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Lejf Moos
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How School Principals Sustain Success over Time

International Perspectives

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How School Principals Sustain Success over Time

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How School Principals Sustain Success over Time

International Perspectives

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Chapter 1
Introduction to the International Successful School Principalship Project

Lejf Moos, Christopher Day, and Olof Johansson

When we started the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) in 2001, we were interested in finding answers to the question: What contributes to school principals' success in leading schools so that students gain the most from their experience of school education? Teams of researchers from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, Canada, the United States, Australia and China participated and found a series of answers and arguments as the results from analysing a range of documentary, quantitative and qualitative data from approximately 30 schools. Five years later on we went back to those schools which were led by the same principals in order to find out whether the success had been sustained and if so, how.

This book reports our findings through country case stories and cross cutting thematic chapters. First we report briefly upon findings from the first phase. Following this we describe the research methods that were used and the challenge of finding common international understandings of success in schools and in school principalship. Finally we report findings about sustaining success from the second phase of the study.

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1.1 The First Phase, 2001–2002

- The findings from the first round of school visits from all countries involved in the project were reported in a special issue of the Journal of Educational Administration (Jacobson et al. 2005) and in two books (Day and Leithwood 2007; Ylimaki and Jacobson 2011). At the end of this first phase, we all were convinced, and still are, by the evidence that excellent and high quality leadership does create successful schools. We were also very interested in finding similarities and differences between educational systems. In this first phase of the ISSPP, we produced over 65 case studies. Our analysis of the case studies had four guiding research questions:
- What gives rise to successful principal leadership?
- What practices are used by successful principals and do these practices vary across countries?
- Under what conditions are the effects of such practices heightened or diminished?
- What variables effectively 'link' principals' influence to student learning?

1.1.1 Results from the First Visit to the Schools

Below, we present selections from country reports in the first phase of the project which illustrate differences in contexts but close correspondences in the way these successful principals construct their values and practices.

The *Australian* study (Gurr et al. 2005) showed a common and consistent set of personal traits and behaviours of successful principals in two states. The importance of the principals' values and beliefs as a theme is equally captured in each study, as is their contribution to the areas of capacity building and teaching and learning.

In the *Shanghai* study, the two successful principals studied were both effective and successful 'top-down' managers (Wong 2005). Although consultative processes were used to invite the participation of teachers in major decisions, these decisions were almost always taken by the principals. Once decisions were made, deputy principals and teachers in middle management were charged with implementing them. This is known in China as position responsibility. This is consistent with the traditions of how schools should be managed in China, although current government policy is seeking to encourage more collegiality.

In *Denmark,* participants in the two case story schools stressed that their principals listened to them and that they thrived (Moos et al. 2005). The teachers also emphasised this characteristic as an important principalship trait of successful principalship. There was also robust evidence of participatory democratic communities, i.e. the open flow of ideas, critical reflection and analysis, concern for the welfare of others and the 'common good' as well as the concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.

In *England* (Day 2005), the research reported provides empirical evidence that despite the pressures and consequent tensions, successful head-teachers, like

successful teachers, are resilient, and have found 'room to manoeuvre'. None of them believed themselves to be compliant and this was confirmed by their staff. They were all concerned with values and achievement in leading in ways which build a sense of identity, community and a broad range of learning opportunities and achievement for all stakeholders. They also managed with integrity the emotions, tensions and dilemmas that are part of everyday life of leading, teaching and learning in reform responsive schools of the twenty-first century.

In *Norway,* a learning-centred approach was the focal point of the schools' philosophies, as well as their practices (Møller et al. 2005). Three aspects of this were: concern for the individual student's learning process; the development of conducive learning environments and teacher–student relations; and curriculum visions and goals. Leadership in successful schools in Norway, then, is almost entirely characterised by collaboration and team efforts. Leadership is an organisational quality and a distributed practice in these schools, where the distribution of leadership means more than acknowledging the need for a division of labour.

In *Sweden,* successful principals work hard to convince teachers, students and parents to develop an emphasis on both academic knowledge and social goals in accordance with the way a successful school is defined in Swedish law and policy (Höög et al. 2005). These principals worked in accordance with the ideology and culture of the local school district. In all three of the case schools, this meant expanding the schools' academic mission to include a focus on the development of social values among the students. All Swedish principals worked to build teacher teams.

Finally the *US* study, which focused on schools serving communities of high socio-economic disadvantage, Jacobson et al. (2005) found, when looking across the cases, that the principals were leaders who managed to set and maintain a sense of purpose and direction for their schools and generally exerted a positive influence on people's willingness to follow their lead, even in the face of challenging conditions. The US principals established safe, nurturing environments for children and adults, set high expectations for student performance, and held everyone – students, faculty, parents and themselves – accountable for meeting those expectations.

1.2 Finding Successful School Principalship: Cross Nation Differences and Similarities

The ISSPP project was designed as a mix-method project, using a broad spectrum of both qualitative research methods – interviews, observations and 'shadowing' – and quantitative methods – surveys and documentary analyses. On the basis of a shared protocol, we went to schools in order to collect data from a multiplicity of perspectives, including those of principals, deputies, teachers, parents, students and support staff. This was the basis for writing the first case story of each school and each school principal. At a later stage, we went back to some of the schools and conducted more in-depth interviews and observations. In some cases, we 'shadowed' (observed at close distance) the principal, a teacher and a student for a full

day and interviewed them at the end of the day in order to get a deeper understanding of their actions and reflections.

An important prerequisite for doing case stories like this, and for using them for comparison is that we had a commonly shared understanding of, which schools (and principals) should be included in the project. This posed a challenge to some of the researchers at the beginning of the project. In the founding descriptions of the project, it was stated that criteria for choosing successful schools were: that the schools would have shown improvements in performance, as measured in league tables of tests and examination results; that the school had received positive external inspection reports; and that the principals were widely acknowledged by their professional peers as being successful leaders. Those criteria were in line with the educational governance in Hong Kong, Australia, England, Sweden and USA. But in Denmark, Norway and Sweden there were no league table or inspection reports at that point in time. We, therefore, had to find other – comparable – criteria. Norway chose schools that had been elected by the Ministry as 'lighthouse schools' and in Denmark we requested a number of superintendents to choose two schools each, that were known to the local educational authorities as being successful on a broad basis and when it came to student performance. In Sweden, there was a similar approach. The school superintendents were asked, as well as their organisations and the principal training organisation of Sweden, for examples of schools that had made a journey from under performing to success over 3–5 years. After getting all these suggestions of schools, the Swedish group selected schools in different parts of the country. They managed to get schools from different social environments and on top of that they checked for academic rankings and the fulfilment of social goals. When it comes to the fulfilment of social goals, the student's views on the school was important. For the Swedish principals, the concept of success was not the same as it was on the national policy level. For the principals, it was far away from ranking list but much more hands on the present challenges and problems!

In both Norway and Denmark, we made it an important aspect of the first investigations to ask all project participants how they would understand and describe a successful school and principal. This means that in the outset we had diverse approaches: In some educational systems we went to schools that were chosen on the basis of known success – on the basis of 'hard data' like test results. In Denmark, however, we chose schools because superintendents had pointed to them being successful. However, when we finished the first phase, out of the eight schools originally recommended we were able to select only three, because they showed sufficiently strong evidence of success, both from a 'hard data' perspective and from a soft, comprehensive set of date perspective that we had collected ourselves.

Investigations of governance of the educational systems in different countries made the whole project being more aware of differences in understandings of success: a New Public Management understanding, that build on 'hard data' and nationally described goals and standards in the one end of a continuum (UK, US, AU) and a traditional and more comprehensive understanding of the purpose of schooling (Den, Nor, Swe). Although we found that successful principals in all countries possess the same values and qualities and developed similar combinations and accumulations of context sensitive strategies and observed that as the project

progressed the performativity agenda spread to the Nordic countries, when analysing our data we remained open to stories and accounts that went both ways, and when discussing them within the researcher group we very often found that it was fruitful to keep this continuum as a mapping of our arguments and findings. However, at the end of the day, all successful principals in all countries, regardless of national contexts, held, articulated and shared core ethical/ moral purposes, built, distributed and nurtured leadership teams at all levels, actively sought participation in education from external communities and emphasised both academic and social learning and achievement for all.

1.3 From Divergence to Convergence?

In this project, with schools in eight educational systems all over the globe and researchers from the same number of scientific communities, we have become keenly aware that an understanding of context is pivotal to the way in which principal looks at, conceives and constructs her/his leadership.

When we went back to ISSPP schools and principals and tried to find out if their earlier successes had been sustained over the five-year period, it was not only a matter of measuring/valuing whether schools and principals had continued to act as they had 5 years earlier in building of productive and supportive environment for teaching and student learning. Rather, it was also a matter of finding whether they had maintained their success in contexts of changing contemporary expectations and demands from within and from the outside of schools. Where external or internal expectations had changed, it might also be, for example, that the criteria for success had also changed.

We shall start analysing the changes in external and internal governance contexts to school leadership, based on the case stories.

Many perspectives can be employed in analysing the contexts for school and leadership success. We chose a five category systematic accountability typology as the basis (Moos 2003; Firestone and Shipps 2005). The five categories are here compressed into three:

The first cluster is: Have the *national* and *local market place and managerial* expectations changed – as interpreted in act, regulations and official discourses and also in official standards and criteria for success and criteria for accountability? And closely linked to this: Have the demands from the *marketplace* changed – as interpreted in the competition situation and the financial situation? Two distinctive pictures emerged from this analysis: The accountability/New Public Management (NPM) regimes in USA, England and Australia have been sustained and in some cases tightened; and the 'second generation of accountability regimes' in our project, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, are also tightening the couplings between state and schools. The major logics: bureaucratic and market place accountabilities are now, it seems, forming the foundation for all political regimes and thus for the isomorphic development of national governance. The carriers of this development are the now

dominant political discourses of 'competition of the knowledge economies', effectiveness, 'back to basics' and social technologies like international comparisons, bench-marking, rankings, league tables and contracts.

The second category is: Are the *political* and *local community* with parents' expectation the same as 5 years ago? In our case stories, the local, political and community expectations were more important to all the principals than the national political expectations. There was a growing tendency in most of the cases towards looking at local community (including parents) as separate from local governance (municipal authorities) and very much separate from national governance. The focus on cooperation with parents seems to have grown in all countries. At the same time, school principals are seen as integrated partners in their own local governance in a move to weaken the influence of the local authority, in effect giving more influence to national authorities.

The third cluster comprises *professional and cultural-ethical* accountabilities: Do *professionals* interpret how they best meet the needs of learners and of learning organisation, and their own needs, in the same way as they did 5 years ago? Closely linked to this: Are the *cultural-ethical purposes* of students' education and the importance of their relations to the bigger community understood, envisioned and enacted in the same way as they were at the first visits. The basis for those discussions is the cultural, ethical aspects of teachers' and principals' practice, the *internalised and socially encouraged value system* (Firestone and Shipps 2005). Here we are examining themes like 'in loci parenti', care, 'Democratic Bildung' (Moos 2008), 'education for social justice' (McKenzie et al. 2008), participation and critique, equity and care. In some places, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, there now seems to be more focus on 'back to basics', while principals insist on not forgetting or neglecting the comprehensive 'Democratic Bildung' perspective. In the 'old accountability regimes' – Australia, England and USA, there is still a strong focus on national teaching programmes, examinations and external inspections, but, as in the Scandinavian countries, these successful principals continue to emphasise also the need for the broader, more comprehensive focus: the whole child, caring, social competencies, etc. So there seems to be an understanding that the bureaucratic accountability system should be given its share, while schools also should give more attention to the broader education. Whilst this is a new situation for principals in the Scandinavian countries, principals in the (AU-UK-US) systems have adapted to the situation and found ways to mediate and manoeuvre.

