

Strategies to develop school leadership

A SELECT LITERATURE REVIEW

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Executive Summary

This review contributes to Key Reform Project Six: School Leadership Development Strategies, part of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships initiative. The reviewers were tasked:

- i. to identify the most effective school leadership development strategies, according to an assessment of the evidence base; and
- ii. to identify gaps in existing national and international research evidence on school leadership development and recommend areas for future research and action.

Seven key publications were stipulated for the review, supplemented by other sources (see Appendix 1). A number of these works commented on the lack of detailed research findings about what works and why and this lack of robust research on strategies which maximise the transfer of leadership learning into school and classroom effects is a clear gap to which future attention should be given.

The review has found compelling agreement for action on these points:

1. Recognition that outstanding leaders make a difference to the quality of teaching and learning, and to student achievement, is prompting a return to professional development programs, strategies and activities which concentrate on linking leadership with student learning.
2. There is a need for professional development planners and school leaders to understand that an increasingly complex policy environment requires a commitment to continuing professional learning.
3. Educational systems need to pay systematic attention to professional learning at all career stages, both to meet quality demands and to address possible supply difficulties over the next two decades.
4. School leaders need to ensure their own professional learning throughout their careers.
5. Mandatory professional development programs and opportunities are essential at each career stage.
6. Literature on leadership learning highlights common capabilities and key knowledge and dispositions in frameworks which help to guide the planning and provision of professional learning.
7. School leaders should encounter a range of generic development strategies (Huber, 2011) that are linked to school practice as they move through each leadership stage.
8. Mentoring, coaching and peer support through networks are necessary professional development strategies, no matter the career stage.
9. There is no widespread evidence of support for teacher leadership as a fundamental part of the leadership development strategies repertoire.
10. Professional development strategies which blend substantive content knowledge with leadership capabilities frameworks are becoming evident and show sufficient promise to warrant future research.

Overall, the review has distilled criteria to aid those making judgments about the potential effectiveness of professional development strategies.

Leadership professional development strategies should be:

1. Philosophically and theoretically attuned to individual and system needs in leadership and professional learning.
2. Goal-oriented, with primacy given to the dual aims of school improvement and improvement in student learning and achievement.
3. Informed by the weight of research evidence.
4. Time-rich, allowing for learning sequences to be spaced and interspersed with collegial support, in-school applications and reflective encounters.
5. Practice-centred, so that knowledge is taken back into the school in ways that maximise the effects of leadership capability.
6. Purpose-designed for specific career stages, with ready transfer of theory and knowledge into practice.
7. Peer-supported within or beyond the school, so that feedback helps to transfer theory and knowledge into improved practice.
8. Context-sensitive, and thus able to build in and make relevant use of school leaders' knowledge of their circumstances.
9. Partnership-powered, with external support through joint ventures involving associations, universities and the wider professional world.
10. Committed to evaluating the effects on leaders, as well as on school practices to which their learning applies.

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Introduction

This research review contributes to Key Reform Project Six: School Leadership Development Strategies, one part of the Commonwealth Government's Smarter Schools National Partnerships initiative. To focus the review, seven primary sources were selected from national and international research reports and scholarly writing (see Appendix 1). Close examination of these publications showed that while discussion of leadership development content and strategies was prominent, there were few robust research findings about the strategies that are most effective in ensuring that knowledge and skills are transferred to the workplace. The selected authors claim much for the importance of developing leaders, and much of what is written is superficially compelling, but it is disappointing that detail about what works and why is not yet well researched. We found it necessary to go beyond the nominated documents in our search for as full a picture as possible. Therefore we also reviewed six chapters on leadership development from six world regions, included in a forthcoming Springer International Handbook on Leadership for Learning (see Appendix 1). We also drew on other reports and articles from Australia and overseas in our quest to understand current practice, emerging trends and future possibilities.

This review takes into account all levels of school leadership (potential, aspiring and current) in its discussions. This is consistent with the definition of school leadership adopted in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report *Improving School Leadership* (2008), the definition that informs Key Reform Project Six.

The definition of school leaders guiding the overall OECD activity suggests that effective school leadership may not reside exclusively in formal positions but instead be distributed across a range of individuals in the school. Principals, managers, academic leaders, departmental chairs and teachers can contribute as leaders to the goal of learning-centred schooling. Precise distribution of these leadership contributions can vary and can depend on factors such as governance and management structure, levels of autonomy and accountability, school size and complexity, and levels of student performance. Principals can act as leaders of schools as learning organisations which in addition, can benefit and contribute to positive learning environments and communities (OECD, Vol 1, p.17).

This definition emphasises leadership as a distributed phenomenon. Leadership is potentially shared and is evident in the activities of people who have particular responsibilities, although it is acknowledged that those in positions of authority are accountable and control resources in ways not expected of some who accept and undertake leadership activities. The review discusses leadership development content and strategies for particular career stages, both for those in positions of authority and those who are regarded as teacher leaders.

We were charged to identify emerging trends, themes or initiatives which point to effective leadership development strategies. To this end, we have structured our report in five parts. **Part 1** discusses the national and international contexts in which Australian school leaders work, together with some of the expectations and challenges they face. **Part 2** makes the case for school leadership development, and examines why the literature says it should be a priority. **Part 3** discusses the content of leadership

development, examining the benefits and limitations of what we call content frameworks. **Part 4** identifies and describes leadership development strategies or processes and shows how these apply at different points in a leadership career. **Part 5** concludes the review by pointing to trends on which the research literature suggests there should be dedicated action in the future — that is, ‘next practice’ in the professional development of school leaders.

PART 1

National and international influences on school leadership

Globally there is growing concern that in the 21st century the preparation and in-service development for educational leaders is inadequate (Brundrett & Crawford, 2008; Hallinger, 2003). Such a strong statement is justified by analyses of the international and national contexts in which school leaders work.

The international context

The OECD Report on Improving School Leadership (Vol 1, p.16) leads with this provocation:

There is a growing concern that the role of school principal designed for the industrial age has not changed enough to deal with the complex challenges schools are facing in the 21st century.

International studies have documented the complexities faced by contemporary schools, noting, high on the list, issues of 'social and population mobility, technological advances and an increased focus on schools to perform' (OECD, Vol 2, p.2). In response, over the past two decades, many schools have experienced decentralisation accompanied by increased autonomy and accountability. Sustainability concerns (particularly the issue of school leadership succession) are also a challenge (Brundrett & Crawford, 2008; OECD, 2008; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). School leaders now are responsible for managing change, building organisational capacity and implementing technological advances as they strive to improve their school's effectiveness and student learning outcomes. This position was reached Brundrett and Crawford (2008) point out, as a result of the last major international paradigm shift in the way that school leadership was conceived. This occurred in the 1980s and early 1990s, when in the West there was almost a universal move to site-based management.

In many countries policies to decentralise were designed to break the dominance of centrally controlled systems in favour of those based on significant school autonomy with increased parental and community choice and control. Added responsibilities for school leaders often followed policies into practice. Initially, particularly through the 90s, these led to programs by which leaders were trained, in the main, as finance and resource managers. However, the shift to site-based management brought student outcomes or results into far greater prominence than before. According to the OECD, the move to decentralisation, while creating greater autonomy for many schools, now holds them directly accountable for results in an increasingly complex and competitive environment (OECD, Vol 1, p.9).

As the OECD Report shows, there is widespread agreement in the international literature that expectations of school leaders are largely focused on achieving results, especially in tests which benchmark national system performance against world's best practice (for example, PISA, the Program for International Student Assessment, and TIMSS, the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study).

Finding out how schools can lift student performance has brought two themes into prominence: the quality of teachers and the quality of school leaders (Teaching Australia, 2007). They have become the educational priority of our times. Both are being addressed in ways that see new practices in school leadership gaining international currency. As the OECD asserts (Vol 1, p 11), increased responsibilities and accountabilities create a need for distributed school leadership so that teachers and middle-level managers are able to become leaders. Indeed, there is emerging research evidence to support this thrust:

Leadership appears to have a greater impact on influencing the school and students when it is widely distributed (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006, p.3).

In sum, the international context is shaping the way in which policymakers and school leaders are working to improve school and student performance. They must do so in an increasingly competitive world, where success or failure is transparent in a climate of high expectations. Policymakers have positioned school leaders and teachers as accountable, and as a result their professional learning needs have increased.

The Australian context

According to Starr (2009), the context in which school leaders work is characterised by two major influences. First, a market-economy emphasis in politics and public policy has provoked much structural reform over the past two decades. Competition, consumer choice and accountability are three policy imperatives which have affected schools and their leaders. Second, when these imperatives have found expression in education, they have led to pressures for enhanced parental choice, changed roles in school governance, greater regulation of curriculum and assessment requirements, standards for both teachers and leaders, and school performance comparisons based on student achievement. Authority and responsibility has been devolved to schools, significantly increasing the role and responsibilities of principals. A number of national and international studies show that the role of principals has changed considerably over this time (Bush, 2009; Gronn, 2007; Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford, 2000; Ainley & McKenzie, 2000).

Starr (2009, p. 22) describes it thus, at least for principals of large schools:

The role now equates with that of a Chief Executive Officer of any organisation, with management of strategic planning, multi-million dollar budgets, industrial relations, facilities, marketing and public relations coming on top of the 'core business' of curriculum, pastoral care, teaching and learning.

A further factor at work has been the emergence of risk-averse governments concerned with growing litigiousness in society. Managing risk places added pressures on principals' professional knowledge, as they move to comply with the legal and regulatory frameworks within which they administer their schools. In short, it has been argued by many that school leaders have become managers rather than leaders of learning (Erich, Kimber & Cranston, 2009; Mulford, Cranston, & Erich, 2009; MacBeath, 2009).

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) describes the kinds of broadly capable, vigorous and energetic citizens Australia's schools should be engaging, extending and supporting. It calls on principals to lead action on learning:

School leaders are responsible for creating and sustaining the learning environment and the conditions under which quality teaching and learning take place (MCEETYA, 2008).

This kind of advocacy in one of the nation's most influential statements about the purposes of education suggests that principals need to be well-versed in strategies that help young people achieve the broad goals of the declaration, at the same time as they are well-versed in the skills to command a tight fiscal, legal and regulatory 'ship'.

The Council of Australian Governments has agreed to develop Australia's first National Curriculum, though the timing of its implementation for compulsory and post-compulsory year levels is yet to be finalised in all States and Territories. Principals will lead its implementation, overseeing compliance with the teaching and assessment requirements that will accompany the initiative. An immediate consequence will be participation in professional development activities to ensure that they are well prepared for their national curriculum responsibilities.

These policy developments have occurred at a time when principals, in particular, have been called on to manage the Building the Education Revolution (BER) program, a key element of the Australian Government's economic stimulus package. Principals had to give this immediate attention to ensure that the stimulus proceeded sufficiently rapidly to help the country avoid recession. Unanticipated professional learning of the kind needed to fulfil BER responsibilities is always a possibility, a fact which underlines the claim that professional learning for school principals is a career-long occupation (Gronn, 2007).

Summary

The policy environment in which principals are expected to lead their schools is complex and demanding. It involves far-reaching initiatives, most with mandated requirements, all with high political and public expectations, explicit competition and transparent accountability, and some with tangible rewards. All are aimed at driving improved performance by schools, principals, teachers and students. It is in this roiling milieu that the question of how best to help school leaders to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for productive careers must be addressed.

