that the vision has hope of realization.

A visionary leader also marks the fulfilment of the missions with milestones. While plans refer mainly to the day-to-day operations and achievements of the school, milestones often refer to critical junctures or events that would provide a point of reference for both the target goals and the timeline for operations. For example, a school may typically use the celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary as a milestone, such that in that year, the school should have a list of accomplishments. A milestone will also provide the school with an opportunity to take stock of its achievements and to renew its further plans.

Visions have to be realized with strategy. Often, visions fail to materialize not because of lack of plans, but rather, the lack of strategies. By strategy I mean sequence, urgency, emphasis and priorities the school undertakes in order to fulfil the vision.

- *Sequence* refers to the order in which changes take place. In many cases, the wrong sequence may cause fatal consequences.
- *Urgency* is related to how soon things should be done. In reality, urgency has to be considered in conjunction with importance, and one has to ensure that long-term benefits are not compromised by mere consideration of urgency.
- *Emphasis* is about resource strategies. It is about how much resource, human and financial, should be put into each area of action. Over-emphasis on an inappropriate area would deprive attention on other areas that may deserve more resources.
- *Priority* is about give and take. It is about what should be done, and what should be dropped. Often, the crux of school development strategy is to decide

on what should be removed in order to give way to areas of greater concern.

As many writers have emphasized, visions reflect the core values upheld by the leadership. A school's vision is realized only when such core values are disseminated among members of the school and shared by all in the school. Many school leaders think of a vision predominantly as policies and measures, assuming that what is regarded as appropriate and good by the leader should also be so regarded by other members. Such assumptions are simply invalid. On the contrary, if efforts are invested in communicating the visions and securing agreement on the core values, members will be motivated as autonomous individuals in realizing the visions.

This comes to the very core of the issue of vision. Vision is about trust. Anybody can have a vision of a school, but only those who have trust in teachers and students are able to realize such a vision. Schools are human organizations working on human beings through human interactions. Only by trust in teachers' sincerity and professional wisdom, and trust in students' capacity and intelligence, is it possible for school visions to be realized. For schools, a vision with no trust is not a vision.

Notes

1 I encountered this in Bangalore in 1999 in a principal's manual.
2 Hong Kong dollars, at an exchange rate of US$1 = HK$8.

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5 Leadership Study and Administrative Practice – Shall the Twain Ever Meet?

Reflections on the Wisdom of Practicality

Martin Barlosky

> There was a most ingenious architect who had contrived a new method for building houses, by beginning at the roof and working downwards to the foundation, which he justified to me by the like practice of those two prudent insects, the bee and the spider.
>
> (Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings*, 1962, p. 178, Bantam Books.)

The above account is from the fictional journals of Lemuel Gulliver which contain a history of similarly curious encounters. The journal entry reports Gulliver's meeting with one of the many impractical professors of the Grand Academy of Lagado, the peculiar centre of higher learning described by Jonathan Swift in his account of the sojourns of his venturesome protagonist. To Gulliver, an outsider, the Grand Academy appeared an unsettling and, at its worst, outlandish place. He tells of his many encounters with established scholars and researchers who tirelessly pursue fabulous 'solutions' that worsen rather than resolve the practical problems they would address. In the figure of the architect, Swift captures the essence of what seems to have gone so wrong in the august academy. Building from the top down, the scholars of Lagado have become thralls to their own theories which blind them to the impracticality and the hazards of their respective research programmes. In Lagado, theory-bound ingenuity persistently leads invention, as well as the interventions it inspires, astray.

Even though theories like that of the architect are premised in empirical observation and maintain internal coherence, there is much that is mad and maddening about them. Granted their many internal epistemic virtues, these theories speak poorly, if at all, to external circumstance. Nevertheless, the Grand Academy's many questionable research programmes continue undeterred by ample evidence that they either overlook or exacerbate the very conditions they would relieve. Researchers toil busily, albeit errantly, while those who must implement their findings suffer the consequences of ideas broken away from practicality but leveraged by scholarship. In other words, within Lagado the speculations of scholars unchecked by practical considerations allow things to work well in theory yet steadily undermine the practices that constitute the world outside its walls.

Practitioners forced to put up with schemes lacking in practical wisdom have difficulty getting anything done that might genuinely improve their unenviable lot. They are condemned to their fate as recipients of 'knowledge'.

In creating the Grand Academy and its colourful assortment of tenured and misguided tenants Swift is, of course, speaking satirically. Through a strategic exaggeration of the familiar, the habits of scholarship are viewed as both other- and anti-worldly. Rather than bringing enlightenment to everyday problems, academic research appears to confuse and misdirect even the well-intentioned exercise of intellect. The machinations of the academy aid and abet the rupture between thinking and doing that begins in the empirical misconstrual of circumstance and ends in findings that are invariably detrimental to those upon whom they are foisted. Admitting that knowledge may indeed be power, although power of a perverse sort, Swift raises the troubling questions: power to do what things and to whose advantage?

Swift's at times savage satire is perhaps disturbingly resonant for those of us who have worked as educational administrators and who have also researched leadership in educational settings. Unless we are very unusual indeed, we have come to know personally the rift that can separate ideas about educational leadership from its realization in practice. Whether the perplexity engendered by this separation is lasting or fleeting, it underscores the uneven relationship that exists between leadership theory and administrative experience, or what James March (1986) referred to in his now classic study of the American university presidency as the difference between 'how we talk and how we act.' March suggests that if we are to make the rhetoric of leadership more consonant with administrative action, we must revisit the often unexamined assumptions that separate the scholarship of researchers from the knowledge of practitioners.

In this chapter I argue that much of the bewilderment that continues to cloud discussions of educational leadership and to beleaguer administrative action is the result of a misguided quest to find a single, uniform and deterministic knowledge base capable of underwriting managerial mastery. Because the practice of educational administration is inescapably human, it is necessarily pluralistic, diverse and contingent. The experience of practitioners will not, therefore, reduce to the generalizable certainties we typically associate with more scientific enterprises. If the 'truths' we may come to know about the administration of educational settings are inherently multiple, local and unstable, they will continue to frustrate attempts to establish the predictability and control associated with a managerialism premised in scientific certainties. This is not to impugn the attempt to generate knowledge that may help us to make the study and the practice of educational leadership more reciprocally enlightening. It is, however, to suggest that we must redescribe what such knowledge will look like and how we can best go about making and applying it.

By drawing upon ideas developed by Donald E. Polkinghorne (1992) in his essay 'Postmodern epistemology of practice', and referring to Aristotle's (1980, 1985) understanding of *phronesis* or 'practical knowledge', I suggest that much may be gained by exploring the utility of what I call a 'non-normative' knowledge

base. Further, I suggest how the study and the work of educational administration can be given new direction, interest and professional relevance by taking seriously – and pragmatically – at least some of the ideas that have come to be associated with postmodernist thinking. Lest this postmodernist orientation be overstated, and in the spirit of this volume which combines scholarship from the East and the West, I also point to the parallelism between the postmodern epistemology of practice and principles implicit in ancient Chinese Taoist thought, particularly in the concept of *li*. Each of the distinctive philosophical sources noted above contributes to a rethinking of what sort of knowledge is needed to accommodate a professional practice that sits uneasily within the singular normative tradition in which educational administration has, to its own detriment, sought to locate its methods, practices and ambitions.

The point throughout this chapter is to explore how the continuity between leadership theory and administrative practice might be enhanced so that each may be bettered. That this enhancement may be effected through the exploration of a recent philosophical turn as well as in two well established but still provocative philosophical traditions – one Occidental and one Oriental – is a reminder that what we think has a very real and important impact upon how we talk and upon how we act. The arguments made herein support the possibility that unaccustomed ways of thinking may lead to new and enlivening forms of research, teaching and practice in a field that has arguably sold short its potential contributions to the human enterprise.

DISCIPLINING ORGANIZATIONS: THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE AS MASTERY IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Scholars and researchers in the field of educational administration have been long troubled by the lack of a declared profession to establish a consistent, declarative and certain knowledge base that defines its practices (Culbertson, 1988; Dolmage, 1992; Evers and Lakomski, 1991; Willower, 1988). This concern drove the attempt to align educational administration with the human disciplines that sought to adopt the procedural methodologies, the academic mantle and the cultural prestige of the 'hard' sciences. The project to give academic credence, greater surety and increased uniformity to administrative practices in educational settings fuelled the field's attempt to move from an increasingly denigrated practitioner anecdotalism to the seemingly more rigorous methods common to the physical sciences. The effort to enshrine the hypothetico-deductive method which, it was claimed, would yield a set of compatible, law-like theories sufficient to create a uniform, objective and effective administrative practice, reached its zenith with the advent of the Theory Movement in the 1950s. In the ideal world imagined by the Theory Movement's champions, school administrators could derive consistent and constructive professional behaviours from a well-articulated and scientifically secured knowledge base.

The hope proffered by the Theory Movement was that science, predictability and uniformity would systematically and progressively take the place occupied in educational administration by practitioner experience, moral intuition and procedural variation. Theory, developed scientifically through the work of researchers housed in academic institutions of higher learning, would increasingly determine and make constant the practice of school administrators. The vagaries and the scope of personal choice would be increasingly constrained by the introduction of rules and techniques secured through the scientific appropriation of the organizational life. In a very real sense, educational administrators would be rescued progressively from themselves and their individual practices would be normalized to an objective standard. It was the faith of the Theory Movement that these measures, unlike those related by Swift in his depiction of the Grand Academy of Lagado, would make scientifically researched and managed institutions better places.

A great deal of water has gone under the unsteady bridge between idea and action in educational administration since the salad days of the Theory Movement. While the demise of the grand programme to develop a unified body of knowledge sufficient to govern administrative conduct in educational settings has been chronicled elsewhere (Evers and Lakomski, 1991; Greenfield, 1986), it is helpful to revisit the core belief that drove the Theory Movement's ambitions. The movement took as an article of faith that science provided the methodological hardware needed to reduce the complex and unruly encounters that constituted human social institutions to a set of predictable regularities the manipulation of which would systematically advance the rationalization and control of organizational circumstance. In short, science would progressively facilitate the ability of administrative intention to form organizational outcome. The unpredictabilities of school life would be deciphered systematically by experts trained in scientific modes of knowledge-making who would isolate the causal variables beneath the irregularities of appearance. Through the planned manipulation of these variables, institutional interactions would be made responsive to administrative will. The driving ambition of this work was to replace the intractable, the unpredictable and the uncertain with administrative mastery.

The term 'mastery' is itself shorthand for the enterprise to mitigate chance by developing a knowledge capable of regulating human affairs. Because the promise of mastery has become a cornerstone of the academic and professional legitimation of educational administration, it is important to be clear about its usage herein. To help in this clarification I will borrow briefly from other writings where I have discussed the apotheosis of mastery that is coincident with the modernist enterprise to regulate the physical and the human world. Joseph Dunne (1993), referencing the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1986), provides a comprehensive definition of mastery that accurately conveys my usage of it:

> As human beings we give ourselves to – or find ourselves in – projects through which we shape our environments and our relationships with each

> other. In the history of this projecting, particularly since the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century, we have moved more and more into a position where, as 'subject', we confront a world which is ours to objectify and control. And, increasingly, the substance of our human lives has become part of this objectified world over which we exercise mastery. Our lives are resolved into a series of projects, and all of these projects – all 'our wanting and doing,' our 'making, producing and constructing' – occur within this overall project or 'frame' of mastery itself. It is this frame which defines the scope of our ambitions and the meaning of success; our attitudes, our modes of thought, the very questions which are our problems arise already within this framework or else are smoothly, and inexorably, assimilated into it.
>
> (p. 366)

Mastery is, then, more than an idea that informs our habits and orients our aspirations. As Dunne begins to suggest, mastery is the fate modern individuals feel destined to fulfil. In a very real sense, it is us.

The subscription to 'mastery through prediction over human and non-human nature' leads, as the Canadian thinker George Grant (1974, pp. 8–10) reminds us, to a peculiar epistemic reduction of human life where 'to know about human beings is to know about their behaviour and to be able to predict therefrom'. That the peculiarity of this reduction is so seldom remarked upon is evidence of mastery's persuasiveness as an end appropriate for human endeavours, whether they be practical or intellectual. Grant (1986) sees the dramatic development of the applied arts and sciences as a consequence of this promise to regulate the self and its relationships to others:

> The new adage of rulers and educators is that to the mastery of non-human nature must now be added mastery of ourselves. The desire for 'mastery of ourselves' (which generally means the mastery of other people) results in the proliferation of new arts and sciences directed towards human control, so that we can be shaped to live consonantly with the demands of mass society.
>
> (p. 16)

Educational administration, an uneven blend of organizational and educational theory, has moved to become, in Grant's words, one of the 'new arts and sciences directed toward human control.' As a field it has come to share the quest to discipline educational organizations by securing administrative mastery over those who inhabit them. Seeing in the emerging management sciences, especially in the early work of Herbert Simon (1976/1957), the means for generating a unified, value-free and verifiable knowledge base, educational administration sought to replicate the methods that promised to render educational settings receptive to regulative interventions. In doing so, the field, perhaps unwittingly, enclosed itself within the horizons of what may be called, as Stewart Clegg (1990) outlines, the modernist Weberian agenda:

> Representational modernism consisted in the sketching of a singular set of empirical tendencies which were imagined to be irresistible and inevitable. These were the famous rationalization of the world, the success of which would be attributed to bureaucracy as the primary mechanism of its achievement…. Organization theory is in many respects a modernist discipline par excellence, springing as it does from Weber's modernist vision of the modernist world.
>
> (p. 4)

Through the reduction of meaning to behaviour, of organizations to a set of uniform descriptors, and of leadership to technical managerialism, educational administration participated in the modernist programme to fashion an administrative practice stripped of subjectivity and impervious to circumstantial particulars. The commitment to perfect whatever technical means are needed to regulate human conduct dispassionately and uniformly has wedded educational administration's ambitions to what may be called, borrowing from Lyotard (1984), modernism's 'metanarrative' of mastery. As a consequence, educational administration has been mired in a neo-Taylorist rhetoric (Gronn, 1982) ill-suited to the imponderables characteristic of human experience.

To dwell upon the scientific regulation of educational organizations tends to make scholars and practitioners strangers to surprise and little inclined to welcome the unexpected. As Nicholas Maxwell (1984) has underscored, the transition to the putatively powerful research methodologies of management science quickens the path from data to prediction, and from prediction to control:

> First, the social sciences… develop improved theoretical knowledge of laws governing human behaviour and social systems. This knowledge then enables us to predict that if such and such human social circumstances are realized, such and such will reliably be the outcome. As a result we are in a position to develop useful *social technology*.
>
> (p. 61; emphasis added)

Finishing his thought, Maxwell makes plain that 'useful social technology' is a euphemism for a more morally problematic although equally elusive enterprise:

> But this amounts quite simply to developing techniques of human social manipulation. Built into the very enterprise of the social sciences, conceived of in this way, is the ideal of developing more effective techniques for manipulating people.
>
> (p. 61)

Maxwell emphasizes that the 'scientizing' of the human disciplines is driven by the desire to rid social behaviour of the unanticipated, the ambiguous and that which might threaten established structures of authority. When linked to Weber's

projection of irreversible organizational rationalization, it becomes clear that one aspect of this project will consist in the production of experts trained in those management techniques deemed sufficient to discipline the behaviour of others. As administration is increasingly oriented by claims of interpersonal manipulation, leadership is, in turn, reduced to the managerialist expertise needed to effect this project.

Although it is prudent to recall that Weber was led to remark ruefully about the 'iron cage of modernity' that looms menacingly at the end of the modernist techno-rational rainbow, his regret obscures more than it reveals. It does so by presuming that the 'rationalization of the world' and the 'bureaucratization' of organizations is an agenda that can in actuality be accomplished. The agenda of social prediction and control can be attempted, but experience suggests, perhaps providentially, that it is an agenda that can never be fully realized. This is hardly news.

In his book *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) puts forward a protracted and elegant argument that what he calls the Enlightenment Project made manifest in modernism is morally bankrupt. Specifically in his unforgiving critique of the quintessentially modern figure of the manager, MacIntyre argues that there is something fundamentally specious in the equation of leadership with managerialism. This speciousness follows from a preoccupation with the modernist wish to predict and control social circumstance:

> The concept of managerial effectiveness is after all one more contemporary moral fiction and perhaps the most important of them all. The dominance of the manipulative mode in our culture is not and cannot be accompanied by very much actual success in manipulation. I do not of course mean that the activities of purported experts do not have effects and that we do not suffer from those effects and suffer gravely. But the notion of social control embodied in the notion of expertise is indeed a masquerade. Our social order is in a very literal sense out of our, and indeed anyone's, control. No one is or could be in charge.
>
> (p. 107)

MacIntyre's challenge to our preoccupation with the manipulation and control of others, and the managerial expertise that would make this objective institutionally practicable strikes, as Clegg's comments suggest (see pp. 71–72), at the heart of the modernist metanarrative of mastery. In his scepticism, MacIntyre dismisses neither the very real and problematic consequences of managerial 'expertise' nor the moral repercussions of making the manipulation of behaviour and its settings a goal paramount in human affairs. Rather, he suggests that those who undertake the task of leadership must be more than technical virtuosos whose supposed knowledge is prone to dissolve upon encountering the volatile organizational realities that Greenfield (1993, pp. 53–74) described trenchantly as intersections of 'talk, chance, action, and experience'.

Martin Barlosky

THE EMERGENCE OF VALUES DISCOURSE IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

In 'The decline and fall of science in educational administration' Greenfield (1986) provided a perceptive, powerful, and still provocative critique of those who sought to develop a repertoire of value-free techniques through which organizations could be managed scientifically and, therefore, efficiently and objectively. Rather than being value-free, Greenfield demonstrated that management science itself stood resolutely, if furtively, for the values of expedience, authority and compliance. Seeing the promise of value-free inquiry as a ruse, Greenfield argued persuasively that values are inextricably part and parcel of administrative theory and practice. He warned that the technical rationalization promoted by management science would lead neither to educational improvement nor to an enhanced comprehension of administrative work. In place of the reduction of educational leadership to a politically and technically correct repertoire of administrative behaviours, Greenfield encouraged researchers and practitioners to acknowledge the organizational role played by values and to strive for better ones.

Harshly critical of Herbert Simon, whose book *Administrative Behavior* (Simon, 1976/1957) provided both a rationale and a programme for value-free decision-making within organizations, Greenfield unapologetically reintroduced the subjectivity science would extirpate. As Greenfield saw it, discussions among and between academics and practitioners can only become 'true' when the subjective and the literally unruly aspects of experience are admitted as worthy of attention. For Greenfield every administrative idea and deed is premised in a value judgment about what organizations and, ultimately, what people are for. To use metaphor, organizations and our studies of them are but the visible architecture of the beliefs, values and predispositions of those vested with power sufficient to instil practice with idea. As Greenfield tirelessly cautioned the contrary-minded majority of his colleagues, what we do in organizations and what we say about them are always axiologically telling, ideologically revealing and indicative of the allocation of power.

Excoriating Simon as the champion of all that he regarded as misleading and existentially barren in studies of administration, Greenfield was drawn to Chester Barnard, whom he regarded as a more perceptive and inclusive student of organizations. Although Barnard unabashedly endorsed the managerial culture emerging in 1930s America (see Scott, 1992), he accented the importance of the subjective goods and organizational aspirations that must be interwoven in order to secure the cooperation he viewed as essential to both individual and collective prosperity. In contradistinction to his reading of Simon, Greenfield saw in Barnard a humanistic partisan of individual experience over value-free 'fact'. Still more importantly, Greenfield saw accurately that Simon's scientific approach would ensnare less critical minds in a research agenda that would fail to deliver the promise of educational and administrative improvement while increasingly removing the field from the realities of practice.

Greenfield's focus on Barnard as a protector of 'a wisdom that derived from the experience, observation, and reflection of writers who were administrators, not scientists' (Greenfield, 1986, p. 58) fortified a position overtly sceptical of academic theories of management that either ignored or excluded the personal knowledge derived from leadership experience. As the following citation illustrates, Barnard was more than capable of articulating the moral life of organizations while ably depicting leadership as an intellectually and ethically demanding vocation of the highest order.

> 'Intellectual honesty' too often means a puritanical and disinterested acceptance of conclusions under a mere code of reasoning. Its broader and higher sense may often require subjection of all processes to honesty in purpose; and, when there are involved instruction, persuasion or leadership, which I think call for the highest manifestations of the mind in all fields, the test of character is the final test of intellect as well as of morals.
>
> (Barnard, 1948/1938, p. 322)

For Greenfield the morally sensitive Barnard, not the scientifically predisposed Simon, was the voice in the wilderness that educational administration ignored at the peril of scholarly sterility, intellectual vapidness and the impoverishment of professional practice. As Greenfield (1986) observed, by doing what Simon says:

> we have a science of administration which can deal only with facts and which does so by eliminating from its consideration all human passion, weakness, strength, conviction, hope, will, pity, frailty, altruism, courage, vice, and virtue. Simon led the science of administration down a narrow road which in its own impotence is inward-looking, self-deluding, self-defeating, and unnecessarily boring.
>
> (p. 61)

Greenfield's intellectual comrade in arms, Christopher Hodgkinson, succeeded Barnard in charting the often turbulent translation of personal and organizational values into administrative practice. In a series of perceptive writings Hodgkinson (1978, 1983, 1991, 1996) elaborated the subjective world of administrative experience in a manner that gave axiological specificity and existential vividness to Greenfield's image of administrative work. Jettisoning the pacific and self-assured argot of management science, Hodgkinson would focus upon the often agonistic lived world of administration that trades upon values in contexts rich in ambiguity and where power impels action.

Defining administration as a *praxis* that ideally requires a morally informed melding of thought and action, Hodgkinson speaks convincingly in a philosophical voice. That he can speak philosophically without sacrificing the 'real' and conflicted world in which administrators live is illustrated by two Wittgensteinesque

propositions from his book *Towards a Philosophy of Administration* (Hodgkinson, 1978):

> 1 Administration is philosophy-in-action.
>
> 1.212 Philosophy begins in the dirt.
>
> (pp. 202/204)

Although the exemplary notion of *praxis* is borrowed from Aristotle, Hodgkinson's focus upon values and power as well as his willingness to depict organizational life in terms that are neither pristine nor pleasing are clearly Nietzschean. And like Nietzsche, Hodgkinson constructs a rigorous and exacting analysis of how the highest values are too often sacrificed to expediency in social institutions. Offering the possibility of 'honour and rectitude' (Greenfield, 1991, p. 4) to administrators who engage in what is fundamentally a moral *praxis*, Hodgkinson never underestimates the odds against achieving either in modern bureaucratic organizations, which he is given to describe as 'moral primitives' (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 108ff.). That the organizations to which Hodgkinson (1991) refers are often educational institutions adds sting and point to his blunt characterization of them.