1.4 Successful School Principalship: Direct and Indirect Influences

Findings in the leadership literature and from analysing our two rounds of school visits agree that successful school principals influence school improvement and thus students learning and achievement in direct and indirect ways, through the effects of

the direct and sustained application of their values, intra and interpersonal qualities, individual, relational and whole school strategies with staff, community and school environment upon them.

The literature of school leadership has produced a sufficient body of empirical evidence to persuade us that school leadership matters, e.g. Hallinger and Heck (1998), Leithwood and Riehl (2005), Leithwood et al. (2006), and Waters et al. (2003).

This research points at broad categories of basic leadership practices or functions. We shall use the four categories from (Leithwood and Riehl 2005; Leithwood et al. 2006) setting direction, understanding and developing people, designing and managing communities, and managing the teaching and learning programme. We shall add one more: leading the environments. Here, we give a short description of the categories and add illustrations from findings from both the first and the second phase of the project.

1.4.1 Setting Direction for the School

This is one of the major tasks of school principals. This understanding is implied in the concept of leadership that is understood as: 'Lead the way …' and 'be at the head of …'. The basis for this understanding is that leadership is an interactive practice. Woods (2005, p. 115) phrases it in this way: '… the essence of leadership is not the individual social actor but a relationship of almost imperceptible directions, movements and orientation having neither beginning nor end.' While reciprocity is fundamental to such relationships, the defining contribution to an organisation is an emergence of a shared sense of direction (Leithwood and Day 2007, p. 4). It is also understood in this way in this research (Leithwood and Riehl 2005), where it is found that successful principals are setting the direction for their schools: '… successful leadership creates a compelling sense of purpose in the organisations by developing a shared vision of the future, helping build consensus about relevant short-term goals and demonstrating high expectations for colleagues' work.' (Leithwood et al. 2006).

In the initial study, we found that principals were engaged in motivating teachers according to the goals and aims set out by policy makers and administrators but that they were also personalising institutional goals and building trust between themselves and teachers.

In the second round of visits, we found that leadership practices were similar to those of 5 years previously, but in some cases, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, there was growing attention to the external demands following the growing national goal setting and accountability demands as the New Public Management ideology of the USA, UK and Australia permeated these systems. The trend of governments tightening the couplings with schools through the use of more detailed and strict social technologies like testing, comparisons, rankings and benchmarking had resulted in most of the principals becoming more focused on school effectiveness and 'back-to-basic' trends.

At the same time, however, they were trying not to neglect or let teachers neglect their comprehensive, holistic goals. Principals in the (AU-UK-US) cases were also still very clear in their direction setting, encompassing both narrow subject matters and more comprehensive skills and knowledge matters.

In all countries, there seemed to be a growing awareness of the importance of leading through personal sense-making, setting the scene and the agenda (producing the premises) and in making connections to decision-making in the ongoing interactions with teachers and in developing new and appropriate social technologies for those purposes, like teams, annual plans, data informed decision making, etc. Therefore, there was more intensive and extensive attention to their schools' social structures, technologies and cultures.

1.4.2 Understanding and Developing People

As teachers have the most important influence on student learning, they need to construct optimal conditions for their relations to students. This means that structures and school cultures which enhance the quality of teachers and teaching must be good, and that the means for support and capacity building must be in place.

In the first phase, we had found that principals were engaged in stimulating teachers intellectually, promoting reflection and modelling desired commitment, values, norms and practices. There was a continuous project on building capacities that could fit the new demands and expectations of policy makers, parents and students and there was in many places a constant struggle to build resilience in response to challenging circumstances.

Five years later, we found that this project had become more visible, that there was a focus on building and sustaining trust between teachers and principals. In some instances, the basis for trust was being spelled out more clearly than before.

There was now more work on building teacher teams in most cases, distributing leadership responsibilities and accountabilities from principals and middle leaders to teacher teams and individual teachers. At the same time, there was a growing closeness between principals and teachers in professional and personal relationships of trust, support, care and, perhaps most of all, of clear direction and expectations.

In leadership theory and in the ISSPP project, there is a consensus on the need for distributed leadership where such distribution is purposeful, progressive and based upon mutual trust. There is an understanding that the principal cannot be sufficiently informed to make all decisions in a school, nor can she/he be present in all places and situations where decisions need to be made. This is eminently the case in classrooms, where teachers have to interpret demands, goals and situations and make decisions many times every lesson. It is also the case where teacher teams meet to plan and evaluate their teaching or engage in professional development. If the principal is not present, she/he is excluded from making direct decisions, but of course she/he can construct the frames, within which teams can manoeuvre, and she/he can construct the means of monitoring and evaluation practice.

Distributed leadership can take many forms. (Woods 2004) (Spillane and Orlina 2005). At the core of this concept is the notion that leadership is not only enacted only by those with formally designated roles, but may be seen in the interactions between leaders and other agents. Leadership is therefore 'an influencing relation' between leaders and followers that takes place in situations in which the leader–follower relationship is changed to one of leader–leader.

From a social constructivist perspective (Thyssen 2003), leadership can be understood as 'the goal-oriented and specialised communication that aims at stimulating comprehensive learning at all levels in schools' (Moos 2003) This communication concept is parallel to Spillane et.al.'s interaction concept because both focus on the relations between leaders and teachers. The actions of the leader are only interesting from a leadership perspective if they are understood as leadership actions by co-leaders.

Leadership influence is thus a mix: There is production of premises for decision-making (sense making or setting the scene). It is decision making itself, and it is the connections to decisions that are being made by those who were, prior to the distribution or redistribution of leadership followers.

1.4.3 Designing and Managing Communities

Schools are organisations held together by structures, but if they are to be effective and successful, they must also be communities, held together by a shared sense of identity and by common norms (Bourdieu 1990; Wenger 1999). Classrooms and schools are, in this sense, social fields and education, and learning takes place in those social fields. Loyalty and commitment to the organisation cannot by any means be an automatic or assumed starting point for any school; so building and deepening it is a key leadership duty and mission. If staff and students are to behave loyally to their organisation, leaders should make an effort to transform the organisation, into one which is characterised by all members being sufficiently committed to the ethos of the community.

In the first school visits, principals were encouraging collaborative decision-making, teamwork and distributed leadership in a collective culture and in structures that supported collaboration. Participation in decision-making, premise production and connections helped to create safe and secure environments for teachers.

In the latest visits, we found all case schools were developing their organisation into team-based networks, or webs. Leadership was now being distributed from principal to leadership teams and further on to teacher teams. Although this trend played out differently from case to case, with the Nordic cases being more similar to each other than to the (AU-UK-US), there was a common move across schools in all countries to distribute influence from principal to staff. In many cases, new middle leaders, or specialists, had been brought in to give support to teachers.

Generally, then, there seemed to be, albeit with different speed and depths, a trend towards recognising that teachers are self-leading, meaning that are given

room for manoeuvre within broad policy driven contexts of ever tightening standards and demands for accountability. Principals were aware that teachers needed to be given support and care in order that they could manage the professional choices and find room for manoeuvre, thus creating a safe and secure working environment for them. This has been described as similar to a form of 'pastoral leadership' (Foucault 1991).

1.4.4 Managing the Teaching and Learning Programme

In the first phase of the project, we had found, in accordance with other research, that an important feature of leadership for student success was the close attention which principals placed on developing, monitoring and feeding back on teachers' practice classrooms, where the core business of schooling takes place. This is often called instructional leadership in the literature but we found it to be only one part of a combination of leadership strategies employed by principals. Thus principals set and continuously raised standards and expectations and produced classroom and whole school improvement plans. There were also differences in range and intensity by which this focus was applied between the UK, USA, Australia and the Scandinavian countries.

The case stories from revisiting the schools demonstrate vividly that whilst the pressure on national aims, performance measurements and accountability was very much as it was 5 years previously in the AU-UK-US cases, it had been raised considerably in the Scandinavian cases. That was also the consensus of the stakeholders in schools. Whilst the AU-UK-US schools were now keen to talk about their hard work on social justice, relationships, trust, passion and comprehensive education, Scandinavian principals were now focusing on the new curriculum, back-to-basic demands and challenges and had become very concerned with the effects of the pressure from the new policies on the traditional, comprehensive way of looking at school and education.

It seems, however, that a common feature of all case schools that both principals and teachers in all countries insist that teaching and learning cannot be a technical, instrumental activity, but that deep down it is a matter of relations, interactions, communication and making sense of oneself, ones relations to other people and the outer world.

1.4.5 Leading the Environments

We add this very important function to the four previously mentioned. Schools are profoundly dependent on their environments, be they political, administrative, community, professional, cultural or other. Therefore, it is a very important function for principal to manage and lead relations in the world outside the physical boundaries

of their schools. They need to be able to understand and interpret signals and expectations from many stakeholders and they need to ensure that these external environments are confident that their school is doing a good job, be it through league tables, inspection reports or through political negotiations with stakeholders for legitimacy (Weick 2001).

In the first visits, we had found that many schools were engaged in building working relations with parents and community: they analysed the context in which they were located to find out about the expectations towards their schools and to create alliances and partners through supportive and productive networks. They had built good relations with government, local policy makers and authorities. In many cases, this was done via professional organisations and networks.

Five years later, most case schools had expanded their community work considerably, some in relation to parents and others in relation to partnerships and networking with other institutions and enterprises. There were clear indications of a move towards systems leadership in most places for many reasons: Schools were looking for support from parents; they formed partnerships with social and cultural institutions that could support them in meeting challenges that were not easily, if at all, met by schools working alone; some schools had formed partnerships with institutions and enterprises in order to facilitate a broader range of learning opportunities for their students, and others were policy makers at several levels in order to try and influence their expectations of their school and attract additional resources.

1.5 This Book

The country case stories in the first section describe and discuss the work of successful school principals in eight educational systems: Australia, China, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden and the USA. The chapters here are revised and extended versions of case stories published in a special issue of The Journal of Educational Administration (Johansson and Moos 2009). When we reported findings from the first phase, it was evident that external expectations of schools and school leadership were very much accountability-driven in Australia, England and the USA but less so in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Five years later, we see that external demands for managerial accountability are rising fast in the Scandinavian educational systems too.

It is, however, a common feature of all cases, in all parts of the project-world, that school principals work to fulfil those political demands whilst, at the same time, retain a clear and consistent focus on the core educational purpose of schooling – the long lasting upbringing and education of children – and thus on the cultural-ethical purposes.

In the second section of the book, we make use of the data and analyses in the case stories in writing cross-cutting, thematic chapters which focus upon key aspects of successful principals' work across all countries: sustainability, resilience, accountability, improvement and preparation. All these are pivotal to understanding, developing and sustaining successful school leadership.

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Chapter 2
Sustaining School and Leadership Success in Two Australian Schools

Lawrie Drysdale, Helen Goode, and David Gurr

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the Victorian research team of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) report on two longitudinal case studies of successful school principalship. In the first school, Morang South Primary School, the principal Jan Shrimpton transformed it from an under-performing school into a good school. We initially visited this school in 2004, and then again in 2008. For this chapter, we build upon an earlier published article on Jan's sustained leadership success (Drysdale et al. 2009), and articles based on our initial research with Jan (Gurr and Drysdale 2007; Gurr et al. 2005, 2006). The second school, Port Phillip Specialist School, had been led by Bella Irlicht for more than 20 years, and was transformed from a small specialist school in a converted house, into a large, world-class specialist school with outstanding facilities and programmes. We have researched and worked with Bella for many years, but for this research we initially visited Bella in 2003 (see Di Natale 2005; Drysdale 2007; Gurr et al. 2003), and then again in 2009. The chapter outlines the findings from the original investigations and describes the changes and outcomes since the initial study. It shows how the principals were able to sustain success, despite new challenges and changing contexts.