What does this add up to for school principals? From their analysis of exemplary leadership development programs in the United States of America, Linda Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr and Cohen (2007) argue that the primary role of principals is to align all aspects of schooling to improve instruction so that all children are as successful as they can be. Expectations in the USA, unrealistic as they may be, are that school administrators will be expert in a wide range of roles to meet that goal – education visionary, change agent, instructional leader or leader of learning, curriculum and assessment expert, budget analyst, facility manager, special program administrator and community builder. In addition, they will have theoretical and practical understanding of organisations, organisational change, resource allocation and how to link organisational and pedagogical decisions to improving children's achievement.

Such expectations downplay a more broadly based view of school leadership, a collective view that distributes leadership opportunity and activity across roles and responsibilities particularly as they relate to children's learning and achievement. What the Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) description masks is the need for principals and school leaders to understand the macro- and micro-contextual influences on their work and the need to have the knowledge and skills to harness that understanding in their schools' interests.

PART 2

The case for leadership development

A moral imperative to develop leaders

In the United Kingdom, Tony Bush (2009), citing Leithwood et al. (2006), argues that there is consistent agreement in the research literature that leadership matters both to improve schools and to raise student achievement. Bush asserts that such is the increasing complexity of school contexts and growing list of responsibilities placed on school leaders, that employers have a moral obligation to provide them with appropriate preparation and development for their roles (Bush, 2009, p.377). This moral obligation applies both to those in leadership positions and the teachers who one day may be leaders.

Such preparatory programs rely on a steady stream of people willing to assume leadership roles, formally or informally. Leadership succession involves a range of issues to which employers and individuals need to respond.

The need to manage leadership succession

Using empirical findings from Australian research, Gronn (2007) claims:

As a general rule, reliance on voluntarist succession systems based on self-nomination is satisfactory as a recruitment principle, provided that the number of those volunteering exceeds the number of vacancies to be filled, and provided the range of available candidate quality facilitates competitive options and choices for selectors...When the positions to be filled exceed the number of people willing to fill them, however, the principle of voluntarism becomes problematic (Gronn, 2007, p.8).

He cites his results and those of other Australian researchers (d'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan & Neidhart, 2003; Cranston, Tromans & Reugebrink, 2004) to show that, although a high percentage of beginning teachers think of themselves as future leaders (though not necessarily as principals) the number who apply for vacancies varies considerably. The situation is generally better in secondary schools than in primary, and better among younger than older and more experienced teachers (Gronn, 2007, p.9). These findings suggest that aspiring young teachers should be nurtured so that they can move confidently into leadership roles: to turn aspiration into application. Other international research supports this view. The message from this body of work is that it is in the interests of employers to take leadership succession seriously. They should examine how they identify and support possible future leaders, and give them chances to fulfil roles that give them a 'taste' of what might be to come. They should not leave succession to chance, as John Halsey's (2011) study suggests.

The need for pathways to leadership

Halsey's (2011) Australian study shows that 83 per cent of 683 respondents to a national survey reported that their first experience of educational leadership was in a rural school. Almost half (46 per cent) reported that they had had no preparation for the role and 29 per cent reported that their preparation was in short courses only (Education Review, 24 February, 2011). Halsey himself suggests that principals deserve much better than a 'sink or swim approach', and to be offered 'better pathways' into leadership.

Quality leaders make a difference

The argument by the authors of the McKinsey Report (2010) for greater concentration on the preparation and development of school leaders rests on their analysis of eight high-performing school systems: Alberta (Canada), England, Ontario (Canada), New York (USA), New Zealand, The

Netherlands, Singapore and Victoria (Australia). The authors say:

Officials in each of the systems we studied (N=8) agree that school leadership is crucial to outcomes and that it has grown in importance over the past decade... All regard the improvement of leadership capacity as a top priority and an area where more has to be done (p.5).

Like Bush (2009), the McKinsey Report quotes the United Kingdom's National College for School Leadership meta-analytical study by Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006), who made 'seven strong claims' about successful school leadership. Among them was the finding that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning. The McKinsey Report goes on to argue that:

High-performing principals focus more on instructional leadership and developing teachers... They believe their ability to coach others and support their development is the most important skill of a good leader (McKinsey, 2010, p.7).

This suggests strong support for the concept of 'pedagogical' leadership which has at least three related purposes: a focus by leaders on pedagogy which affects student learning and thus achievement; a focus on teachers' learning, the outcomes of which are transferable to classroom teaching practices and thus student achievement; and collective action by leaders and teachers to improve their schools. Pedagogical leadership, as conceived by Smyth (1989), was a forerunner to much current research to better understand how distributed or shared leadership might be used to create engaging learning environments for children and young people.

Ensuring that education systems have ample stocks of quality 'pedagogical' leaders committed to making a difference in teacher performance and student achievement is justification enough, the McKinsey authors argue, to place leadership development amongst the highest of priorities.

A possible shortage of principals

It is claimed that education systems will soon face a shortage of principals because large numbers of 'baby boomer' school leaders are expected to retire, and because of the low numbers of teachers willing to take on leadership roles. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) believe that expanding the leadership talent pool in the United States is likely to be difficult because of factors which discourage teachers from taking their first leadership steps – among these factors are the pressures of new accountability systems, expanding roles and responsibilities, reforms removing principal tenure, inadequate compensation, poor working conditions, lack of opportunities for advancement and poor preparation and inadequate support for pedagogical leadership and school improvement.

Fink's work (2011, in press) reinforces that of Darling-Hammond et al. (2007). His studies of Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand lead him to assert that there is a supply-and-demand problem, although he qualifies the claim by saying that:

The accuracy of supply and demand statistics for leadership posts is often politicised and of questionable veracity (Fink, p. 770).

Fink (2011, in press, p.778) is less concerned with the erosion of experience when 'baby-boomer' school leaders retire in bulk than he is with the kind of leaders and leadership that will replace them.

Developing new leadership philosophy and practice, he argues, will require much better succession management than now. A 'hire and hope' mentality must be replaced by a 'grow your own' mindset (Fink, 2011, in press, p. 782). Such a change is consonant with the definition of leadership with which this review commenced – one that acknowledges leadership as shared human agency. With leadership shared amongst teachers and those holding leadership positions, Fink argues that 'growing your own' can become a planned outcome of shared leadership. It is incumbent, therefore, on those exercising pedagogical leadership, to take steps to awaken the 'sleeping giant' of teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Summary

Taken together, there are convincing reasons for authorities to actively identify, select, prepare and ensure the continuing development of teachers who see themselves as future school leaders. Morally there seems to be no argument. Pragmatically there is a concern about a less-than-adequate pool of possible applicants for leadership posts, concern over the pathways offered to aspiring leaders and a need to respond to the knowledge that good leaders make a difference for teachers and students. If the quality of school leadership is to be ensured, it is essential that authorities do everything possible to encourage capable people to take their first leadership steps, and to support the continuous learning and development of existing leaders.

PART 3

The content of professional learning for school leaders

Darling-Hammond and her colleagues (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007) reported that critics of pre-service leadership development found many programs in the USA 'inadequate to the challenges of managing schools in a diverse society in which expectations for learning are increasingly ambitious' (p. 5). Within existing programs, critics found misalignment between program content and candidate needs, failure to link professional learning with school or district mission or needs, failure to leverage job-embedded learning opportunities and uneven use of learning technologies. There was also criticism that districts failed to link professional learning to instructional reforms and wasted resources on one-shot workshops (p.7).

These criticisms are largely related to the 'what' of professional development in leadership. They raise questions about what the focus of leadership development programs should be and what fields of knowledge school leaders should be invited to consider, internalise and take into their practice.

Components of leadership development programs

There is consensus in the literature that better student outcomes should be central to educational leadership. Yet despite universal agreement on this point, there is little about how pedagogical leadership can be incorporated in leadership development programs and similarly how to connect leadership and learning. A review of the literature in the New Zealand Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES) (Robinson et al. 2009) found 'a miniscule proportion of research on educational leadership that focuses on the leadership-outcomes relationship' (p.209).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) argued that leaders influence learning outcomes in at least two ways; firstly, they achieve this through their selection of teachers and their support and development of teacher capacity. Although leaders' ability to ensure a match between teacher and context is constrained when they do not have the authority to select staff, their role in supporting and developing teacher capacity within their schools emphasises the strong relational aspect of the pedagogical leader and identifies the need for leaders to understand transformational leadership theory. As Marks and Printy (2003) have explained:

If a principal demonstrates no capacity for transformational leadership – for example, articulating an intellectual vision, providing structures for participatory decision making, building consensus toward a productive school culture, and promoting collaboration, the principal will be ill disposed to share responsibility with teachers in matters of instruction, curriculum, and assessment in a shared instructional leadership model (p. 385).

Darling-Hammond et al. also argue that leaders influence learning outcomes 'through processes that affect the organizational conditions of the school' (2007, p.9). These are 'building school community, developing school procedures and plans, and developing curriculum, instruction and assessment' (p.9). This last notion aligns with Elmore's (2004) definition of educational leadership as the 'guidance and direction of instructional improvement' (p.13). Elmore describes educational (pedagogical) leadership in terms of setting ambitious agendas, ensuring good communication channels and monitoring and evaluating instruction. The impact of pedagogical leadership in the BES was found to be 'nearly four times that of transformational leadership' but concluded that 'given transformational leadership's emphasis on relationships and pedagogical leadership's emphasis on educational purposes, one could argue that both theories are needed' (p.38). There is also a strong argument for the need for distributed leadership.

The OECD (2008) study found that 'the increased responsibilities and accountability of school leadership are creating the need for leadership distribution both within schools and across schools' (p.93). Its authors claim that many countries are 'experimenting with different ways to better allocate and distribute tasks across leadership teams' because they realise that distributed leadership not only provides opportunities to build leadership capacity through team-based project work but also to ensure

that quality teaching and learning support student outcomes. It is significant too that Robinson et al. (2009) have chosen to write about school leaders rather than principals in their best-evidence synthesis on leadership and its connection to student outcomes. They have recognised that a broader definition of school leader is required. Furthermore, a body of research literature is emerging that indicates distributed leadership can improve school outcomes (2009, p.74), and so strengthens the case for distributed leadership, along with pedagogical and transformational leadership, in improving student outcomes.

Darling-Hammond's et al. (2007) study identified eight exemplary programs that included many of the same elements considered essential for pedagogical leadership: that pre-service programs should be based on research, and incorporate organisational capacity building, change management and instructional knowledge, as well as leadership skills. Exemplary programs in the study stressed the importance of problem-based learning situations that integrate theory and practice, emphasised the management of school operations and leadership for school improvement, and were accompanied by 'strong internships, field-based projects, action research, analysis and discussion of case studies, and usually a portfolio of evidence about practice' (p.64).

Two other studies (Knapp, Copland & Tabert, 2003; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003) have identified core leadership skills that they believe should be included in leadership development programs. Many are the same skills as those found by the Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) study, but with the addition of collaborative decision-making processes and distributed leadership practices, as well as processes for organisational change, developing knowledge to promote successful teaching and learning, and developing management competencies in analysing and using data and in using instructional technologies to guide school improvement.

The OECD report (2008) argues that program content needs to be flexible, 'based on an analysis of need, as well as contextual factors that influence practice and support for training' (p.136). Its authors identified four major domains of responsibility for school leaders: supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality; defining goals and measuring progress; strategic, financial and human resource management; and collaboration with external partners.

Limitations

The discussion in this section has left some critical limitations unexposed. The first is that the components relate essentially to the work of principals rather than incorporating the broader range of skills and responsibilities undertaken by teachers, middle managers and others who assume leading roles in schools where there is distributed leadership. In this case, leadership development programs may not reflect the breadth and depth of leadership roles and responsibilities.