The bite of many Hodgkinsonian aphorisms like 'The term leadership is an incantation for the bewitchment of the led' (Hodgkinson, 1978, p. 219, proposition 6.4), would seem to spare his often ironic work from appropriation by those seeking an apologetic for existing patterns of administrative research and educational organization. Surprisingly, however, Hodgkinson's axiological perspective was readily coopted by many in educational administration who saw value analysis as a new way of reducing organizations to causal formulae and thereby fortifying managerial control. Quantitative researchers were quick to begin counting and tabulating the values of 'effective' practitioners; those of a qualitative bent used the emerging values discourse as a convenient medium for expressing their equation of organizational leadership with cultural change; for neo-positivists values made possible a new calculus through which administrative actions could be decoded, explained and predicted; traditionalists found in values a quick justification for their often uncritical and strident advocacy of virtue as an educational elixir. In sum, the discourse of values issued in efforts to produce a new cadre of axiological experts able to manipulate organizational realities. Such experts attempted to revivify the old wine of mastery by pouring it into the new wineskin of values.

But those who sought to exploit values as a form of axiological capital that could fund the project of organizational mastery encountered an inexorable obstacle. This obstacle consists in the very nature of human values as perpetually unfinished images of the desirable. The literally minded who seek to transmogrify Hodgkinson's discussion of values into fixed and determinate entities subject to rules of exchange continue to miss a point raised neatly by Michael Oakeshott (see Rorty, 1989):

> A morality is neither a system of general principles nor a code of rules, but a vernacular language. General principles and even rules may be elicited from it, but (like other languages) it is not the creation of grammarians; it is made by speakers. What has to be learned in a moral education is not a theorem such as that good conduct is acting fairly or being charitable, nor is it a rule such as 'always tell the truth', but how to speak the language intelligently…. It is not a device for formulating judgments about conduct or for solving so-called moral problems, but a practice in terms of which to think, to choose, to act, and to utter.
>
> (p. 58)

For Oakeshott morality is continuous with practice and loses urgency and pertinence when composed apart from it. Morality is the province of speakers more than that of grammarians, of administrators more than that of the academicians who study and profess to guide them. Morality, however we may judge it, is always and unavoidably being enacted on the 'rough ground' where life is lived and where decisions are made.

To force the axiological grammar of administrative *praxis* from above is to make the professional work of leadership a technical craft that idles the moral faculties of practitioners while providing agendas for educational change that are untested and, therefore, lacking in practical wisdom. Like the well-intended but fabulous theories constructed in the Grand Academy of Lagado, top-down attempts to engineer the moral enterprise of education – whether they originate in research institutes, government offices, or academic faculties – result in what Sarason (1990) has called 'the predictable failure of educational reform'. Such efforts misjudge the practical obstacles that can thwart the most well intentioned and formidable designs for quality improvement.

As the moral discernment of those who work in educational institutions is progressively atrophied by seemingly endless and conflicting research claims and policy dictates, findings like those offered by Elizabeth Campbell (1994) can hardly come as a surprise:

> Twenty teachers and ten principals, both elementary and secondary, from ten public school boards were interviewed in order to examine how some individuals perceive right and wrong and how, as a consequence, they act based on or in spite of their own beliefs. Although more teachers than principals were aware of moral and ethical conflicts in their professional lives, neither group was shown to be able to translate objective and fundamental moral beliefs into meaningful action.
>
> (p. 1)

Campbell's conclusion suggests that an increase in moral knowledge and axiolog§ical sophistication will not, by itself, improve the moral life of schools or the quality of school leadership. And, as Iris Murdoch (1992) states, putting value

studies at the centre of research and study in educational administration may retard virtue rather than advance it: 'There is an important difference between learning about virtue and practising it, and the former can indeed be a delusive substitute which effectively prevents the latter.' (p. 9). This problematic is compounded for those who attempt to manage virtue from afar.

AFTER MODERNISM: EPISTEMOLOGY AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

If the improvement of educational quality is resistant to both managerialism informed by regulative techniques and to administrative *praxis* at least nominally informed by values, how might we reconsider the meaning and the role of leadership in such settings? Put another way, given the insufficiency of the modernist regulative aspirations stated as either technical means or as axiological ends, how might we understand educational leadership as a concept continuous with but distinct from both management and administration? To what sort of knowledge base might we link an educational leadership that is local, sensitive to particulars, morally discerning and pragmatically efficacious? In Hodgkinson's terms, what kind of knowledge will enable educational leadership as a moral art that entails a process of continuous interpretation, rather than limit it to the technical craft of installing predetermined programmes and politically expedient remedies?

In his essay 'Postmodern epistemology of practice', which is the ninth chapter of Steiner Kvale's insightfully edited book *Psychology and Postmodernism*, Donald Polkinghorne (1992) helps us to appreciate the vital interplay between epistemology and practice. In doing so he pragmatically recasts the relationship between academic psychological researchers and practising psychotherapists in a way that brings clarity to the unproductive and troublesome divide that now separates scholars and practitioners in educational administration. Further, Polkinghorne gives reason to believe that a revaluation of the practical wisdom which enables educational leaders to respond to novel, ambiguous and controversial organizational situations may provide the beginnings of a bridge between researchers and the leaders they study.

Before examining the perspective Polkinghorne sketches, however, it is important to understand why the relationship between epistemology and practice is so important and immediate for educational administration, a discipline that is, as Mark Holmes (1986) has remarked, 'at the applied end of an applied field… concerned with the application of applied knowledge' (p. 86). Although Holmes overstates educational administration's disinterest and uninvolvement in creating knowledge, he accurately captures the degree to which the field is formed by the kinds of knowledge that it deems credible and worthy of application. The applied nature of educational administration, however, makes it more – not less – continuous with the kinds of knowledge it creates.

In initiating their extended inquiry into contesting knowledge bases in educa-

tional administration, Colin Evers and Gabriele Lakomski (1991) have made explicit what is implicit in Holmes' remark:

> Our central argument is that what epistemology counts as a satisfactory justification imposes powerful constraints on the content and structure of administrative theory. Or, in other words, the structure of justification, as specified by epistemology, determines much of the overall framework in which theorizing in administration is conducted.
>
> (p. 3)

This imposition of epistemic constraints upon administrative theory is, in turn, played out in what organizations and their leaders do:

> in noting the relevance of epistemology for administrative theory it is sufficient to observe, for our purposes, that significant differences in organizational consequences can flow from adopting divergent theories of human knowledge acquisition.
>
> (Evers and Lakomski, 1991, p. 16)

Underscoring the formative quality of what is deemed knowable, what is worth knowing, and what means are methodologically suited to develop knowledge, Evers and Lakomski foreground the centrality of epistemological considerations in a field that too often has opted to remain philosophically naive. Their message – and it is a message the importance of which cannot be overstated – is that a position of unexamined realism or willed philosophical ignorance is simply unacceptable, especially in a field that measures its capabilities by its effects upon others. While critics may question the adequacy of their resolution of the epistemic differences manifest in current debates in educational administration (see Barlosky, 1995a, 1995b; Hodgkinson, 1993), Evers and Lakomski have made it plain that we in educational administration have lost forever, and for the better, our epistemic innocence (see Barlosky, 1999).

Polkinghorne's exploration of the reciprocal relationship between epistemology and practice in psychology is especially relevant to educational administration, as the former field preceded the latter in the adoption of scientific modes and methods. We may expect, therefore, that the set of epistemic virtues Polkinghorne offers in order to close the divide between scholars and practitioners widened by the adoption of scientific conventions may have equal application in educational administration. In contradistinction to the assumptions of the scientific perspective adopted by what he calls 'academic psychology', Polkinghorne (1992, pp. 146–165) sketches an 'epistemology of practice' which counters assumptions that experience is ordered by scientifically discoverable, objective, and generalizable principles enabling prediction and control of human circumstance:

> The tacit assumptions of this epistemology of practice are: (a) there is no epistemological ground on which the indubitable truth of knowledge statements can be established; (b) a body of knowledge consists of fragments of understanding, not a system of logically integrated statements; (c) knowledge is a construction built out of cognitive schemes and embodied interactions with the environment; and (d) the test of a knowledge statement is its pragmatic usefulness in accomplishing a task, not its derivation from an approved set of methodological rules.
>
> (pp. 146–147)

Polkinghorne goes on to add 'I argue that these are postmodernist assumptions and that the psychology of practice provides a forceful illustration of the implementation of a postmodern science' (p. 147).

The pragmatic 'second science' of which Polkinghorne (1992, p. 154) speaks and which, he argues, accommodates the experiential knowledge of practitioners can only appear paradoxical in the context of the modernist assumption that knowledge is the product of methodologically correct discovery rather than a humanly made and, therefore, iterative and fallible construction. In terms that Richard Rorty (1980) has made familiar, truth is transformed in this variant science from a singular mirroring of reality into a plurality of constructions that compete to make narrative sense of often divergent experiences. The unitary, universal and permanent are replaced by the plural, the particular and the protean. To 'know' is to interpretively construct rather than to find or discover. Once again in Rorty's (1980, pp. 315–356) terms, epistemology begins to bleed into hermeneutics.

The contingent and constructed rendering of truth jeopardizes the once taken-for-granted relationship between practitioners defined as those who apply knowledge and scholar-researchers defined more prestigiously as those who discover it. If knowledge is multiplex, situationally dependent and iteratively constructed, research will not provide predetermined solutions that simply await technical implementation. On the contrary, research will supply a range of contrary ideational contexts to which practitioners may – or may not – refer eclectically as they give sense to their professional administrative experience. Experience thus precedes and is generative of the sensibleness with which it can be endowed, and it is precisely this practically grounded experience which is excluded from much theorizing in educational administration.

Polkinghorne points to a substantial body of research (Morrow-Bradley and Elliot, 1986; Barlow *et al*., 1984; Cohen *et al*., 1986) indicating that practitioners typically learn first from their professional encounters, second from oral traditions that capture practical experience, and third from professional literature written for the most part by fellow practitioners. In instances when practitioners do refer to an academic literature that typically contains contradictory research findings, selected texts are most often interpreted metaphorically and heuristically as frameworks that can help to make sense of immediate experience. That is, practice clarifies research rather than the assumed model in which research both

elucidates and defines practice. Those of us who speak with principals of schools and with presidents of colleges and universities have every reason to believe that this relationship holds among administrators of institutions at every educational level.

In his advocacy of a practitioner knowledge pragmatically sensitive to circumstance, person and institutional setting Polkinghorne is turning the established epistemological tables in a manner that would probably elicit an approving nod from Jonathan Swift. Knowledge generation is moved from locations of putative but largely unproven scholarly and policy expertise to the sites of practice and to the persons of practitioners. In the process knowledge is focused by the urgency of real situations that seldom correspond to abstractions academically sifted from raw data to suit pre-established research agendas and ideological positions. Enjoying none of the remove of their academic colleagues, administrative practitioners must develop the practical wisdom needed to meet issues that, as Wolcott (1973), Mintzberg (1973) and Giamatti (1988) document, ceaselessly impose upon their work. And while, as Polkinghorne suggests, administrative experience and the practical wisdom with which it is endowed accord with the postmodern themes of nonfoundationalism, fragmentation, interpretive construction, fallibilism, situatedness, difference and contingency, the non-normative knowledge base he develops has deeper roots in Western and Eastern philosophical traditions that amplify its sense and sensibility.

TOWARDS A NON-NORMATIVE KNOWLEDGE BASE: ARISTOTELIAN *PHRONESIS* AND TAOIST *LI*

Perhaps surprisingly, Aristotle makes a special place in his teleological metaphysics for a kind of knowledge-making that is continuous with action but which can be neither philosophically secured by general principles nor prescribed in advance of particular instances. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle addresses a range of questions concerning what sort of knowledge is needed to define the life in which human happiness may be found, and how such a good life might be actualized. With regard to the issue of determining the good, Aristotle speaks of theoretical knowledge or *theoria*. Theoretical knowledge is the abstract product of contemplation and its objects are apprehended intuitively and directly by the mind. It gives rise to permanent, universal truths like those of logic and mathematics. But as Aristotle (1985) notes, echoing Murdoch's comments (see pp. 77–78), 'the purpose of our examination is not to know what virtue is, but to become good' (p. 35). Since questions of how to enact the good 'have no fixed [and invariable answers]' (p. 35), Aristotle instructs his readers that 'agents themselves must consider in each case what the opportune action is, as doctors and navigators do' (p. 36).

In order to make such discernments, the individual must rely upon practical knowledge or practical wisdom, *phronesis*. This second form of knowledge is

unlike theoretical knowledge which is independent of the physical senses, unalloyed, and indisputable. Rather, *phronesis* emerges from human experience and is immersed in the fragmentary reality of particulars. Although *phronesis* is inflected with the fallibility that attends ordinary perception and is therefore contestable, it is the ground of all action, and hence, the only way to make the good real. Distinguishing *phronesis* from philosophical or scientific wisdom, Aristotle (1980) says:

> Practical wisdom on the other hand is concerned with things human and things about which it is possible to deliberate…. Nor is practical wisdom concerned with universals only – it must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars.
>
> (p. 146)

Aristotle adds to his definition of *phronesis* by noting that it is derived primarily from experience rather from the insight believed afforded by contemplation:

> What has been said is confirmed by the fact that while young men become geometricians and mathematicians and wise in matters like these, it is thought that a young man of practical wisdom cannot be found. The cause is that such wisdom is concerned not only with universals but with particulars, which become familiar from experience.
>
> (p. 148)

Honouring the knowledge that gradually becomes available to the experienced practitioner, Aristotle (1985) says 'these people see correctly because experience has given them their eye' (p. 166).

But what sort of situation calls for the practical wisdom Aristotle (1980) tells us is needed to discriminate between 'what ought to be done or not to be done?' (p. 151). In Aristotle's antecedent discussion of legal justice we are given a paradigmatic answer. To explain that laws made deficient by unique situational factors must be superseded by individual judgments sensitive to these singular elements, Aristotle (1980) uses the striking metaphor of a rule made from lead, the malleable nature of which allows it to take account of the irregular dimensions of particular objects:

> In fact this is the reason why all things are not determined by law, viz. that about some things it is impossible to lay down a law, so that a decree is needed. *For when the thing is indefinite the rule also is indefinite, like the leaden rule used in making the Lesbian moulding; the rule adapts itself to the shape of the stone and is not rigid*, and so too the decree is adapted to the facts.
>
> (p. 133, emphasis added)

Aristotle suggests, in concert with Swift, that those who specify rules and laws

about what to do in order to advance the good are part of the problem rather than part of the solution. In the inexact, contingent and shifting moments that create opportunities for moral choice, rules or policies as well as laws must give way to a practised sensitivity to particulars. If there is a rule, Aristotle tells us paradoxically, and perhaps with irony, it must itself be idiosyncratic: 'for when the thing is indefinite the rule also is indefinite'. It is the experienced practitioner, the possessor of practical wisdom, who must be relied upon to make the discernments requisite to action. That errors may be made is a given; that such errors will not bear the strain of their results ensures that practitioners will correct them and thereby add to their store of practical wisdom.

While I do not wish to overstate East–West parallels, a striking similarity can be found to Aristotle's thoughts cited above in the 'philosophy' associated with ancient Chinese Taoism. In this section I will rely on Alan Watts' illuminating discussion of the Taoist use of the term *li* and its relationship to wise human action. Watts (1975) initiates his discussion by selecting a quotation from Joseph Needham's (1954–74) translation of the *Huai Nan Tzu* that shares much with the selection from Aristotle immediately above, although it gives it broader spiritual compass:

> The Tao of Heaven operates mysteriously [*hsüan*] and secretly; it has no fixed shape; it follows no definite rules [*wu-tse*]; it is so great that you can never come to the end of it; it is so deep that you can never fathom it.
>
> (p. 45)

Watts tells us that the term *wu-tse* literally means 'non-law' and is consistent with Taoist cautions against becoming overly rigid through submission to fixed rules. Nevertheless the Tao, to speak paradoxically, is an orderless order that sustains all things and yet cannot be captured in conceptual nets. As Watts puts it, perhaps unknowingly tracking Aristotle's references to the limits of geometry and to the necessity of the leaden rule:

> Tao is the flowing course of nature and the universe; *li* is its principle of order which, following Needham, we can best translate as 'organic pattern'; and water is its eloquent metaphor. But we cannot explain *li* by laying it out flat, as in a geometrical diagram, or define it in the linear order of words …
>
> (p. 49)

In Taoist literature, the sage or, in Aristotelian terms, the possessor of practical wisdom, cultivates access to this 'asymmetrical, nonrepetitive, and unregimented order' (Watts, 1975, p. 46) that is self-arising, or, in Lao-tzu's words, that which happens of itself (*tzu-jan*). In exercising leadership, the sage, like the lead rule used to design the Lesbian moulding, gainfully accommodates this latent order and those who follow reap the benefits of moving with rather than against what is inherent in circumstance. The *Tao-te ching*, which is traditionally attributed to the

authorship of Lao-tzu himself, is, in addition to being a profound spiritual text, a collection of practical admonitions to those who would rule wisely (see Waley, 1958). In his translation of the twenty-ninth chapter, Watts (1975)[1] draws out the implications of the Taoist perspective for leadership:

> Those who would take over the world and manage it,
> I see that they cannot grasp it;
> for the world is a spiritual [*shen*] vessel
> and cannot be forced.
> Whoever forces it spoils it.
> Whoever grasps it loses it.
>
> (p. 52)

Both *phronesis* and *li*, then, bring us to an understanding of leadership that exceeds managerialist perspectives and the will to organizational mastery characteristic of modernist understandings of administration. Regardless of whether mastery would be effected by the use of scientifically secured technical means or axiologically confirmed ends, such uniform and objective undertakings are dissonant with the nature of leadership dictated by practical wisdom and attuned to the order implicit in circumstance. The Aristotelian and the Taoist images of leadership each require a patient and steadfast discernment among particulars and an eye conditioned by experience that is sensitive to the tacit knowledge embedded in social phenomena. In concluding his discussion of *phronesis*, David Wiggins (1980) captures why the adoption of such a non-normative, practitioner-oriented knowledge base elicits so much resistance within educational administration, where the prospect of organizational prediction and control remains intact in spite of ample evidence that it is an implausible goal, the pursuit of which hinders rather than advances educational improvement:

> I entertain the unfriendly suspicion that those who feel they *must* seek more than all this provides want a scientific theory of rationality not so much from a passion for science, even where there can be no science, but because they hope and desire, by some conceptual alchemy, to turn such a theory into a regulative or normative discipline, or into a system of rules by which to spare themselves some of the agony of thinking and all the torment of feeling and understanding that is actually involved in reasoned deliberation.
>
> (p. 237, original emphasis)

Although the field of educational administration itself may be the upshot of an aspiration to build a 'regulative or normative discipline' capable of controlling educational institutions, it is helpful to remember Rorty's (1980) philosophical encouragement that 'Professions can survive the paradigms which gave them birth' (p. 393).

A MODEST PROPOSAL

If we in educational administration are to avoid the top-down, impractical and often ill-fitting constructions described by Swift as indicative of the academy, our patterns of researching leadership and developing its practice must change. Similarly, if we are to broaden and humanize a profession that has its origins in the modernist programme of administrative mastery sustained by the prediction and control of educational personnel and events, we must seek and articulate better and more workable aspirations. The postmodern appreciation of practice summarized by Polkinghorne, the phronetic sense-making sustained by the practical wisdom described by Aristotle, and the Taoist approach to leading by attending to the order inherent in circumstance each offer promising pathways to reorienting and enlivening the study and the practice of educational administration.

With Stephen Lawton, I have authored *Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook* (Barlosky and Lawton, 1994), a 200-page publication which provides a framework through which ideas like those immediately above can be given practicable form in school settings. Drawing heavily on the work of W. Edwards Deming (1986), the American pragmatist who helped rebuild the Japanese economy after World War II, the handbook maps possibilities for school improvement in terms that have been applied successfully by several Canadian educators with whom we have consulted. The quality improvement we advocate begins with a redefinition of leadership that accords with the purposeful, intellectually demanding, and morally accountable qualities conveyed in the quotation above from Barnard's (1948/1938) *The Functions of the Executive*. As we say in the handbook, in order to become effective, educational leadership needs to transcend the old agenda of ensuring conformity by managing individuals. Rather it must recognize, evoke, and build upon the practical wisdom that is already resident within organizations:

> In drawing upon the latent expertise and insight embedded within organizations, educational leaders release the capacities and the latent talents of organizational participants. Rather than managing people through mechanisms of compliance, those in administrative positions must begin to manage a process which itself is made visible through the shared insights of individuals at every organizational level.
>
> (Barlosky and Lawton, 1994, p. 34)

To borrow from Aristotle for a final time, if we see management as consistent with *techne* or the best aspects of technical improvement and administration as an expansive *praxis* continuous with an emphasis upon the moral aspects of administration, we may see *phronesis* as descriptive of an educational leadership which is neither rule-bound nor objectively secured by policy or research. Rather, *phronesis* dignifies the practical wisdom which is gained only from experience and which is the source of leadership as a process of fallible decision-making in situations rich

in ambiguity, high in contingency, and increasingly pluralistic and contested. It offers the possibility of learning at the metaphorical ground zero where organizational push now too often comes to administrative shove. Through an appreciation of Aristotle's delineation of *phronesis*, we can come to see leadership as a work in progress in which quality improvements are part of a process of continuous, situated and collective learning that is tutored by its outcomes.

Finally, the incorporation of the ideas mentioned herein is not simply a matter of investing more heavily in one side of the scholar–practitioner dichotomy than the other. The transformation we might pursue first involves seeing the relationship between researcher and practitioner as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy, and second as a continuum that can be vivified in conversation. As the social philosopher Michael Oakeshott has argued (1962, pp. 197–199), conversation is in its essential openness constitutive of a knowledge distinct from the supposed certainties rendered in the reductive monotone that too often is 'the voice of "science"' or in the unyielding injunctions of an obdurate moralism:

> In conversation, 'facts' appear only to be resolved once more into the possibilities from which they were made; 'certainties' are shown to be combustible, not by being brought in contact with other 'certainties' or with doubts, but by being kindled by the presence of ideas of another order; approximations are revealed between notions normally remote from one another…. Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis; it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure…. Properly speaking, it is impossible in the absence of a diversity of voices: in it different universes of discourse meet, acknowledge each other and enjoy an oblique relationship which neither requires nor forecasts their being assimilated to one another.
>
> (p. 198)

If we follow the pathways suggested above, we may enter, however tentatively, a discursive space in which educational administration may be fundamentally redefined as a human discipline actualized through a continuing, underdetermined and open conversation between researchers and practitioners about the work of educational leadership and its organizational settings. That this conversation can be enlivened and enriched by the ideas discussed above is dependent upon our ability to think prudently and practically in ways that can envision more than the managerialist project to secure administrative mastery and organizational control. Perhaps we have already begun to learn whether educational administration is capable of accepting Oakeshott's invitation to the rigours of an 'unrehearsed intellectual adventure' or if it will remain a field that might rest comfortably among the disciplines that have made the Grand Academy of Lagado their home.

Notes

1 From *Tao: The Watercourse Way* by Alan Watts and Al Chung-Liang Huang, © by Mary Jane Yates Watts, Literary Executrix of the will of Alan W. Watts, deceased. Used by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc.