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2.2 Background

Having conducted more than 90 case studies, the ISSPP project is now moving into a phase where the researchers are returning to many of the original case study principals to see whether success has been sustained and the factors that have led to the current level of success. The special issue of the Journal of Educational Administration from 2005 provides summary chapters of case studies from the seven original countries (Day 2005; Gurr et al. 2005; Hoog et al. 2005; Jacobson et al. 2005; Møller et al. 2005; Moos et al. 2007; Wong 2005) and a synthesis chapter (Leithwood 2005), whilst a special issue of the *Journal of Educational Administration* (Vol. 47, No. 6, 2009) report findings from revisiting some of the original schools.

2.3 Findings from the ISSPP

There have been several important reviews of successful school leadership conducted in recent years (see, for example Leithwood et al. 2006; Leithwood and Riehl 2005; Leithwood et al. 2004; Robinson 2007). Arising from these reviews, there is consensus about the core aspects of successful school leadership. In 2006, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins described four core dimensions of successful school leadership:

- Building vision and setting direction
- Understanding and developing people
- Redesigning the organization
- Managing the teaching and learning programme

During the time of these reviews, the ISSPP was collecting and reporting on case studies of successful principals, and the knowledge gained adds to this basic understanding of successful school leadership. For example, Leithwood and Day (2007, p. 189) found evidence from the ISSPP for additional principal leadership practices that include: ensuring there is a safe environment; having clearly articulated core values; constructing context-sensitive improvement plans; establishing trust; ensuring they were visible in the school; indirectly influencing the instructional programme; and working with the broader context through the building of productive coalitions.

In a recent review, building on their own research in England and findings from other research such as the ISSPP, Day et al. (2010, p. 4) describe eight dimensions of successful leadership practice. Successful leaders:

- Define their values and vision to raise expectations, set directions and build trust
- Reshape the conditions for teaching and learning
- Restructure parts of the organisation and redesign leadership roles and responsibilities
- Enrich the curriculum

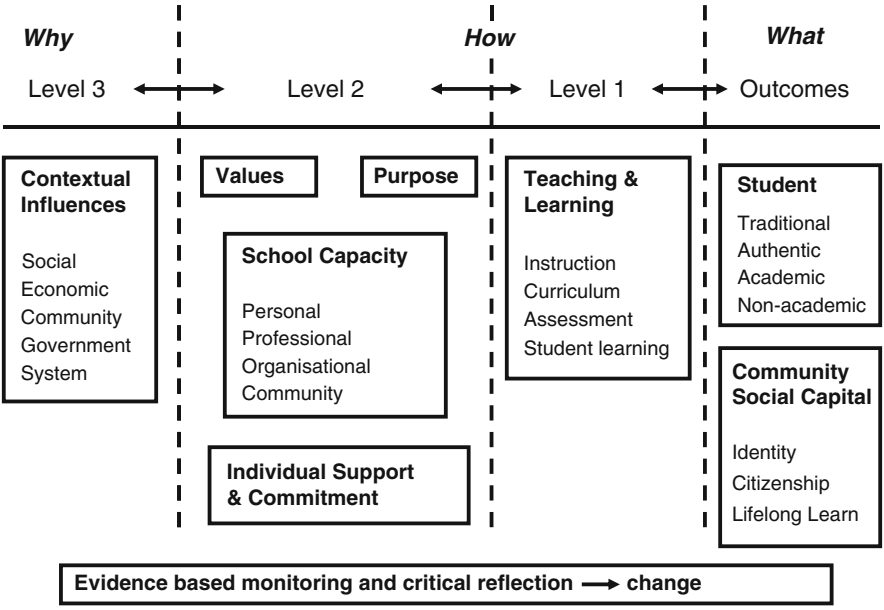

Fig. 2.1 Australian model of successful principal leadership

- Enhance teacher quality
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning
- Build collaboration internally
- Build strong relationships outside the school community

Within the ISSPP, the Cypriot and Australian researchers have sought to explain their findings through construction of models. The Cyprus group have yet to formally publish their model. From Australia, Gurr et al. (2006) constructed a model derived from their 14 case studies (nine from Victoria and five from Tasmania), which is presented in Fig. 2.1. In this model, principals exert an influence on student outcomes (broadly conceived) through a focus on teaching and learning which is driven by their own values and vision, an agreed school vision, elements of transformational leadership, and increasing school capacity, across four dimensions (personal, professional, organisational, and community), taking into account and working within the school context, and using evidence-based monitoring, and critical reflection to lead to change and transformation.

This model provides several conceptual frameworks to allow principals to locate their work. It indicates that they can impact both directly and indirectly on student learning, but that mostly the impact is indirect. All the areas of principal leadership highlighted in this chapter are either explicitly mentioned or implied. An interesting aspect of this model is that it can be applied to those school personnel holding other leadership positions, especially those in coordinating roles. For example, there are 16 elements that describe the school capacity section, and these are relevant for

anyone who has a supervisory role – if a school leader wants to exercise leadership, an important aspect is helping to develop these capacities in those that the school leader works with.

The case studies described in this chapter take two of the original Victorian schools, considers the extent to which success has been sustained, and then, through multiple-perspective interviews and shadowing of the principals, considers the role of leadership in sustaining success. We link these findings back to our leadership model to show how principals influence school outcomes.

2.4 Methodology

In these case studies, three researchers were involved with the school over a 3-week period, spending approximately 10 days in the school conducting interviews, collecting appropriate documents, and observing the practice of the school principal and the life of the school. The main methods used to collect data were:

- Individual interviews with the principal (two interviews), assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, six other teachers (two previously interviewed, two long-serving at the school, one experienced teacher recently appointed to the school, one newly qualified teacher recently appointed to the school), school council president, and school council parent member
- Group interviews with parents (two groups of 5–8) and students (two groups of 5–8)
- Observation of the work of the school principal and aspects of the life of the school
- Collection of documents to confirm the success of the school and to inform the observational and interview data

Individual and group interviews used a semi-structured interview schedule focused on three broad questions:

1. Can you tell me about the changes to the school that have occurred since we were previously at the school?
2. Can you tell me about how your leadership (the principal's leadership) has developed over this time?
3. The evidence presented to us indicates that the school has remained successful. To what do you attribute this?

Observation of the principal was through shadowing the principal for 3 days. The days were selected at random. Observation of key school events (leadership team meetings, staff assemblies, whole-school assemblies, sport activities, classrooms in action, etc.) were used to verify views expressed in the interviews about the principal's leadership behaviour, and the relationships and processes and practices of the school. Events observed were chosen by the researchers in consultation with the principal and the other interviewees. Depending on the event, one or more researchers were involved and events videotaped. The researchers used field notes

and a reflective journal to record observations and responses to events. Debriefing amongst the researchers and/or with the principal occurred at the end of each observation day.

In addition to interview and observational data, relevant documents were collected such as school development plans, school prospectuses, school review reports, newsletters and examples of media coverage. These sources were used to contextualise the empirical data and to enhance trustworthiness.

2.5 Findings: Morang South Primary School and Jan Shrimpton

2.5.1 School Profile

Morang South Primary School is a co-educational government primary school that was first established as a rural school in 1877. It is situated some 23 km north of the central business district of Melbourne. The school caters for children from Preparatory Year to Year six with an age range between 5 to 12 years. The school moved to a new site in 1996 to cope with anticipated enrolment increases from the rapidly developing surrounding suburbs. At the time of the initial study, the school enrolment had grown from 322 in 1999 to 583 in 2004, and there were 52 staff, including 36 teachers and various support staff.

2.5.2 Principal Profile

The Principal, Jan Shrimpton, worked in Victorian government schools for 40 years and was a principal for 17 years. She first took up the role of principal in 1990, and in 1993, successfully initiated and then merged two primary schools. She remained principal at the merged school until term three in 1998 when she was seconded as a Senior Education Officer in the Northern Regional Office of the Victorian Department of Education and Training. At the request of the Regional Director, she took up an acting principal position at Morang South Primary School in term four of that year. When the position was advertised the following year, she applied, was successful, and was in the substantive position until her retirement in term two of 2008.

2.5.3 Background: Previous Findings

The initial case study was conducted in 2004. The school was identified as a turnaround school as a result of a systemic school review conducted in 2003 (each Victorian government school is currently required to undergo self-assessment and

independent verification every 4 years, and previously every 3 years; see Gurr 2007). Prior to Jan's appointment in late 1999, the school had experienced a considerable decline in performance, especially between 1995 and 1999. Evidence of the school's performance was noted in the 1997 School Triennial Review (Morang South Primary School 1997, p. 6):

> The analysis of student learning at Morang South highlights that many children are working below the expected Curriculum and Standards Framework levels in English and Mathematics.

A further decline in performance between 1997 and 1998 was noted in the 2000 School Triennial Review (Morang South Primary School 2000). A major reason for the poor results was explained by the poor school culture that had developed, with this most obvious in conflict between the principal, teachers and parents. Much of the conflict was attributed to the school's move to a new site and the then principal's management style.

From the time Jan was appointed principal in late 1999, the school's performance improved on a number of measures. The 2002 Triennial Review report (Morang South Primary School 2000: 2) showed that:

> It is evident that the school has made a significant recovery since 1998 and the new leadership team is well placed to tackle the curriculum issues that the school must address over the next Charter period.

During our study, we found evidence of improved student performance in Mathematics and English, staff opinion, parent opinion, resource management, school image, and principal reputation and esteem among peers and the school community. This was supported by findings in the 2003 School Review:

> Morang South Primary Schools is to be congratulated on continuing its improvement over the triennium. The school provides a stimulating and dynamic curriculum that successfully caters for the needs of the school community. Improvement in all aspects of the school is commendable. (Morang South Primary School 2003: 2)

The school identified its success on a range of criteria. In addition to improved performance in literacy and numeracy, the school noted: Development of a clearly defined philosophy; collaborative, happy, committed staff; positive and rich learning environment for the children; community support; and a sound reputation in the community.

The main reason for success was reported to be the principal's positive contribution. She described her greatest achievement as having the whole community working with her. From our analysis of the data, we identified four core themes that appeared to account for her success – leadership style, personal philosophy and values, building relationships and personal characteristics. In terms of her leadership style, she was described as a positive role model, inspirational, and empathetic. Her style was consultative and conciliatory. Her personal philosophy was centred on the whole child and not just academic results.

> I have had a long and enduring commitment to all children receiving the best possible range of educational experiences, opportunities to succeed, and to reaching their full potential. (Principal, 2004)

She had introduced the notion of the school moving from a 'rules-based' approach to a 'values-based' approach. Building positive relationships was a corner stone of her approach to improving teacher morale and commitment, and establishing community support. Her personal characteristics included integrity, high energy, sensitivity, enthusiasm and persistence.