Moreover, what has been identified does not seem to have either a theoretical or clear evidentiary base, a problem which Robinson et al. (2009) encountered when searching for empirical studies which demonstrated direct links between leadership actions and student achievement. They had to delve instead into studies which showed how school leaders had worked through others and, in particular, created opportunities and structures to improve student outcomes.

Further, there does not appear to be an explicit rationale for the components approach to professional development programs. There is a logical connection to work-related matters but little evidence of the psychological connection necessary in professional learning. In other words, there is a clear leaning towards the job requirements that leaders are expected to meet, but scant attention is paid to individual need and context. To clarify the scope of content required for leadership development, we examined a range of content frameworks set out in leadership literature.

Leadership Content Frameworks

Content frameworks are spelt out in a variety of leadership capabilities or standards statements with some examining dimensions of leadership or orientations to it. Three such content frameworks from international sources are examined below.

National Standards for Headteachers (UK)

In the UK, National Standards for Headteachers have been developed by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) to provide a framework for professional development and to inform, challenge and enthuse serving and aspiring headteachers. Revised in 2004 to incorporate government thinking and guidance, and to reflect the evolving role of headship in the early 21st century, the standards identify the knowledge requirements, professional qualities (skills, dispositions and personal capabilities headteachers bring to the role) and actions required to achieve a core purpose within each of the following six inter-related areas:

- Shaping the Future
- Leading Learning and Teaching
- Developing Self and Working with Others
- Managing the Organisation
- Securing Accountability
- Strengthening Community

The standards are used to assist in the recruitment of new headteachers and as part of the performance management process. They are also used as a structure for professional learning as outlined in Learning to Lead: NCSL's strategy for leadership learning. The topics listed within the six standards are: learning and teaching; continuing professional development and professional learning communities; managing self; personal and social awareness; leading and managing others; vision building and implementation; futures and innovation; dealing with change; planning and strategic school improvement; policies, structures and systems; managing the effective deployment and use of resources; team working; stakeholder involvement; local community; networks and partnerships; continuous quality improvement; and accountability. These listings act as a comprehensive inventory of the kinds of content that leaders need to know and understand.

Educational Leadership Policy Standards (USA)

In the USA, the Educational Leadership Policy Standards (ISLLC, 2008) reinforce the proposition that the school leader's primary responsibility is to improve teaching and learning for all children. The standards outlined below are an updated version of the 1996 Standards for School Leaders that were adopted in leadership policy responses by 35 states.

1. An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
2. An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

6. An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

The *Educational Leadership Policy Standards* were designed to provide a framework for policy creation, system supports, life-long career development, the evaluation of performance and the design of high-quality professional learning programs. The design and purpose of the standards are informed, in part, by the 2007 report of Darling-Hammond and associates who found that exemplary pre- and in-service development programs in the US have a comprehensive and coherent leadership curriculum aligned to state and professional standards, in particular the ISLLC standards.

The influence of standards on the development of learning programs can be found in many professional learning programs. Findings from a 15-country comparative study of development programs for school leaders (Huber, 2011) indicated that most programs had centralised guidelines for quality assurance but decentralised implementation to allow greater flexibility and contextualisation. But as with other content frameworks, the question remains: Do standards alone help us to determine the content of leadership development programs to ensure that leaders will make a difference to learning outcomes?

This question was a prime motivation for New Zealand researchers connected with the Best Evidence Synthesis studies which crystallised the leadership dimensions, knowledge, skills and dispositions required to improve student outcomes.

Leadership Dimensions Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (New Zealand)

The New Zealand BES already cited in this review (Robinson et al. 2009) examined the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. It has made an important contribution to the growing research base on leadership development. The authors drew on three broad literature sources: assessments of the direct and indirect impact of leadership on student outcomes, descriptive accounts of leadership's role in effective teaching and learning, and research into links between leaders' knowledge, skills, dispositions (KSDs) and student outcomes. They used a forward mapping strategy, first to measure leadership and then to trace links to student outcomes. They found 27 studies that linked leadership with some type of student outcome and analysed these studies to estimate the influence of different aspects of leadership on academic and social outcomes. They identified five dimensions from these studies and then calculated the estimated mean effect size of these dimensions. Overall though, they found little NZ research that directly linked school leadership with student outcomes.

Next they undertook a backward mapping exercise, starting with episodes identified as having had positive student outcomes. They drew inferences from the descriptive evidence about leadership roles (often distributed leadership) in creating the conditions that produced these outcomes. This process produced six dimensions, some identical to those in the forward mapping strategy. When common dimensions were taken into account, the study identified eight dimensions of leadership that provided evidence on factors that make a difference to student outcomes and four related fields of knowledge, skills and dispositions (KSDs) - namely, administrative decisions informed by knowledge about effective pedagogy, problem-solving, relational trust and open-to-learning conversations (Figure 1). The KSDs in each dimension are expanded to indicate the scope, depth and diversity of the knowledge and skills needed for effective school leadership. The dimensions and KSDs together are applicable across roles.

Robinson et al. maintain that it is this combination of 'practical insight (what works) and underpinning theory (why it works) that changes professional practice in ways that make a difference for students' (p. 171). They explain that effective educational leadership requires in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning, and knowledge of the eight dimensions across which leaders must act.

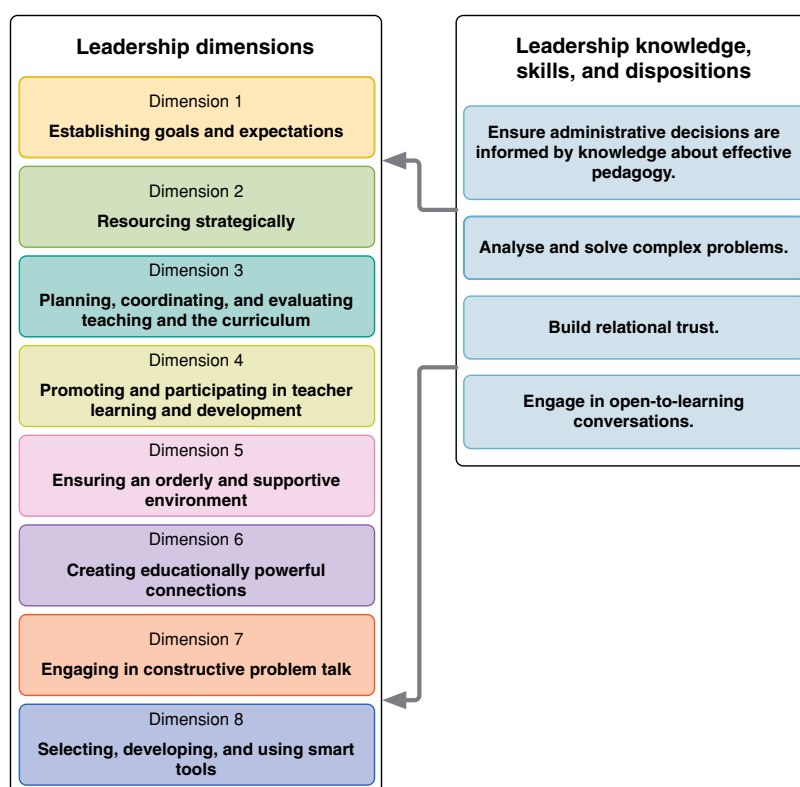


Figure 1: Leadership dimensions, knowledge skills and dispositions from Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why. Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education, p.49.

Content frameworks: Benefits and limitations

There is no doubt that content frameworks like these have potential benefits for leadership development. They offer consistency to policymakers and planners who are responsible for managing professional learning budgets, offer a guide to teachers considering leadership roles, enable self-assessment, can be useful to employers recruiting staff, and can act as maps of the terrain which employers expect leaders to cover independently.

However, two limitations need to be noted. The first relates to restrictions on what is given prominence, who is being represented and whose interests are being served, along with how the frameworks may enable or constrain the qualities of individual leaders and their practices. Much of the content frameworks' focus is drawn from employer or system perspectives. While this is understandable, the influence of employers' interests on the choice of subject matter for leadership development needs to be brought out into the open.

The second limitation relates to the avowed future orientation of content frameworks. In and of themselves they do not, and cannot, provide a clear sense of the preparation an individual may require for leadership in the 21st century. Frameworks must be amenable to human agency. As they stand, they appear to give primacy to an 'outside in' or systems approach to professional learning, in contrast to an 'inside out' or personal approach.

Two alternative content frameworks

The limitations just described suggests that careful consideration is needed to ensure that balance is achieved between system needs and reform agendas on one hand, and the professional learning needs of individuals and the needs of the school and its community on the other. A balance also needs to be struck between developing the knowledge and skills needed to perform the job (these often tend to confirm and sustain the status quo), and developing transformative practices that can bring about change.

The first alternative content framework (Figure 2) is drawn from the work of Dempster (2001). This framework is based on Burrell’s and Morgan’s (1979) paradigms of social theory and comprises two intersecting continua that define four orientations to professional development: System Restructuring, System Maintenance, Professional Sustenance and Professional Transformation. Dempster (2001, p.5) explains that ‘The poles of each continuum identify oppositional positions, the X-axis showing a “people focus” versus a “system focus” on human activity, the Y-axis showing two views of change, “reproduction” versus “reconstruction”.’

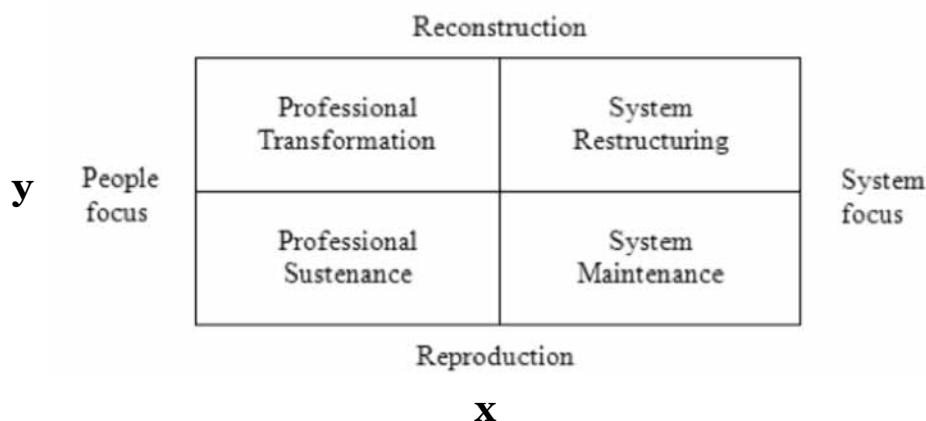


Figure 2: A framework for analysing professional development from Dempster, N. (2001). The professional development of school principals: A fine balance. Professorial Lecture 24th May, 2001. Griffith University Public Lecture Series.

Dempster explains that a System Maintenance-oriented approach should be competency-based, linked to enduring educational policies and priorities and focused on the authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities of school leadership. In this approach, ‘employers set the expectations for what knowledge and skills are necessary for the roles people play and they then provide training and development to ensure that employees are appropriately equipped to carry out their organisational functions’ (p.5). Thus the system determines what is provided and has a set of leadership and management competencies in mind. It does not take account of school leaders at all stages having very different individual needs. A System Restructuring orientation should help leaders to develop values and attitudes consistent with the system; make changes in the structure and function of their schools in system-determined directions; work towards system-nominated change outcomes within set budgets; and gather and use system-stipulated performance data. Dempster maintains that this approach ‘requires that principals pursue efficiency and effectiveness in implementing both government priorities and values and system plans and objectives’ (p.6). In terms of professional learning those agendas are set by the system for the good of individuals.