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6 Embedding Leadership in Task Performance

Viviane M.J. Robinson

In his recent review of research on leadership in the *Handbook of Organization Studies*, Alan Bryman (1996) writes that 'Leadership theory and research have been remarkably and surprisingly uncoupled from the more general field [organization studies] in which they are located' (p. 259). Much leadership research floats ethereally above the humdrum of organizational life, abstracted from the tasks that leaders are alleged to help others accomplish. When leadership is disconnected from tasks we pay too little attention to their structure and to the resources required to progress them. We may also misunderstand the skills and capacities involved in leadership, focusing too much on decontextualized processes of interpersonal influence and too little on substantive task-related expertise.

These are the themes I explore in this chapter. I begin with a brief review of leadership research, and show how it disconnects task performance from leadership. I then propose a way of reconnecting the two by describing leadership as exercised when ideas or acts are recognized by followers as capable of progressing tasks or problems that are important to them. The argument involves describing what it is to progress a task or problem, through an account of problems and problem-solving. Since most educational problems are solved by interacting actors and not isolated individuals, I then show how this account constrains the type of interpersonal influence process involved in leadership. Finally, I contrast this view of leadership with the recent emphasis on leadership as visionary and transformational.

THE DISCONNECTION OF TASK AND LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE

The following definition of leadership is typical of those which dominated the field until the mid-1980s: 'Leadership may be considered as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement' (Stogdill, 1950, p. 3). The inclusion of goals and goal achievement in this definition suggests that task performance is an important

aspect of leadership, but despite this acknowledgment little of the research within this rational tradition has theorized the processes that contribute to task performance. For example, in the search for the holy grail of leadership effectiveness, hundreds of studies have correlated leaders' traits and styles with task outcomes, but there is doubt about even whether the results reflect the causal impact of leaders on task performance, or the inclination of followers to attribute task outcomes to their leaders (Lakomski, 1998).

The contribution of leadership to task performance has also been clouded by the assumption that leadership is adequately studied by the study of leaders, that is, those who occupy formal leadership positions. By contrast, when leaders are identified by the effects of their acts on others, rather than by the fact of their appointment, attention is drawn to the processes by which influence is exercised, the emergence of leadership in the course of interaction, and the way different individuals exert varying influence across situations (Hosking, 1988). Furthermore, when acts of leadership are distributed across individuals, studies of leaders will capture but a small percentage of the contributions that advance the relevant tasks.

When rational approaches to leadership were overtaken by New Leadership in the mid-1980s, there was even less focus on task accomplishment. The term New Leadership, which embraces a variety of approaches including transformational, charismatic and visionary leadership, treats leaders as 'managing meaning' rather than goal achievement, and motivating followers through a variety of symbolic activities. Alan Bryman (1996) describes the common ground between the various New Leadership approaches as follows:

> Together these labels revealed a conception of the leader as someone who defines organizational reality through the articulation of a vision which is a reflection of how he or she defines an organization's mission and the values which will support it. Thus the New Leadership approach is underpinned by a depiction of leaders as managers of meaning.
>
> (p. 280)

Leaders in this approach need to be charismatic and inspirational and they need to know how to motivate followers. What knowledge they need of the work of the organization is unclear. The disconnection between task and leadership is seen in the following definition of James MacGregor Burns whose study of political leaders produced the distinction between transactional and transforming leadership – a distinction that has been very influential in educational administration literature. For Burns (1978), 'Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers' (p. 18).

On this account, leaders access resources to satisfy the motives of followers, which in the case of transactional leadership is achieved through rewards and

sanctions, and in the case of transforming leadership is achieved through the articulation of vision and values. The requisite leadership skills include the accurate reading of follower psychology, so that one knows how to motivate and inspire. Task-relevant knowledge and skill play little role in this conception, so that one gains the impression that leaders can motivate, engage and inspire regardless of task demands. If followers are motivated by task demands, then leadership through satisfaction of motives will be compatible with task performance – if not, then leadership and task performance will be disconnected. These themes remain influential, for in his 1996 review of 'New Leadership', Peter Gronn (1996) proposes that 'leading' is best defined as 'the framing of meaning and the mobilization of support for a meaningful course of action' (p. 8). While Gronn's reference to a 'course of action' implies a task dimension, his review makes clear that what is problematic is the mobilization of support, not framing the meaningful course of action. Leadership is analysed as an influence process that is disconnected from, rather than embedded in, task accomplishment.

EMBEDDED PERFORMANCE

While leadership research, or at least large portions of it, have ignored the task contexts in which leadership is exercised, the practice of leadership is inextricably woven into the fabric of task performance. The following scenario provides a typical enough picture of how school staff go about accomplishing tasks together. The question I raise about the scenario is 'What, if anything, does the scenario have to do with leadership?'

Mei, the Head of Science, is chairing a meeting in which her staff are reviewing the results of the assessment of the last unit of work. She circulated the results in advance, with notes about how to interpret them, and asked the team to think about their implications for next year's teaching of the unit. The team identifies common misunderstandings and agrees they need to develop resources which help students to overcome them. Jushan, a second year teacher, was pretty unhappy with the assessment protocol used this year, and suggests revisions which he thinks will give more recognition to students who have made an extra effort. Most of his suggestions are adopted. Lee, who teaches information technology as well as science, shows the group how the results have been processed on the computer so they can be combined with other assessments, and incorporated in reports to parents and to the Board. Several team members express nervousness about reporting to the Board so they decide to review a draft report at the next meeting.

If we were to believe some of the more popular accounts of leadership, the above scenario would not be recognised as relevant to the topic. Mei is not in the driver's seat, articulating a vision, motivating the troops or satisfying their needs. What she is doing is structuring the task, doing it, revising how it will be done next time and simultaneously completing related tasks. Her contributions articu-

late with those of others, whom she influences through her talk or actions, but Jushan and Lee also influence her. In this scenario leadership has gone underground because it is embedded in the task rather than floating above it as a meta-level commentary. I try to capture the way leadership is embedded in organizational action in the following definition:

- Leadership is exercised when ideas expressed in talk or action are recognized by others as capable of progressing tasks or problems which are important to them.

The recognition does not require a verbal endorsement from followers. Leadership is detected by its effects, that is by identifying those contributions around which other contributions are coordinated. Mei structures the task of reviewing the science results by providing guides to their interpretation and suggesting an agenda. Her staff indicate agreement with this influence attempt, by simply doing as she has suggested. Jushan makes a similar contribution, and so we see that leadership occurs wherever and whenever such contributions arise, whether or not the contributors hold formally designated leadership roles. The notion of leadership as distributed across work groups contributes to the democratization of leadership by decoupling leadership from rank and focusing attention on who is doing the work and how it gets done.

If leadership is about making contributions through actions and words that are accepted by others as progressing an important task, then we need to focus on the nature of tasks and what it is to progress them. Clarification of these issues will enable us to make progress on understanding the skills, knowledge and attitudes that might be associated with making leadership contributions. Our research will then be grounded in the detail of task contribution rather than in assessments of the personal qualities of those who are designated as leaders and who may or may not make such contributions to any given task.

TASK PERFORMANCE AS PROBLEM-SOLVING

In previous writing I have proposed an account of problems and problem-solving that I believe is useful in understanding what it is to progress a task (Robinson, 1993, 1998). It draws on the work of Thomas Nickles (1981), a philosopher of science who defines a problem as 'the demand that a goal be achieved, plus constraints on the manner in which it is achieved' (p.111).

Nickles argues that problems arise through demands that they be solved and that such demands arise within particular historical and cultural traditions. What counts as a problem changes over time and across social and cultural contexts. The shift to school self-management, with its associated emphasis on accountability, has increased the demand that schools address a number of problems of finance, property, personnel and curriculum, that were either not previously seen

as problems, or were the responsibility of central agencies. Whether these particular problems ought to be on schools' agenda raises more general questions about the political processes creating the demand that particular problems be solved. Precisely because these processes are political, the problems through which leadership is exercised are not uncontested, both in the sense of how a particular problem is formulated and in the sense of whether any particular problem ought to be on the agenda at all. It is important, therefore, that the above definition of leadership can be developed into an account that demonstrates how leadership contributes to task performance through both the emergence of particular issues as problems, and through the resolution of contested formulations of those problems that are on the agenda.

In the following, I explain Nickles's somewhat abstract account through the example of a hypothetical school trying to solve the problem of how to monitor and report on the collective achievement of students. Let us imagine that some staff in this school do not accept the problem demand, which has largely come from regulatory agencies, and other staff accept that the problem should be on the agenda, but are wary of how it may be formulated.

The problem of how to monitor collective achievement in the context of an individual school, like many problems in education, can be described as ill-structured because there is uncertainty about the information and methods needed to solve it, and about what counts as a solution (Simon, 1973). In education, such problems are controversial as well as uncertain because people develop emotional and value-based commitments to different understandings of the problem, and it is unclear whether they can be adequately reconciled. Ill-structured problems are solved by making them more well-structured, that is, in Nickles's terms, by specifying the constraints on the solution. Constraints narrow the solution alternatives by specifying the conditions that are to be satisfied. Constraints could include relevant values and beliefs, regulatory requirements, material conditions such as available financial and human resources, and other school practices with which any proposed solution must articulate. The more constraints that are specified, the more well-structured the problem, which means that there are fewer degrees of freedom available about how it may be solved, and a narrower problem space in which to search for the solution.

This account can now be applied to the example of collective assessment as follows. Imagine that the comments in Table 6.1 are a summary of the main concerns that have been raised in staff's preliminary discussions about the type of collective assessment they wish to develop. On the right hand side of the table are the positive and negative constraints on any proposed solution that are implicit in the associated staff comment. For example, the comment that the information will be used against teachers implies opposition to any assessment practices which may be used punitively; advocates of this constraint may not accept any solution if they believe that it is not possible to solve the problem without violating this constraint to an unacceptable degree. If sufficient staff shared such a view, the problem of collective assessment would remain irresolvable until this constraint

was fomulated in a more flexible manner. Alternatively, the demand for its solution could be dropped until a more trusting political climate emerged – this amounts to taking the problem off the agenda, at least for the time being.

Problems are solved by discovering or designing practices which adequately integrate the proposed constraints. For our assessment problem, this involves developing procedures which, as far as possible, provide reliable information, have utility for both classroom teaching and programme evaluation, satisfy external accountabilities, protect teachers from possible misuse of the information and are efficient.

It will be obvious to anyone familiar with current debates on collective assessment that there is considerable tension between staff's various solution requirements – indeed, some would argue that the constraints in Table 6.1 are irreconcilable. The tension inherent in this example can be appreciated by evaluating various assessment practices against the listed constraints. Achievement data that are easily aggregated and reported to external stakeholders may tell teachers that improvement is needed, but provide little diagnostic information about students' difficulties. If more detailed diagnostic data are collected, the requirement to assist classroom teachers will be better satisfied, but the efficiency constraint may then be violated to an unacceptable level. While this example may be extreme, tension between constraints is precisely what makes so many educational problems intractable, and subject to repeated reform attempts, as different stakeholders advocate new solutions which give greater weight to their preferred constraints.

The degree of tension between constraints is a function of both their formulation and the objective relationships between them. For example, if the comment that 'the Board will misinterpret the information' implies that it should not receive the information, then the problem may be irresolvable, for this constraint

Table 6.1 *Implied constraints on collective assessment*

Staff comments	*Implied constraints*
'The Board will misinterpret the information'	Accuracy of interpretation
'It must be useful for my teaching'	Useful to classroom teachers
'As Director of Curriculum, I need to know whether our programmes are effective'	Useful for programme evaluation
'We are legally required to inform the Board and the government'	Accountability to external stakeholders
'In this political climate the information will be used to further bash teachers'	Protect teachers from misuse of information
'It must be computerized to be manageable'	Efficiency

contradicts any legal requirement to provide such information. If, on the other hand, it represents a plea for accurate interpretation, then these two constraints are not incompatible, because certain sorts of reporting to the Board could reduce the risk of misinterpretation to acceptably low levels.

The process of constraint specification and integration are concurrent rather than sequential, for in attempting to integrate constraints, problem-solvers adjust their meaning, their relative weighting and their proposed solutions until they are satisfied with the degree to which they have been integrated. Satisfaction does not, of course, indicate an absolute level of integration, only that problem-solvers see the solution as good enough for now. For example, staff who are concerned that individual teachers will be held accountable for their students' results might accept a system which aggregated results across a whole year level, but not one which aggregated and reported results by class. The latter system would make it too easy, they would argue, to target allegedly under-performing teachers.

In summary, problems do not arise until there is a demand that they be solved and both the demand itself, i.e. the claim that there is a problem, and its formulation may be uncertain and contested. Problems are solved, however inadequately, when problem-solvers adopt practices which sufficiently integrate their proposed constraints on the problem. When I say 'their' constraints, I mean those they take into account, whether they reflect their own preferences or not. In other words, the constraint set proposed for a particular problem is likely to originate in both the preferences of the problem-solvers and in features of the environment controlled by others which they believe must be taken into account. Practices which solve problems have short- and long-term, intended and unintended, and positive and negative consequences. Since many such consequences are neither predicted nor predictable, the solution may subsequently be judged inadequate and trigger a new demand that the problem be re-solved (Nickles, 1981).

FROM TASK STRUCTURE TO LEADERSHIP

Most educational problems are formulated and resolved not by isolated actors, but through the coordinated understanding and action of multiple actors. Earlier, I defined leadership as exercised when ideas or actions are recognized by followers as capable of progressing tasks or problems that are important to them. Now that we have an account of what it is to progress a task, we can turn to the influence processes that promote the collective accomplishment of problem-solving. In turning to social considerations at this point, I am not outlining a two-stage theory of leadership in which problems are solved in the heads of leaders who then engage with followers in order to convince them of his or her solution. What I am doing is exploring how problem-solving constrains the social dimension of leadership activity.

Problem-solving constrains leadership by suggesting the relevant aspects of social interaction. The word 'social' rather than 'interpersonal' is deliberately

chosen, for the latter implies influence through face-to-face interaction which is only one of various ways in which influence over others may be exercised. For example, followers may value ideas that are conveyed through written descriptions, demonstrations, or that are implicit in the observed actions of others. A teacher may notice how a curriculum leader is able to use individual assessment records to give teachers useful feedback about particular students, and to use those same records, along with those of the remaining children at that level, to evaluate the teaching programme. Leadership is exercised in this case, not because the teacher holds the position of curriculum leader, but because her assessment practice shifts her colleague's belief that information collected for the purpose of programme evaluation cannot provide useful information about individual students.

Some clues to the nature of the influence processes that constitute leadership are found in the earlier definition of leadership as 'exercised when ideas expressed in talk or action are recognized by others as capable of progressing tasks or problems which are important to them'. First , leadership is identified by the reaction of followers, not, in the first instance, by the position, character or style of particular individuals. The latter type of investigation becomes useful when it focuses on those who have been independently identified, through the reaction of others, as making more than the usual number of contributions. Second, the influence is accepted because the ideas and actions are attractive, not because of coercion, fear or a sense of duty or obligation (Fay, 1987). The basis of the attraction is the belief, which may or may not turn out to be true, that the contribution will progress the task or problem in a manner consistent with one's own understanding of it. This means that others sense an alignment between the values and interests through which they understand the problem, and those implicit in the contribution. Or, to put it more technically, the contribution is accepted, because it incorporates and gives appropriate weighting to those constraints which are important to followers.

THE PROCESSES OF LEADERSHIP

What knowledge and skills are involved in influencing others through making contributions that are recognized as progressing relevant tasks or problems?

Gaining and utilizing knowledge relevant to the task or problem

Experience with similar problems and tasks provides information about the constraints that may be relevant, their inter-relationships, and the possibilities for their integration. The deeper one's knowledge of a problem's constraints, the more possibilities open up about how they may be integrated because they are understood at the level of underlying principle rather than surface detail. To return to our former assessment example, whether or not school-wide assessment practices

can be informative for teaching as well as management purposes, and still be efficient, depends on the subtle detail of their design. Staff who have a superficial rather than a detailed knowledge of assessment are unlikely to recognize or make the distinctions needed to craft practices that can satisfy all three requirements.

People with prior relevant experience are more likely to anticipate unintended consequences of certain patterns of constraint satisfaction, to accept more complex constraint sets because they are more confident of their integration, and to avoid crafting constraints in ways that set up opposition between them. Like expert problem-solvers, their experience with similar tasks enables them to perceive a possible structure through the detail of the initially ill-structured problem (Chi, *et al*., 1982).

Skills in constraint integration

Whilst this process is closely related to that of gaining and utilizing task-specific knowledge, it is treated separately, for it is possible to influence others' understanding of specific constraints without contributing to the process of their integration. Indeed, partisan leadership achieves just that, by emphasizing the importance of one aspect of a problem while neglecting, if not opposing, other dimensions or perspectives. Integrating constraints requires relevant knowledge, attitudes and skill. Dewey's (1922) notion of imaginative deliberation captures what is involved:

> The aim in deliberation should be to devise an action in which all [competing tendencies] are fulfilled, not indeed in their original form but in a 'sublimated' fashion, that is, in a way which modified the original direction of each by reducing it to a component along with others in an action of transformed quality.
>
> (p. 194)

The competing tendencies, or constraints, are fulfilled, not by crass compromise or trade-offs between them, but by understanding their underlying principles and values so that more possibilities are revealed about how they may be satisfied. Inseparable from this knowledge is an attitude of commitment to the whole problem, which motivates problem-solvers to search for solutions that as far as possible satisfy the whole constraint set rather than maximize those they initially favoured. Such integrative contributions are more likely to be made by those who are skilled at recognizing and creating common ground, than by those who more readily perceive conflict and opposition.

Gaining and utilizing knowledge of actual or potential followers

When actors know what is important to potential followers, they are more likely to craft ideas and actions in ways that are recognized as contributions, not simply

because they are trying to 'win them over', but because they have learned more about what the problem involves. Because this knowledge is contextualized in terms of particular tasks or issues, it is not necessarily gained by what is sometimes described as 'getting to know', or 'getting alongside' others. Someone in a formal leadership position may not have such knowledge, despite friendships and years of shared experience, because they have assumed that they know what is important, or because they have not had an opportunity to learn how others understand a particular problem.

Hosking (1988) describes how knowledge of others' interests is gained through networking – the process of making contacts and building social relationships. Networking promotes collective problem-solving through learning what is important to others and building relationships which can be channels for influence.

Ideas and actions may gain recognition from groups that have had no contact with their originator because understandings gained from engagement with similar groups are widely applicable. Leadership is thus always social (confirmed by the response of a follower) without being necessarily interpersonal (it does not always occur in a face-to-face context).

Like all of the processes described in this section, utilizing knowledge of followers implies both cognitive and attitudinal dimensions. Gaining knowledge of how others frame problems implies that one cares about others, especially when their beliefs and values differ from one's own. Respect for difference produces ideas and acts that take into account the interests and values that others bring to the problem, so, as a result, more people with initially different positions will identify with the resulting problem formulation. Thus gaining knowledge of followers increases the likelihood of being influential through negotiating a problem formulation that is sufficiently shared to allow a solution to be reached.

In summary, I have suggested three leadership processes that increase the likelihood of making contributions that others recognize as progressing problems that are important to them. Two of those processes, gaining relevant knowledge and integrating constraints, emphasize the role of task expertise in leadership, and the role of experience in gaining such expertise. The remaining one, gaining knowledge of followers, recognizes the contested and political nature of educational problem-solving and the value of an empathic and respectful understanding of the differing interests and values that inform alternative problem formulations.

LEADERSHIP, VISION AND TASK PERFORMANCE

When leadership is embedded in task performance, it becomes more mundane and less dramatic than portrayed by those authors who write of leaders as inspiring and transforming followers through their vision for the organization (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Senge, 1990). What are we to make of this popular conception of what it is to lead? Do these leadership attributions bear any relationship to the actual work of leadership as we have described it here?

The articulation of a vision draws attention to what is important and what is important ought to shape the way ill-structured problems are formulated. A vision expresses those constraints that are intended to guide all organizational problem-solving and if this is achieved, there will be overlaps between the constraint structures of many organizational problems. Let us say that 'serving its community' is part of the vision articulated by a school leader. This espoused constraint shapes the school's theory-in-use to the extent that it is incorporated within the constraint structure that informs relevant school practices (Argyris, 1982; Argyris and Schön, 1996). In the assessment example referred to earlier, this 'vision' would require dialogue with parents about the type of assessment information they seek, and sufficient weighting of their preferences to influence the eventual problem solution. Vision becomes meaningful when it makes a difference by ruling in some alternative actions and ruling out others.

Vision gets a bad name when it is represented in words, rather than in words and deeds. Some words cannot be represented in deeds, because the words do not recognize the constraints that will determine the deeds regardless of what the new words are. That is why Karl Weick (1993), who has made a brilliant career out of turning things on their head, advises leaders that rather than learn how to 'walk the talk' they should learn to 'talk the walk'. Workable visions are developed by those whose intimate knowledge of the past makes them wise about what can be accomplished in the future, rather than by those who engage in elaborate planning disconnected from evaluation of current practice.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

If task-relevant expertise is critical to the resolution of complex educational problems, then leadership that accesses expertise, wherever it lies, makes sense. The phrase 'wherever it lies' requires careful consideration, however, for expertise lies in the tools and resources that are the products of previous problem-solving efforts, as well as in the heads of individuals. These resources lie both within individual self-managing schools and in the wider educational environment. One of the mistakes that may be made in the move to school self management is to misunderstand how the problem-solving capacity of individual schools is partly dependent on the capacity of the system as a whole (Hutchins, 1995). For example, the capacity of a school to grapple with the problem of designing school-wide assessment policies and procedures is dependent on the resources available in the wider educational environment. While each school must solve the problem for itself, this does not mean that each one should start afresh. The state has a leadership role in supporting school self-management, not just by increasing the demand that certain problems be solved, as it has done in the case of school-wide assessment in numerous OECD countries, but also by offering a menu of resources, including a variety of solution possibilities. Such solution possibilities increase confidence that the problem is soluble, provide a concrete reference

point against which envisaged threats and opportunities can be assessed, and provide a basis from which schools can formulate their own solutions.

If leadership is linked to task-relevant expertise, then is there such a thing as generic leadership? When leadership is disconnected from task performance it is reduced to a decontextualized interpersonal influence process which lends itself to generic analysis. It may be the case that some people make contributions which are recognized as progressing a wide range of tasks, but the basis of their apparently generic leadership is their wide ranging substantive expertise. If I am right about this, we should be wary of claims that there is little difference between managing a school and a supermarket. My proposal of a theory of a problem and problem-solving should not provide comfort to advocates of generic leadership, for while that theory identifies a generic problem structure, it makes clear that fleshing out the structure to formulate and solve any particular problem requires task-specific knowledge.