> There is nothing you cannot achieve and fix if you are persistent, consistent, and tenacious. (Principal, 2004)

2.5.4 Changes Since the Last Visit

During our return visit in 2008, we were interested to see what changes had occurred and to what extent the school was able to sustain its performance. The following changes were noted:

1. The school enrolment had declined from a high of 611 students in 2005 to 500 students in 2008. This resulted in the need to reduce staff through transfer, retirement or non-renewal of those teachers on yearly contracts (in Victorian government schools, the majority of teachers are employed on a tenured basis, but all schools will have some teachers employed on 1-year contracts to cater for permanent staff, leave, fluctuations in enrolments, curriculum needs and so forth). Changes in enrolments were largely due to the establishment of two new schools in the area designed to cope with the projected growth in population in this rapidly expanding outer fringe of Melbourne.
2. There was an older staff profile, as many of the younger teachers had moved for promotion, or their short-term contact had not been renewed because of a decline in student enrolments.
3. The student demographics had changed to the point that behavioural problems were more pronounced due to more students coming from challenging family backgrounds.
4. Major Education Department initiatives imposed on the school included implementing a new curriculum framework, new assessment and reporting practices, and greater accountability procedures. These initiatives had put increased pressure on staff and school resources.
5. At the time of the research, the principal announced her retirement after 10 years as principal; Jan retired in term 2 of 2008 and her assistant principal, Julie, was successful in gaining the principalship.

2.5.5 Ability to Maintain or Improve Performance

In 4 years since the initial research, there was sufficient evidence to indicate that the school had maintained its overall performance. The 2007 School Review report (Morang South Primary School 2007: 4) noted in the executive summary:

> It is a good, successful school which aims to consistently provide high quality education and continuously improve.

The report listed successful attributes as a strong sense of purpose and community, high level of collegiality, strong leadership and quality professional learning. It congratulated the school on its initiatives to improve student outcomes and improve the quality of school life through a focus on learning, social competencies, student leadership, citizenship, student well-being, values development and extra curricular activities.

School data across a range of areas supported this view. The School Level Report (Morang South Primary School 2007; assembled centrally from data supplied by all government schools) showed that literary results in the early years (Prep to Year 2) remained well above state benchmarks, and results for English and Mathematics in the statewide testing programme (Assessment Improvement Monitor, AIM) in Year 3 and Year 5 showed a slight upward trend with results at or above the state average. Student absence rates remained high but showed improvement, and parent opinion of key aspects of the school had improved on most items, although general satisfaction showed a slight decline. One area where results were not sustained was staff opinion as this declined in most variables but remained at very high levels; nevertheless, declining from the 90th to the 70th percentile compared to other primary schools. Two areas that teachers were concerned about were student behaviour and student motivation. However, there was data that indicated some very positive improvement with, for example, the 2008 records showing a decline in incidents with serious consequences from 481 in 2004 to 26 in 2007.

2.5.6 Reason for Sustainability

The interview and observational data collected from the return visit showed that the original four themes that accounted for the principals' success were still evident – leadership style, personal characteristics, relationship building, and personal philosophy and values. The interviews and observations provided greater clarity concerning the interventions and approaches used by the Jan to improve school performance. Her focus on staff, parents and students remained central to how she worked.

2.5.7 Leadership Style

Jan noted that her style had, in the main, not changed, although while she said she had not lost any of her patience, she had had to be tougher on some occasions. She described herself as not being afraid to address issues head-on, whilst remaining cognisant of the welfare of all involved.

> I will be tough if I need to be but I always try for a win/win. (Principal)

She was observed to be influential and purposeful. Her style was open and invitational rather than confrontational. As one experienced teacher remarked:

> Even if you have done the wrong thing you feel like you are being congratulated. (Experienced Teacher)

Her approach to decision making was described as 'collaborative', 'democratic' and 'consultative'. Key decisions were discussed in forums where issues could be openly raised by staff. Jan and her assistant principal, Julie, worked as a team. Julie had been selected to the position because she was perceived to have complementary skills. Jan was the communicator who was able to articulate the vision and build relationships. Julie was the curriculum leader whose expertise was in teaching and learning. Indeed, the revisit confirmed that the success of the school relied on both Jan and Julie, and, increasingly, on teachers contributing through leadership teams.

Jan had developed a structure that promoted professional learning teams at each level, and she had empowered the teams to set their own goals and try new approaches.

> We don't interfere with staff once they run with an idea. (Principal)

Teachers were encouraged to be leaders at every level and both individuals and teams were expected to be accountable for their performance. Interestingly, while she empowered staff she was also a 'hands on' leader. She frequently visited classrooms and provided support where possible. This type of support was described by the Languages Other Than English (LOTE) teacher who had recently requested a return to the classroom:

> Last year to make the transition a smooth one she gave me planning time with the Year 5/6 team, provided me with opportunities to attend professional development, a general 'Hi how are you going?', and coming into my classroom to see how I am going, and giving me confidence to do a better job. The whole Year 5/6 team has been supportive.

2.5.8 Personal Characteristics

Jan displayed a range of personal characteristics. A key characteristic was a strong sense of purpose and persistence. She outlined that it had taken her 5 years to turn the school around and that it was important not to let go of the momentum. She spoke about how it was being alert to events and stepping in before events escalated:

> *I try to avoid going into damage control (Principal).*
>
> Jan had a positive self-image: *I see myself as a successful leader (Principal).*

Her success was based on teacher and community support, and the trust of the children. She was able to bring the community together and maintain the momentum for improvement. Her positive view was regarded by teachers as a role model to others that helped create confidence and a positive school climate. She also had numerous personal qualities that were admired and respected by staff. She was described as friendly and upbeat, creating good vibes, very loud and very funny,

compassionate yet tough also. She was vigilant, and self-contained as a person, yet very open and a good listener. As one teacher said:

> With Jan you can walk into her office and say anything that is on your mind-personal or work.

Finally, she was regarded as an excellent communicator, totally trustworthy, diplomatic, and supportive.

2.5.9 Personal Educational Philosophy

Over the 10 years of her principalship at the school, Jan's educational philosophy remained the same. She felt it was important to work holistically. For example, while literacy and numeracy were important, so were the Arts, social competency, and tolerance of others. Her aim was to bring together the resources to create a community of life-long learners, rather than striving to be the top school in the state.

> The Educational Department focuses too much on literacy and numeracy, yet we know we do well by our students who do well at secondary school. (Principal)

The Year 6 teacher reflected that Jan saw her work as a vocation rather than a career:

> She works well and gets something positive out of even the most difficult student, parent or situation.

Another teacher outlined the philosophy by commenting that the school did not have the best student outcomes data, but the kids were motivated and happy, and parents saw the school as successful and a happy place. Jan strongly believed that schools were for students, and this was demonstrated by her recruitment philosophy:

> We recruit for attitude. First of all they must be passionate about teaching, love kids, and want to be part of a team. Then skills come second. (Principal)

2.5.10 Relationship Building

Jan was able to build relationships with a wide range of individuals and groups. She had demonstrated her capacity to do this when she turned the school environment around from one that was caustic with everyone fighting, to a harmonious and friendly atmosphere. She was able to reach out to the community and establish trust and confidence in the school. She talked about building community through the use of open door polices, lots of meetings with parents, encouraging teachers to invite parents in the classroom, providing parenting programmes, and acknowledging parents' good work.

She was able to effectively manage staff. For example, if she had to remove a teacher from the school, she tried to ensure that both the school and the teacher were both satisfied. Relief teachers provided feedback that they saw Jan as very welcoming and they preferred to teach in this school more than any other school. She developed and empowered young teachers, and provided them with quality professional learning and leadership opportunities. Jan was very supportive of her staff and gave an example of a direct intervention with a staff member:

> A young, excellent teacher wanted to be friends with the student, but seemed to be heading for disaster…I sat down with her and was very directive about what she had to do…in her second year I set her up in a team teaching situation…she is now one of our best teachers.

Above all she established trust as her assistant principal describes:

> When I was acting principal last term I felt comfortable in the role and Jan trusted me to do this. (Assistant Principal)

She was approachable - students, teachers, and parents felt they were welcomed to speak to her any time.

2.5.11 Interventions

As a leader, Jan introduced a range of interventions that impacted directly on individuals and groups, and indirectly through programmes and processes.

Key programmes that made a positive impact included programmes such as 'Quality in Schools', 'Restorative Practices', developing social competencies, and a clear code of conduct that emphasised communication rather than sanctions. The values programme was particularly effective with specific values used consistently during the school day to guide actions. One example observed was a small group of boys who had been in conflict in the school grounds and called to Jan's office. Her conversation with them began by referring to the school values. Each class had also established its own code of conduct with their own rules and consequences.

Another positive intervention was the responsibility that was given to students. For example, students staffed the front office at recess, took telephone calls and passed on messages. During one visit, one of the students came into the staffroom at lunchtime to remind Jan that she was on yard duty!

There were also interventions that were smaller scale, but nevertheless had a positive impact. For example, Jan acquired two King Charles Cavalier spaniel dogs, with Jan responsible for one, and a classroom teacher caring for the other. These were school dogs, with one living in Jan's office and the other in a teacher's classroom during the school day. These dogs had had a positive impact in a number of ways. For example, they had a calming effect on distressed or badly behaved students, particularly Jan's dog, Clipper, who sat in a basket in her office; they provided support for students who had difficulty mixing, as they were able to come to the office during breaks, put the dog on a leash and take him into the yard.

A number of extracurricular activities had been introduced. One of these was a choir. This was open to all students, regardless of whether or not they could sing. Jan trained this group each week. They performed regularly at a local old people's home.

We now move to report the findings from our second principal, Bella Irlicht and Port Phillip Specialist School.

2.6 Findings: Port Phillip Specialist School and Bell Irlicht

2.6.1 School Profile

Port Phillip Specialist School is a government funded multi-mode specialist school that caters for a diverse range of students with mild to severe intellectual disabilities with associated physical and emotional disabilities. The age range is from age 2.5 (Early Education Programme) to 18 years of age. It is located in the south eastern bayside area of Melbourne, 5 km from the CBD. The catchment area covers a number of suburbs in the south east.

The school started in humble circumstances in 1986 as a special developmental school located in a small converted house with 20 students. It was relocated to larger site (an old primary school that had been closed) and changed to a specialist school (permitting a wider range of students to enrol) in 1996. The school now operates from three campuses with an enrolment of 150 students and multi-disciplinary team of 50 staff (special education teachers, therapy staff, specialist teachers and teacher assistants). The school was the first 'fully serviced' school in Australia with an integrated service model to structure educational, medical, paramedical and mental health services and maximise the available resources and outcomes for students and the broader community. The school receives enrolment enquiries both nationally and internationally.

The school is highly innovative in its approach with three distinct features: A fully serviced school (with a broad range of educational, welfare, and medical services provided), with integrated services provision (referring to the tight integration between the various professionals to provide personalised student programmes) and a curriculum based on the visual and performing arts (Visual and Performing Arts Curriculum, VPAC).

2.6.2 Principal Profile

Bella Irlicht was appointed principal of the school in 1988 and has overseen its transformation from a small school in a converted house into an outstanding facility with an innovative curriculum and world-wide reputation. Initially, Bella trained as

a primary school teacher and educational psychologist, before taking on the role of principal at Port Phillip. During her principalship, she gained several formal qualifications including a Masters in Education, and Graduate Diplomas in Educational Administration, Curriculum, and Student Welfare. She won a Churchill Scholarship in 1995 to study Fully Serviced Schools overseas, a concept that she then implemented at Port Phillip.

She has been recognised with numerous awards including an Order of Australia (OA), CEO of the Year for Not For Profit Organisations, and Fellowship of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders. These are outstanding achievements for a school principal and testify the breadth of recognition of her outstanding work as a principal. She officially retired from Port Phillip in 2009.