In contrast, a Professional Sustenance orientation seeks to meet personal and collective professional needs as they are encountered in leading specific communities of students, teachers and parents, and arise from practical, moral and ethical concerns in daily leadership and management. It is based on issues or concerns that occur ‘on-the-job’, is linked to leaders’ personal definitions of professional identity, and is consonant with ethical professional independence. A Professional Transformation orientation is collaboratively initiated and supported, and seeks ways to empower staff and school communities to bring about socially constructive, people-focused change. It enables leaders to work with others to undertake social, system and organisational analysis; to question accepted views of leadership, management and schooling; to analyse and reshape personal and collective professional knowledge; and to consider alternative approaches to schooling and school administration. Balancing learning based on individual and collective needs locally with learning designed to meet system requirements can only be accomplished if systems and individuals subscribe to the idea of that balance as a fundamental rationale for professional learning.

The second alternative content framework rests on the rationale that system innovation and subsequent growth occurs when school leaders have system responsibilities beyond their schools. Hopkins (2008)

has defined a theory of action for system leadership in terms of concepts, capacities, roles and strategies. System leaders are seen to share characteristic behaviours and skills that represent the actions of the best educational leaders (Hopkins, 2008, p.32). A model (Figure 3), described by Hopkins as flowing from the inside out, draws on Fullan's (2005) premise that moral purpose is the core in system leadership. In the next ring, personal development and strategic capability are seen as being inherent in system leaders. Effective leaders benchmark themselves against their peers and develop their skills in relation to the context in which they are working and '...translate their vision or moral purpose into operational principles with tangible outcomes' (Hopkins, 2008, p.33). Hopkins draws attention to the system leader as agent of change –the locus of control resides with the individual, not the system or organisation. This aligns with Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee's (2002) claim that self-directed learning is the crux of leadership development.

The third ring in the diagram shows the attributes mentioned being focused on three aspects of school leadership: managing the teaching and learning process, developing people, and developing the organisation. To do this, system leaders 'develop their schools as personal and professional learning communities, with relationships built across and beyond each school ...' (Hopkins, 2008, p.33). The model represents a new framework for practice requiring change in the way that leadership is developed and supported.

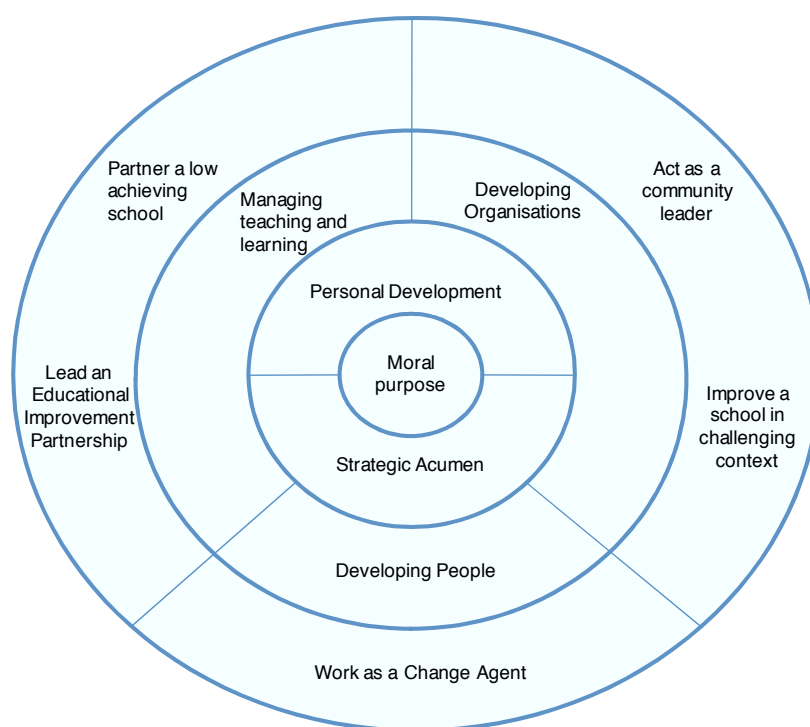


Figure 3: Emerging model of system leadership from Hopkins, D. (2008). Realising the potential of system leadership. In B. Pont, D. Nusche, D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Improving School Leadership Volume 2: Case studies on system Leadership*. Retrieved from OECD website: <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org> (p.33).

Alternative frameworks: Benefits and limitations

These alternative frameworks provide useful ways to conceptualise how individual and system needs might be balanced in professional learning. The locus of control can be seen in both models, but especially in the Hopkins model, as residing with the individual rather than the system. It is individual leaders who assume responsibility, not only for their own learning needs, but for the needs of their organisation, and the system. This responsibility arises from a moral purpose (Fullan, 2001) at the core of both frameworks which drives leaders to make a positive difference to the lives of others. It is strengthened by opportunities, for example, for leaders to be agents of change. There is potential in the Hopkins' framework for real system change to result from leaders sharing what happens in school as key reform drivers.

The two alternative models examined in this section are underpinned by a belief that leaders achieve balance in their learning by being self-reflective, and that they want the responsibility for determining their own learning needs and those of their school, rather than relying on system perspectives. They are also based on the belief that leaders' sense of moral purpose extends beyond their own schools. There is an expectation that leaders will be career-long (or life-long) learners who constantly strive to improve.

Summary

The literature we have reviewed reinforces the claim that many programs do not meet leadership development needs.

First, the focus on leadership in learning is not well addressed. There is a need to strengthen the research knowledge and theoretical base that influences policy and practice around pedagogical leadership, for connections to be made between leadership and learning, and to provide further clarity around how other leadership approaches contribute to pedagogical leadership.

Second, using lists of components as a basis for professional development programs has a number of weaknesses. These include the lack of an explicit rationale as well as a clear theoretical or evidentiary base to this approach, and the fact that the components relate essentially to the work of principals, rather than reflecting the extent of school leadership roles and responsibilities.

Third, it is not clear how well a components approach will prepare and support aspiring, new and experienced leaders as their careers unfold. It seems likely that this approach simply reflects leadership needs in the here and now, rather than identifying what is needed to prepare leaders for future challenges.

Lastly, leadership development programs appear to emphasise the generic requirements of the job rather than leaders' individual capabilities, moral purpose and need to take an active role in learning.

Analysis of content frameworks reveals common elements around which leadership capabilities or dimensions are organised. They strongly emphasise personal leadership, and understanding and managing school and system contexts. They particularly emphasise leading learning through curriculum leadership, coordination and monitoring of teaching and learning. Similarly, Clarke and Wildy (in press, 2011) report that frameworks emphasise the personal dimension of leadership of learning and other capabilities that are likely to support it. They discern a shift in thinking is evident from system maintenance and restructuring orientations to professional sustenance and transformation. Our analysis leads us to conclude that greater flexibility and opportunities for contextualisation and personal initiative are needed if leadership programs are to maintain a balance between system needs and reform agendas on the one hand and identified school and individual needs on the other.

An heuristic tool

An heuristic tool proposed by Clarke and Wildy (in press, 2011, pp.895-898) has considerable merit. It offers principals further clarity about what is important in their work—namely, understanding the issues of context (referred to as place), the people with whom leadership is enacted, the school as a part of a wider system satisfying its requirements, and the individual (the self) and his or her professional motivation, beliefs, values and practices. We argue that an heuristic method that enables a person to discover or learn something about professional matters is useful. This is because it reminds principals of the need to maintain a balance in dealing with realities as they develop the professional knowledge, skills and dispositions to work effectively. Clarke and Wildy's heuristic model provides the framework of four 'focal points' (place, people, system and self) which we have expanded.

1. **Place:** Principals need to be able to assess the context in which they work, especially the people, problems and issues involved, and the culture of the school and the community in which it is located. Clarke and Wildy refer to this as being culturally literate. They see it as necessary at a broader level and at the school level, where it involves acquiring data about students' achievements and progress and turning it into useful information and strategies for action.

2. **People:** Principals need the knowledge, understanding and skill to handle a range of complex interactions each day. This highlights the important interpersonal, political and ethical dimensions of the principal's role and the need to understand human nature and individual motivation.
3. **System:** School leaders need to be able to navigate complex and sometimes baffling bureaucratic regulations, policies and protocols. This requires functional knowledge and skill as well as confidence, determination and political sophistication. Clarke and Wildy suggest that this may lead to an ability to adapt external imperatives to the school's purpose and to use data and evidence effectively – an increasingly important dimension of educational decision-making.
4. **Self:** Personal resilience is needed to deal with the complexities of the job. Self-knowledge, the ability to contextualise, understand, accept and deal with the emotional demands of the role are important for supporting and developing leaders.

Clarke and Wildy (2011, in press) support the notion of individuals using the heuristic process to make judgments about finding a balance between what the system demands of them and what capabilities they need to respond to the needs of their workplace. We believe there is sufficient common concern with the leader's educative role in the content frameworks we have examined to add a further 'focal point' to the Clarke and Wildy model: 'pedagogy'. We consider that this addition reinforces the key purpose of school leadership—the improvement of learning and teaching.

Five propositions for selecting content for leadership preparation and development

From the content frameworks discussed, we suggest five propositions to guide decisions about subject matter to be included in leadership programs and learning opportunities for school leaders.

- Proposition 1: They should be founded on current research and be underpinned by the clear moral purpose to improve the lives of children and young people through learning.
- Proposition 2: The major content areas should include knowledge and skills related to the organisational role, as well as personal, procedural and relational knowledge and skills. This will ensure that validated dimensions of leadership-for-learning are addressed.
- Proposition 3: Those choosing content should ensure that organisational improvement and better student learning and achievement are explicit goals.
- Proposition 4: Agencies or employers should create opportunities for content selection by individual school leaders based on personal need.
- Proposition 5: Content can be selected consistently around five focal points: place, people, pedagogy, system and self.

We now turn to professional development strategies which the literature suggests can be applied across a leadership career.

PART 4

Strategies for leadership development

The literature reviewed indicates clearly that professional learning and development for school leaders needs systematic improvement. In her foreword to the Darling-Hammond et al. commissioned report, De Vita, as President of the Wallace Foundation, also draws attention to the need to get principal preparation right. She considers that this is more than preparation for the initial stages and argues that it concerns “the quality of training principals receive before they assume their positions, and the continuing professional development they get once they are hired and throughout their career”. This attention to career-long development is endorsed by the OECD (2008) report which stresses the importance of catering for varying needs so that principals can strengthen their practice. However, it is also important to consider whether the starting point for professional learning and development should be driven by the system determining what leaders need at particular points and providing programs to meet those needs, or whether individuals should be able to assess and determine their own needs at each phase of their career and select the means to fulfil them.

Interaction of theory and practice

Huber (2011) suggests that the central question of all professional development is its impact. He asks “What leads to the experience of professional effectiveness, to professional competence, to gaining expertise by reflected experiences, and to professionalism?”(p.833). His concern with the ‘what’, points to the importance of professional development strategies or processes. However, when we ask how learning about leadership makes a difference to leadership actions and, in turn, to improving student outcomes, we find that writers are still trying to determine what knowledge and skills school leaders need and how those abilities can be acquired and applied.