The more one embeds leadership in task performance the more it disappears from view – which raises the question of whether the concept is needed at all (Mintzberg, 1998; Ogawa and Bossert, 1995). Is it possible that leadership research is marginal to the wider field of organization studies because organizational action can be explained without appealing to the concept? This question deserves a paper in itself, but here are some initial thoughts. Leadership disappears when tasks are well-structured, because the knowledge that progresses the task has been structured into the technologies and routines that are involved in its completion. When tasks are well-structured, their solutions are known, so the problem is solved automatically rather than through conscious deliberation. It is the conversion of ill-structured to well-structured problems that requires leadership, because the routines that would otherwise coordinate action have not yet been devised. Over time, well-structured problems may return to being ill-structured as changed circumstances create a demand that the problem be re-solved. As discussed in the earlier example, the science staff had solved the problem of how to assess the science unit, but became dissatisfied with their solution as they learned more about the pattern of grades it generated. The assessment problem then became more ill-structured, and leadership more visible, as team members contributed to its reformulation.

As schools become more self-managing, they encounter dozens of ill-structured problems, ranging from property maintenance to personnel management. The resolution of these problems provides countless opportunities for leadership from administrators, parents, teachers and students themselves. One of the jobs of leaders is to make such leadership opportunities accessible to all those who have or would wish to develop expertise which is relevant to the formulation and resolution of these problems.

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7 Knowing How to Lead

Theoretical Reflections on Inference to the Best Training

Colin W. Evers

The widespread adoption of school-based management (SBM) models of schools and systems administration raises many issues to do with the training of school leaders who can operate effectively in these environments. In this chapter I explore some theoretical issues surrounding the task of researching relationships between SBM and student outcomes, the role of the principal, and the question of what training might be appropriate for raising levels of student learning achievements. These theoretical issues concern what we need to know in order to make reasonable inferences about what can be done to improve schools.

Such an exploration might, at first glance, seem unnecessary. The presence of clear cut empirical results on these, and other, matters can sometimes function as a disincentive to further conceptual and methodological inquiry, and you would think that in the midst of all the accompanying rhetoric about school improvement, school effectiveness, accountability, quality schooling and quality assurance, there would be an obvious link between, on the one hand, adopting a particular kind of school administration, and on the other hand, seeing a change in key indicators of school effectiveness (like student learning outcomes). However, when it comes to SBM, this is not so. For example, in an analysis of eighty-three empirical studies of SBM reported between 1985 and 1995, with most from the later period, Ken Leithwood and Teresa Menzies (1998) had this to say:

> there is virtually no firm, research-based knowledge about the direct or indirect effects of SBM on students. All claims that there is likely to be some sort of payoff for students must be reconsidered given the lack of research-based support…. There is an awesome gap between the rhetoric and the reality of SBM's contribution to student growth, especially in the light of the widespread advocacy of SBM.
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> (p. 340)

Perhaps this inferred ineffectiveness of SBM in promoting clear improvements in student learning was due to the role played by principals in its implementation, a possibility suggested by Leithwood and Menzies (1998, p. 341). Seeking reassurance in the empirical literature that principals do indeed have a role in school

effectiveness, one naturally turns to the writings of Philip Hallinger. In a review of some forty empirical studies reported over the period from 1980 to 1995, Hallinger and Heck (1996) summed up as follows: 'Despite the optimistic perspective assumed by many writers in the field of principal effectiveness, closer inspection of individual studies has disclosed a need for considerable caution.' (p. 37).

Hallinger and Heck's analysis is complex but in essence the need for caution stems from two factors. First, evidence of principal effectiveness tended to be restricted to those studies whose research design permitted some analysis of the statistical structure of hypothesized causal chains with certain intervening variables. That is, studies reporting on the direct effects of principal effectiveness were disappointing, while there was better news when things in the middle of the causal chain were looked at. In general, it seems that principals make a difference by influencing certain internal school processes that are in turn associated with improving student learning. Second, the theoretical richness of concepts of leadership is fundamental to the construction of any worthwhile empirical research design. This is because identical observable principal (and others') behaviours can be described in different, causally non-equivalent ways. Having a theoretically rich conceptual structure is therefore crucial for identifying patterns implying trajectories of principal influence.

In what follows, I want to analyse more closely these sentiments by identifying and commenting upon a number of theoretical and methodological areas that require substantial development before we can claim to possess a really good understanding of the dynamics of school processes, or even of the relationship between leadership and outcomes.

STATISTICS AND THEORY

Since many studies designed to find out about what happens in schools, or what affects schools, employ a raft of simple to complex statistical analyses, I shall begin with an issue, raised in another context, by Paul Meehl (1970). It applies directly to the interpretation of studies conducted for intervention, or improvement purposes. Research-based interventions are meant to change the material circumstances reflected in the statistics forming the evidential case for making the interventions in the first place. That is, an intervention, if successful, will most likely alter the statistical structure of the situation used to justify the intervention. Although there is nothing methodologically odd about this arrangement, it does mean that any research used for these purposes must be robust enough to sustain counterfactuals. Now a counterfactual has the appearance of a special 'if…then…' statement of the form: 'if, contrary to what actually happens, we bring about X (or X occurs), then Y will occur'. Counterfactuals are extremely common in the fabric of discourse. Here are some examples: 'if the budget had not been cut, then we would have been given a replacement teacher'; 'if the school were in a more wealthy neighbourhood, then it would attract more able students'; 'if the principal knew more about leadership,

then the students' learning environment would be much better'. Methodologically, the capacity to sustain a counterfactual conclusion marks out the difference between a statistical regularity and a cause. Thus, to use an example of Bertrand Russell's, let us suppose that as a matter of fact, when the factory hooter sounds at 5.00p.m. in London, then the factory workers in Birmingham finish work. Although this may occur with 100 per cent regularity, such a regularity does not sustain the relevant counterfactual, namely, that if the factory hooter failed to sound in London then the Birmingham workers would not knock off.

Empirical research, where it has the goal of discerning non-randomness in the flux of phenomena, does not often face an immediate test of the regularity/cause distinction. But research that provides the basis for interventions needs to fund counterfactuals right from the beginning. Unfortunately, as everyone knows, this is a distinction that is theoretically motivated, outrunning the resources of an inferential process that can provide evidence only up to the level of claims to regularity. How, then, are we to move from evidence of regularities to conclusions about causes? One approach, albeit negative, is to test the regularities in counterfactual situations, perhaps by conducting interventions or by making proposed improvements, to see if the hypothesized outcomes actually occur, or whether, on the other hand, the statistics are picking up accidental, or coincidental, or, in the terminology I favour, superficial connections. The main trouble with this approach is that it is a fairly extravagant way of testing a claim. Given that the entire pattern of regularities can be locking onto superficial connections, the implementation of a public policy on school improvement, or even a restricted pilot programme, can be an expensive, large-scale business. Moreover, pilot programmes may fail to produce generalizable results precisely because of features that distinguish them as pilot programmes. The School Management Initiative, commenced in limited form in Hong Kong in 1991 with the involvement of twenty-one schools, is a case in point. Its sheer exceptionality, in a surrounding sea of regular system-wide practices, contributed significantly to difficulties in implementation. For example, there was a lack of compensating adjustments to teacher workloads reinforced by familiar expectations of what teachers normally do, and a lack of support for parents that continued the norm of negligible involvement (see Wong, 1996, p. 528).

Methodologically, it would be nice to have some way of marking out, in advance, those regularities that express causal connections among events from those that do not. The approach I would counsel is to enrich one's inferential resources beyond mere empirical adequacy. Basically, this involves seeing the positing of causal relations as an outcome of what is known as 'inference to the best explanation'. An inference to the best explanation uses a full range of criteria for theory appraisal to make judgments about, for example, what exists, what causes what, what explains what, and more controversially, what is the right thing to do (see Harman, 1986, pp. 65–75; Thagard, 1992, pp. 62–102). Here's how it works. Let us suppose that we have a perfect correlation between events of type X occurring and events of type Y occurring, where the Xs might be flashes

of lightning, or London factory hooters sounding, and the Ys might be the sound of thunder or workers knocking off in Birmingham. Now, saying that 'X causes Y' is an inference to the best explanation, amounts to saying that 'X causes Y' is part of the most coherent account we can give of the relationship between X and Y. Such an account can be regarded as a theory that enjoys, more than any other theory, the virtues of coherence.

The theoretical virtues of coherence include empirical adequacy, which is simply the requirement to be in accord with empirical data, and a cluster of familiar and widely acknowledged 'superempirical' features of theory that include consistency, comprehensiveness, simplicity, and explanatory unity (see Evers, 1999, pp. 272–275; Evers and Lakomski, 1991, pp. 37–44; 2000, pp. 1–8). Although I do not propose to elaborate these virtues here (except by way of example later on) I do want to emphasize an obvious corollary. The results of empirical research admit of sound interpretation for intervention and improvement purposes only within the context of a fairly elaborated and sophisticated theoretical framework. The more effort that goes into the construction of a theory of schooling, and its overlapping constituent components to do with learning, leadership, pedagogy, staff development and all the other internally impacting school processes that affect outcomes, the more plausible can be the inferences made from data concerning what is to be done to bring about change.

To give a simple example, consider some of the empirical findings concerning the influence of leadership effects on student outcomes (see Leithwood and Jantzi, in press, for an overview). By the identification of suitable variables, studies typically attempt to determine what accounts for the amount of variation in outcomes by looking for correlations with variation in these other variables. The results, though controversial, suggest that leadership effects account for a relatively small amount of outcome variation. It is tempting to conclude that leadership does not have a major place in outcomes-oriented reform. Tempting, but wrong. A statistical snapshot of current practice will not give the amount of theoretically possible variation in leader behaviours, only the actual amount. And if most school principals are exercising only a very limited number of possible courses of action, then that will depress the size of the effect. But reform needs to explore the envelope of possibility, and that means having some reliable notion of what can be achieved. Hallinger and Heck (1996) are entirely correct to champion the importance of theory building in effectiveness studies.

If this preliminary understanding of the relationship between theory and data is correct, we can characterize the process of research in a very general way. Preeminently theory comes first, shaping the nature of empirical inquiry, providing meaning to the sorts of variables postulated and tentatively suggesting relationships among them and the kind of data that would be needed for testing these relationships. The results of inquiry are then fed back for further theorizing, with the aim of producing the most coherent account of phenomena. Since feedback will most often generate suggestions for further inquiry, the process may continue as an ongoing cycle of learning.

THEORY AND LEARNING TO LEAD

Inferential difficulties in attempting to make interventions based on prior-established regularities spill over into specific areas of intervention. Here, I propose to dwell on how they affect what we can infer about the beneficial effects of principal training programmes. I begin with an example, chosen to illustrate the point that even when all the data are in, sometimes no amount of theorizing can resolve an issue, or settle an interpretation of the merits of a proposed intervention. Consider the following two counterfactuals (adapted from Quine, 1960, p. 222) that hint at the leadership secrets of Julius Caesar:

1 If the commander of US forces in the Vietnam war had adopted Caesar's methods, he would have used the atom bomb.
2 If the commander of US forces in the Vietnam war had adopted Caesar's methods, he would have used catapults.

Deciding which of these is true is a matter of deciding how to extrapolate what is known of Julius Caesar and his methods into a context at two thousand years' remove. One can easily see the temptation to choose the first. But how much of a person's knowledge, beliefs, values and character, shaped by the exigencies of life in the first century BC can be held constant in a counterfactual transfer to the near present? In what sense would Caesar continue to remain the same person who wrote the *War Commentaries* if the contents of his mind were gradually and systematically replaced with ideas of more recent vintage? The problem in answering these questions is not so much a lack of information. Rather, the problem is that there is no clear way of specifying what would even count as a correct answer; it 'is an idiom for which we cannot hope to find a satisfactory general substitute in realistic terms…' (Quine, 1960, p. 222).

Interestingly, although the above example was extreme, this same argument can be applied to leadership counterfactuals closer to today's intellectual commerce in school reform. The results are less drastic, but still signal the need for a new tack. Consider a recipe for improving student learning outcomes (or some other desirable outcome) that posits the importance of a particular form of leadership training: studying the example of other school leaders. Thus, we might entertain the proposition:

3 If the principal of the school had adopted the methods of Sir James Darling (a well-known principal of a well-known Australian school – see Gronn, 1999, pp. 94–104) students would have learned more.

Well, how would anyone ever know? Two lines of inquiry seem plausible. One might be to engage in a detailed study of the contextual and historical minutae surrounding Sir James's long tenure of leadership. The problem, of course, is that at this level of particularity, it is hard to avoid making reference to the equivalent

of the catapults – methods of leadership significantly embedded in issues, events, practices and policies laden with circumstantial uniqueness. For these methods, where obviously successful, may owe that success to the specifics of milieu, culture and the spirit of the times. Knowing whether that is the case, and also knowing what can be carried over as sound advice to today's principals, would require a very good account of the causal push and pull of administrative life in both contexts, no mean theoretical achievement but sadly, one that is not presently at hand.

A second line of inquiry would be to tilt towards generality, perhaps employing categories of description and terms of explanation drawn from theorizing present concerns in the hope of detecting relevant causal isomorphisms in other contexts. For example, it seems plausible to suppose that the causal structure of human motivation is relatively invariant over time and place, at least sufficiently so to permit, say, a pattern of Machiavellian manipulation to be identifiable beyond the specifics of threats, desires and misrepresentations. To use some useful jargon, we might say that the outcomes of agency in one situation can be used to predict the outcomes of agency in another situation if the situations share enough structural similarities (or are causally isomorphic in the required way). On one reading of the work of Ribbins (see p. 12 ff.) a methodological combination of ethnography and biography should be helpful in determining the truth of (3). Admittedly, the forces of methodology line up pretty solidly in favour of particularity and hence favour the uniqueness of context. However, Gronn and Ribbins (1996, p. 465) do see a way of discerning general structure in all the detail. The key, following Seddon (1994), is to focus on relational aspects of context.

To see how to appeal to the relational works as a way of extracting relevant advice for principals from a study of the working lives of other principals, consider a parallel example:

4 If Smith, the parent of the child Sam, had adopted the methods of Jones (a well-known exemplary parent of Jean) the child would not be in so much trouble with the law.

Although Smith and Jones are entirely different people, they have in common the relational property of being a parent. That is 'Smith is the parent of Sam' is relationally equivalent to 'Jones is the parent of Jean', which appears sufficient for establishing an isomorphism strong enough to defend the truth (or falsehood) of (4). Being a parent comes with enough relational structure to make exemplars worth modelling despite the multitude of individually distinct ways of actually carrying out the role. And so, the argument runs, is being a leader, which is actually best understood as a leader–follower relationship. If, for example, Sir James's success in being a principal owed much to his skill in dealing with subordinates, and if the relational features of subordination are fairly similar in different settings, then it seems we can make a case for at least one type of useful principal training – the direct use of biography.

I think that Gronn and Ribbins (1996) are rightly cautious about pushing this argument too far. At most they have focused on the rather abstract relational notion of a career trajectory for school leaders, notably the idea that such a career can be analysed in terms of distinct but sequentially-related stages. A relational analysis of leadership may look like it can deliver the sort of causal story required to underwrite useful general counterfactuals encountered in considering reforms based on training, but care needs to be exercised with regard to an important distinction. Many features of relational roles are defined constitutively, which means that they are the result of a system of rules, usually with some legal or contractually-specified arrangements. At this level, the difference between being a principal or not being a principal is a matter of whether one has signed a contract with an employer that sets out the terms and conditions of employment. Because these contractual arrangements are relatively similar across variations in employer, school, organizational configuration, students, system, country, and the like, they appear as appropriate axes for generalization. And so they are, but not in the required way. For the whole point about effectiveness is what a person achieves within the constitutively defined terms of the job – otherwise every incumbent would be equally effective. Here is where the differences in causes, in how one acts and in the responses of others, matter most. Those influenced by the work of Anthony Giddens (e.g. 1979, 1984) where his rule-based theory of discourse functions massively to extend the domain of the constitutive, are apt to blur this distinction and to underestimate the importance of the task of establishing suitable causal regularities.

In view of these difficulties, I would recommend using biography, in all its particularity, as a prompt to the critical imagination of those being instructed, rather than as a source of directly applicable lessons. (And I think that Ribbins and Gronn would agree.) Of course, more remains to be said about training the critical imagination. An additional reason for being less direct in learning to lead from the lives of others is that the statement (3) posits the principal adopting 'the methods of…'. Since performing an exact copy of the methods of another would be too burdensome, even under conditions of causal isomorphism, we leave room for interpretation and judgments of contextual appropriateness. Adoption includes adaptation, which is a cognition laden process. Note that the question of knowing how a person readjusts their cognitive economy under the pressure of incorporating the results of learning from other sources is logically of a piece with the question of knowing how Caesar's view of warfare might be construed under the pressure of incorporating recent counterfactual circumstances into his hypothesized first century BC cognitive economy.

Another source of knowledge on training principals to best take advantage of SBM conditions is task analysis. Essentially, this involves conducting a close analysis of what school leaders actually do, noting the kinds of competencies they are required to demonstrate, and then identifying areas of training that would contribute to competent performance. The Australian Principals' Centre, for example, has identified twenty leadership competencies as important –

things like 'managing conflict' or 'personal awareness' or 'team building'. Moreover, there is obvious merit in this approach where principal competencies can be specified in a clear and relatively specific way. Putting matters into a counterfactual, we would say:

5 If the principal had been trained to perform the following (herein enumerated) tasks required by the job, then the students would have learned more.

But can the required competencies be specified in a clear way? Well, they probably can if they are read off in all their particularity from existing practices. Unfortunately, as we have seen, the evidence is ambiguous as to whether what school leaders have been doing under conditions of SBM is really good enough, at least in the sense of leading to obvious school performance gains. And if this is so then we end up training for school maintenance rather than school improvement. We train for running the system rather than making it produce better outcomes. Leadership training should certainly include maintenance elements, but it should also include more. But what more?

If we are concerned about what principals can do to improve learning, given that most planned student learning takes place within the classroom, we want to know what precisely are the variables, or factors, or processes, within the organization of schools that provide strong antecedent causal support for these more direct learning activities – something that much of the current research in the area is trying to figure out. It seems, though, that the more sensitive to intervening variables sophisticated models become, the more diffuse these variables appear to be. For example, Hallinger and Heck's (1996, p. 38) candidates from the literature included school policy, norms, goal consensus and school mission, while Cynthia Uline and her co-workers identified matters such as 'Teacher Trust in Colleagues', 'Teacher Trust in the Principal' and 'School Health'. (Uline, *et al*., 1998, p. 469). This is bad news for a competency approach to training because it ends up doing the opposite of what a focus on competencies was supposed to do: it detaches the specification of training tasks from the analysis of job requirements. The diffuse but vital skills of being able to improve morale, develop consensus, elaborate acceptable norms, goals and policies, and create trusting collegial relationships, are the sorts of skills embedded in holistically construed abilities that are not easily partitioned off into specific job-related training modules. We can certainly generalize job related tasks and insert their descriptions into the counterfactual (5), but then the displaced uncertainty will settle on knowing whether the required training has ever been accomplished.

A third major perspective on principal training, in addition to biography and competencies, is what we can call the 'knowledge base' approach, the best known example of which was initiated in 1989 by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, a US consortium comprised of ten national educational administration related organizations. (See Donmoyer, Imber and Scheurich, 1995, p. 1, 12.) They conceived the training task to demand the development of a

common core of knowledge that would represent the results of the best research in the field. With seven areas of relevant educational specialization identified by the National Policy Board – namely, social and cultural influences, teaching and learning processes, organizational studies, leadership and management, policy and political studies, legal and ethical matters, and economic and financial dimensions – the challenge was taken up by the University Council for Educational Administration, which commenced a ten-year study to identify 'the knowledge essential for school leaders to solve critical contemporary problems of practice' (Donmoyer, Imber and Scheurich, 1995, pp. 1–2).

Presumably, if this approach works out, it will support the following counterfactual:

6 If the principal had adopted relevant and appropriate aspects of the knowledge base, then the students would have learned more.

Regardless of how worthwhile the project appeared at inception, it is now widely held to be flawed, with three primary sets of reasons discernable in the literature. First, there is substantial methodological pluralism in the field, sufficient at any rate seriously to compromise belief in a single unitary body of established truths. As a consequence of the paradigms debate in educational research, there is a prevalent assumption that the very recognition of a body of claims to knowledge is sensitive to the prior acceptance of one or another of the paradigms of research as a basis for knowledge justification. Where a research paradigm is thought to be unacceptable, then so too is the knowledge justified by that paradigm (unless it can be defended in some other way). Second, the field enjoys a stubborn theoretical diversity that persists even within so-called paradigms. However, the presence of equally well-defended but orthogonal theories sits ill with the goals of a knowledge base. Finally, from the perspective of postmodernism, which continues its intrusions into educational administration, the whole enterprise of a knowledge base fails to survive a rejection of the categories of justification and truth.

While I think that the sceptical assertions of postmodernism are unwarranted (see Evers and Lakomski, 1996, pp. 262–270) there can be little doubt that all but a handful of candidate claims figuring in a knowledge base of the field would be contested. Nevertheless, this seems to be more the result of administration being a social science than of any intrinsic methodological or substantive weaknesses in the field. In line with previously canvassed concerns, my own worry with the counterfactual expressed by (6) is dealing with the particularity/generality nexus. The problem is hidden in the words 'relevant and appropriate'. Either the claims in the knowledge base are heavily context-dependent or they are not. If the former, then we need to appeal to additional antecedent theory to discern their relevance and applicability to all the other contexts for which they may be sought to throw light. If the latter, then we are still faced with the same issue; discerning the relevance and applicability of the general to the particular. A regress beyond the knowledge base threatens whenever it is expected to do work in administrator training programmes.

LEADING AS CRITICAL LEARNING

As has emerged from our discussion so far, a curious paradox invests the matter of leadership training for effective intervention and school improvement. For as Robinson (see p. 90 ff.) suggests, in as much as problems are well-structured and admit of the ready application of sound theory, they are least likely to be the problems of leadership. They stand the best chance of being transformed into issues resolvable by lower level administrative procedures. In as much as problems resist such transformation, however, our knowledge for dealing with them is disappointingly fallible, incomplete and contested. Unfortunately, the problems and issues that fall into this second category are precisely the ones that most concern the intervening variables that connect up what principals do on the one hand, with posited effective school outcomes on the other.

This state of affairs implies the need for a different approach to leadership training, though one that currently requires systematic and sustained development (see Evers and Lakomski, 2000, pp. 57–72, 121–140, for a start). In essence, leadership training should have as its main focus the goal of promoting learning. While there is valuable substantive knowledge of administrative theory and practice that can be incorporated into training, that knowledge is modest and appears mainly to serve the requirements of system maintenance rather than improvement. What is required is for leaders to function as researchers, or critical learners with the goal of developing their own most coherent account of how their organization works and what it should be doing.