2.6.3 Background: Previous Findings

The initial research for the ISSPP was conducted between 2002 and 2003 (see Di Natale 2005). The school was identified as being a successful school from the time of its transformation into a specialist school in 1996. It had made significant achievements in a short period of time: The renovation and refurbishment of the school, establishment of a 'state-of-the-art' technology centre, new improved grounds and equipment, building of indoor therapeutic swimming pool and an outstanding transition programme for students leaving school. While difficult to measure in normative ways because of the particular learning difficulties of students, student achievement was recognised as improving (Port Phillip Specialist School 2002). Enrolments had increased significantly and the reputation of the school had grown in the community.

Most of these achievements were attributed the principal. She was acknowledged for gaining grants and sponsorship, establishing partnerships with commerce and industry, providing leading edge professional development for staff, and changing processes and structures to accommodate the school's growth. She also forged strong links with tertiary institutions, and key personalities and organisations in the entertainment industry. Two key achievements stood out that attributed to her vision and drive: the development of a fully serviced school model, and introduction of an integrated model of service delivery. The fully serviced school model was a holistic approach to service provision that provided educational, medical, paramedical, and mental health services for students and the wider community. The integrated model of service delivery was an approach which saw teachers, specialists, and therapists collaborate to deliver the best instruction strategies for students.

Four aspects of her overall leadership were identified in the initial research: Personality and leadership style; Personal philosophy; Personal and interpersonal skills; and, The type of interventions that she introduced to improve student outcomes and build staff, school and community capacity (e.g. new school site, transition programme, therapeutic swimming programme, dental service, ICT support for students).

2.6.4 Changes Since the Last Visit

On our return visit we noted the key external forces for change and the internal changes:

1. The school had increased its enrolment from 120 to 150. This had placed considerable pressure to accommodate the growing number of students to extent that the school was forced to put a ceiling on enrolments.
2. Demographic changes had occurred. There was now a more diverse range of students from a broad spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds. There was an increase in the number of students with multiple disabilities, as well as an increase in students diagnosed with autism.
3. There had been a significant change in staff profile. Although there were some staff who had been at the school for a long time, there was also a significant number of new and younger staff members.
4. Similar to Morang South Primary School, major Education Department initiatives had been imposed on the school including implementing a new curriculum framework, new assessment and reporting practices, and greater accountability procedures. These had put increased pressure on staff and school resources at a time of major school change.
5. The school had been restructured. The leadership team had been restructured. Therapists, special education teachers, and assistant teachers were expected to work together and provide a new level of integrated education.
6. The school had changed direction:
   (a) The school had been developing a new culture where the expectations were to shift from a culture of 'care' and 'therapy' to one that focussed on 'education'.
   (b) The school had developed and introduced a new innovative curriculum based on the performing arts.
   (c) The school had introduced a new reporting system that included pictorial representation of the students' progress.
   (d) Staff had been more professionally accountable.

2.6.5 Ability to Maintain or Improve Performance

In the 5 years since the initial research, it was apparent that the school had moved in a new direction and staff had experienced significant change. Not surprisingly this was reflected in the staff opinion survey which had declining results (Port Phillip Specialist School 2007). This challenging environment for staff was not reflected in the parent views, as parent opinion continued to improve and far exceeded state benchmarks. This suggests that parents were supportive of the changes they were seeing. While student outcomes were difficult to measure on standard tests, teacher

judgements showed good to very good progress in all subject areas, and exceeded state benchmarks for students in special school settings. The new reporting system appeared to effectively capture individual student progress:

> I get a much better understanding of my son's progress at Port Phillip than I do from my daughter's reports from her mainstream school. (School Council President)

The school's reputation was further enhanced with greater recognition from overseas as well as within the community. For example, the school initiated and hosted an international symposium on arts-based curriculum, which attracted international recognition, and created international interest in the school's arts-based curriculum, the VPAC:

> VPAC has put us on the world map. She (Bella) put us out there and people wanted to come on board…In ten years we have gone from nothing to a state-of-the-art school. (Assistant Principal Operations)

From the interviews, it seems that the new curriculum improved student engagement and learning outcomes, and the new reporting process provided a broader and more in-depth view of student achievement attuned to the new VPAC.

2.6.6 Reasons for Sustainability

Again the consensus of opinion for why the school improved was attributed to the leadership of Bella. The key aspects of her principalship were, vision and direction, leadership style, personal qualities, skill set, strategic interventions, and having a positive attitude to change.

2.6.7 Vision and Direction

A key aspect of Bella's leadership was the ability to develop and articulate a clear vision and to gain broad support for this:

> You have to be clear and know where you are going; you have got to know what you want, and you have got to set your direction in your own mind, and as long as you do that things will follow… you have got to have some direction and know the path that you are on so that you can take everyone else with you. (Principal)

> You can't fault her vision and her leadership. (Assistant Principal Curriculum)

She never lost sight of her vision. Her overall vision had remained constant since the day one of her principalship. The message was clear and consistent, and backed up by a moral purpose as she describes:

> I wanted to create the best special school in the world; to create opportunities for my students that were not available anywhere else, and to put up a model so that children do not fall through the cracks. (Principal)

Then, she was able to turn the vision into a reality by aligning staff, parents, community and other stakeholders who helped provide the necessary resources, facilities and programmes.

> I am able to find resources, I am able to develop a vision, and then drive it relentlessly. (Principal)

2.6.8 Leadership Style

When we returned to the school in 2008–2009, she still had high expectations and the drive to develop the best specialist school that had always characterised her leadership, but she had now become more of a situational leader.

There were many labels that were attributed to her leadership by those we interviewed: politician, educational entrepreneur, marketer, networker, coalition builder, and innovator. While these continued to be important, it was her high expectations that defined her leadership approach. In this area, she was uncompromising and this was recognised by staff and parents as providing a positive influence on outcomes:

> She surrounds herself with people and skills, she pushes people really hard: a lot of delegation. 'I know you can do it', so people achieve and get on a high. (Teacher 2)

> She has set an incredible benchmark for special education … these children don't need mediocrity. (Social Welfare coordinator)

> Bella looks at the practice in the school and asks 'How can we make this better?' Assistant Principal Curriculum)

One parent commented that her high expectations also had a hard edge to it:

> The staff are fantastic, but if they don't work out they are gone. (Parent)

This was re-enforced by a senior staff member:

> Her leadership is consistent- they know they will not get it easy. (Social-Welfare Coordinator)

While her expectations had remained high, she had become more of a situational leader in that she had developed both the 'hard' or and 'soft' sides of leadership. In terms of the 'hard' approach she was able to be more challenging.

> I have found myself, I have grown in my own confidence, I know what I want. I used to avoid the hard stuff. I will now challenge people. I sit people down, I tell them it is not appropriate and ask people 'What have you got to say?'

In terms of the 'soft' approach, she was more collaborative and actioned her expectations more appropriately. She had learnt to read situations better and to modify her leadership to suit the situation. For example, she was more capable of being consultative and invitational, and to distribute leadership responsibilities. As one teacher who had been with Bella for 17 years, said:

> She has become better at allowing others to lead; she has become more distributive. (Teacher 1)

The Assistant Principal explained:

> What has changed is her ability to deal with people. She is more able to say things without being judgemental, she has learnt to self reflect, and to observe others, and how they do things…

but

> What has not changed is her passion and authenticity.

In summing up her leadership and ability to sustain success, the President of the School Council noted:

> She is uncompromising, she is prepared to have uncomfortable conversations, she sets high expectations and empowers people, she delegates and holds people accountable and she has great energy. (President School Council)

2.6.9 Personal Qualities

Bella's personal qualities and values were highlighted by interviewees as an underlying basis for her successful leadership. It was not just what she did and how she did it, but who she was. The characteristics of passion, persistence and determination were consistently highlighted:

> I am passionate about what I do and I believe in what I do and want above all for it to work… if someone says 'no, there is another door'… if I believe it can be done I will move heaven and earth for it to be done and keep knocking on doors. (Principal)

Her tenacity was reinforced by comments such as:

> She gets the bone between her teeth and off she goes… Working for anyone else would seem very mundane. (Social-Welfare Coordinator)

> Once she gets something in her mind she is unstoppable. (Assistant Principal Operations)

Bella had a strong believe in self and self-efficacy.

> Yes I did take risks, Big risks. I am a big risk taker, but I thought we could do it. (Principal)

She was also very aware of both her strengths and weaknesses. She noted her strengths as being able to seek out new opportunities, find appropriate resources, develop a clear vision, and drive through change. She also understood some of her limitations, such as in curriculum development, and sort to ensure that there were people in the school that had strengths in these areas. For example, in a leadership meeting, she was observed to say to the Assistant Principal Curriculum:

> I will drive home physical resources, you drive the curriculum. (Principal)

2.6.10 Skill Set

Bella had a range of important skills that enabled her to raise funds, get people interested in the school, to market the school, and to attract the right people and resources. She was skilled at public relations and in previous research, we noted her strength in

market-centred leadership (Drysdale 2002). She was a good listener, and her inquisitive nature meant she was always seeking new ideas and new ways of doing things.

> She has a rare skill set. She builds, influences, and get people to do things that are mutually beneficial. (President School Council)

Her skills in attracting resources, getting people on board, finding ways to combat new challenges, networking, and forming alliances complemented her leadership style. This was supported by a range of comments:

> Bella's expertise is in attracting people and funds. (Assistant Principal Operations)

> Her vision, her fund raising ability, her ability to get people interested in and out of the school, her PR skills could not be better. She puts a noose around their neck until they say, 'Yes'. (Teacher 1)

> She is clever at choosing staff, she knows how to read people, how to pick people with particular skills, and she always has her ears to the ground. (Administration)

> The ability to listen… let them have their say…skills you have to work on… the harder stuff. (Assistant Principal Operations)

A particular skill was selecting the right people. As she was never threatened by competent people, Bella made sure that she was surrounded by people who were good at their work and had expertise that complemented her skill set.

> Success is having smart people around you. (Principal)

> She makes sure she has the right persons around her. (Parent)

> Sustainability is very dependent on the right people – you employ people who share an empathy, frame everything with professional dialogue. (Principal)

She had the ability to get people on board and committed:

> It was more about making people excited. Making them feel it was their idea and picking the key people who were most influential with staff and making sure they were on board first. If you knew they were on board you knew that other people would come. (Principal)

> All this change would not be possible if it were not for a number of very solid people who backed every move I made…it is not a one man show… its about bringing people on board really. Making people own the project rather than me. Getting people to own it and facilitating the resources and trusting in people that they can do it, not standing over them. (Principal)

2.6.11 Strategic Interventions

Bella had an enormous capacity for introducing significant change. In her early years as principal, she branded the school as innovative, establishing best practice, and being different (Fully Serviced School, Integrated service delivery, state-of-the-art facilities and technology resources, transition programme). In the 5 years since we first visited the school, she had continued to provide the resources, facilities, and services for students, but also continued to improve by setting the school in a new direction by changing the culture from a medical to an educational view, and developing and implementing an innovative curriculum (the VAPC).

The development of the VAPC was a massive change that required long-term commitment, dedication, and willingness to re-shape the curriculum and pedagogy. She assembled a team of external consultants and experts to work with the staff to develop a new curriculum that had not been tried before, but with the firm belief that it would greatly change and enhance the learning opportunities of students. The fact that she and her team pulled this off in 3 years, and achieved international recognition for this work, was an amazing result.

> It was a massive change because it effected the way teachers were doing their teaching… everything had to be taught through drama, art music, visual arts and it had a huge impact of teaching and learning right through… All this change would not be possible if it were not for a number of very solid people who backed every move I made. (Principal)

The second major intervention was to change the school culture from what was described as a 'medical' model to an 'educational' model. Bella and her team believed that the school had focused too much on 'caring' and providing 'therapy' for students with disabilities, and not enough on education. The challenge was to move from a hospital to a school model.