Dempster (2001) sees the need for “a fine balance” between people taking responsibility for their own learning and for the system making available opportunities for individuals to make sense of the leadership challenges they face. We suggest that the system should provide a range of options from which individuals can select (unless job-related expectations and role requirements demand mandatory participation). Such an approach would give credence to the view that professional learning and development needs differ from person to person. Context-related knowledge and skill are necessary if leaders are to understand their own organisational cultures and work productively within their constraints. As leaders apply new knowledge and skill, they should be able to tap support from individuals or systems through mentoring, peer-networks and participation in directed study.

Huber focuses our attention on the unique knowledge and application needs of individual school leaders by reminding us how adults approach learning. He maintains:

Adult learners select what they learn; they filter information consciously or subconsciously. Thereby they proceed in a way that is much more problem-oriented than theme-centred and the effects of learning are more sustainable when there is the possibility to apply in practice what they have learned. (p.833).

He explains this further by linking theory to practice (Figure 4), highlighting the desirability and practical necessity of a reciprocal relationship between theory and knowledge on the one hand and practical application on the other.

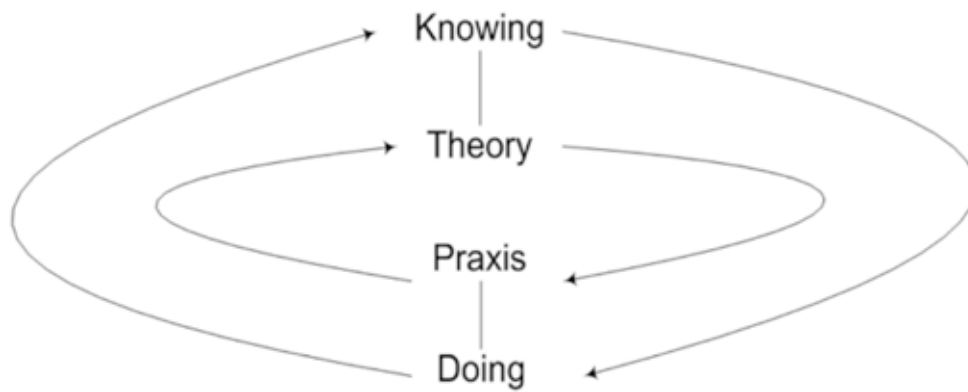


Figure 4: From theory to praxis, from knowing to doing.

Huber considers the transfer of knowledge to practice crucial for effective leadership development strategies. This is done by selecting from a range of generic strategies for ongoing professional learning (p. 835). These strategies are categorised as ‘cognitive theoretical ways of learning’ (courses, lectures and self-study), collegial (cooperative group work) and communicative process-oriented procedures (projects), and reflexive methods (feedback and self-assessment, as well as supervision). Figure 5 illustrates the connections between generic strategies and experience.

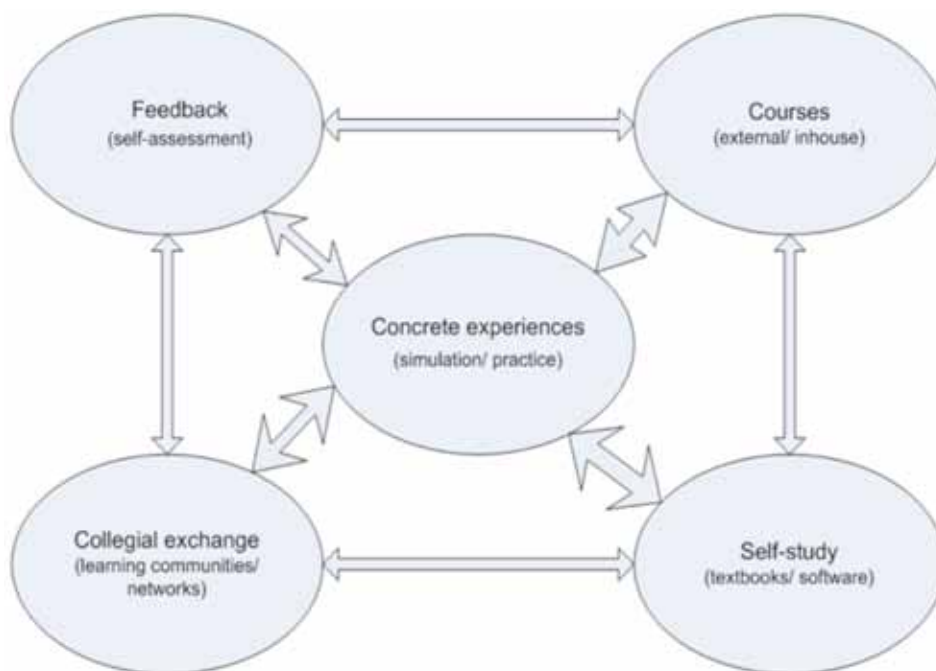


Figure 5: Approaches to learning in professional development.

The critical component of Huber’s illustration is the centrality of ‘concrete experiences’. No matter the mode of learning, it must be drawn into a reciprocal relationship with practice. Our reading of the research literature reinforces this position.

Huber also provides a list of recommendations for providers of professional development, for target groups, and covering aims, timing and pattern, content and methods. Providers are advised, inter alia, to select program personnel carefully and ensure that they use evaluation iteratively to guide the next steps in the program. For target groups, Huber recommends that:

- individual learning needs, particularly learning time and learning speeds, be taken into account;
- participants be included in program decision making;

- programs be demand-oriented and able to meet participants' present and future concerns;
- aims be oriented towards pedagogical goals, theory, practice, research, competence, effectiveness, sustainability, relevance and quality;
- methods encourage reflection, action, self-organisation, performance with feedback and transfer (pp.839-841).

Overall, Huber's recommendations emphasise the individual's contribution to leadership professional development.

Learner-centred professional development is endorsed in Hopkins' (2008) emerging model of system leadership, with its focus on moral purpose. Hopkins' work shows clearly the importance of the symbiotic relationship between system and individual.

This belief is also apparent in Dempster's (2001) framework, discussed in Part 3. He points out that 'a balanced professional development agenda cannot be achieved by means of allegiance to a single orientation' — hence the call for 'a fine balance'.

Theory and practice: Summary

Both system and individual requirements need to be addressed by having a range of generic learning strategies available. Education systems and individuals have clear interests in the calibre of leadership activities and both should be concerned with their effect on teachers, students and communities. Professional development should be governed not only by what individuals require, but also by what systems need to ensure that schools are led by competent, effective and efficient professionals.

A logical aim, therefore, is to have individuals able to identify their own learning needs and to develop or access strategies to meet those needs. Systems can respond by providing particular programs, personal opportunities or networks while retaining the right to stipulate programs which they deem necessary. Learning options, no matter the source of identified need, should be relevant and have an immediate application to practice.

The aspirant leader

A discussion of the aspirant leader needs to encompass two kinds of candidates – the teacher leader who is perhaps not in a formal position of authority, and those who hold positional roles but seek advancement towards principalship.

Identifying talent

How can leadership talent be identified and what can be done to help potential leaders move into new roles? The authors of the McKinsey (2010) report suggest 'attracting and selecting those with the right qualities is critical to the overall leadership capacity of the system' (p.9). The 'right qualities' may not be innate but the result of professional learning with supportive colleagues. The McKinsey report authors argue there are three approaches which school systems rely on to find and develop leadership talent. These are:

- self-identification by potential leaders and informal mechanisms by which potential leaders are coached and given development opportunities within their schools;
- providing opportunities for future leaders to take courses or join programs to build their capacity and interest;
- guiding potential leaders so that they progressively gain leadership experience through new roles in their schools (p.9).

This means that the cultures in which aspiring teacher leaders work need to create leadership opportunities for a wider pool of teachers. This may mean giving people a chance to act in defined leadership roles in a supported way, an approach that would help raise the aspirant's awareness of possible learning pathways, including courses of study.

The McKinsey authors strongly recommend giving the best people experience before they are ready, because this tests and challenges them. It is a better strategy than ‘expecting [talents] to emerge or [be acquired] by sending them through training programs just before they assume leadership responsibility’ (p.10). To support this view, they highlight the requirement that all districts in Ontario must have a succession and development plan for school leaders.

The report cites examples from other countries.

In Singapore, schools are responsible for identifying potential leaders, (normally during the first five years of teaching) and giving them opportunities to progressively take on greater leadership responsibilities, combined with formal training programs. They claim this emphasis on developing talent is now more important than increasing the attractiveness of leadership positions.

In the Netherlands, groups of 10-15 teachers or middle managers organise their own training with a business or university provider over a one- to three-year period. These programs include coaching and reflection on in-school experiences. The Netherlands School for Educational Management, for example, runs twice-weekly sessions led by former school leaders or professional coaches. This has helped to create a pool of potential principals.

Selection and recruitment

The Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) report highlights policy strategies with its account of an overhaul of Mississippi’s system to recruit, prepare and develop school leaders. They attribute the success of this policy to top-down and bottom-up approaches which included the ‘purposeful use of standards to leverage change’, ‘supports for the proactive recruitment and development of aspiring principals’ and the ‘development of a state infrastructure to support ongoing learning’ (p.152).

Programs to prepare aspirants

Across the globe, leadership development programs vary from being mandatory to just being available to interested teachers. For example, Alberta and Singapore encourage people to complete a formal qualification program even though the qualification is not mandatory; New York runs a 14-month Leadership Academy for Aspiring Principals and a Leadership Excellence Apprenticeship Program which includes a six-week intensive summer school with a requirement to lead a project on return to school.

Reliance on a formal qualification in preparation for appointment as a principal varies between countries.

In England, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) program targets those who will be credible applicants for appointment as principals within 12 to 18 months. It begins with a 36-hour assessment which is followed by mandatory placement in a high-performing school for 5-20 days and then a final evaluation. It claims to be a personalised program of four to 12 months’ duration. Programs to develop middle leadership are conducted in clusters through the National College of School Leadership. This work is often subcontracted, but quality assurance over delivery is retained.

In Ontario, where a principal’s qualification is mandatory, the program consists of 120 hours of theory and 60 hours of practical work tied directly to school leadership. An in-school project is observed and mentored by another principal and a professional mentor.

The McKinsey report concludes that ‘there is some evidence to suggest that the requirement to hold a qualification helps improve the quality of school leadership’ (p.14).

The aspirant leader: Summary

The McKinsey, Darling-Hammond et al. and OECD reports reveal that identifying and nurturing talent is not consistently addressed across countries. Some education systems actively address leadership succession and development with mandated practices, but others make little or no provision to nurture leadership aspirants. There is a little evidence showing that countries where programs are mandated produce higher-achieving leaders than those which simply offer programs which may be highly desirable.

Novice school leaders and principals

Cowie and Crawford (2007) have usefully explored the landscape of principal preparation in their nine-nation International Study of Principalship Preparation (ISPP). Their starting point was 'a belief that principal preparation is a crucial aspect of school development and progression, and that programmes of preparation should have positive outcomes for those who undertake them' (p.129). One of their concerns was the lack of evaluation linking capacities developed through pre-appointment preparation programs and the transfer of these capacities to practice on appointment, something also noted by Bush (2009). Such concerns point to a need for research to examine the effectiveness of professional development programs or opportunities by tracking their effects on leaders' and teachers' practice and on children's learning and achievement. The competing objectives of systems, schools and individuals is another recurring theme in the Cowie and Crawford study. Moreover, they argue that there is no consensus on 'what kinds of principals are needed, what skills and attributes are needed and how they should be trained' (p.132). Cowie and Crawford also raise concerns about relying on participants' perceptions of their learning when what is needed is long-term evaluation of the impact of professional learning on performance. Bush (2009) has similar concerns. He poses a series of questions which we believe the literature has not sufficiently addressed or clarified:

- Is the main purpose to develop individual leaders or to promote wider leadership development?
- Should leadership development be underpinned by succession planning, or be targeted at the needs and aspirations of individual leaders?
- Should it be standards-based, or promote a more holistic approach?
- Should it be content-led or based around processes?
- Should programs aim to inculcate a specific repertoire of leadership practices?
- Should leadership learning be predominantly campus-based or field-based?
- Should it address issues of equity and diversity? (pp.108-109).