In pursuing this model, two aspects of any account of intelligent social practice need to be accommodated. First, knowledge distributed through an organization will far exceed the knowledge contained in the head of any one individual. Indeed, the accomplishment of most organizational tasks requires the coordinated application of action from individuals each with their own bits of partially complementary knowledge. Nevertheless, arguments for the fallibility and limited nature of knowledge also apply to the organized whole, which means that it is not enough to develop powerful retrieval systems. Rather, there is merit in organizations themselves being reconfigured for critical learning. There is a voluminous literature on learning organizations, most of it inspired by the work of Argyris and Schön (for example, Argyris, 1990; Argyris and Schön, 1978, 1996). In that literature, the primary focus is on correcting error by incorporating feedback loops into organizational designs. Ideally, error occurring in the normal flow of organizational life should be picked up by noting any mismatches between expectation and the observed consequences of organizational outcomes. Despite the apparent simplicity of this formulation, a methodological tension prevails between the importance attached to effective decision-making versus error elimination. Organizational structures that support one are not optimal for supporting the other (see Evers, 2000a; Hutchins, 1995, pp. 239–262). My choice of the expression ‘critical learning’ is to emphasize that in obviously knowledge-intensive worksites, such as schools and universities, where there is a premium on error

elimination, a more aggressive approach needs to be promoted for catching error. That approach involves the active testing of ideas against hard cases, and the development of a supporting, innovative and experimental organizational framework for promoting the growth of knowledge.

Second, any theorizing of intelligent social practice needs to give some account of that continent of non-symbolic practical knowledge that underwrites the vast bulk of practical professional skilled performance. Traditional views of theory as a body of linguistically expressed propositions are ill-suited to providing good models of the dynamics of practical knowledge acquisition, revision, rejection or improvement. The best candidates, in my view, are neural network models of cognition. Nevertheless, their application to explaining human knowledge representation is still in its infancy (but see Evers and Lakomski, 2000; Evers, 2000b, for an introduction to these ideas and their application).

Early and late I have noted that what everyone would like to possess is a valid causal model of schooling that connects up what a school leader does, with what happens. Then we could train with some confidence for those leadership tasks that produced improvements. But because we are such a long way from having a good understanding of these matters I am suggesting that this task be distributed to all places where such understandings are of most importance and that those places become participants in acquiring that knowledge for themselves. Indeed the argument is that this is the best inference to make about leadership training given our current lack of well-developed social science knowledge. Can this suggestion sustain the corresponding counterfactual?

7 If the principal had adopted a critical learning perspective then the students would have learned more.

Previously, our counterfactuals failed for want of sufficient appropriate knowledge. In this case, the epistemic burden is not so great. True, the principal will need to have the usual amount of agreed reliable theoretical and practical knowledge of how schools work, and some ideas for extending that knowledge in context. While theories of the growth of knowledge are contested, we know enough about epistemology to do better than chance. For example, we know that testing theories against (theory-laden) experience is important. And making coherent adjustments of theory in light of disconfirming evidence works better than making *ad hoc* adjustments. We know that the presence of rival theories, and a consequent theory competition, matters too, which is encouraging where epistemologies are contested. Finally, we know something of the kinds of social arrangements under which the growth of knowledge prospers. There are advantages in promoting the flow of information, in practising tolerance and respect for alternative points of view, and in being able to question traditionally accepted claims and propose new views. How these features of the 'open society' get translated into administrative arrangements in schools for promoting the growth of knowledge about school improvement has not been specified. Fortunately, what is

required is merely that we can get some self-correcting learning machinery going in schools. This is not a small task, but it is achievable in SBM environments, and renders more likely the possibility of developing in detail realistic and applicable models of critical learning for school leaders.

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8 Leadership: Paradoxes and New Direction

Gabriele Lakomski

How can we achieve leadership for quality schooling? What (if any) is the connection between leadership and school improvement, effectiveness and performance? If there is a connection, how can it be determined? Most important of all, how can it be developed to further the aim of improving the quality of schooling of all who participate? These are some of the fundamental questions asked in this volume. The various contributions attempt to address these issues from a number of perspectives and raise new issues and concerns in our understanding of what leadership is supposed to be in school as well as in broader social contexts.

This chapter serves to take stock of where the leadership debate has progressed, as evidenced by the contributions in this volume, to gather one or two main strands of concern that run through the debate, and to offer some new directions. I want to challenge the profession of educational administration and administrators by stating my general conclusions and recommendations right at the beginning:

1 We need to take more seriously the theoretical base on which the conception of leadership is constructed. Although empiricism is a philosophically discredited view it nevertheless continues to shape the leadership debate through its prescriptive hypothetico-deductive methodology and implicit theory of mind.
2 Given (1), it follows that the empirical evidence that leaders make an organization or school more effective, productive or efficient cannot be accepted as valid; causal chains are much less certain and much more difficult to establish.
3 While there is growing recognition of the embeddedness of leaders in their contexts, the fact that leaders have to learn how to lead is a point largely ignored. The study of human knowledge acquisition and information processing conducted in cognitive science is fundamental to the understanding of what leaders do in their specific contexts.
4 Since the social–cultural context determines what is being learnt, researchers ought to engage in the empirical, fine-grained study of organizational prac-

tices, processes, and (inter-) relationships which make up organizational life (cognitive anthropology). It is the ensemble of these interacting elements that accounts for organizational efficiency and good practice.

In the following pages I will elaborate these points and provide some examples and arguments for why we might want to cease engaging in leadership studies as traditionally understood, and rather engage in the study of organizational contexts and their cognitive economy of which leaders are always a part.

A good starting point is a brief rehearsal of the state of leadership studies and their problems, from the early trait conception to the New Leadership, as Bryman (1986) put it (this critical discussion of leadership history draws on Evers and Lakomski 1996, Chapter 6).

FROM LEADER BEHAVIOURS TO TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS: CORKED WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

There is little argument that the history of leadership studies is characterized by the ongoing effort to find more appropriate factors or variables that might help determine a leader's essential nature. Researchers attempted to identify a single trait that would account for leadership, and upon failing to find one, moved on to the identification of multiple traits deemed fundamental in leaders. Since this approach did not yield substantive insights into what makes a leader either, increasingly complex inter-relationships were postulated between such entities as organizational and group structure and environmental issues. The latter were commonly accounted for as the so-called 'situational factor' and proved very vexing in older as well as newer accounts of leadership.

The preferred methodology of this early work was quantitative and consisted in operationalizing variables by means of designated observable administrative behaviours documented in surveys or questionnaires (the LBDQ and MLQ are standard measures still widely used). The variables thus compiled were analysed by means of increasingly complex statistical–quantitative methodology, which, researchers believed, provided solid empirical support to make generalizations about leadership across organizational contexts. The hope was that such generalizations could serve as a sound basis for the training of good leaders and the creation of efficient organizations. As history subsequently showed, this aim was not achieved.

Such failure was in part due to the fact, amply attested to in the literature, that there is no agreed-upon definition of leadership, and that whatever we know about leadership is fragmented and open to different and often contradictory interpretations. There is no unambiguous knowledge base (e.g. Hunt, 1991; Howe, 1994; Bryman, 1986, 1997). It was also reported that different organizations facilitate or bring forth different leadership effects, and that comparisons were practically unreliable and misleading (see Perrow, 1986). The upshot of these studies was that leadership, like beauty, could be said to be in the eye of the

beholder, and that it has not been possible to determine anything like an essence of leadership which would be clearly identifiable and beyond doubt.

As for the New Leadership, the term coined by Bryman (1986) to designate the new period of leadership studies emanating from Burns's seminal work of the 1970s there remains a close inter-relation with the older single- or multiple-trait approaches. Bryman (1997, p. 282) notes in a recent assessment of the field that the New Leadership 'ties in with the great appetite for stories about heroic chief executives'. Although he excepts the work taken from Bass's initial transformational leadership research, he maintains that the New Leadership nevertheless 'can be accused of concentrating excessively on top leaders' (p. 282). This comes out clearly in the emphasis on the so-called transformational qualities of leaders. Amongst these are the creation of organizational visions or missions, the motivation of staff and the engendering of extra effort, as well as the changing of basic values and beliefs (Bresnen, 1995, pp. 496–7; Bass, 1985 ; Bass and Avolio, 1994).

In educational administration, a number of writers have found this conception quite compelling, and have advocated it over the years as a promising answer to dealing with organizational change and basic restructuring currently encountered in formal systems of schooling just about everywhere (e.g. Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood and Steinbach, 1995; Caldwell, 1992).

Given the continued emphasis on the role of the formal leader, now conceived as transformational, the New Leadership perpetuates some of the shortcomings of the approaches it was designed to supersede. It continues to study the heroic and formal leader and thus almost exclusively examines leadership at the top. Continuing to focus on the individual to the exclusion of the group or groups makes the study of informal or other leadership processes and practices almost impossible. Hence, the application of quantitative research methodology on issues of principal or CEO leadership still dominates empirical work in the field. The suggestion that qualitative case studies might be more appropriate in their attention to local conditions and the interplay of subtle relationships not captured by surveys or other statistical means is only slowly gaining recognition.

A point closely related is an absence of research dedicated to the 'situational factor', traditional leadership studies' black box. Indeed, one of the advocated strengths of the transformational leader is the ability to transform people and incite them to perform 'beyond expectation', and to redefine problematic situations so that they appear manageable and less threatening by subordinates (for a fuller discussion of transactional leadership as conceived by Bass and associates see Evers and Lakomski, 1996, pp. 72–77). There is no indication that the organizational internal or external environment has a substantive role to play in determining or shaping leadership. The emphasis remains on the various personal characteristics of the leader, as defined in the various approaches. This observation is not new and has been made forcefully by Perrow (1986, especially Chapter 3) in his critical assessment of the history of leadership studies (see also the studies conducted by Bryman *et al*., 1996; Leavy and Wilson, 1994).

The final point to note relates to causal attribution (Evers and Lakomski, 1996)

which is far from clear in that writers advocating transformational leadership also acknowledge the complexities of implicit leadership and attribution theories, and follower perceptions, a difficulty to which I will return later.

The most important link connecting otherwise differing leadership models from the early days to the New Leadership is the scientific framework in which leadership was studied. The motivation of early leadership theorists to study leaders and leadership scientifically is an honourable one because it is science that lets us know whether phenomena in our social and natural environments exist. The problem raised here is not the scientific study of leadership, but the model of science employed in doing so. Adopting a specific conception of science brings with it certain conditions, assumptions and theoretical commitments.

The conception of empiricism determines, *inter alia*, how the alleged phenomenon is to be studied (methodological prescription of hypothetico-deductive procedure); it stipulates what counts as evidence (observational adequacy); and it implies a conception of the human mind. This assumption is not commonly noted. Its importance is not difficult to appreciate though. Whatever we claim to know, or to have found out about our universe, must be compatible with our natural abilities developed through evolution to investigate and to acquire the information. We cannot find out things for which we do not have the physical wherewithal. Putting the matter the other way round, we can only know what our minds/brains make it possible for us to know.

Traditionally, the model of the human mind has been assumed to be that of a symbol processor, that is a computer-like engine that allows us to manipulate successfully a range of symbols of which language is deemed the most significant (see Evers and Lakomski's (1996, 2000) extensive discussions of the symbol processing view). This view of the human mind is very limiting because it assumes that what we know, and are able to know, is expressible in symbolic form only. Everything else that humans do, like leading organizations, playing the piano, teaching a class, or being 'good with people' remains in the realm of the inexplicable, the practical domain we cannot find the words to explain. The worry for leadership studies here is quite considerable because transformational leadership in particular was imbued with just such intangible qualities. Given what I have just said about the model of the human mind inherent in empiricist science, how to create such outstanding transformational leaders remains in the realm of the mysterious since this model cannot account for its origins. Let us consider the empiricist model in a little more detail in the following to make quite clear where it breaks down, and what the consequences are for the study of leadership.

What is also described as the hypothetico-deductive account of scientific theory and practice postulates that empirical evidence consists of singular observations. To be more exact, it consists of observation reports of behaviours which are hypothesized to be representative of whatever leadership construct is being tested. These individual claims, expressed in observation reports, are at the bottom of the hierarchy where they form the foundations for claims to leadership at the top of the hierarchy. Through the process of deduction and testing empirical

claims are examined, and it is this very process that defines the hypothetico-deductive account. Since it is a core feature of empiricist theory that its foundation is based on indubitable observation reports, every claim made has to be capable of being defined empirically. This stipulation also holds for theoretical objects, and in order to deliver such invisible objects into the realm of the observable, the very important concept of operational definition has been introduced. For example, since it is not possible to see a theoretical object such as democracy, for instance, it is assumed that its presence can be deduced from observing certain behaviours such as voting, attending political meetings, or writing an newspaper article critical of government higher education policy. These behaviours are considered as tokens for the existence of the concept or theoretical entity.

However, as pointed out by both interpretive social science, hermeneutics and recent philosophy of science, what we observe is always laden with some kind of interpretation or theory. We also know that the empiricist conception of evidence, the principle of empirical adequacy, rules out determining the facts of the matter since more than one interpretation may fit the data. Third, the evidence gathered for the existence of leadership, in whatever conception, is mainly based on questionnaires and quantitative–statistical methodology.

The main problem with these issues is that the empirical methodology of mainstream leadership studies is not able to separate out what people implicitly believe about leadership from what they report as having observed in a specific situation by filling out a questionnaire (e.g. Gronn, 1995). Only observation is admissible in the empiricist approach, not interpretation. However, since people always see things differently, there is no clear way to determine whether what people report as having observed is an empirical phenomenon, or simply an attribution/interpretation on their part given their own understandings on what leaders look like and what they are supposed to do. These difficulties have led some theorists to argue that leadership is thus merely a socially constructed category (e.g. Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Chen and Meindl, 1991) which wrongly and misleadingly reifies an abstraction, that is, makes into an object something that does not really exist.

The upshot of this is that the answers reported on questionnaires can be considered as after-the-event rationalizations of people's subjective views of leadership rather than the objective measurement of what a 'real' formal leader did in some specified context and time-frame. There is thus a built-in, endemic uncertainty about empirical claims to leadership in the empiricist framework.

As a result of these criticisms leadership appears to be established mainly through the eyes of those who interpret a given set of behaviours as such. Leadership on this account remains a subjective interpretation with no warrant for scientific status. And yet, we do encounter people who seem to fit various descriptions of leaders, and we also encounter effective, good organizational practice. If the empiricist account of leadership is not the right account to explain how this is possible, then, in the eyes of some, perhaps there is no scientific explanation of the phenomenon. Some people end up being leaders, others don't. We

'learn through experience', and some do it more effectively than others, and that is all there is to it. Fortunately, we do not have to trade in science for experience, for the latter is amenable to explanation by the former – on a more satisfactory account of science and of learning.

But before we get there, it is instructive to explore two related developments in the (organizational theory) leadership literature that emerged in the wake of the New Leadership of which they are variants. The reason for doing so is that these perspectives attempt to consider the 'situational factor' not simply in an additive manner in terms of factor analytical variables which can be added to the personality factors deemed relevant to the leadership model under discussion. Rather, the 'situational factor' is explored both in the context of the study of culture and leadership (e.g. Hallinger and Leithwood, 1996; Heck, 1996; Hatch, 1993) and by considering leadership as a dispersed feature rather than an individually owned category made up of personality traits.

Methodologically these approaches are more holistic and thus offer a more appropriate way of studying interconnected phenomena in their naturalistic settings. They open up avenues of research not previously considered valid for the study of the leadership phenomenon.

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

It is not overstating the case to note that the importance of culture and context for leadership has emerged as a strong theme in this volume. Several authors address the importance of culture, values and context for the shaping and execution of leadership. Thus, Sergiovanni's proposal of Community Theory acknowledges schools as moral norms-based communities and emphasizes leadership as being based on shared ideas and common purposes. In developing the notion of 'principled decentralization' accompanied by 'layered loyalties', he recognizes both the interconnectedness of schools as well as their local and individual uniqueness. Leadership in this context is considered as authoritative rather than authoritarian; it is moral in that it must derive from agreement on ideas.

In Ribbins's critical discussion of leadership and school effectiveness, the importance of culture emerges in the qualitative approach he adopts in his many studies of leaders and schools. He strongly advocates a 'contextualized perspective' which is defined as follows, 'Reconceptualized as the sum of the situational, the cultural, and the historical circumstances that constrain leadership and give it meaning, context is the vehicle through which the agency of particular leaders in specific situations may be empirically understood' (Ribbins, see p. 21, Chapter 2, this volume). In advocating the study of leaders in different cultural contexts by means of ethnography and biography Ribbins's proposal departs overtly from the mainstream quantitative methodological approaches of traditional leadership research. The presumed causal relationship between the leader/principal and school effectiveness is, according to Ribbins, a relationship still in need of proof.

Kai-ming Cheng's chapter on vision building and leadership and Kam-cheung Wong's discussion of leadership and culture also develop the theme of the importance of shared ideas and the context in which leadership is exercised. This is particularly stressed by Wong in his analysis of the shift away from organizational culture to culture broadly understood, with particular emphasis on the understanding of these concepts in Chinese culture.

Barlosky's chapter emphasizes many of the difficulties of mainstream leadership studies observed above in terms of the lack of an essence of leadership, of leadership as a context-bound and shifting conception. He argues for these conclusions from a postmodern point of view which shares some of the theoretical results developed by modern philosophy of science, interpretive social science and hermeneutics.

The recognition that an organization's culture is an important phenomenon that contributes to the understanding of its functioning has emerged relatively recently in organization theory (e.g. Jelinek *et al*., 1983). More specifically, it denotes a development away from structuralist–functionalist explanations of the workings of organizations to an emphasis on language and the creation of meaning, and how organization members interpret their reality. The many advantages of employing the conception of culture in the study of organizations are outlined brilliantly by Weick and Westley (1997):

> First and foremost it [culture] is embodied in the language, the words, phrases, vocabularies and expressions which individual groups develop. Secondly, it is embodied in artifacts, the material objects a group produces, from machines to decorative objects, from buildings to paintings. Lastly, and most ephemerally, it is embodied in coordinated action routines, predictable social exchanges from highly stylized rituals to the informal (but socially structured) convention of greetings with acquaintances. Thus culture as theoretical construct meets all three… criteria for social science of organizations: the invisible (social relations) made manifest in the tangible (artifacts as models); the middle-range concepts which offer experiential reference points; and an option of approaching the phenomena with methodologies which build on empathy and empathize feeling (such as literary analysis, ethnographic analysis and ethnomethodology.
>
> (p. 442)

Given this description, it is not surprising that a basic tension emerges in the study of organizational culture, noted by Ouchi and Wilkins (1988) in their review of the literature (also Meek, 1988). On the one hand, organization theorists of culture want to study

> what is explicit about organizations and… on the other what is implicit; a tension between those who emphasize the capacity of organizations to create order and rationality versus those who are struck by the sometimes chaotic

> and nonrational features of organizational life.
>
> (Ouchi and Wilkins, 1988, p. 224)

It is not surprising that this observation surfaced in contemporary studies of organizational culture since it denotes a fundamental tension in the parent discipline of cultural anthropology itself where it is discussed as the 'paradox of culture' (Strauss and Quinn, 1997). I return to this important point later.

A second shared trend is also evident especially in the popular management literature such as the writings of Deal and Kennedy (1982), Peters and Waterman (1982), and Schein (1992). In these works, culture is generally considered as a tool of management employed to mould the beliefs and behaviours of organization members so that the organization's purposes may be reached satisfactorily. The same trend shows up in the educational administration context in what Evers and Lakomski (1991, pp. 114–117) have termed 'the cultural perspective in educational administration'. (For critiques of culture-as-control see Angus, 1995; Willmott, 1993).

A common theme that unites studies in organization theory as well as educational administration is the assumption of leadership as culture creation and of the leader, often through his [!] vision, as the creator of culture. This conception is evident, for example, in the work of Peters and Waterman, as well as Schein's (1992). Since leaders in the New Leadership mould are also entrusted with transforming their organizations, a related element of culture creation is also that of culture change when an existing culture has become maladaptive and no longer serves to fulfil the goals and purposes of the organization. Hence the aspect of change is explicitly related to culture, and Schein's model presents a good case in point. While his conception does not stand for all in this genre, it nevertheless is a prominent example of thinking on the issue of leadership and culture.

Schein (1992) is concerned to explain the apparently non-rational reactions of organization members in the face of required change and believes that the 'dynamics of culture' hold the key to understanding this widely observed phenomenon in terms of group differences, and why their attitudes are so hard to change. He considers culture as

> the accumulated shared learning of a given group, covering behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements of the group members' total psychological functioning. For shared learning to occur, there must be a history of shared experience, which in turn implies some stability of membership in the group. Given such stability and a shared history, the human need for parsimony, consistency, and meaning will cause the various shared elements to form into patterns that eventually can be called a culture.
>
> (p. 10)

This concept of culture is considered to allow leaders to get at the 'taken-for-granted basic assumptions held by the members of the group or organization'

(Schein, 1992, p. 15; see also Argyris, 1990) which are similar to Argyris and Schön's (1996) concept of theories-in-use. The latter are those unspoken and unacknowledged understandings which guide people's behaviours and actions in contrast to the verbal explanations they give of their actions. The former are extremely difficult to get at since we are not conscious of them. It is however imperative that they be changed by means of Argyris and Schön's double-loop learning. Such a process is understandably disturbing and unsettling and will lead to the production of defence mechanisms. Leaders need to know this for it is through these mechanisms that groups defend their old culture. The relation between culture and leadership in Schein's conception (1992) is defined as follows. They are

> two sides of the same coin in that leaders first create cultures when they create groups and organizations. Once culture exists, they determine the criteria for leadership and thus determine who will or will not be leader. But if cultures become dysfunctional, it is the unique function of leadership to perceive the functional and dysfunctional elements of the existing culture and to manage cultural evolution and change in such a way that the group can survive in a changing environment.
>
> (p. 15)

Given the above characterization of culture, Schein then develops a conception of a self-correcting, learning, culture, steered by a learning leader, which is capable of diagnosing and responding appropriately to changes in its environment on an ongoing basis.

Finally, there is another qualification in the organizational culture and leadership debate worth noting. Organization theorists who argue for the importance of shared meanings and agreed understandings as the core of culture tend to assume that there is one dominant and cohesive culture that gives rise to those shared understandings. Martin (1992) calls this the 'integration' perspective (a view often criticized for its simplistic conception of the social fabric and its inherent political conservatism). It is present in Schein's work, for example. This view is challenged by the 'differentiation' notion of culture in which it is not assumed that there is basic consensus or one culture. Rather, leadership is considered as happening in sub-groups or counter-cultural groups. Added to this is the third 'fragmentation' perspective in which organizational cultures are seen as fragmented and ambiguous, a state of affairs attributed to the complexity and size of modern organizations. In this view leadership is by necessity de-centred, and what has traditionally been described as the organizational leader's task of sense-making and creating has practically become impossible. Attempting to change the culture in order to create a coherent new culture appears futile because of modern organizational diversity, complexity, and fluidity. The role of leadership becomes quite ambiguous, and rather than engaging in the management of meaning, leadership is likely to issue in 'the transmission of equivocality' (Bryman, 1997, p.

286). The upshot of this latter view is that leaders and their visions and actions appear less important and less effective than in the other frameworks. It is arguments such as these that gave rise to the idea of leadership as being dispersed.