> We are a school number one, not a hospital. Occupational therapists must fit into a school model… As a school it is a luxury for a school to have you guys and we appreciate it…but we are a collaborative team and goals have to be mixed into the educational model – Now go to the party and tell me when the food is on. (Principal in interview with Occupational therapist)

The challenge to change the culture and to integrate all the services, and mesh the medical and therapeutic practices into an educational model was a work in progress at the time of our investigation.

2.6.12 Attitude to Change

Bella demonstrated a positive, proactive attitude to change. Her attitude was expressed as:

> Change is inevitable but growth is optional, Change is going to happen anyway and you can choose to grow with it, or shrivel up and stay as you are. (Principal)

> Rob(AP) and Bella allow change to happen; it never goes back to what it was; we always move forward and it is always for the benefit of the kids. (Administration)

An important characteristic that underpinned her leadership and the notion of continuous improvement was her attitude to change. She continuously moved the targets for improvement, and while she created discomfort she also produced excitement. However, at no stage did she consider there was too much change. When asked about whether there was too much change she replied:

> Too much change? It did not feel as if there was too much change, it felt like it was on a course… we keep on travelling on a path, the mission was clear, vision was clear, and we just had to reach our destination. (Principal)

Her determination to be the best, her positive attitude to change and the need to introduce something new and innovative provided a stimulating concoction that produced a

new level of excitement, energy and ultimately improved outcomes for students. This energy is characterised in following statement from the School Council President:

> Every resource, money in the bank and always something exciting and different to do; therefore keep moving the goal posts, keep expectations high and raising the benchmark, keep staff engaged, and recognise when things need to be kicked along – interactive white board –you have to demonstrate that you want one.

2.7 Discussion

2.7.1 Comparing the Two Cases

For both schools, despite political, educational, and demographics changes over the 5 years since we first visited, these schools had maintained their improvement. At Morang South Primary School performance had plateaued. At Port Phillip Specialist School, the change agenda had accelerated and significant reforms were successfully carried out. This difference is shown diagrammatically in Fig. 2.2.

The findings show that success in both cases was largely due to the principal, and in particular, their respective leadership styles, strongly articulated personal values, personal qualities and characteristics, effective relationship building, and strategic interventions. An important variable though in why one school continued to improve, was the principals' attitude to change. At Morang South Primary School, where there was a turnaround in performance and where this successful performance was maintained, the principal was controlled by change events. As with the findings of Giles and Hargreaves (2006) and Hargreaves and Goodson (2006), system reforms, demographic changes, and the natural changes in the life cycle of the school had impacted on this school. Whilst the school was able to maintain its overall performance (which is in itself a significant achievement), it was not able to progress to a higher level of performance. At Port Phillip Specialist School, where the school continued to improve upon its history of success, the principal was able to better control the change events to the school's advantage. In both cases, internal and external change challenged past success, but the principals were able to accommodate the impact. Jan could be described as a Restorer-Builder - she turned the school around and built a good school that maintained success in the face of external and internal changes. Bella could be described as a Visionary-Driver - she drove improvement through promoting change. She used the similar external and internal changes that had led to a plateau on improvement at Morang South Primary School as an opportunity to create further improvement.

2.7.2 Conceptual Model

Both Jan and Bella's leadership is consistent with the conceptual framework of Fig. 2.1. In terms of outcomes, Jan placed equal emphasis on authentic outcomes such as social competencies, citizenship, and instilling in students a love of learning.

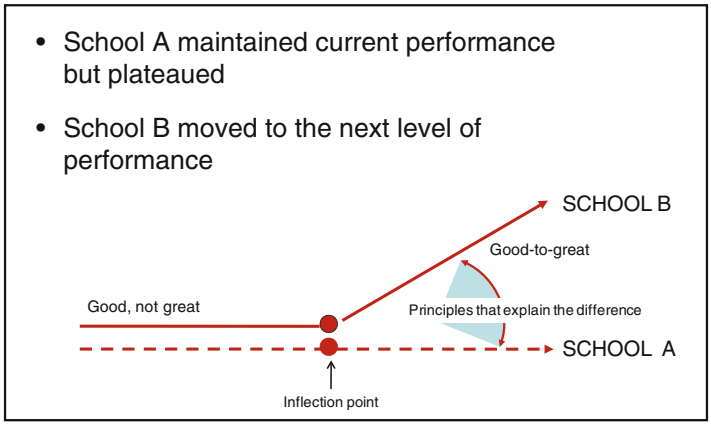

Fig. 2.2 From good to great

She placed great emphasis on capacity building in areas such as professional learning, professional learning teams, acknowledging the individual talents of teachers. There was a continuous effort to engage the community and enhance the reputation of the school. She attempted to develop a distributed leadership model by encouraging professional learning teams, and she relied greatly on the curriculum knowledge and programme implementation skills of her assistant principal; Jan and Julie had complementary skills with a focus on people and curriculum respectively. Jan noted that she did not have the curriculum knowledge necessary to make interventions in the classroom: Julie was seen as the curriculum leader and expert who had the capacity to make the necessary interventions. Jan's priority was people; she was best able to build a sense of community and cohesion. Julie as the curriculum leader encouraged and developed the staff by exposing them to the latest teaching and learning methods and techniques. Jan's mantra was to raise standards, and in Julie, she had the person with the teaching and learning skills to fulfil this.

Bella's leadership also provided strategic interventions that were consistent with the model. She was able to work on all three levels. In terms of outcomes, she focused on citizenship and social competence as important student outcomes because traditional outcomes were problematic for many students (for some of the students delaying their decline in abilities is an achievement). Her most strategic and largest intervention was in Level 1 - teaching and learning. She totally changed the curriculum, refocused student assessment, and introduced a new comprehensive reporting system. The curriculum became a Visual and Performing Arts curriculum with an immediate impact on pedagogy for every teacher. At level 3 – capacity building, she continued to focus on community capacity building to forge strategic alliances to get the necessary resources and to get parent support for the changes. At the time of our study, she was attempting to change the culture from a medical to school focus. Professional capacity building continued to be a high priority with an emphasis on staff working in teams, and a school-wide pedagogical approach. She

continued to build on the individual capacity of people by encouraging them to develop new skills and self-confidence. At level 3, she renamed influential with the region and local network to harness the necessary resources and support from the Education Department and other authorities.

2.8 Summary

Both case studies show that leadership is important in sustaining and promoting growth and improvement. The leadership characteristics that helped the principals to develop a successful school remained important in sustaining the change. The characteristics that impacted on sustaining their performance were vision and passion, appropriate leadership style, clear and articulated values, personal qualities and skills, ability to build relationships, being highly engaged and connected to the school and community, and managing change. However, there were differences in outcomes in both schools. One school continued to maintain its current performance whilst the other progressed to a new level. Three aspects appear to explain the difference. The first explanation was that there were some different external forces that impacted on the schools that resulted in a decline in school enrolments and consequently a decrease in staffing in one school, compared with a growth in numbers that allowed for staff expansion and choice in staff selection in the other. Secondly, there was a subtle but important change in leadership style, where one principal was more prepared to challenge the behaviour of staff and create a climate of further change. Thirdly, the attitude to change appears to be crucial. One principal was proactive and created more and more change, while the other principal was more reactive to the changes in the external and internal environment and to some degree protected staff from too much change.

The final message is that school leaders matter and their continuous self-development and attitude to change are important factors in sustaining and enhancing performance.

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Chapter 3
Danish Successful School Leadership – Revisited

Lejf Moos and Klaus Kasper Kofod

3.1 The Danish Project Schools

In the first round of case studies we found eight schools (six 'Folk schools'), one upper secondary school, and one vocational school) that were described as having successful principals by the superintendents. Because success is a contested concept we wanted to find out how stakeholders (superintendents, parents, students, teachers and school leaders) perceived a successful school and successful principals, so we interviewed stakeholders in all schools. At a later stage, we wanted to have a close look into the relations, communications, interactions and forms of influences used in the every day practices, so we chose three of those schools and undertook a more thorough investigation in these schools. We observed teaching, teachers' and leaders' meetings and the everyday practice in schools and wrote the first set of case stories. Four to five years after the first visits, we re-visited those three schools and interviewed the principals.

The *West School* is a school situated in a suburb of a larger city with a socio-economic status (SES) comprising a large number of workers, white-collar workers, and with a proportion of students from minority groups of approximately 25%. The school's principal had been in the post for only a few years, and she took over from rather a charismatic predecessor and has therefore been working to make her own mark on the school. The head was working to modernise the school's organisation, and the discussion of newer organisational forms had just begun considering a team-based organisation.

The *Commuter School* is situated in a smaller municipality that has over the years become a sort of suburb to a larger adjacent city. The school's catchments

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area is characterised by children from the homes of white-collar workers. It has been known to be a rather progressive school, and the principal acts as an adviser to the municipality on matters of education and school management. The discussion of new structures using team-based organisation had been going on for quite a while, and the school is organised in three departments inside the school with self-governing teams.

The *North School* is situated in a wealthy suburb of a larger city. The students' parents are well educated, self-employed, employed in the private sector or civil servants. The principal has managed the school for approximately 15 years. When he took office, he embarked upon the task of reorganising the school and has made the school a team-based organisation, the teams having a high degree of independence because they are self-governing. The school's ideology is based on a conception of the students' multiple intelligences (Gardner 1997), which means that to a fairly high degree they are involved in the planning of instruction.

3.2 The Danish Schooling System

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

Since the beginning of the 1990s, and with renewed pace from 2001, the Danish comprehensive educational system has been undergoing a process of transformation under the influence of strong international currents: Neo-liberal currents have linked educational thinking very closely to the economy, education as investment in human capital, and to neo-conservative trends of back-to-basics, more subject-oriented teaching, re-introduction of testing at all levels of primary school and other social technologies. The meaning of leadership, professionals, and learning are thus under profound change (Krejsler 2005; Moos 2003).

An example of this is that the responsibility for finances and administration of the 'Folkeskole' (primary and lower secondary school, students aged 6–16) was in 1992 devolved to municipalities and from there to schools.

The school leader now manages very large parts of the budget in collaboration with School Boards, which have a parental majority membership. The Acts, and therefore the responsibility for objectives of the schools, remain in the hands of Parliament/the Ministry of Education, but the interpretations and administration of the curriculum was given to municipalities and to schools themselves.

3.3 Recentralisation and Tightening of Organisational Couplings in the Danish Schools

In the first Danish contributions to the 'The International Successful School Principalship Project' (ISSPP), we discussed the modernisation of the public sector and democracy in schools because it is obvious that modernisation had come to a new and more radical phase, where the logic behind political and administrative decision-making with a focus on accountability, and new Public Management were penetrating public institutions to a much higher degree than previously. That seemed to open up for both new opportunities and limitations for democracy in schools and for 'Democratic Bildung'. One of the main interests in our investigations has been and still is to find out how contemporary government and management appear in schools. We are thus interested in investigating how the agents in schools react to these changes and how the room for interpretation of how to instruct in both basic skills and knowledge and for 'Democratic Bildung' is taking place (Moos et al. 2007a, b, c).

In connection with the first visits, we described how the process of modernisation is working in the decentralisation and the loosening of organisational couplings (Weick 2001) between central agencies and local agents, which produces less prescriptions from the central government for the municipal level and the school level (e.g. with regard to finance and administration).

We also observed similar processes within schools as leadership was decentralised from the principal to teacher teams and to individual teachers. It was new that teacher teams were being inserted as a permanent link between the leadership and individual teachers. New tasks and duties were being distributed, thereby loosening the organisational couplings (e.g., practical annual and weekly planning of lessons, parts of finance management), while other tasks were being re-centralised (e.g. target setting and evaluation of instruction and learning), thereby tightening the organisational couplings.