These questions are addressed in New Zealand's national first-time principals' (FTP) program for newly appointed first-time primary and secondary principals, developed since 2003 by the University of Auckland for the Ministry of Education. It is based on relevance to practice, but with strong links to theory. It includes a combination of residential courses, school-based guidance from individually assigned mentors and on-line support through network clusters. While the program has generic elements, it also claims to address principals' individual needs. One starting point is the participants' use of the Self Assessment of Leadership, Teaching and Learning (SALTAL 11) instrument to formulate learning goals with their individual mentors. This instrument is based on each of the leadership dimensions from the Best Evidence Synthesis 'School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why' (Figure 1).

In the SALTAL tool, (Appendix 2), the leadership dimensions are accompanied by indicators that may be used to show that participants understand these dimensions. The indicators are loosely grouped around 'knowledge and skills for leading teaching and learning; commitment to positive learning outcomes for all students; collaborative leadership and ethical leadership'. Novice principals are asked to indicate to what extent they demonstrate each attribute. For example, there are six items under 'knowledge and skills for leading teaching and learning'. They relate to such matters as their knowledge of effective teaching and learning, understanding of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework, understanding of the key concepts in current assessment debates, use of ongoing school-wide assessment, leadership of information technology developments in ways that enhance teaching and learning, and the extent to which they see the development of a school culture focused on learning as a crucial factor in creating an effective school (see <http://www.firstprincipals.ac.nz/>). Principals are asked to assess their leadership abilities by rating their knowledge and competence against each of the statements. These statements are set at levels of performance more like those expected of experienced principals—a deliberate strategy to give novices a sense of direction for their continuing learning about leadership.

The extent to which the FTP program is able to cater for individual needs is apparent in several ways.

Mentors are key people who work with individuals at school and in clinics at residential schools. They are also involved in online and face-to-face discussion groups mixing the first-time principals together. One component is assistance with a professional portfolio around agreed goals. The FTP strategy allows novices to be surrounded by colleagues at a similar stage and to receive support from more experienced mentor principals over 18 months.

Novice leaders: Summary

This discussion has reinforced the case for a blended approach that recognises both system and individuals' interests. We have highlighted the ways in which one national program for first-time principals incorporates features to recognise individual needs, work contexts and issues of practice. That combination includes a formal residential program supplemented by individual mentoring at the school, opportunities for face-to-face and online networking and learning over time through self-assessment tools. Evaluations of this national program have reinforced the need for the system to make formal provision for leadership learning and for individuals who enrol to have confidence that the program will provide timely personal learning which can influence leadership practices.

Experienced leaders

The tendency for systems to make provision for professional development in the early leadership years means that, typically, learning in the later years may become sporadic. All leaders, regardless of experience, benefit from continuous support to enhance their practices. The challenge is to find the learning support that will best enable experienced school leaders to stay committed to their work and be able to respond to challenges effectively. While timely and appropriate professional development may help to address issues of attrition and succession, the key point for experienced leaders is to locate new learning challenges. Some may be found by helping others. MacBeath (2006) suggests this may be a double-edged strategy:

On the one hand, it [professional learning and development] can provide the support and stimulation for heads to remain in their schools with renewed vigour and commitment but on the other hand it may provide the incentive to move on, either to other schools, to positions in local authorities, or into private consultancy (p.196).

Such movement is a natural consequence of engaging in learning and is to be expected, but nevertheless the profession can still benefit from having a layer of experienced principals who are able to support other leaders in their midst. Expertise needs to be cultivated so that it is shared; in other words, leaders need to reach out and support colleagues in leadership roles. This does not mean providing answers but rather using a repertoire of tools to help those being mentored to reach new understandings. University programs can make a useful contribution on the language and strategies for coaching, mentoring and critical friendships. The mentoring role of experienced leaders highlights the critical importance of the relational aspects of leadership (Robinson, 2007).

MacBeath (2006) takes Robinson's (2007) finding further, claiming that the three most cited forms of external support for school leaders involve mentoring, coaching and the critical friendship of other leaders. These are explained in terms of a spectrum moving from intervention to facilitation. He says 'coaching is at one end, critical friendship at the other and mentoring somewhere in between' (p.197), and suggests that experienced school leaders are needed to perform these roles for their less experienced colleagues.

Several countries have mentoring and coaching strategies. In Alberta, Canada, superintendents are expected to observe, assess and support potential leaders over a long period and advise them during the application process. In Ontario's York region, all new principals are required to have two years of mentoring by an experienced principal. Those designated as 'official mentors' are also given support and incentives. For example, in the York region, mentors must have a minimum of three years in a principal's role; most will have received professional coaching for their mentoring roles; have been selected for the task by a district superintendent and have agreed to meet those they are tutoring at least once a month, or for 25 hours a year. They receive C\$1000 in two instalments, and are trained to

act as 'guides who do not solve problems but are expected to ask the right questions' (McKinsey et al, 2010, p.10). Similarly, in Singapore, superintendents and principals are expected to apprentice potential leaders in their schools. Singapore also has a six-month course to develop strategic leadership skills in vice-principals who are seen as potential principals, in recognition of the need to prepare vice-principals beyond their current administrative role.

Clusters of school leaders who meet for professional learning and support occur in Singapore and England. In Canada the preferred term is 'learning network'. A Singapore cluster involves 12-15 schools, with principals and vice-principals meeting once a month. In Canada, learning networks are led by a superintendent who is regarded as a high-performing principal. Each school joins one of 22 networks which are facilitated by the Institute for Educational Leadership. The McKinsey report describes such learning as 'lateral' and 'vertical' (p.18). MacBeath (2006) endorses communities of practice and the potential benefits of joining clusters of schools and other agencies to share knowledge and innovation. He says these networks can be face-to-face or virtual and can operate locally, nationally and internationally to offer new perspectives and challenge existing ideas. Such network opportunities should be seen as a way to create job interest and provide stimulation.

Recognising high-performing principals

Recognising the role that experienced principals can play with less-experienced colleagues, New York has made the development of future leaders an indicator in principals' performance reviews. This signals that those in the education system have a responsibility for nurturing the next school leaders.

In Alberta and Singapore, selected principals are offered secondments or internship schemes in the Education Ministry. Likewise, England recognises high-performing principals with the title National Leader of Education, or Local Leader of Education, and then requires them to lead improvements in schools identified as struggling. It was not clear from the reports we read whether these strategies were effective or not.

However, one program which was favourably evaluated by participants and formal reviewers was the Education Queensland Strategic Leaders' Program (SLP). It was designed for experienced people in leadership positions from schools, central and regional offices and then, later, for experienced principals only. It included a residential component, requiring an initial commitment of five days for intensive introductory work followed by three days for further task-related meetings over a six-month period. It was closely linked to the Education Queensland leadership expectations articulated in its Leadership Matters: Capabilities Framework (2007) as five sets of capabilities: educational, personal, relational, intellectual and organisational.

Commenting on the learning experiences the program offered, Dempster, Alen and Gatehouse (2009) state that 'the program designers felt that for mature leaders, an opportunity was needed for reflection on the "person within" to examine personal strengths, weaknesses, motivations and aspirations as individuals and educational leaders' (p.324). There was particular emphasis on scrutinising participants' interpersonal attitudes and skills to help them redefine leaders' approaches to leading and working with others. The design and strategies used in the SLP reflect careful attention to the experienced leader stage. The following approaches were used:

- integrated: to include organisational and personal outcome priorities and accountabilities;
- blended: to include a flexible mixture of personal coaching, online facilitation, peer-learning networks, personal readings and reflection processes, group forums and face-to-face professional development workshops and school-linked action learning projects;
- relational: to connect participants with partnerships and networks to support and challenge them, and to access working models of relationships and cultures they might wish to create and influence;
- experiential: to create learning-by-doing and merge cognitive and social-relational learning experiences such as challenge, repeated interpersonal feedback and skill building; and

- longitudinal: to conduct planned interventions over enough time to accommodate experiential and rich reflective learning (Dempster et al. 2009, p.325).

Five related areas of knowledge were identified by Dempster et al. in their 2009 review, and by McKinsey as an international corporate consulting specialist. These were: knowing the purpose of leadership, knowing oneself, knowing others, knowing the context and knowing the job. Rather than restricting knowledge and skills to a single person, the leader, Dempster et al. write that “the spreading of knowledge and skills to others and encouraging their effective use are key tasks for leaders because it is through combined human agency that successful school leadership is possible” (p.323).

Experienced leaders: Summary

The literature shows that, typically, experienced leaders need new challenges and that these can often be found in helping less-experienced leaders. Most experienced principals will need professional learning to support this change in emphasis, but countries vary in the degree of support offered. Some receive financial rewards and others titles to recognise high performance. However, worldwide there is an emerging consensus that access to mentors is crucial to develop inexperienced leaders.

Teacher leaders

Teacher leaders do not necessarily hold formal leadership positions but they warrant consideration in this review because of the inclusive definition of leadership quoted in the introduction. Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) argue that it is teachers who represent the largest group of prospective leaders because they are best placed to act as change agents for school improvement. This view resonates with the recent finding that classroom teachers have the greatest in-school effect on student achievement (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006). Katzenmeyer and Moller go further and argue that the future of schools is ‘dependent on the productive engagement of teachers as leaders’ (p.ix).

The need for shared and distributed leadership has already been presented as a response to the intensification of leaders’ work. In their work on the Teacher Professional Learning and Development Best Evidence Synthesis, Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) argue that the ‘demanding notion of school leadership, associated with the realisation that what is being asked may be well-nigh impossible to deliver, has led to the view that effective leadership is and should be distributed’ (p.192). Developing leadership in others is therefore a key role of school leaders. However, while Timperley et al. suggest that distributed leadership may be a desirable goal, they claim ‘it is not without its own set of difficulties’ (p.196). They noted concerns about sustainability, teachers’ discomfort taking on the role of expert, diffidence about giving feedback to other teachers and identifying areas for further learning and that teachers who volunteered for such leadership roles were not always those with relevant expertise. These concerns highlight the importance of professional development strategies to enable teachers to learn how to create and sustain teacher leadership.

One example of a teacher leadership role is the Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT) initiative in New Zealand secondary schools. It began as a pilot program in 2006 which was favourably reviewed (Ward, 2007) and has continued with modifications ever since. It is designed to promote more effective teaching practice and to enhance student engagement in learning (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Under the ministry provision, each secondary school in New Zealand is given a monetary allowance so that it can appoint one teacher to the SCT position. Provision is also made for four or more hours (depending on school size) or additional staffing time so that the SCTs have time for this work. They also have access to appropriate professional development arrangements, such as postgraduate courses.

The SCT is strongly focused on learning – on finding ways for teachers to have conversations about student learning and achievement in classrooms. Teachers invite the SCT to work with them. Details of that work are used purely for formative feedback and are not used for reporting to schools’ senior management teams. The model provides a structure which allows teachers (as individuals or in small groups) to seek assistance. That assistance can take a variety of forms: a professional reading group, invited classroom observation, learning conversations about aspects of teaching, behaviour management support and modelling by the SCT. The position does not replace a classroom teaching

role but is a substitute for four hours of classroom teaching with renewable tenure. Lovett and Cameron (2011) indicated the program's potential in their case study of a talented teacher who was attracted to the SCT role at a time when she needed new challenges to remain enthusiastic. The example highlights how the system, through school appointments, can mobilise teachers to accept leading their colleagues when their talk is about learning.