Since the application of the conception of culture to leadership studies, as presented, is touted as a qualitatively superior way of accounting for the 'situational factor' that affects or substantively determines leadership (depending on one's point of view), it is imperative to examine what is actually meant by 'culture', and what constitutes the 'changing of culture'. This is also another way of asking whether the leader is the causal change agent as assumed in all models, how we might think of leadership, and whether we should think of it at all.

RECONSIDERING CULTURE AS COGNITIVE PROCESS

The paradox encountered in the present discussion regarding leaders-as-cultural-change-agents lies squarely in two fundamental tendencies which inhere 'culture' and subsequently all organizations as well. What Ouchi and Wilkins (1988) describe in terms of the tension between organizational order and rationality on the one hand, and its non-rational implicit features on the other, Hosking (1988) considers as the problem of describing 'organization as a noun, as a state, entity or "condition"' rather than 'as a verb, as activity and process' (p. 148); both directly conflict with each other. Not surprisingly, this is an example of the 'paradox of culture' referred to earlier.

The paradox can generally be described in terms of the duration and stability over time of shared powerful meanings – culture as a bounded and timeless system of public meanings on the one hand, and the very existence of cultural diversity and change on the other. So on the one hand, there is cultural reproduction which attests to stable structures over time, no matter what social–political perspective one adopts in appraising it (e.g. 'the University of Melbourne'), while at the same time there is also contestation over meanings, cultural variation and radical change. In cultural theory, both positions, i.e. the focus on the external public forms of culture and the interpretations and understandings of these public forms, have been considered in 'either-or' terms since it was not believed possible to explain how cultural theory could explain both cultural forms' and expressions' durability as well as their obvious change over time.

But this supposed paradox turns out not to be a paradox at all once we focus on how people in fact acquire their knowledge and understanding of both objects in the external public world and in their private, inner worlds where interpretations and meanings are believed to be located. The view of cognition Colin Evers and I have been developing (especially in Evers and Lakomski, 1996, 2000) provides the key to considering both sides of this long theoretical dispute as two potentialities of human knowledge representation. In other words, both the durability of cultural practices as well as the fact of their variation, dissolution or change are to be explained by the way in which humans acquire, process and represent information

as the result of the specificities of the neural architecture of the human brain. As a result, and for reasons to be explained below, both sides of the (organizational) cultural dispute are valid, and on this account 'organization' can be both object and process, Hosking's concerns notwithstanding. They are simply different aspects of the ways in which humans represent what they have learnt.

The first step towards unravelling the mystery is to consider that culture is not a thing, an entity that exists over and above human production and history, but happens as the result of human interactions and shared experiences over time. In Strauss and Quinn's (1997) formulation:

> Culture… consists of regular occurrences in the humanly created world, in the schemas people share as a result of these, and in the interactions between these schemas and this world. When we speak of culture, then, we do so only to summarize such regularities.
>
> (p. 7)

Speaking from their discipline of cultural anthropology, a fundamental category in Strauss and Quinn's conception of culture is that of cultural meanings which, for present purposes, play the part of 'taken for granted basic assumptions' (Schein, 1992) or Argyris and Schön's theories-in-use (1996) in that they denote the causal realm in which sense-making is said to take place:

> A cultural meaning is the typical (frequently recurring and widely shared aspects of the) interpretation of some type of object or event evoked in people as a result of their similar life experiences…. To call it a cultural meaning is to imply that a different interpretation would be evoked in people with different characteristic life experiences.
>
> (Strauss and Quinn, 1997, p. 6)

The question to ask is how did we acquire cultural meanings? The important fact to recognize for the purposes of this discussion is that human cognition's inner non-symbolic dimension (i.e. meanings, understandings, beliefs, reasons) while different, is not radically separated from cognition's external, symbolic representation (see Evers' more detailed account, p. 103 ff.).

The traditional assumption that human cognition is identical with its public expressions, such as language or other symbol systems, has misled us to accept a narrow and limiting view of human cognition. In excluding knowledge of our inner world of values, feelings, and of those things we know how to do but cannot express in symbolic form, our practice, (Hutchins, 1991, 1996), we have for a long time worked with an additive view of cognition and culture: culture as something added to the workings of the mind while remaining substantively separate from it.

However, contrary to the assumption of the additive view, our brains are not primarily symbol processors (like linear computers) but are a vast confederation

of interconnected neural nets whose *modus operandi* is to work in parallel rather than linear fashion. Its base units are thus neurons that assemble into patterns when suitably activated, and disassemble when they are not. The human brain is a wonderfully efficient pattern processor and recognizer because of its parallel processing ability, and symbols, such as words, are just such patterns (for a brief discussion of how brains learn see Churchland, 1993: pp. 159–171; Evers and Lakomski, 1996, Chapters 8 and 9). Neural nets vary in the weights of their enormous numbers of connections, and it is this variation which explains human diversity. As Churchland (1993) expresses it:

> The character of one's perception, one's cognition, and one's behavior is determined by the particular configuration of weights within that network. It is the many weights that determine what features in the world one responds to, which concepts one uses to process them, which values one embraces, and which range of behaviors one commands.
>
> (p. 131)

It is this feature of our brain which accounts for the extraordinary plasticity of human nature, and which made culture possible in the first place. The cultural anthropologists, Strauss and Quinn (1997; Holland and Quinn, 1993), have begun to draw out the implications of a connectionist account for cultural theory. Such an account applies equally well to organizational culture, and cultural change and leadership.

As we saw above, culture is not a disconnected entity from everyday routines and interactions with others, from materials and artifacts, but can be considered as a cognitive process. Such a conception allows us to understand, for the first time, how cultural–organizational meanings (theories-in-use) are formed, and why they are as contextually variable and changeable as they are, within groups and between groups. The differences can now be understood as resulting from the different groups' experiences, and thus differences in cognitive networks. More technically, these differences are differences in their respective connection weights.

The problem of organizational change and leadership becomes one of the difficulties of dislodging strong connection weights formed over periods of time through common understandings, and recurring and shared ways of doing things. It is this problem which faces all organization theorists interested in organizational change, whether they consider the formal leader as causal in the process or not. Where he is considered as causal, as in Schein's explicit example (1992), and in much of the New Leadership literature, we are beginning to get an inkling of just how complex the change process is, and that it cannot be simply located in one individual's understanding or vision of where things ought to get to.

The reason already established neural nets (old learning) are so hard to change is to do with the natural tendencies of neuronal connections to become re-activated through repeated encounter with the kind of environment that activated

them in the first place. A second reason is that cultural understandings, as neuronal patterns of activation, become self-reinforcing, and thus strengthened. Connection weights of a pattern of activation have the tendency to complete themselves even when only a few of their nodes are active (glimpse of a nose already contains enough neural 'clues' to recognize 'mother'). This is a tendency that makes shifting an old pattern rather difficult and also tends to override disconfirming evidence through its previously set activation pattern. Here we have one possible explanation for why organization members appear to oppose organizational change for 'no good reasons'. Already acquired cultural understandings or stereotypes, i.e. negative schemas, also might keep people from getting themselves into situations where these schemas might be threatened or overturned because they contain disconfirming evidence. Lastly, strong emotions of any kind, while not yet sufficiently well understood (see Damasio, 1996), also contribute to the durability of neuronal patterns of activations. If we consider the impact of the ensemble of these neuronal tendencies, then it becomes much clearer why it is that organizational understandings and practices are so hard to change, particularly as they only 'show' themselves in organizational behaviour that cannot be 'known', merely exhibited.

The previous discussion should have made clear too that the durability of cultural–organizational practices and meanings is not just the doing of any one individual but results from the complex interactions in and between groups with whom individuals interact, and of which they are a part, and the working environments' routines, practices and policies that provide the material frameworks for interaction whose specificities in turn determine not only the kinds of patterns that get activated but also whether and to what extent they get changed. Where does all this leave us with regard to leadership?

DISPERSED OR DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP: THE SOLUTION OR DISSOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP?

If, as argued in the previous section, the explanation of organizational change equates with the explanation of the durability of cultural meanings, practices, etc. then at the very least, it should have become obvious that there is no direct causal link between the leader and organizational change. The early attempt to redescribe organizational culture in neuroscientific terms, while merely at the beginnings, points to some very important insights. For one, what has been termed the embodied and embedded brain by writers such as Clark (1997), and Hutchins (1996) allows us to recognize for the first time just how human cognition works in its external symbolic as well as its internal neural net representations, and that it does so seamlessly. There is no in-principle cognitive divide between outer, symbolic representations such as cultural objects and artifacts and inner, sub-symbolic features such as meanings and reasons represented in neuronal activation patterns. Cultural external manifestations can be explained

as externalizations as well as extensions of the human mind which is limited in its computational capacities (for detailed discussion of this complex issue see Clark, 1997; Norman, 1993). Humans outsource many tasks because solving them takes more individual computational capacity than any one human brain can master. The forming of organizations, or more generically, organization, is the telling example of the results of the out-sourcing of complex task solutions throughout human evolutionary history. This also means in turn that we are both constrained and emancipated by our own cognitive creations in so far as what we have created – the modern transport system, for example – exerts its influence over the way we think and act, a condition of human existence already known by the idealist philosopher Hegel (as the unfolding of the Spirit in history) as well as Marx whose naturalistic–materialist explanation of the appropriation of nature through human labour can be seen as an important forerunner of the present cognitive account.

The other conclusion has already been alluded to earlier: leaders are embedded in the cultural–organizational context as is everyone else; their formal position at the top of the hierarchy does not bestow cognitive privilege since the patterns of cultural meanings do not acknowledge structural positioning. However, in so far as people tend to know what they learn from their more immediate environments, shaped by the specificities and nature of the work tasks and tools, there exists an organizational differentiation created by differential inputs, for example, created by differential access to information. This is the kind of cognitive differentiation that matters in an organization. As a consequence of such differentiation leaders might know more and might know different kinds of things than other organization members – but such differentiation has little to do with formal position. It has a lot to do with what kinds of inputs are available which serve to strengthen (or possibly weaken) already existing connection weights in the leader's brain. Since leaders tend to be exposed to similar situations with similar inputs, it is not surprising that they get good at certain things – such as considering broad policy objectives, 'reading' the market correctly, etc. When it comes to 'turning the organization round', the picture gets more complicated still.

It seems that in much leadership theorizing, and Schein's work (1992) is just one example here, the general idea of change is that of an omniscient rational designer who plans the organizational cultural change, and then executes it according to plan. The causal arrow goes in only one direction – from leader to organization – and organization members are assumed to be passive recipients or opponents, as the case may be, of the planned change. Recall Martin's model of organizational culture (1992) as fragmented due to the complexity of modern organizations. This is a much more realistic assessment of the nature of organizations. They consist of many overlapping and interlocking parts that may also be quite distant from each other. Even if there were no hostility to a proposed change, given that the specificity of members' local organizational knowledge may differ significantly, in and between groups, the efforts to absorb or integrate the requested change into their existing mental maps of what they do may be very

difficult indeed (Argote and McGrath, 1993). What might appear as apparent resistance to well-intentioned change may be no more than an inability to override the existing activation patterns members have because their existing connection weights are too strong. Their networks may just not be tuned in the same way, or tuned sufficiently closely to enact a shift in patterns. (This does not deny that there may be overt and deliberate opposition, but that is another matter.) Add to this the existence of many organizational layers and functional sub-divisions, and it becomes ever clearer why organizational change is such a slow and piecemeal event. Context, as it has been explained in this discussion, is centrally important, in 'making sense' of the change, and may end up in results that were unforeseen. Where there is evidence of organizational change in terms of the existence of new procedures or routines, as exemplified in members' theories-in-use, then it can be said that the organization has learnt with express regard to the specific routines and procedures in question. On the present account, it makes little sense to speak of 'organizational change' as a global event across the whole organization (see Robinson, 2000). What is also clear from a connectionist cultural account is that noone knows everything there is to know about an organization, knowledge is always piecemeal and situation- and context-specific.

Robinson's discussion (see p. 90, Chapter 6, this volume) of distributed leadership, leadership as a process, coheres well with the argument presented here. Taking her departure from the observation that traditional leadership studies treat leaders and the tasks they are entrusted to accomplish as completely disconnected, Robinson puts forward a view of leadership as embeddedness in task performance. Her conception of leadership as both distributed across work groups and as inhering in the very tasks to be solved through organizational action is the most radically 'de-centred' view offered in this volume. Her observation that 'Leadership disappears when tasks are well-structured, because the knowledge that progresses the task has been structured into the technologies and routines that are involved in its completion' (see p. 101, Chapter 6, this volume), comes close to abolishing the conception altogether. However, she believes that leadership is still required in the conversion of ill-structured to well-structured problems.

The idea of 'dispersed leadership', as currently gaining ground in organization theory, goes a long way towards debunking the leader myth of traditional leadership theories in attempting to account for situational and contextual factors. While for Robinson leadership is distributed in terms of its embeddedness in task performance, for Hosking (1998) leadership is thought of in terms of a 'bottom-up' approach that focuses on 'leadership acts and processes as special kinds of organizing…. This makes leadership intrinsic to organization, rather than a mere epiphenomenon as in a top-down perspective' (p. 150). (See also Knights and Willmott, 1992.) The skill of 'networking' is identified as a core leadership skill. Gronn (1999) recently suggested a model of distributed leadership systems. Other writers such as Manz and Sims (1991) and Sims and Lorenzi (1992) have coined the term 'SuperLeadership' which emphasizes leading others so that they may

become leaders themselves. For Kouzes and Posner (1993) leadership means emancipation from formal leaders and taking on leadership through groups and teams, as is the case in Katzenbach and Smith's (1993) proposal for the development of leadership through 'real teams'.

These various positions cannot be discussed now, but they are important to note in terms of the greater awareness that leads away from studying designated formal leaders to studying the complexities of contextual and situation-specific organizational functioning and practice, mostly conducted in groups or sub-units. The meaning of dispersed or distributed leadership is generally indicative of such emphases. Attention to teams, groups and specific organizational processes and practices is a very important development since it is through such fine-grained empirical work that more insights can be gathered of organizational functioning. But what is absent in those perspectives is an account of how organization members acquire cultural–organizational knowledge, i.e. the very machinery that makes their practices possible. Hence, the sense in which Evers and I use 'distributed leadership' differs substantively.

The distribution of importance in the present context is that of cognition which made culture, and hence organization, possible in the first place. To put matters the other way round, organization members can only accomplish what they do because cognition is distributed in the way it is: inside an individual's skull in terms of the individual brain's parallel distributed processing capacity; between individuals since cognition is not limited inside one skull – the reach of language and other symbol systems – but is made available across human relationships and between them and the objects and processes they have created which react back on the producers of these externalized objects of the human brain.

Finally, let me conclude by returning to the questions raised at the beginning in this chapter. It would be foolish to claim that they have been answered in all respects. But if nothing else, we should no longer be able to use the concept of leadership with the innocence of old, notwithstanding current popular writings which appear to perpetuate the myth with scant regard to, or knowledge of, its many difficulties. For my part, I do not think the concept is at all helpful to our understanding of complex organizational interrelationships and processes, such as change, organizational effectiveness, performance, etc. In fact, I am prepared to advocate that we give it up altogether! While Robinson makes an interesting point in terms of leadership being required in converting ill-defined into well-defined problems, it is the ensemble of organizational/group cognitions as defined above which is responsible for the change. Leadership as a causal category just dissolves into the structuring and re-structuring of organizational problems by interacting contextualized agents whose cognitive efforts, in the much broadened sense of cognition discussed here, may or may not produce the solution.

The distributed nature of human cognition in its internal and external facets, coupled with the strong determining inputs of specific contexts and situations, should become the focus of study and research efforts. It is at this level that causal explanations of how things happen in organizations are to be found. They are to

be found in the contextual specifics of organizational procedures or processes, and they will differ from situation to situation, and between organizations. There can no longer be any pretence of developing a theory of leadership, just as it is no longer possible to speak of the culture of the organization. We can of course continue to speak of formal leaders as 'tenants of time and context', the excellent phrase coined by Leavy and Wilson (1994, p.186). And it will be difficult to override our old neuronal patterns of leaders and leadership, since they are constantly activated and re-activated in our culture. But as the previous discussion showed, while change may be slow, it does happen. We might just begin by training ourselves in talking about effective organizational practice and how to bring it about, and drop talk of leadership and leaders from our vocabulary as no longer useful in helping us to create better practice in any of our organizational endeavours.

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9 Systems of Quality and Quality Assurance in Basic Education

Perspectives from Mainland China

Minyuan Gu

This paper outlines how the concept of quality and quality assurance in education was understood and developed in China. The author begins by arguing that quality, which is regarded by many simply as public examination results, is a multi-faceted phenomenon. Despite this, one can still find consensus about it among different stakeholders. In China, the concept of quality assurance originated in higher education, referring generally to the activity of evaluating teaching programmes. When the concept was applied to primary and secondary schools, it resulted in the development of an inspectorate system. At present, the main function of inspectors is to ensure the implementation of government policy at different levels. The author anticipates that this will gradually shift to ensuring quality teaching in schools. Lastly the author has adopted an 'input–process–output' model and elaborates on how, in each process, quality issues are to be addressed.

Concern for the quality of education seems to be a worldwide issue. Since the 1980s, a number of countries have treated the improvement of education quality as one of the most important elements on their educational reform agenda. For example, in 1983 the US government's National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* which expressed a concern for the declining quality of education in the US. In China, a similar concern for improving education quality was recently expressed. Indeed, with popularization and the rapid development of education in China, the quality of education has become an increasingly significant issue.

Those who follow educational development in Mainland China know that China is going to have its nine-year compulsory education scheme implemented nationwide by the year 2000. The question to be asked after China has achieved this target will be the question of education quality. The campaign for 'quality education' that has recently been occurring in Mainland China is an effort made to address precisely the issue of how to improve education quality.

Increasing concern over the matter of education quality, however, is not only caused by the popularization of education, but by all sorts of challenges faced by education in the new millennium. These challenges include the rapid development of science and technology; the threat to human existence resulting from the damage

done to ecological environments; the intensified competition brought about by social reforms; and the deterioration of moral standards of people in general and young people in particular. In order to meet these challenges successfully, education must undergo further reforms, and effective ways and means must be sought to improve the quality of education. It is against such a background of concerns that the matter of a quality assurance system has been raised.

Behind this review are some of the more basic questions including:

- How to reduce the emphasis on public examination.
- How to change the examination-oriented education system into one that provides everyone an all-round education.
- How could the quality of primary and secondary schools be raised by a quality assurance system?
- How can such a system be established?
- What kind of school leadership can contribute to educational quality at school level?

CONCEPT OF EDUCATION QUALITY

What is education quality? This is the vocabulary people use almost every day, though without always having a clear concept in mind. Nor has much research been done within China to inform people about what education quality is. At school level, administrators and teachers use it to refer to teaching quality, an issue they often take for granted since it is an expectation of teachers' daily work to improve teaching quality.

As a matter of fact teaching quality is also multi-faceted in nature. Different parties involved in education may have different understandings of the concept of teaching quality. For example, the central or local governments may think that it means meeting the quality criteria as long as teachers follow the educational policies and curricula of the governments; the teachers consider themselves as having satisfied the quality criteria once they have enabled their students to master the scheduled learning contents; the parents will judge whether their children have been successfully enrolled into good schools and universities; the students may regard it as quality teaching if their teachers possess good teaching strategies and if their desire to learn can be satisfied. To a large extent, teaching quality is an expression of people's expectation on schooling, and a reflection of people's need for education. Seen in this light, teaching quality could be the sum total of all the characteristics of schooling in order to satisfy the needs, both implicit and explicit, of individuals, groups and society. Thus, it reflects some important value judgments on schooling.

Do we have objective criteria for measuring teaching quality? In China, the teaching objectives that form part of school objectives are designed on the basis of the government's educational policies. They are based on the characteristics of

teenagers' growth drawn from theories in psychology, science and technology. These objectives, once promulgated, are accepted by the government, schools and parents alike. They then serve as criteria to select students for higher-level learning, or as criteria for employers to recruit employees. School activities that can meet teaching objectives are therefore generally considered to be of good quality. After all, as some scholars point out, educational quality is the fulfilment of, and the conformity to educational objectives (Harman, 1996).

In reality, school and teaching objectives are very difficult to measure. In schools, students acquire knowledge and skills through participating in classroom activities. As a result they grow and become more able. This could be the result of teachers' teaching. However this is a rather complicated process and it is difficult to measure the effects of teaching on students' improvement. But it is easy to show students academic results, as they are often measured by public examination. What has happened is that the community at large will use public examinations as a proxy for teaching and school quality. Needless to say, public examination results are both incomplete and inaccurate.

TEACHING QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Alongside education and teaching quality, there has been the intention in China to establish a mechanism to measure teaching quality. The concept of a teaching quality assurance system was first used in tertiary institutions in the mid-1980s. It was then a new concept in teaching quality management. It was developed on the basis of different types of evaluation measures that had been systematically adopted in institutions of higher learning.

Could the Teaching Quality Assurance System (TQAS) be applied to primary and secondary schools? The answer is both yes and no. As far as the concept goes, because TQAS involves evaluation of teaching activities, there is no reason why it could not be used in primary and secondary schools. However, from the point of view of application, as tertiary institutions are much more complex in scale and scope, to be adapted into primary and secondary schools the TQAS has to be greatly modified.

The teaching quality assurance system that operates in higher institutions involves a log of evaluation activities. It requires the setting up of an evaluation system to assess teaching quality. As such it is different from general teaching activities. Some scholars regard all the composing links in the teaching process as objects of a teaching quality assurance system. This is too general. Evaluation activities should not be restricted to summative purposes. Only when the spirit of maintaining quality permeates into the daily teaching process of teachers can a teaching quality assurance system really play its due role. Formative evaluation, which assists staff in continued improvement, will be more appropriate as a measure with which to achieve the goal of TQAS.

In Mainland China, evaluation in tertiary education has been going on for

more than ten years since the 1980s. In 1990, the State Education Commission published *Regulations Regarding Evaluation of Tertiary Institutions*. The Report made it plainly clear that the Government would play guiding and administrative roles in the evaluation processes in tertiary institutions. The Report also categorized the evaluation of education quality into four areas:

- qualifications and standards;
- management and leadership;
- selection and promotion;
- within-school evaluation.

The Report set up a basic framework for tertiary education quality evaluation. Until late 1990, no such education quality evaluation system had been set up for primary and secondary education.

At the moment, the criteria for measuring quality of primary and secondary education are still largely based on how well their graduates perform in the public examinations. In fact, the local educational authority, the education department and individual schools attach great importance to the proportion of their students entering schools of a higher level. Each year people watch very closely, first, the proportion of the primary school graduates entering the key junior secondary schools; second, the proportion of the junior secondary graduates entering the senior secondary schools, especially the key senior secondary schools; and third the proportion of the senior secondary school graduates enrolling with key tertiary institutions. This has caused keen competition in examinations, which in turn burdens students heavily with schoolwork. As a result, the health of students is sometimes severely affected. The author has had one personal experience of this.