Four to Five years ago we saw signs of re-centralisation from the government, as it presented much clearer and detailed goals for teaching and learning on a national basis. The Ministry was also constructing new testing and accountability systems.

When it comes to couplings of educational and content matter, we now see a picture of strengthening the couplings. The relations between the central level and the local and school level have changed rather profoundly over the 4–5 year period as demands for accountability have been moving from political discussions and discourses towards administrative practices. National testing is slowly being implemented in all grades in the basic school. New systems of quality development and documenting, including the 'Quality Report' have been introduced and implemented. The act on this particular contract form, the Quality Report, has set three areas for evaluation and development (evaluation of the educational level, how the local authority has responded to the former report and a comprehensive report of the frames, processes and outcomes in the school district). The formal intention of the Quality Report is to form the foundation for dialogue between schools and local authorities and at the same time, report the state of affair in the school district to the

School Agency. Another initiative, taken by the Ministry, is to make Individual Student Plans compulsory for each student every year in all subjects (Moos 2008).

This development is accompanied by the move to describe and prescribe the subject content of education more detailed than previously. This tendency has been visible for 10–15 years, but now that the evaluations and planning technologies are being introduced, it is being more visible in the school's everyday life and thus in the relations between principals and teachers. The principals in the ISSPP tell us that the trend to narrow the interest in schooling from the general Danish vision of the comprehensive and broad 'Democratic Bildung', meaning emphasis on both subject competences and personal and social competences, to focusing more on basics skills, literacy and numeracy, is growing rapidly at present.

Those demands and conditions are the same for all schools and all school districts, but we find local differences at the municipal level. The Government implemented a nation wide structural reform in 2007, meaning that 171 municipalities were merged into 98 in order to construct bigger entities. This meant no changes to the municipalities of North School and the West School, because the municipalities they were located in were from the outset big enough. But, to the Commuter School, it meant that three smaller municipalities were merged into one. That brought about very heavy restructuring at the local authority and policy makers' levels: Some principals and middle range leaders had to leave; some had to fight for their – new – positions. Three cultures and procedures of administration and local politics had to be merged into one new set of culture, procedures and politics.

The West School is going to be merged with another school in half a year as part of what is called a local adjustment of school structure to parents' moving round.

The principal of the North School (in an affluent area) says that more bureaucracy and demands for testing leave less room for broad competencies because all subjects are test-subjects in the last grades: focus on test brings focus on skills. This is narrowing down the work in the older grades and gives teachers stress. The school leadership brings the external demands to the teachers saying: *'Let's see how we can use this in a productive way. Can national tests and student plans be used to legitimize the school to parents? Can we couple the new plans with what we used to do: the student portfolio? Tests are mostly rituals and the results are difficult to use for educational purposes.'*

Schools make development plans, now Quality Reports, to the municipality every year. Says the principal: '*My task is to translate them to teachers so the plans can be turned into developmental activities, in order to give meaning to teachers. It is about me trusting teachers.'* The principal uses the same phrase as the principal of the West School. Principals translate the legal and legitimate, political external demands to teachers in order to have them accept and implemented.

The principal of the Commuter School complains that the dialogue between school and local authority has gone down to a very low level and is being substituted by written principles now that the municipality has been merged and the distance between local authorities and schools have become longer, and the number of schools and other institutions that the authorities are in charge of has grown considerably.

Instead of the direct dialogue, the new municipal directorate now makes many policies, regulations and principles on paper. Some have the forms of contracts, based on benchmarks and evaluations. What the school sees as an external quality control – from the authorities – is considered as conflicting with the internal quality development. Therefore, the professionals have chosen to give the external control only a minimum of attention – only what is needed.

We interpret this development to be a move towards governing through accountability, contracts and network. This means that management is changing from prescriptive, direct influences towards negotiation between the school and the municipality. Management from one level to the other is done indirectly at a distance (Danelund 2005), with the superior level setting the framework and the agenda for the organisational levels and leaving the implementation to the inferior levels. At the same time, we see increasingly tighter organisational couplings and institutionalised management, with social technologies like quality contracts where standards and monitoring procedures are becoming more detailed and prescriptive.

3.4 Leadership at the School Level

At the school level, we see similarities and differences between the school districts and schools. In the Commuter School in the new, bigger municipality, a steeper hierarchy is being developed both at the municipal level – with more middle leaders and more formal management lines. As a reaction or reply to that, we also see a duplication of that at the school level. The principal is now the only representative of the school, who is being invited or called to meetings with local authority representatives. As meetings are called less frequently now, she has felt the need to establish an internal backing group of leaders and teachers (the leadership team, teacher team coordinators and chair of the Educational Board) who meet once a month in order to help her prepare for the external meetings and to prepare strategies for disseminating external demands to staff. They also have employed an administrative leader of the leadership secretariat and have developed clearer divisions of responsibilities and tasks in a written organisation plan.

Based on the new trends in national educational politics to focus on school leavers and their transition to youth education, the principal in the North School has established collaboration with colleagues in other school districts to develop new school structures for the school leavers that are intended to facilitate the shift to the other educational institutions and the labour market.

Generally speaking, we saw in the first round of visits, that there was a growing focus on networks like teacher teams. Teachers worked in teams within the frames and directions given by – and often negotiated with – the school leadership. Leadership was performed at a distance from the self-governing teachers. At the same time, we saw the unfolding of different social technologies. Many of those were in the forms of meetings: Educational Council Meetings (all teacher staff and leadership meet regularly according to the acts of the school), all staff meetings

(teachers and other staff and leadership meet once or twice a year, according to regulations), team interviews (teacher teams meet with the principal), 'employee development interviews' (individual teachers meet with the principal once a year). There were also annual plans (teachers plan the instruction for a grade for a year and hand it in to the principal), student plans (plans for individual students' progress in all subjects).

This development meant that leadership influence was less direct and more in the form of sense making, setting the agenda, and institutionalised influence. Within the teams, teachers had to collaborate very closely and therefore had to invest their personality in this part of work as well as in the relations to students and classes. It was not enough that they invested their time and presence; they had to be motivated and engaged.

In the case schools, we now see that these issues develop differently. The leaders (principal and deputy) of the North School are very clear when they state their position on the direction in which they want the school to develop and they have, in collaboration with teachers, developed a networking system where teacher teams carry out all planning, instruction and evaluation on their own. Over the past few years, it has become more obvious to the principal that the direction the leadership team wants the school to take, is in great parts translations of the external demands. This is seen as an effect of the tightening of the couplings between the central authorities and the school, as more detailed goals and accountability technologies are put effectively in place by the Ministry of Education.

We were told that principals only take part in team meetings if they are called upon to do so by teachers faced with a problem or a conflict they want to discuss. Teachers are still autonomous within the frames and directions set out by and negotiated with the leadership and within the frames given by the tight and binding collaboration in the teacher teams. Teacher autonomy has become collective. A phenomenon that binds the school into a comprehensive entity is the meeting structure: School meetings, Educational Council meetings, etc. The principal clearly exercises a great deal of influence in meetings concerning the whole school but does not participate in team meetings. Here we see leadership at a distance, indirectly through social technologies like contracts. We did not, in any of our visits, hear of teachers who were opposed to the way the school is functioning.

The leaders (the principal and deputy) of the Commuter School are still very clear in stating their position on the values and the direction the school should develop according to at our first visits. They had developed a number of forms of self-governance using social technologies, which on the one hand, provided opportunities for teacher participation, and on the other hand, demanded a high level of personal commitment. The leadership was working to develop the school into a learning organisation. There was a considerable, albeit not unequivocal, support to that from the staff. Some teachers still found that it is difficult to work according to the superior lines of direction set by the leadership. In this school, leadership was informed about teaching in classes as the deputy often visited classes and was therefore able to develop a nuanced image of teachers' instructional practice and act as a critical friend to teachers. Leadership in the Commuter School is now done indirectly,

at a distance, through setting the agenda and making sense in plenary meetings and through collaboration with teacher teams.

A number of tightening of the content couplings described above were described in a modification of the Act of School in 2006. The principal finds that most of the adjustments are in line with the thinking of the Commuter School if only they stay focused on 'Democratic Bildung'. Thus, the translation of the new demands is easy, she claims. This is supported by the fact that most of the new accountability technologies are similar to those being used in the school already. The efforts to develop the school into a learning organisation are still relevant and active in the life of the school.

The principal says that the relations between the school leadership and the teacher teams have been tightened in that the leadership announces a set of common values that the teams have to interpret and manoeuvre according to. At the same time, there are clearer and more detailed demands on the teams' self-evaluation.

In our first visits to the West School, the school leaders clearly stated its positions on which direction the school should take with regard to teaching, students' learning, and especially, the need for changes to more contemporary forms of collaboration and leadership. The leaders energetically tried to persuade teachers to participate actively in establishing self-governing teams. The teachers continued to employ many strategies that were suited for and intended to drag the implementation, while leaders are developing and implementing a number of social initiatives parallel to this development; e.g. annual plans and meetings with teams. This helped keep leadership informed of the development in classes. One of the important forums for exercising principal influence is the annual team meeting when she set the agenda for the meeting. For example, we observed in one meeting that she insisted that teachers should maintain and develop their authority in relation to students.

Three years ago, the local authority demanded that all schools in the municipality should have self-governing teams. This made it much easier to implement that feature in the West School. The principal also wrote a paper with an overview over and expectations towards collaboration in teacher teams. Here, the expectations are clearly laid out in order that teachers and other staff can lean on those shared guidelines.

In all case schools, we have seen a very close and tight collaboration within the leadership teams. They meet daily, keep each other informed about their work, and attune their interpretations and decisions before they are announced publicly. The principals tell us that most interactions within the leadership team are symmetrical. They discussed things at the same level and supported and challenged each other. In the years between our first visits and the present visits, there has been a sharpening of the clarity of collaboration within schools. Expectations are pinned out more detailed and clearly, and frames – like hours and meeting schedules – are formalised.

Another common feature found in all case schools is that all principals are members of numerous networks with principal colleagues from other schools in the district and with the local authorities. Part of the work that used to be done in the local authorities, like laying down common principles and making action plans or

coordinating work between schools, is now done in the leadership networks. The municipal superintendent places the work here and therefore accepts that principals can influence the ways that the work is done. This means that principals have to work outside their schools, but at the same time they get the opportunity to influence the ways the school district is run. This development can be seen as parallel to the development in schools; management at the district level is to a certain degree based on networks, too.

While school-parent collaboration was important in the first visits, it seems to have grown very much over the years. All principals report that they are focusing more on collaborating with parents. For a period of time, the principal of the Commuter School participated at all parent class meetings in order to discuss the values of the school. The principal of the North School has emphasised the use of test results to legitimise the work of the school to parents. The principal of the West School is underscoring the need to see parents as collaborators to new teachers.

It is a shared experience that parents are important partners in the effort to establish legitimation in the local community.

3.5 School Leadership and the Collaboration with Different Interests Groups

It seems that the principal's relations with his/her environment have undergone some changes in general since our last visits at the schools. The principals seem to be more focused on their roles as what could be called meta-governors, i.e. to control and support the conduct of involved parties' conducts (Sørensen and Tofting 2005). In this way, it is important to influence the teachers in indirect ways to do what – in the principal's opinion – is necessary to be done, without having to tell so directly. It is about influencing through setting an agenda for the school's development and through this, showing a direction for the school (Kofod 2007; Moos 2008). And this pertains not only to the teachers and the students but also in relations to the parents.