Johnson and Donaldson (2007), researchers in an American study *The Next Generation of Teachers*, maintain that such a role is attractive in terms of teacher professional development, engagement and retention. They write that early career teachers:

feel increasingly competent and confident in their work, and they want an early taste of leadership through opportunities to share their acquired expertise with others (p.8).

They also note that 'welcome leadership opportunities', with the promise of becoming a teacher leader, 'reduces [the] isolation' of teachers working in separate classrooms day after day. A teacher leadership position, say Johnson and Donaldson, also provides job variety and the opportunity to influence decision-making (p.8).

Teacher leaders: Summary

Teacher leadership is a stepping stone to other leadership roles. It is often a hidden activity, without the recognition of a formal role and dependent on an individual's inclination and generosity to share insights and concerns about practice with colleagues, and to invite others to do the same.

Teacher leadership holds considerable promise for school improvement because it is teachers who are closest to classroom work and make a difference to student achievement. Our review suggests there is a need for dedicated professional development strategies that are designed to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills so that they can engage in evidence-informed professional talk about practice, and thereby lead and learn with one another. While we examined New Zealand's specialist classroom teacher initiative as one helpful example, the review literature did not suggest that the use of professional development strategies on teacher leadership was widespread among education systems.

Major messages

We can now illuminate some major messages for strategy design, planning and provision of learning for leadership. A central tenet from our scoping is that all leadership learning must be sheeted back to practice and, equally, must be supported. This is underscored by Huber's framework (Figure 4) showing that knowledge and theory are connected with practice and action. Huber illustrates this reciprocal relationship by inserting two directional arrows between 'theory and praxis' and 'knowing and doing'. We now demonstrate the importance of such reciprocity by applying it to the kinds of processes that we discovered in synthesising the literature. These processes can be placed within Huber's six elements of concrete experiences: courses, self-study, collegial exchange, feedback and reflection and planning (Figure 5).

Experiences

Aspiring and existing school leaders want their professional learning to be centred in practice so that it is relevant and meaningful. This applies whether learning involves simulating the kind of challenges an aspiring leader may face in the future, or real, on-the-job challenges existing leaders encounter. The challenge for the system and those providing professional learning experiences is that all theoretical learning must be linked to a reality known by participants. This then allows the reciprocity Huber calls for to work. Theory becomes a framework to justify particular actions and to understand why they work or need amendment. Theory can inform practice through professional reading and discussion, pertinent questions from colleagues in professional networks or through individual mentoring, coaching or critical friendship links.

We noted in a number of countries the existence of work-based experiential learning as a formal component of leadership development programs which covered the three career stages discussed earlier. For example, in Scotland, project leadership targets teachers early in their careers, team

leadership is offered to those leading groups or teams of staff, school leadership preparation is gained through the Scottish Qualification for Headship program, and for established and experienced leaders practical exercises and strategic leadership activities are available. While these may appear to enhance leadership capacity, Cowie (2008) suggests that flexible design is needed to make the links to 'real world' experience even more explicit, thereby recognising and catering for differences in school context, workloads, changing individual and family circumstances.

Courses

Huber's model includes both external and in-house courses. Previous discussion included university courses for qualifications as well as system-organised programs such as New Zealand's First-Time Principals induction. Evaluations of this and other programs indicate that course work does not provide sufficient professional learning for leaders but that it should be viewed as one possible component.

An interesting development, previously mentioned, is the partnership of universities with professional associations. The review has cited the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) Pilot Project managed by the Australian Primary Principals Association and involving three university partners. It produced a 'course' undertaken over two years with mentoring support aimed at improving leaders' capability to lead literacy learning with teachers in their school. Linking learning to each principal's concrete experience was reported by Clarke and Wildy (2011, in press) as a key design feature of the project.

In another development, we found that approaches to the preparation of school leaders in Norway changed in 2000 when teacher unions decided to argue the desirability of formal education programs in leadership and management. Until then unions had strongly contested the need for university-based preparation programs for school leaders. The de-facto partnership between Norwegian policymakers and unions cleared the way for innovative course work in leadership development. A national education program for newly appointed principals was introduced in 2009. Moller and Ottesen (2011 in press) write that this made the roles and responsibilities of principals more explicit. To this end, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training developed a framework for the program, along with key objectives and priorities. Universities and university colleges were then able to bid to provide the program — four were successful. The starting point for these programs was the practical challenges facing schools. This focus on challenge in the workplace is another example of how knowledge and theory can be integrated with practice and action.

Both the Australian and the Norwegian programs use strategies through which systems respond to the practical needs of school leaders by designing courses with outside associations or organisations. Alternative partnerships for school leadership also appear to be under consideration in the USA, where potential administrators substitute work experience for course work. They show that many players might usefully contribute to better preparing and supporting professional learning for school leaders through course work.

Self-study

Those designing professional learning need to recognise the importance of personal choice. In this regard authorities, agencies or associations need to offer individuals an appealing range of options for self-study.

An online research repository or clearinghouse is one of the mechanisms through which self-study options might be presented to school leaders, both audio-visually and through articles and reports. Argyris (1982) reminds us of the distinction between learning alone and with others by referring to single and double loop learning. For many individuals, the single loop learning of self-study is but the first, and not the only, learning step. Double loop learning occurs when a learning leader has access to another person who shares knowledge and some level of experience in a similar professional role, thus enabling the learner to test assumptions and air concerns about practice. Together the partners are able to work through processes to find solutions to practical issues rather than perhaps remaining overwhelmed in their isolation. A clearinghouse which is built on this kind of strategy would encourage single loop learning first but also facilitate the important secondary loop by providing opportunities for pairing and

networking via an online community. Identifying others who have sought out the same materials and providing a platform, such as a discussion forum, for cooperative problem solving would enhance the value of self-study considerably.

Collegial exchange

The value of establishing effective learning relationships with colleagues is important at all stages of a leadership career. School leaders thrive on opportunities for dialogue and in this regard we promote the term 'disciplined dialogue' from the work of Swaffield and Dempster (2009). This form of discussion, which these authors define as "informed, inclusive and enabling" (p.118), helps teachers and leaders talk with one another about ideas and concerns in a 'constructive' way (p.106) that allows them to develop trusting relationships and to view their colleagues as learning resources. However, Swaffield and Dempster note that disciplined dialogue needs to be encouraged by systemic change that gives teachers and leaders opportunities to discuss practice based on sound evidence. This means promoting a range of collegial relationships, networks and partnerships with individuals and groups, and creating structures and strategies to guarantee the time for those exchanges. Such exchanges address Huber's need for practice and action but must be augmented with theory and knowledge if learning is to be sustained.

Again, the message is clear. Leaders need to be supported by other knowledgeable people if they are to become stronger leaders who make a difference to the lives of colleagues and students. Robertson (2008) emphasises the importance of supporting and challenging leaders in their work. Whether referring to coaching, mentoring or critical friendships, she advocates leadership practice as an opportunity for learning, whether one is an aspirant, novice or experienced leader. It is through sharing that new insights are formed. Furthermore, Robertson believes that collegial exchanges have the potential to 'challenge leaders to think about the theory of learning in different ways and to recognise that, for new leadership learning to take place, leaders must cross the boundaries of their comfort zones' (p.29).

Many countries continue to use formal mentoring programs. These have been initiated by education systems as components of induction programs, components of qualification programs for school leaders across experience levels, or as components targeted at a specific level of leadership. Our discussion of professional development strategies at the experienced leader stage highlighted the value of that group being trained to mentor less-experienced leader colleagues. A remaining approach is that of school-based mentoring, which is somewhat more informal and relies on initiatives by schools themselves.

Merely including coaching or mentoring in a program does not mean that those in the program will benefit. Systematic training is required to ensure that coaches employ the skills of active listening, reflective questioning and giving feedback in ways which build relationships for effective learning. Some universities usefully provide postgraduate diplomas in mentoring to reward those who have the knowledge and skills needed to work with other colleagues. Education systems might be encouraged to look to those who have completed such qualifications when appointing formal mentors in leadership programs.

Feedback

Leaders need to know that their work is having a positive impact. While they may have some idea of how their leadership directly affects teachers' work and student achievement, many of their activities unfold over time and are hard to specify. Taking our cue from the work of Robinson et al. (2009), we have already drawn attention to the complexity of understanding leadership through direct and indirect actions. We ask whether leaders should depend on others providing feedback through performance appraisals and other accountability measures, or whether learning to be an effective leader rests more productively in the realm of reflective practice. Having a repertoire of questions to raise one's awareness of leadership strengths and weaknesses is a precursor to discussing them for feedback.

Reflection and planning

Smyth (1989) develops the notion of reflectivity into four forms of action which can improve teaching practice. We would argue that they apply equally well to learning about leadership. These are listed as sequential stages and are linked to a series of questions:

- What am I doing? (describing)
- What does this mean? (informing)
- How did I come to be like this? (confronting)
- How might I do things differently? (reconstructing)

We believe each question can be usefully incorporated in collegial exchanges and then internalised in personal repertoires for understanding practice. We believe that these questions need to be modelled through learning conversations and taught in coursework programs if collegial exchanges are to move beyond emotional support to deeper learning.

Similarly, we note the potential of leadership learning portfolios as another opportunity for leaders to record their reflections on practice. Portfolios, however, have proven to be somewhat problematic as components in leadership development programs, because in most cases they have been time-consuming for little collegial feedback and for no external credit. Consideration needs to be given to how portfolios could become better accepted in leadership development.

Finally, we argue that there is no single preferred professional development strategy or process which will work to either prepare or sustain school leaders' strengths and capacities for the long term. Rather we argue that a blended approach is required, one which is driven by individuals wanting to improve leadership practice, and with the education system and other agencies providing options which link learning with practice. This is why we find particular merit in Huber's framework of leadership learning: it combines theory with praxis and knowing with doing.

PART 5

Emerging themes for ‘next practice’ in leadership development

Finally, this review endeavours to identify emerging trends in school leadership development and where ‘next practice’ might most productively be located. We produce a set of criteria which agencies such as AITSL might use to make decisions about the kinds of leadership development strategies or processes it should support.

Major messages and emerging trends

The major message from Part 1 of this review is that school leaders need to be students of the ‘big educational picture’. From time to time they need to update their knowledge of the macro-political and policy environments that affect their schools, even while they remain involved in the demands of their daily work. This will allow them to use comprehensive knowledge of contemporary issues in their schools’ interests.

The emerging trend is for those responsible for the professional development for school leaders to lift their sights beyond schools so that school leaders are engaged in understanding the politics of education and their servant systems.

The major message from Part 2 is that education systems and authorities need to do everything possible to encourage capable people to take their first steps towards leadership, whether in formal or informal roles. A subsidiary message is that it is essential to create more systematically the conditions for continuous leadership development at all career stages.

The trend is for authorities to be committed to more deliberate action on succession planning and leadership sustainability, particularly on the role that focused professional development can play in expanding teacher leadership, increasing leadership pools and sustaining leadership quality.