In early 1990s I was the chief invigilator for the university entrance examination. The time allocated to the biology paper was three hours. About three quarters of an hour after the examination had begun, one male candidate raised his hand nervously. I quickly approached him and asked him what he wanted. With pain in his face the boy said he did not have time for breakfast this morning and had a pain in his stomach. He asked if he could have some water. Seeing his pain I went out to the school canteen to get him a cup of warm water and bought him a piece of soft cake. In three mouthfuls he swallowed the piece of cake and drank the cup of water. After that he was relieved and went back to his examination. The whole process did not last for more than two minutes. However, after about five minutes he raised his hand again. Not knowing what he wanted this time I returned to him. 'Sir', he looked up to me anxiously and said, 'Could I get back the minutes I used for my breakfast?'

Since 1990s, the Educational Administrative Department has adopted measures such as the cancellation of all public examinations for primary graduates before they enter junior secondary schools. Students are assigned to their neighbourhood schools. The Department also took up measures to support poorly developed schools. However, despite these measures, examination fever has shown no sign of dying down.

In 1983, the Ministry of Education published *Some Guidelines Concerning the Setting Up of the Supervision System*; it spelt out the ways in which the Supervision System would be operated. A new body called the Supervision Department was set up under the Ministry of Education with its corresponding supervision branches set up in local governments. This new body was responsible for playing the various supervising roles on behalf of the Government and the educational administrative departments.

Up to now, the role of the Supervision Department has been confined to giving advice and assistance to local governments in implementing the nine-year compulsory education policy, which includes, among other things, supervising the uses of education funds, maintenance and repair of school buildings, and ensuring that government policies on education have been carried out. There was no provision at the early stage for the supervision of quality in schools. The current supervision system is designed to monitor administration rather than supervise schools. It is likely that after the goals of the nine-year compulsory education have been achieved, the emphasis on supervision will shift towards examining the quality of schools and teaching.

The discussion above shows that in China there has not yet been a quality assurance system for primary and secondary schools, although the issue has been discussed on many occasions.

INPUT, PROCESS AND OUTPUT MODEL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

In Mainland China, scholars are inclined to borrow economic measures for analysing the performance of social systems, including the matter of the quality of education. It may look crude and unsophisticated but it makes good sense since China has a vast territory and there are great variations between regions. In the coastal areas, cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou have achieved an education standard that has measured up to the level of some developed countries. But in the inland areas, many cities are barely able to provide basic education for their children and a few cities encounter genuine difficulty in so doing. A centralized measure will offer both central and local governments some common denominators in the planning of education. The input–process–output model for quality assurance was developed under this consideration.

The input–process–output model has the categories shown below.

Education objectives

A Input

- Teachers
- Students

- Physical conditions
- Curricula and textbooks

B Process

- School organization
- Classroom teaching
- Extra-curricular activities
- Examinations

C Output

- Students outcome (effectiveness of schooling)

The education objectives aspect in China's context refers to the goals of government educational policies. These goals include enabling students to have an all-round development in morality, intelligence, sports, artistic appreciation and working skills. The teachers are active agencies for change, with teaching being not merely a method of passing knowledge to students, but also of promoting the development of students' intellectual and physical abilities. Moral education is becoming one of the main goals of schooling. These goals could be interpreted as the ideals of education. Like all educational goals, they are an expression of ideals or visions rather than a statement of reality. Being pragmatic, the Chinese developed concrete steps to realize these goals. The input–process–output model is such a measure, providing a common denominator for the provision of minimum standards within the quality assurance system.

Input factors

The input factors include four areas: teacher, student, physical condition of the school and the curriculum and textbooks adopted.

Teachers are surely the major determining factor affecting teaching quality. Teacher resources refer to the total number of teachers available, their academic qualifications, their distributions, and the student–teacher ratio. In Mainland China, the qualifications of primary and secondary school teachers are relatively low. For a primary school teacher, the required qualification is graduation from a secondary level teachers' institution; for a junior secondary school teacher, the requirement is graduation from a two-year diploma programme of a higher institution; for a senior secondary school teacher, the basic qualification is graduation from a four-year degree programme of a tertiary institution. At present, in some of the more developed coastal regions, secondary level teachers' institutions have ceased to exist, and the basic qualification for a primary school teacher has been raised to graduation from a two-year diploma programme. Teachers who have not reached such a requirement are required to join self-taught diploma programmes or other forms of in-service training.

One of the unique features of the educational scene in Mainland China is the relatively high teacher–student ratio. One needs to bear in mind, of course, the fact that the wages of workers in China, including teachers, are low. For primary schools, the teacher–student ratio is 1:23.74; for junior secondary schools, the ratio is 1:17.18; and for senior high schools, the ratio is 1:15.38. But there are variations from province to province. Generally, primary and secondary school teachers teach eighteen lessons per week and each lesson lasts for forty-five minutes. The workload of teachers in Mainland China is much less than that of teachers in Hong Kong. But class-size is big on the Mainland with each class having up to fifty students, a fact disguised by the averaging effect of teacher–student ratios. In some primary schools, the class size could go up to as high as sixty or seventy students. Teachers in the Mainland are classified, based on their educational qualifications and teaching experiences, into four categories: second, first, advanced, and those who have made outstanding contributions, super category. The salary of a teacher depends on their qualifications, experience and the category he or she holds. The number of senior teachers' titles a school has reflects, to some extent, the status of a school.

Needless to say, the quality of students is a crucial factor in the quality exercise. Student resources refer to the standard of students when they enroll in a school, the structure of the student composition, their attitude to learning and their learning motivation. In the Mainland, children start entering neighbourhood schools at the age of six. Only private schools are permitted to enroll students across school districts, or even across provinces. In rural areas, junior secondary schools are set up in towns. Since the late 1990s, both rural and urban junior secondary schools have cancelled entrance examinations. Senior secondary schools generally enroll their students through the county-wide or the city-wide public exams. In general, the senior secondary schools are very keen to attract the better students. For parents, their chief concern is to send their children to key secondary schools that stand for better quality.

Physical conditions refer to school buildings, laboratory equipment, library facilities and the school environment. The Ministry of Education has laid down clear and specific requirements concerning the space an average student should have, the size of a school campus, the average copies of books a student can have access to in the library. China is a big country. In actual fact, many schools are below the required standard but there are many that are above the standard. The role of educational quality assurance is to ensure that the minimum standard is attained.

Curriculum and textbooks adopted affect the type of education being offered. In China, the school curriculum is designed by the Ministry of Education. Some degree of flexibility is allowed in the implementation. On top of the approved curriculum, schools are permitted to operate some optional courses. Textbooks are also decided by the Ministry of Education. There are different versions of textbooks for compulsory education in all the subjects. There are at least eight different sets of textbooks used by schools across the country. At the moment, the

curricula for senior secondary schools are undergoing reform. Revision is also being made to the textbooks. A new set of curricula for senior secondary schools is being trialled in Tianjin, Shanxi and Jiangxi. It is understood that the curriculum will include after-class reading activities.

Process factors

The process factors also include four areas: school organization, classroom teaching, extra-curricular activities and examinations.

In a school setting, the basic unit for teaching is usually a class. But there are different ways of organizing classes. Students could be streamed into different classes according to their general ability, languages skills or subjects chosen (in the senior forms). For example, there are in the senior forms science or humanities, or commercial streams. In Mainland China, classes are not usually organized with mixed-ability students. So in some schools there are the fast or slow classes. Normally when students enter the senior secondary schools, they will be streamed into science or humanities groups. The purpose is to prepare them better for university entrance examinations. Teachers are generally grouped into teaching units according to the subjects they teach. The group is referred to as a teaching research group. Teachers are encouraged, and given a lot of opportunities, to share their teaching experiences. Teachers who teach the same subjects to the same levels of students will gather together to prepare for their teaching collectively.

Classroom teaching is the key to teaching quality. This has been given serious consideration by almost all schools. In Mainland China, teachers spent a great deal of time and attention preparing their teaching notes. Teachers are required to have teaching notes when teaching. Teaching quality in the context of classroom teaching in China is evaluated by whether a teacher has explained the key points or difficult points clearly as indicated in the prepared teaching notes, and whether he or she could stimulate students into active thinking and participation. As a way to enhance teaching quality, novice teachers are required to visit their colleagues' classes both in and outside the school. It is also practice for schools to organize exhibition and open classes to allow other teachers to visit and/or make comments.

Extra-curricular activities are considered an important area in the education of children. This is to complement the work done inside the classroom. In China, extra-curricular activities are viewed as the second channel through which a student can develop cognitively and physically. Some Chinese educationalists regard extra-curricular activities as second classrooms. There are generally two types of extra-curricular activities: subject-based and recreational activities. Often, the subject-based activities are an extension of the classroom teaching. The recreational activities, which include excursions and voluntary social work, are more true to the spirit.

Examination as a quality assurance activity includes homework assignments, all kinds of quizzes, terminal examinations and entrance tests. All these are ways to evaluate students' learning. Examination has been used solely for formal eval-

uation purposes. Having a long history in the use of public examination for the selection of civil servants, the Chinese are more ready to accept the validity of public examinations and people generally regard it as a fair means to evaluate one's ability. A lot of attention recently has been given to using it appropriately. People are concerned that examinations should not be over-used or misused. Otherwise, both teachers and students suffer.

Output factor

The output factor concerns outcomes of the school. For this the quality of the students is the indicator.

There are several ways to evaluate a student's final learning outcome. Scholars often suggest that the progress students have made over the years of schooling be evaluated. This is referred to as value-added study. If marked progress has been found in the students, it is usually taken as a sign of high-quality teaching. Since the 1970s, there has been much literature in the West (e.g. Scheerens and Bosker, 1997) on effective school study and a sophisticated measure known as multi-level analysis has been developed to study the impact of schools on students. Unfortunately, in the effective schools study, due to the measurement problem only the academic results are taken as outcome in many cases. This has made outcome too narrow a concept.

Another way to examine the effectiveness of schooling is to do cost-effect analysis, that is, to study the rate of investment against outcome. It is considered efficient if better (or more) outcome is produced with less investment. Some people may not feel comfortable about the use of such an economic concept for school quality. But China has a very large number of schools (not to mention the population of teachers and students). It makes good economic sense if efficiency can be achieved in schools. It is necessary to build up a dataset to show whether schools are indeed run efficiently. Some schools could be very good, but they may be expensively run and consume a great many resources. As a result, other schools are deprived of their share of limited resources. An example is that some schools spent a lot of money buying computer equipment but failed to use it frequently enough. This is a waste of precious resources and should be stopped. At the moment, little attention is given to examining the efficiency of a school. Many people, including parents, tend to equate good quality with a large amount of advanced hardware. This is, of course, an inaccurate or wrong concept that should be challenged.

CONCLUSION

The education quality assurance system in China is organized by educational administrative departments at all levels. The Ministry of Education sets up the overall objectives and direction and delegates the responsibility to the local educational

bureaux to take charge of the routine business. Within the local bureaux of education, the specific task of helping teachers is the Teaching Research Section. Staff help teachers to understand the curriculum and the textbooks. They visit schools and assist teachers in their preparation for teaching and organize exhibition classes.

These activities may sound very routine and at times boring. It is, however, on the routine activities that the tasks of teaching and education quality are maintained in China.

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10 Leadership in the Creation of World Class Schools

Beyond the Self-Managing School

Brian J. Caldwell

The issue of leadership in schools is at centre stage of the reform movement in Hong Kong, as it is in many other places around the world, especially where significant authority, responsibility and accountability has been shifted to the school level. In Hong Kong, that shift is known as the School Management Initiative. Related approaches elsewhere are known as local management, school-based management, site-based management or self-management. The focus in this paper is the notion of 'the self-managing school'. The key source, including the centre-piece of thirty strategic intentions for school leaders, is the third book in a trilogy on self-managing schools.

ALL SCHOOLS CAN BE WORLD CLASS

The Self-Managing School appeared in 1988. *Leading the Self-Managing School* followed in 1992. The premise of *Beyond the Self-Managing School*, published recently in 1998, is that the means are at hand to create a system of schools that provide a high quality of education for all students and that will be professionally rewarding for teachers and other professionals. The book is optimistic, expressing the view that enough is now known about effective reform to guide all schools that seek to become world class. The challenge is how to put the pieces together, and how to energize those whose commitments and capacities are required to make it happen.

Beyond the Self-Managing School shows how these things can be done by proposing one hundred strategic intentions for schools and their leaders. They provide an agenda for professional development and a starting point for a school that embarks on a mission to be world class. Illustrations are provided in this chapter. The starting point is a brief review of the terrain that was covered in the first two books.

BUILDING BLOCKS

The *Self-Managing School* (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988) drew on a research project of national significance in Australia in 1983 that yielded a model for the allocation of resources in highly effective schools. The central feature was a cyclical approach to goal setting, policy making, planning, resource allocation, implementation and evaluation, with clearly defined roles for a policy group and programme teams.

The model shaped an extended training programme for principals, school councillors and teachers in Victoria, Australia from 1984 to 1986, leading to the publication of the book in 1988. The book formed the basis of extensive involvement in training, with most conducted by Jim Spinks in Britain and New Zealand. In 1992 and 1993 several training programmes were conducted for supervisors and principals of schools in Hong Kong, where the School Management Initiative called for schools to adopt a more systematic approach to planning and resource allocation.

It soon became apparent that the model should be refined in important ways for effective self-management in the 1990s. This was accomplished in 1992 in *Leading the Self-Managing School* (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992). There was a need to take account of the dramatic change in the external environment for schools. Strong links were being made at the time between the knowledge and skills required for success in a global economy in the post-industrial age and programmes offered in schools. More and more was expected of schools, and any expectation that there would be a period of consolidation following the changes of the 1980s were soon dashed.

Schools need a capacity to manage continuing change and set priorities rather than continue to 'add on' to existing programmes. Systems make substantial demands on schools but schools were also expected to respond to local needs and priorities. Two mechanisms were proposed. One was the school charter, no longer than twenty pages, that set out the nature of the school and its current and expected profile in respect to students and programmes. It outlined in general terms how the school proposed to address central and local priorities. The annual cycle of self-management remained the same, except for some changes in terminology to reinforce the focus on learning and teaching.

The second mechanism was leadership, and four dimensions were proposed: strategic, cultural, educational and responsive. Strategic leadership calls for a capacity to see 'the big picture', to discern the megatrends, to see the implications for the school, to build a capacity among others to do the same in their areas of interest, and to establish structures and processes to deal with the implications in the school setting. Principals and other school leaders are now generally aware of the momentous changes affecting society in the late twentieth century. They ought to take the lead to ensure that all in the school community gain an understanding of what is happening and why, with appropriate responses at the school level.

Cultural leadership is concerned with changing in a fundamental sense 'the way things are done around here'. First, of lesser importance, is to lead the change in culture from dependence on the centre to a culture of self-management. Of

greater importance is to help change a culture to one that focuses all energies on improving the quality of learning and teaching. It is a culture that accepts the need to measure and monitor achievement, to set targets and priorities, and prepare and implement plans to address these.

Educational leadership is a broad concept that focuses on the notion of 'building a learning community': building the capacity of teachers and others in the school community to provide programmes in teaching and learning of the highest quality.

The fourth dimension is responsive leadership or 'coming to terms with accountability' based on the 'right to know' about the achievements of the school that is held by many individuals, groups and institutions in society, not just teachers and parents on receipt of a report of their child's progress. The need for a wider range of diagnostic and achievement tests is accepted but a strong stand is taken against unethical or fraudulent use of 'league tables' based on raw scores from system-wide tests.

BEYOND THE SELF-MANAGING SCHOOL

School reform is viewed in *Beyond the Self-Managing School* (Caldwell and Spinks, 1998) as proceeding on three tracks in places where structural reform has been evident over the last decade:

- Track 1 involves the building of systems of self-managing schools;
- Track 2 calls for an unrelenting focus on learning outcomes;
- Track 3 entails the creation of schools for the knowledge society, underpinned by advances in information and communications technology.

These are not stages or sequences; there are developments on each track everywhere, with schools and systems at different points with respect to how far down each track they have travelled. In Hong Kong, there has been much activity on Tracks 1 and 2 with Education Commission Report No. 7 giving further attention to self-management with its endorsement for all schools of the spirit of the School Management Initiative 'so that they can develop quality education according to the needs of their students' (Education Commission, 1996, p. xi).

Impact of structural reform on learning outcomes

After a decade of structural reform on Track 1 ('building systems of self-managing schools'), it is fair to ask about the extent to which there has been an impact on outcomes for students, and how such reform can make a contribution to further reform on Track 2 ('unrelenting focus on learning outcomes').

It is sobering to note the consistent finding in research over many years that there appear to be few if any direct links between local management or school-based management or self-management, on one hand, and learning outcomes, on

the other (Malen, Ogawa and Kranz, 1990; Summers and Johnson, 1996; Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998). Some observers have noted that such gains are unlikely to be achieved in the absence of purposeful links between capacities associated with school reform and what occurs in the classroom, in learning and teaching and the support of learning and teaching (see Bullock and Thomas, 1997; Cheng, 1996; Cheung, 1996; Hanushek, 1996, 1997; Leithwood and Menzies, 1998; Levacic, 1995; OECD, 1994; Smith, Scoll and Link, 1996).

Bullock and Thomas (1997) go to the heart of the issue:

> If learning is at the heart of education, it must be central to our… discussion of decentralisation. It means asking whether, in their variety of guises, the changes characterised by decentralisation have washed over and around children in classrooms, leaving their day-to-day experiences largely untouched. In asking this question, we must begin by recognising that structural changes in governance, management and finance may leave largely untouched the daily interaction of pupils and teachers.
>
> (p. 219)

Evidence of how 'purposeful links' have been made are now emerging, especially in Chicago (Bryk, 1998) and in Victoria (Cooperative Research Project, 1998; Wee, forthcoming).

Mapping the links

Particular attention is given at this point to the processes and outcomes of the most recent wave of reform in the State of Victoria, Australia which has occurred since early 1993 under the rubric of Schools of the Future. Almost 90 per cent of the state's budget for public education has been decentralized to schools for local decision-making within a curriculum and standards framework in eight key learning areas. Schools have a capacity to select their own staff, who remain employed by the central authority, with provision for annual and triennial reports to the local community and the state Department of Education on a range of indicators.

Findings are drawn from several research projects. The primary source is the Cooperative Research Project, a joint endeavour of the Department of Education, the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, the Victorian Primary Principals Association and the University of Melbourne. The Cooperative Research Project began in mid-1993 and concluded in mid-1998, completing on schedule a planned five-year longitudinal study of the processes and outcomes of Schools of the Future. Seven statewide surveys of representative samples of principals were conducted and these covered virtually every aspect of the reform, including its impact on learning outcomes for students.

More recent work is under the umbrella of an international collaborative project, some fruits of which are shared. This project pools research from Australia (University of Melbourne), Britain (Open University) and United States

(University of Wisconsin at Madison). There are two purposes of this larger effort, which is supported by a large grant from the Australian Research Council, first, the development of models that transcend national boundaries for matching resource allocation to special educational needs and, second, investigation of the impact of school-based decisions about resource allocation on learning outcomes for students.

The potential for linkage is present in the Victorian reform because of its comprehensive and coherent nature, with the shift in authority, responsibility and accountability for key functions shifting from the centre to the school, all occurring within a curriculum and standards framework in eight key learning areas, and realignment of important personnel functions. Principals provided ratings on the extent of realization of expected benefits or extent of achievement of certain outcomes.

Successive surveys in the Cooperative Research Project have consistently shown that principals believe there has been moderate to high level of realization of the expected benefit in respect to improved learning outcomes for students. In the most recent survey, 84 per cent gave a rating of 3 or more on the 5-point scale (1 is 'low' and 5 is 'high').

This finding is noteworthy but it does not illuminate the extent to which the capacities fostered by the reform have a direct impact on learning outcomes for students. Structural equation modelling was employed in the analysis of findings in each of the last three surveys, using LISREL 8 (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993). This approach allows the analysis of ordinal-scale variables such as those utilized in this research. The model reported here derives from the most recent survey (Cooperative Research Project, 1998).

The first step was to create clusters of related items and to treat these as constructs. These seven constructs were created from a total of forty-five items in the survey instrument, with their titles shown in italic in the text that follows.

Figure 10.1 contains the explanatory regression model that shows the interdependent effects among variables (in this instance, latent variables that represent the constructs) on the variable *Curriculum and Learning Benefits*. Standardized path coefficients are shown, representing the direct effects (all paths are statistically significant beyond the $p < 0.05$ level by univariate two-tailed test). The fit between the data and model is very good indeed, with an Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index of 0.969 indicating that almost all (96.9%) of the variances and co-variances in the data are accounted for by the model.

The path coefficients may be interpreted in this manner. The direct effect of *Personnel and Professional Benefits* on *Curriculum and Learning Benefits* is indicated by a path coefficient of 0.299. This indicates that an increase in the measure of *Personnel and Professional Benefits* of 1 standard deviation, as reflected in ratings of principals, produces an increase in the measure of *Curriculum and Learning Benefits* of 0.299 of a standard deviation.

The model shows that three variables have a direct effect on *Curriculum and Learning Benefits* (which includes improved learning outcomes for students),

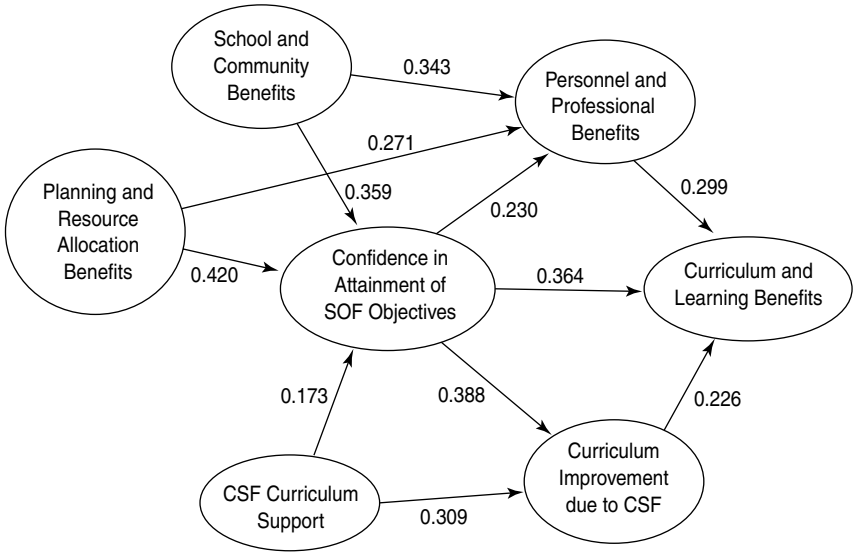

Figure 10.1 *Explanatory regression model showing interdependent effects among factors influencing perceived Curriculum and Learning Benefits*

Source: Cooperative Research Project, 1998

namely, *Personnel and Professional Benefits* (which reflects ratings for realization of the expected benefits of better personnel management, enhanced professional development, shared decision-making, improved staff performance, more effective organisation following restructure, increased staff satisfaction and an enhanced capacity to attract staff); *Curriculum Improvement due to CSF* (which reflects ratings for improvement of capacity for planning the curriculum, establishing levels and standards for students, moving to a curriculum based on learning outcomes and meeting the needs of students); and *Confidence in Attainment of SOF Objectives*.