The major messages from Part 3 are summarised in a series of content-related propositions — that content for professional development should always be directed towards the moral purpose of leadership; that it should be based on contemporary leadership research, recognise the need for organisational, personal, procedural and relational knowledge and skills, and make explicit the twin goals of school improvement and raising the levels of student learning and achievement. We suggest that all these goals can be facilitated by individuals and systems using an heuristic tool as a leadership development organiser that highlights five focal points for professional learning: place, people, pedagogy, system and self.

The first trend is that content frameworks are being seen as helpful mechanisms for individuals or systems that are concerned to better organise professional learning, whether as personal choices or systemic programs. Second, it is becoming clear that no single content framework can be all things to all people. Third, it is apparent that getting a balance between system demands and individual needs is more likely to motivate individuals to tackle their professional learning. Fourth, it is advantageous for school leaders to be offered voluntary and mandatory professional development pathways throughout their careers. Fifth, decisions about when to learn and what to learn are best made where responsibility lies jointly with school leaders and the education systems in which they work.

The major messages from Part 4 concern the processes or strategies which, research indicates, should be employed in professional learning across career stages. The first is that all learning needs to be grounded in practice and second, that it must be supported. Third, Huber’s (2009) framework shows that knowledge and theory must connect with practice and action. The importance of that reciprocity is seen in the kinds of strategies our analysis has linked to Huber’s six elements of concrete experiences: courses, self-study, collegial exchange, feedback and reflection and planning. Fourth, the experience which underpins each of these elements suggests that leaders should be supported by their systems

or their peers to create and use the knowledge and theory needed to respond to problems of real or simulated practice. Fifth, no single preferred strategy will prepare or sustain school leaders' strength and capacity over the long term. Rather a blended approach is required, one driven by individuals wanting to improve leadership practice and the system providing options which will allow that learning to be connected with practice.

Three significant trends emerge. First, it is imperative for professional development programs or opportunities in leadership to tie together research, theory and practice by making the school a prime site for applying and sharing knowledge. When this happens a school leader's understanding of his or her context becomes critical in turning theory into knowledge and knowledge into action.

Second, learning by oneself is being replaced by learning supported by others, such as mentors or networks of peers. Colleagues have been shown to be valuable assets when knowledge is applied, reviewed and evaluated cooperatively.

Third, there seems to be a move to provide a range of leadership development strategies, some mandated for particular career stages but most of which individual school leaders can choose freely. This trend underlines the responsibility of systems and individuals jointly, to take an active role in professional learning across the career lifecycle.

Next practice?

There is unequivocal acceptance in the literature we have reviewed that leadership plays a key role in improving schools and raising student achievement. What matters, therefore, is that 'next practice' should ensure that school leaders acquire a repertoire of strategies to pursue these goals. Likewise, 'next practice' necessitates educational authorities being confident that they are contributing to school leaders' development in ways that better enable them to pursue both key goals.

We saw early evidence of the advantages of blended leadership and curriculum content frameworks to leaders' professional development (Clarke & Wildy, in press, 2011). The example that Clarke and Wildy cite involves linking leadership with improved literacy learning. Further examples of 'next practice' include leadership for improved higher-order thinking skills, for improved behaviour management or enhanced student physical wellbeing. Other blends are also possible, such as leadership for consistency in ethical decision-making, improved performance management, improved collegial support, improved family connections or effective mentoring. Our review suggests that 'next practice' is likely to benefit by basing professional development on sound leadership research that is supported by evidence on substantive school or pedagogical matters— what works and why. School leaders are unlikely to disregard the weight of research-informed action, making it more likely that useful practical applications will occur, transferring knowledge into action.

We have also formed the view that 'next practice' for systems, agencies and individuals must involve clarifying their rationale for school leaders' professional learning, and make explicit their philosophical and theoretical approaches to it.

First, speaking philosophically, taking a position on the voluntarist–determinist continuum of human nature will show how providers of professional development conceive of those for whom they plan. Our review has suggested a balanced philosophical position drawing on voluntarism and determinism in providing programs and opportunities.

Second, the rationale or justification for an enduring commitment to professional development is easily seen in a system's and individual's moral obligation to provide the best leadership possible in a climate where this needs constant attention to identifying talent, testing the capabilities of promising teachers, extending the skills of experienced leaders and educating mentors.

Third, understanding research-backed theoretical explanations of effective leadership and key concepts for exemplary professional learning are inimical to well-planned professional development programs and opportunities. This review has shown that there are many theoretical explanations of effective school leadership but we have privileged Huber's (2009) depiction of the integrated relationship between theory

and knowing and praxis and action. 'Next practice' should include testing content or capabilities and standards frameworks as platforms for consistent, comprehensive professional development programs and opportunities. However, testing should be followed by efforts to ascertain the extent to which leaders apply what they have learned in their schools.

Intrinsic to the trend towards a stronger research focus in professional development, Bush's work (2009) highlights concerns about the heavy reliance on school leaders' own evidence about the beneficial effects of their professional learning. If research and evaluations are to be useful in improving leadership learning, they need to include data on the effects of leaders' actions at school. Our analysis has shown that leadership preparation and development are hindered to some extent because models of preparation and support lack sound school-grounded research and/or evaluation findings. We believe a stronger commitment to research and evaluation of leadership development programs and opportunities is needed in 'next practice'.

Conclusion

To conclude, we describe nine criteria that we consider will be useful to those deciding which leadership development strategies should be supported in the future. No single strategy is likely to meet all criteria but in the absence of convincing research evidence about what is most effective, individuals and education authorities will need to make their own judgments. We suggest that there is sufficient conviction in our analysis to justify relying on the following criteria.

Criteria for worthwhile professional development strategies for school leaders

Leadership development strategies should be:

1. Philosophically and theoretically attuned to individual and system needs in leadership and professional learning.
2. Goal-oriented, with primacy given to the dual aims of school improvement and improvement in student learning and achievement.
3. Informed by the weight of research evidence.
4. Time-rich, allowing for learning sequences to be spaced and interspersed with collegial support, in-school applications and reflective encounters.
5. Practice-centred, so that knowledge is taken back into the school in ways that maximise the effects of leadership capability.
6. Purpose-designed for specific career stages, with ready transfer of theory and knowledge into practice.
7. Peer-supported within or beyond the school, so that feedback helps to transfer theory and knowledge into improved practice.
8. Context-sensitive, and thus able to build in and make relevant use of school leaders' knowledge of their circumstances.
9. Partnership-powered, with external support through joint ventures involving associations, universities and the wider professional world.
10. Committed to evaluating the effects on leaders, as well as on school practices to which their learning applies.

Professional development strategies for school leaders should be both voluntary and mandatory at different times and career stages, but at all times learning processes or strategies should be directed towards clear improvement purposes. They should acknowledge the complexity of school circumstances and allow sufficient time for professional learning to influence practice and for collegial feedback on that practice to shape future improvement. Strategies without these features are unlikely, we believe, to encourage the application of professional learning to the places where it really matters — schools and classrooms.

A final point concerns the paucity of research into the effects of leadership development strategies. If one priority arises from this review, it is the need for more systematic attention to be paid to assembling reliable evidence on the effects of professional development on leaders themselves and their leadership activities, and how these in turn influence school and teacher practices, student learning and achievement.

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Appendix 1

Publications for detailed consideration in this review and gap analysis

1. Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009) *School Leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why*. Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration. Wellington: Ministry of Education. (290 pages)
2. Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007) *Teacher professional learning and development*. Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration. Wellington: Ministry of Education. (290 pages)
3. OECD. (2008). Report: *Improving School Leadership*, Volume 1: Policy and Practice, also drawing from the Australian report in Volume 2. (Vol 1. 196 pages, Vol 2. 276 pages)
4. Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., & Cohen, C. (2007) *Preparing school leaders – lessons from exemplary leadership development programs* [Wallace Foundation Report] accessed from <http://seli.stanford.edu> (254 pages)
5. Brundrett, M., & Crawford, M. (Eds.). (2008) *Developing school leaders: an international perspective*. London: Routledge. (197 pages)
6. McKinsey & Company (2010) *How the world's top school systems are building leadership capacity for the future* (31 pages)
7. Bush, T. (2009) – *Leadership development and school improvement*. Educational Review, volume 61, Issue 4 (15 pages)

In addition, the review will consult six chapters on Leadership Development from Section 6 of the forthcoming two volume work: Townsend, T. & MacBeath, J. (2011 in press) *International Handbook on Leadership for Learning*, Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands (pp. 769 – 934; 165 pages)

Fink, D. (2011). *The Succession Challenge: Warm Bodies or Leaders of Learning?* (pp.769-786)

Pedwell, L., Levin, B. Pervin, B., Gallagher, M.J., Connor, M. and Beck, H. (2011). *Building Leadership Capacity Across 5000 Schools* (pp.787-806)

Møller, J & Ottesen, E. (2011). *Building leadership capacity: the Norwegian Approach* (pp.807-830)

Huber, S.G. (2011). *Leadership for Learning - Learning for Leadership: The Impact of Professional Development* (pp.831-853)

Wylie C. (2011). *The development of leadership capability in a self-managing schools system: the New Zealand experience and challenges* (pp.854-882)

Clarke, S. & Wildy, H. (2011). *Providing professional sustenance for leaders of learning: the glass half full?* (pp.883-906)

Appendix 2

Leadership dimensions and items for SALTAL-II.

Leadership dimension	Item wording: To what degree do you...
<p>Knowledge and Skills for Leading Teaching and Learning</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have a sound and up-to-date knowledge of effective teaching and learning. 2. Possess a thorough understanding of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. 3. Demonstrate a good understanding of key concepts used in the current assessment debates. 4. Use ongoing school-wide assessment to improve teaching and learning. 5. Lead Information Technology (IT) developments in ways that enhance teaching and learning. 6. See the development of a school culture focused on learning as a critical factor in creating an effective school.
<p>Commitment to Positive Learning Outcomes for All Students</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Value the whole student, and use their cultural background to promote engagement with the curriculum. 8. Believe that, for all students, learning can be positively enhanced through the principal's influence on the quality of teaching. 9. Demonstrate a strong sense of personal responsibility and accountability for the learning outcomes of all students. 10. Create opportunities for staff to innovate and experiment with strategies to enhance student learning. 11. Provide, or ensure, feedback to teaching staff on teaching effectiveness and student learning.

Appendix 2 (continued)

Leadership dimensions and items for SALTAL-II.

Leadership dimension	Item wording: To what degree do you...
Collaborative Leadership	12. Work effectively with the Board of Trustees (BOT) to develop and achieve important school-wide goals. 13. Welcome feedback and challenge. 14. Align school and local community objectives and cultures to support positive outcomes for students. 15. Allocate resources, including funds and time, to enhance effective teaching. 16. Ensure parents and caregivers are well informed about the school and the ways they can support student learning processes. 17. Facilitate the creation of a collaborative and ambitious vision for the school that is shared by students, staff, parents, the board of trustees and the community. 18. Plan and adopt a key set of strategies to ensure the ongoing professional development of the staff. 19. Develop and maintain systems to support the effective operation of the school, based on good management practice and in compliance with all statutory reporting requirements. 20. Facilitate change by using sound problem solving skills.
Ethical Leadership	21. Lead with integrity. 22. Effectively manage your own workload. 23. Make and explain the reasons for difficult decisions. 24. Hold others accountable, where appropriate.

From Robinson, V.M.J., Irving, S.E., Eddy, D., & LeFeuvre, D.M. (2008). Capability in the leadership of teaching and learning in New Zealand. The validity and utility of a self-assessment tool. In M. Brundrett., & M. Crawford. (Eds.). *Developing school leaders. An international perspective.* (pp.161-162). London: Routledge.

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