Noteworthy are the pathways of indirect effects, illustrated for *Planning and Resource Allocation Benefits*, which is mediated in respect to its effect on *Curriculum and Learning Benefits* through *Personnel and Professional Benefits* and *Confidence in Attainment of SOF Objectives*. Expressed another way, realizing the expected benefits of better resource management, clearer sense of direction, increased accountability and responsibility, greater financial and administrative flexibility and improved long-term planning, will have no direct effect on *Curriculum and Learning Benefits* but will have an indirect effect to the extent they impact on *Personnel and Professional Benefits* which in turn have a direct effect on *Curriculum and Learning Benefits*.

Also noteworthy are the constructs that have direct effects on *Confidence in Attainment of SOF Objectives*. High ratings of confidence were associated with high ratings for the achievement of *Planning and Resource Allocation Benefits*,

School and Community Benefits and *CSF Curriculum Support*. The likely explanation is that unless principals experience benefits in these last three domains, they are unlikely to have confidence in the reform.

Modelling of this kind has been done for findings in each of the last three surveys and there is now stability in the model, with only small variations in the directions of effects and the size of path coefficients.

Indicators of improvement in learning outcomes

Principals were asked to indicate the basis for their rating of the extent to which the expected benefit of improved student learning had been realized. They were asked to rate the importance of certain achievement measures and indicators of attendance, time allocations in curriculum, participation rates, exit/destination data, parent opinion, staff opinion and level of professional development (a total of twenty-three indicators was provided). Most principals indicated moderate to high importance for these indicators in arriving at their ratings, with the most notable exception being the low level of importance attached to the system-wide testing programme in primary schools.

Principals were also asked to rate the extent of change for each of the aforementioned indicators, with a 5-point scale of 'decline' (1 or 2), 'no change' (3) or 'improve' (4 or 5). A large majority of principals reported either no change or improvement, with more than 50 per cent reporting improvement for most indicators, with the notable exception being achievement measures associated with the system-wide testing programme in primary.

In the absence of a stream of student achievement data over several years among groups of comparable students that would put the matter beyond doubt, a high level of trustworthiness ought be attached to these findings, given consistency in ratings, the stability of the model over the last three years and declarations by principals that they took account of a range of indicators in forming their judgements.

Verifying the model

Further case study research combined the agenda for the Cooperative Research Project and the international project supported by the Australian Research Council. Case studies were designed to illuminate the links illustrated in the model in Figure 10.1 under conditions where principals report improved learning outcomes. Are the linkages evident in the model confirmed in deep on-site investigations in particular schools where improvement is claimed?

The starting point in the research design for several projects to date was a set of schools where principals made a claim of improved learning outcomes. The first task was to test the validity of these claims, drawing on evidence in the particular schools selected for study. The second task was to seek explanations for how such improvement occurred and then to match it against the linkages or path-

ways shown in the model in Figure 10.1. A third task was to highlight, in particular, the role of the principal and other leaders in achieving these linkages.

The first such study by Julie Wee (1999) was conducted in late 1997 when the pool of indicators was well developed and a substantial body of evidence was available to test claims of improved learning outcomes. A feature of her study was the relentless probing for evidence and an extended pursuit of explanations to account for improvement where this was found.

The research was carried out in four primary schools in the Western Metropolitan Region in Melbourne. These were selected from a pool of schools in the 1996 survey whose principals expressed a willingness to participate in the case study phase, believed that evidence was available to support a claim of improvement in student learning, and nominated up to three curriculum areas where improvement had occurred. The final selection of four schools reflected a diversity among areas of the curriculum.

Findings reveal that schools can cite evidence that their efforts have led to improved outcomes for students. They draw on many sources of data in recognizing improved student learning in their schools. This illustrates the capacity being developed in the system to gather information about the performance of schools. It was noted above in connection with the findings of the most recent survey of principals in the Cooperative Research Project that most respondents had been able to draw on up to twenty-three indicators in making their judgement of the extent to which there had been improvement in learning outcomes for students.

Maps of direct and indirect links were prepared by Wee for each school using the rigorous approach to data collection, data display and data reduction for qualitative research proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). These maps are consistent with the explanatory model in Figure 10.1. A new link was identified, being the impact of monitoring, including assessment and reporting, which was not contained in the explanatory model. Developing a capacity at the school level for gathering and utilizing a wide range of techniques for monitoring student progress has impacted directly on improvement in student learning and on the way staff have implemented the curriculum and standards framework. Taken together, this mapping of links between self-management and learning is consistent with the outstanding conceptual work of Cheng (1996) that provided a framework for several related research projects in Hong Kong (for example, Cheung, 1996).

STRATEGIC INTENTIONS

What implications can be drawn from these and related findings for leaders who are determined to ensure that structural reform is linked to learning in schools that aspire to be world class? In *Beyond the Self-Managing School*, these implications are presented in ten sets of ten strategic intentions. The formation of strategic intent is one of several elements in a comprehensive approach to the management of strategy.

Max Boisot is Professor of Strategic Management at Escuela Superior de Administración y Dirección de Empresas in Barcelona and Senior Associate at the Judge Institute of Management Studies at the University of Cambridge. He provided a helpful classification of management responses in the exercise of strategic leadership (Boisot, 1995). As illustrated in Figure 10.2, there are four, namely, emergent strategy, strategic planning, intrapreneurship and strategic intent. Which are possible and appropriate depends on the level of turbulence in an organization's environment ('turbulence') and the capacity of the organization to extract and process useful information from that environment ('understanding'). If used appropriately, these provide a repertoire of responses for strategic management in the learning organization (see Davies and Ellison, 1999 for other ways to utilize the Boisot model).

- When turbulence and understanding are low, an emergent strategy is all that may be possible and hence is appropriate, being an 'incremental adjustment to environmental states that cannot be discerned or anticipated through a prior analysis of data' (Boisot, 1995, p. 34, based on Mintzberg). These are not the conditions that face schools at this time.
- When turbulence is low and understanding is high, strategic planning is possible and appropriate, being the setting of medium- to long-term plans on the basis of an environmental scan. These were the conditions that faced schools until about the mid-1990s but they are fast receding. 'The thinking that underpins strategic planning is a legacy of more stable times when the environment was changing sufficiently slowly for an effective corporate response to emerge from methodical organisational routines' (Boisot, 1995, p. 33).
- When turbulence is high and understanding is low, 'intrapreneurship' may be appropriate (a similar concept to 'entrepreneurship' except that it is carried out within the organization). Intrapreneurship is an approach to management that encourages individual initiative when it is not possible to formulate a coherent and integrated organizational response. Some efforts may pay off and be incorporated later in an organization-wide strategy. For schools, intrapreneurship may be appropriate, for example, for some developments in information technology.
- When turbulence is high and understanding is high, strategic intent is the desirable response, adapted from Boisot (1995) as follows.

  Strategic intent describes a process of coping with turbulence through a direct, intuitive understanding of what is occurring in order to guide the work of a school. A turbulent environment cannot be tamed by rational analysis alone so that conventional strategic planning is deemed to be of little use. Yet it does not follow that a school's response must be left to a random distribution of lone individuals acting opportunistically and often in isolation as in a regime of intrapreneurship. Strategic intent relies on an intuitively formed pattern or *gestalt* – some would call it a vision – to give it unity and coherence.

(p. 36)

In the opinion of Boisot (1995) strategic intent is 'the distinguishing mark of the learning organisation and, by implication, an essential component of its strategic repertoire' (p. 41). This should be the case for schools, faced with a level of turbulence that is unprecedented. Leaders and managers ought to strive for a level of understanding of their environment, and develop a capacity for acquiring and processing information that will ensure a timely and effective response in any circumstance.

Strategic intentions for linking self-management to learning outcomes

In *Beyond the Self-Managing School*, ten strategic intentions are offered as a guide to schools that seek to link structural reform, in this instance, the increased authority, responsibility and accountability that comes with self-management, to learning outcomes for students. For each, the name of a particular school can be inserted at the appropriate place in each statement. A professional development programme or an agenda for action over several months can be based around one or more of these.

These strategic intentions reflect the outcome of a form of 'backward mapping', starting from the primary purpose of schooling – learning – and then

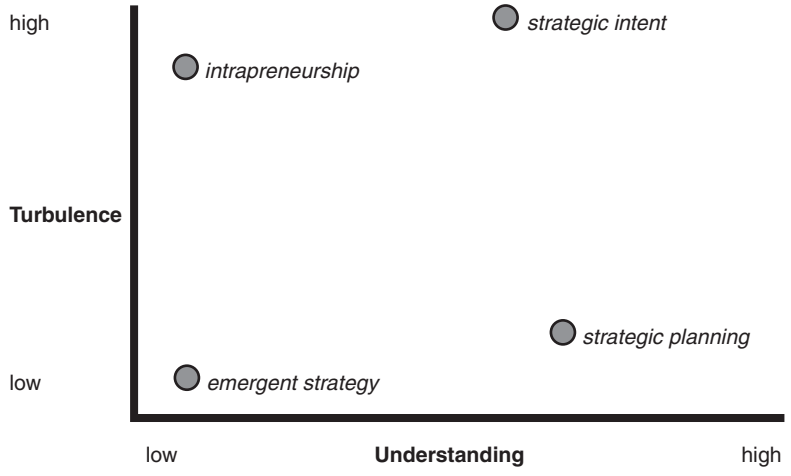

Figure 10.2 *A model for strategic management*

Source: Boisot, 1995, reproduced with permission of McGraw-Hill Companies from: Garratt, B. (1995) *Developing Strategic Thought*, McGraw-Hill.

drawing on research findings to develop an agenda (see Dimmock, 1995 for illustrations of the concept of 'backward mapping').

- The primary purpose of self-management is to make a contribution to learning, so schools that aspire to success in this domain will make an unrelenting effort to utilize all of the capacities that accrue with self-management to achieve that end.
- There will be clear, explicit and planned links, either direct or indirect, between each of the capacities that come with self-management and activities in the school that relate to learning and teaching and the support of learning and teaching.
- There is a strong association between the mix and capacities of staff and success in addressing needs and priorities in learning, so schools will develop a capacity to select staff optimally, taking account of these needs and priorities.
- There is a strong association between the knowledge and skills of staff and learning outcomes for students, so schools will employ their capacity for self-management to design, select, implement or utilize professional development programmes to help ensure these outcomes.
- A feature of staff selection and professional development will be the building of high-performing teams whose work is needs-based and data-driven, underpinned by a culture that values quality, effectiveness, equity and efficiency.
- There is a strong association between social capital and learning outcomes, so schools will utilize their capacities for self-management to build an alliance of community interests to support a commitment to high achievement for all students.
- Self-managing schools will not be distracted by claims and counter-claims for competition and the impact of market forces, but will nonetheless market their programmes with integrity, building the strongest possible links between the needs and aspirations of the community, programme design, programme implementation and programme outcomes.
- Schools will have a capacity for 'backward mapping' in the design and implementation of programmes for learning, starting from goals, objectives, needs and desired outcomes, and working backwards to determine courses of action that will achieve success, utilizing (where possible and appropriate) the capacities that accrue with self-management.
- Incentive, recognition and reward schemes will be designed that make explicit the links between effort and outcomes in the take-up of capacities for self-management and improvement in learning outcomes, acknowledging that as much if not more attention must be given to intrinsic as to extrinsic incentives and rewards.
- A key task for principals and other school leaders is to help make effective the links between capacities for self-management and learning outcomes, and to ensure that support is available when these links break down or prove ineffective.

New professionalism

What are the important dimensions of professional practice that emerge from the research and from accounts of success, especially in areas such as early literacy, where 'success for all' is now feasible?

Teachers acquire new knowledge and skill in a learning area for which they were already qualified to teach. They are skilful in using an array of diagnostic and assessment instruments to identify precisely what entry levels and needs exist among their students, and these are different in each classroom. Every child is treated as an individual, in reality as well as in rhetoric. Teachers have a capacity to work in a team and devote much time out of class to preparation and in briefing and de-briefing meetings, to assess the effectiveness of approaches and to plan new ones. Cross-cultural communication and the effective involvement of parents as partners in the enterprise are also required. Also evident is a commitment to the vision, appreciating that existing approaches were not good enough, though good enough to get by in the past.

These are the hallmarks of the new professional in teaching. None of these capacities calls for abandonment of the traditional tenets of professionalism. They are reinforced, extended and enriched. The effective professional in the past will likely be well-suited to the new circumstance, albeit with an updating of knowledge and skill. But there should be no doubt that there is a more sophisticated body of knowledge and skill than in the past, and a new and very demanding set of expectations to live up to.

One contrast with past practices in the profession is in order, as is a comparison with professional practice in other fields. In respect to the former, it is clear that the isolation of the past has gone. This is not a teacher working alone, who is expected or expects to teach her or his class behind closed doors. This is a professional who is at ease working in a team and at ease in sharing complex sets of data about student entry points, progress and outcomes. This calls for a willingness to share and also a willingness to be vulnerable.

The comparisons with other professions, particular the caring professions, are immediately apparent. One expects doctors, general practitioners and specialists to make use of an increasingly sophisticated battery of tests and select a treatment. There is distress at the prospect that doctors might not keep up-to-date with the latest developments in their fields, through their private reading and successful participation at regularly organized programmes of professional development that are provided as a matter of course by their professional associations. At a place where there is a concentration of doctors, such as a clinic or a hospital, there is an expectation of regular conferences where sharing of information about what does or does not work takes place. We expect full accountability. This comparison with the health care field is not new. David Hargreaves has employed it to good effect (see, for example, Hargreaves, 1994; 1997). It is not an entirely appropriate comparison, for education involves concern about students who are learning whereas, in medicine, doctors deal with patients who have an ailment. It is, how-

ever, entirely appropriate to show that the new professionalism for teachers can be as fully professional as for doctors, whose status in this regard is held in society to be unquestionable.

- There will be planned and purposeful efforts to reach higher levels of professionalism in data-driven, outcomes-oriented, team-based approaches to raising levels of achievement for all students.
- Substantial blocks of time will be scheduled for teams of teachers and other professionals to reflect on data, devise and adapt approaches to learning and teaching, and set standards and targets that are relevant to their students.
- Teachers and other professionals will read widely and continuously in local, national and international literature in their fields, consistent with expectations and norms for medical practitioners.
- Teachers and other professionals will become skilful in the use of a range of information and communications technology, employing it to support learning and teaching, and to gain access to current information that will inform their professional practice.
- Schools will join networks of schools and other providers of professional services in the public and private sectors to ensure that the needs of all students will be diagnosed and met, especially among the disabled and disadvantaged, employing the techniques of case management to ensure success for every individual in need.
- Professionals will work within curriculum and standards frameworks, as well as other protocols and standards of professional practice, with the same level of commitment and rigour as expected in medicine.
- Schools will advocate, support and participate in programmes of unions and professional associations that are consistent with the new professionalism in education.
- Working within frameworks established for the profession, incentives, recognition and reward schemes will be developed at the school level that are consistent with the strategic needs of the workplace, with components that are skill-based and contain provision for collective rewards, gainsharing and team-based performance awards where these are possible and appropriate.
- Staff will seek recognition of their work that meets or exceeds standards of professional practice, and will support and participate in the programmes of professional bodies established for this purpose.
- Schools will work with universities and other providers in a range of programmes in teaching, research and development that support and reflect the new professionalism in education.

CREATING SCHOOLS FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY IN REFORM ON TRACK 3

The third track for change in school education cannot be described in detail but may be presented as a vision, illustrated in a *gestalt* in Figure 10.3: a perceived organized whole that is more than the sum of its parts.

It is schooling for the knowledge society, because those who manage information to solve problems, provide service or create new products now form the largest group in the workforce, displacing industrial workers, who formed the largest group following the industrial revolution and who, in turn, displaced agricultural and domestic workers who dominated in pre-industrial times.

Strategic intentions for the transformation of learning (G1–G3 in Figure 10.3)

- Approaches to learning and teaching will change to accommodate the reality that every student in every setting will have a laptop or hand-held computer, making the new learning technologies as much a part of the learning scene as books have been since the advent of systems of public education.
- Subject boundaries will be broken and learning will be integrated across the curriculum as the new learning technologies become universal, challenging rigidity in curriculum and standards frameworks, without removing the need for testing in discrete areas as well in learning that spans the whole.

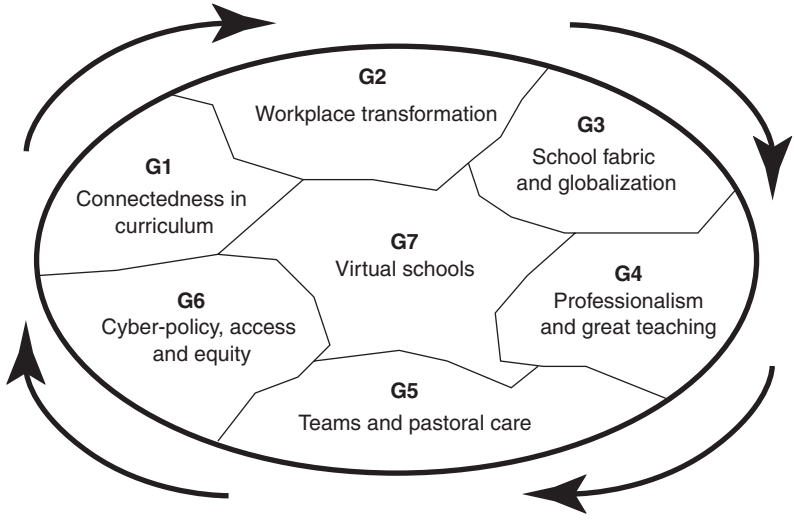

Figure 10.3 *A vision for schooling in the knowledge society illustrated in a* gestalt

- Schools will critically examine their approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy to ensure that the new learning technologies are incorporated, and every effort will be made to resource the latter without sacrificing targets for success in the basics for every student.
- Rigidity in roles, relationships and approaches to school and classroom organization will be broken down, with multiple but rewarding roles for teachers and other professionals, more flexibility in the use of time, and abandonment of narrow specifications of class size that are rendered meaningless in the new workplace arrangements.
- School buildings designed for the industrial age will be re-designed to suit the needs of the knowledge society.
- Staff in self-managing schools will have critical roles to play in school design, sharing needs, aspirations and visions with architects who are tuned to the requirements of schooling for the knowledge society.
- Information technology will pervade school design for the knowledge society.
- Schools that serve the middle years in the Grade 5 to Grade 8 range, or thereabouts, will require major change in school design, reflecting what is known about the causes of flattened levels of achievement and motivation across the years of transition from the traditional primary to the traditional secondary.
- School design will feature high levels of flexibility and adaptability, with the former referring to multiple uses of the same facilities in the short term, and the latter to a capacity for major re-design with minimal disruption in the medium to long term.
- Schools will be adept at analysing the relationship between function, form and culture in school design, helping to bring to realization a design that contributes to making schools exciting and uplifting places of work for staff and students.

THE ART OF STRATEGIC CONVERSATION

The generic skill in strategic management is strategic thinking, described by Mintzberg (1995) in refreshingly straightforward terms as seeing ahead, seeing behind, seeing above, seeing below, seeing beside, seeing beyond, and above all, seeing it through. This suggests that strategic thinking should be a continuous activity on the part of leaders and managers and, for this reason, it should be given expression. The concept of 'strategic conversation' is central, as illustrated in Figure 10.4.

Larry Hirschhorn (1997) is wary of formalizing planning processes, at least in the early stages: 'High-stakes strategic issues stimulate executives to use more formal planning methods. These methods, in turn, create more superficial and less meaningful decisions' (p. 123). The alternative is strategic conversation:

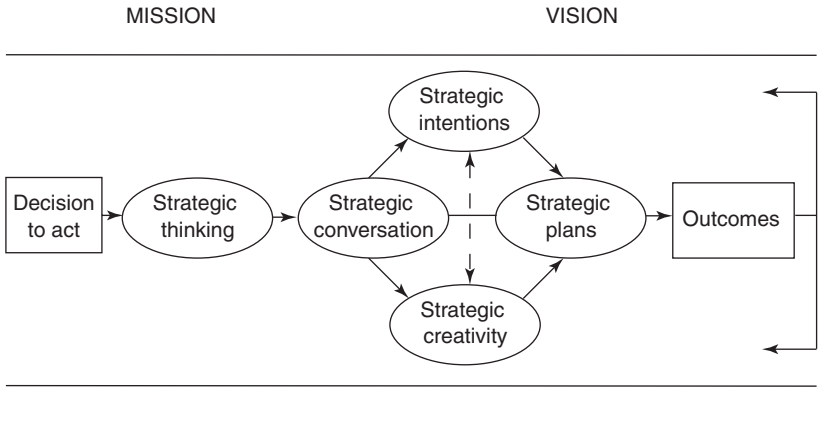

Figure 10.4 *Strategic conversation at the heart of strategic management*

> In this context, I believe that executives must learn to have what I call 'strategic conversations' with one another and with their subordinates. Such conversations, while supported by data and by rigorous thinking… should be as freewheeling as possible.
>
> (pp. 123–124)

Kees van der Heijden (1996) suggests that scenario formulation is an important tool in strategic management, and that strategic planning can inform a strategic conversation, with the aim of the latter being to create a shared view about the direction of the organization:

> If action is based on planning on the basis of a mental model, then institutional action must be based on a shared mental model. Only through a process of conversation can elements of observation and thought be structured and embedded in the accepted and shared organisational theories-in-use. Similarly new perceptions of opportunities and threats based on the reflection on experiences obtained in the environment can only become institutional property through conversation. An effective strategic conversation must incorporate a wide range of initially unstructured thoughts and views, and out of this create shared interpretations of the world in which the majority of individual insights can find a logical place.
>
> (pp. 41–42)

Figure 10.4 suggests a relationship between these concepts.

For a school wishing to thrive in a climate of continuing change, it needs first a decision to act. It needs a capacity for strategic thinking that should be widely dispersed and utilized in a range of structures and processes in which various

strategic conversations are conducted. An outcome of strategic conversation may be the selection of an appropriate response. The environment may be stable enough, and information of action may be understandable enough, for strategic plans to be formulated immediately. On the other hand, the level of turbulence may be so high that the school ought to form clear strategic intentions and proceed on that basis or, alternatively, some intrapraneurial effort might be encouraged (described as 'strategic creativity' in Figure 10.4). As suggested in the figure, there can be some interaction among the elements. Action will follow and outcomes will be secured, yielding data that can inform further strategic conversations in the future. Figure 10.4 also illustrates how these events should be framed by the mission and vision of the school, with a cultural foundation in the values and philosophy of the school.

Leaders in schools that seek to become world class may start the journey through strategic conversation with their colleagues. The 100 strategic intentions in *Beyond the Self-Managing School* may help shape the agenda.

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