The parents, it seems, have become very much the principals' focus at the Commuter School and at the West School compared to our last visits to the schools. At both schools, the collaboration with the parents takes up a lot of attention. That is in accordance with the Act on the Folkeskole where it is stated *"the Folkeskole shall in collaboration with the parents and the students give the students knowledge and skills…*" (Undervisningsministeriet 2007). It is here directly demanded from the school that it has a close collaboration with the parents. That is reflected in these schools' closer collaboration with the parents compared with the time of our last visit at the schools.

It may be due to the fact that at the Commuter School, a temporary crisis had surfaced between the school and the parents due partly to a dive in the students' final tests. As a consequence, the principal took this incident as a pretext to initiate

a work with school's values together with the parents. As another way to improve the collaboration with parents, the principal participated in all meetings between teachers and parents. The principal describes the relationship between the school and the parents as good; consequently, this process has been a success. This value works in cooperation with the parents and the principals attending all meetings with parents are two examples of how and in which areas the cooperation is realised.

At the West School, the focus on the parents may have a connection with the fact that the school is going to merge with a neighbouring school, and that the parents at the school board are strongly opposed to that. The principal tells that the school in general has a good and constructive cooperation with the parents. So, the focus on the cooperation with the parents at this school is a result of the principal's need to handle the parents' resistance to the merge in order that the parents do not withdraw their children from the school in dissatisfaction. The leadership team tells the new teachers that they should consider the parents as co-operators, as partners in accordance with the Act of the Folkeskole mentioned before.

At the North School, that has been working in a contractual system both with the local school authorities and internally in the school between the teachers and the students and between the teachers' teams and the school leadership, the principal has involved the parents in the contract negotiations. As such, the school board becomes actively involved in the school's prioritisations and hence takes part in the overall goal steering of the school.

At all three schools, the cooperation with the parents has been in focus during our last visits to the schools. Even though there have been problems in the relations between the school and the parents in two of the schools there seems to be the common trend that the principals stress and actively work for the parent's involvement in the schools' work – perhaps even more compared to out last visits at the schools. That reflects the new wordings in the Act of the Folkeskole that the school "in collaboration with the parents…" draws actively on the parents in developing the school and that the principals see this collaboration as an integral part of the school principalship: The principals take leadership of the parents as parents of the school's children.

Besides the cooperation with the parents, it is different what the three principals stress in their relations. The principal of the North School focuses much on his cooperation with the vice principal. He sees the leadership team as a strong and mutually complementing team that embodies the continuity in the school. Perhaps, that is resulting from that the school has been through a major turnaround during the last 10 years, and that this turnaround took place as a consequence of the principal's initiative, that around 40% of the teachers left the school as a consequence of that, and that the changes were carried through in close cooperation with the vice principal. In this way, the leadership team constitutes the continuity in two ways: They are representatives of the school both before and after the change of the school's structure, and it is them that took the lead in the change, that has been and still is part of the school's image of a successful school. So, the leadership team embodies both

the school's development during the last 10 years or so; it constitutes the continuity because they have worked closely together for a similar amount of time, and they are because of that part of the "old-timers" at the school.

At the Commuter School, the principal tells that as the hierarchy has become steeper compared to the last visits at the schools. The principal has taken a new role as the go-between the local leadership teams at the school, i.e. the leadership team and the teams of department leaders and the school directorate. In addition to that, the principal feels a general need to strengthen the leadership group vis-a-vis the school direction, but also vis-a-vis the teachers and parents. She says that she needs an internal leadership forum where they can discuss matters concerning the whole school, because 'otherwise it becomes me that has to decide everything'. In other words, the principal sees herself as the central person as an intermediate link between the school's environment and the school. And because of her democratic disposition she has been working to draw more persons i.e. leaders into the decision processes. But it concerns the leaders at the school that have to be strengthened so that they better can be able to cope with the parents, the teachers and the school direction. It is a bit like a "them versus us" position, and not the close cooperation with the parents that is foreseen in the Act of the Folkeskole. So, it is questionable if this collaboration with the parents is considered as a good or a necessary evil.

At the West School, the principal considers herself as part of a leadership team, and as she says: "we are at hand when needed," and she mentions that the leadership team are needed and used primarily as conflict mediators. Otherwise, she considers the leadership team as a service body to the teachers and she believes that the leadership team should "keep their fingers to themselves" if not called upon by the teachers. It may be considered as a rather passive and weak attitude towards the teachers. It may, on the other hand, also be interpreted as a consequence of the beginning of the distribution of leadership tasks to the teachers in a distributed leadership (Spillane 2006).

Even though the principals stress different roles of their leadership tasks, there are also similarities. They all see it as important that they take part in making a close contact climate to the parents, and they see the cooperation with the parents as important, and they think that they ought to have an active part in maintaining this close relationship – albeit in different ways. This feature has been strengthened since our last visits at the schools, and it reflects the alterations in the Act of the Folkeskole that now stresses the cooperation with the parents as imperative. Another similarity is that all three principals see themselves as central in developing the school culture, taking initiatives in order to set the direction of the school in accordance with Leithwood and Riehls' (2005) findings that the principal sets the direction, developing the organisation and the people. Some of the principals, i.e. from the North School and the West School see the parents as co-operators of the leadership. The principal of the Commuter School, on the other hand, focuses on the collaboration inside the leadership group in order both to strengthen the leadership vis-a-vis the teachers, the parents and the superintendent and on the other hand in order to distribute the leadership tasks to the other leaders.

3.6 The Principals' Channels of Influence

It is different how the three principals consider their influence channels. But there are, though, communalities. They all seem to prefer indirect means of influence. That is perhaps not astonishing because all three schools are more or less organised around self-governing teams. And it would be self-contradictory to have self-governing teams of teachers that the school leadership was steering closely. Therefore, there must be used a sort of looser steering technologies by the leadership. There are, of course, also differences between the schools of how, what kinds of steering technologies are used. This may reflect that the organisation around self-governing teams is in different stages of completion. But at all the schools, various self-technologies and other social technologies are used (Moos et al. 2007a, b, c).

At the North School, which is the most advanced school regarding the implementation of self-governing teams, the principal works with his influence both on the inner and outer lines. But it is characteristically done by rather indirect means. He says that he *'plant the seeds'*. In the environment, he tries to influence the ministry through National Association of Municipalities in order to counter the ministry's bureaucratisation policies as he puts it. At the inner front, the principal says that he tries to sustain the teachers by showing them confidence in that they are doing their job s well. He acts here as the Sheppard that takes care of his flock in a Foucodian sense (Krejsler 2007). Otherwise, the principal tells that he manages through the contracts that the leadership group makes every year with each self-governing team and with the single teacher through the yearly appraisal conversations. But, it is only if things go wrong that he interferes. In those cases, he converts the interference to development initiatives. That is in accordance with Leithwood and Riehl's (2005) notion of developing the people and at the same time setting the direction through the reference to the contract. Because of the leadership team's indirect methods of influence, its members are a bit invisible. Therefore, several of the teachers have wanted the principal to make himself mere physically visible in the school's daily work. The leadership team has therefore decided to become so by means of the dialogue in the staff development interviews and by participating in the team meetings. That is a new development since our last visits to the school. The principal finds that he influences primarily as an idea generator and a 'foreign minister'. He sets the agenda for what is to be focused on and he takes care of the relations outside the school, whereas it is up to the teachers and other members of the group of leaders to implement the things on the agenda.

The principal at the Commuter School also says that she governs through indirect means, albeit in some cases more direct than the principal of the North School. In connection with the self-governing teams, she tells that these feel rather closely supervised by the leadership team that demands report from the teams. But the supervision is supervision ex post as report giving, evaluations, meetings, etc. This means that the teachers in the self-governing teams have to lead themselves, and the leadership can thus be characterised as the principal's steering at a distance or conduct of conduct (Kofod 2007). The rather close supervision may by a consequence of the teams not having been self-governing for as long time as at the North School.

Another factor that can have influenced this picture is that a large group of teachers resisted the idea of reshaping the school around self-governing teams. Therefore, there may be a need to supervise the teams more closely – or signal a close supervision as in the classical Panopticon (Foucault 2002). In other areas, the leadership team does not influence that directly. In connection with the development of the school's values and the work with the concept of the inclusive school, the principal involved the whole staff. In these cases, the principal's way of influence is to set the agenda and define what is to be done. One may call it a co-option strategy (Klausen 2001) for influence where the principal co-opts the staff and thereby binds it to the results of the considerations through the participation and co-creation of the results. The principal explains it in this way that *'I try to create the room for involvement. I think that it is important to create a room for discussion'*. This is done by the common participation of the staff and leadership group in developing and together deciding on the principles for the inclusive school and the school's values. In this way, the leadership co-opts the staff and obliges them to abide the decisions, morally as well as in practice.

At the West School, the school with the least experience with self-governing teams, where they are in the midst of the process of introducing this organisation, the principal says that she is rather direct in her way of influencing by relating individually to the teachers. Her leadership credo is that *'I think that most teachers want influence for themselves'*. Therefore, she feels that on the daily basis, she only must interfere to solve concrete problems either if the teachers ask her for it or if she sees the need for it, as for example problem moderator. As for the introduction of self-governing teams, it is a demand of the school authority. As there is a lot of resistance among the teachers for this organising model and working model, the principal influences by being clear about her expectations, and she uses the municipality's demand for the introduction of this model as a pressure, a sort of buffer against the resistance and a lever for making this organisational change. It seems that the principal of the West School uses more direct influence methods: Using the School Authority's demands as the tool to 'persuade' the staff to accept the introduction of self-governing teams; and directly being a conflict moderator, when called upon, solving the problems directly or telling (or ordering) the self-governing teams to meet once a week to coordinate the work in the teams. This more direct way of influencing the teachers may be interpreted as a necessity because this school's teachers do not all agree with the new organising of the school with self-governing teams at the one hand, and on the other hand, it is undoubtedly a result of the uneasiness by the prospect of being merged with another school. Therefore, the teachers of this school need more guidance and persuasion compared to the teachers from the other schools, whose future are more foreseeable. Therefore, the teachers need more direct contact with their principal than the teachers of the other schools.

The channels that the three principals use to exercise their influence vary. There is a connection between the organisational needs for direct steering and the means that are being used. In the organisations where the changes are strongest and where there is most resistance against the changes, the need to be more direct in the means of influence are biggest. (Of course there may also be personal differences between

preferred leadership styles, but the need of the situation is the more prevalent one). Therefore, the principal of the West School uses the most direct influence channels. She uses most direct power of the three to get her influence. The principal of the North School and the principal of the Commuter School use more subtle influence channels: co-opting the staff to the decisions by inviting the whole staff to participate, using political means by influencing other agencies, The National Association of Municipalities, in order to influence the ministry. But those two principals also use rather direct means of influence; by referring to the contract and using it as a pretext to 'develop' the staff member in question to develop him- or herself thereby using both a government and governance techniques, supervising the self-governing teams closely but in the form of report giving and evaluation as a means to secure that the teams do as they are expected to and set them free to decide on their own what to do – but at their own risks.

3.7 The Quality of Instruction in the Three Schools

In general, there has become more focus on the students' basic skills in the three schools. That can be seen in connection with the external demands to the schools that they must document the results of their work through quality reports, putting the tests results of the older students on the ministry's web-site etc. But, it is also a consequence of the rather disappointing results of the PISA reports and of recommendations of OECD. This development illustrate that there is an increased focus on accountability.

Looking across the three schools, a general picture emerges that the ministry's tightening of the demands of the Danish schools and the local authorities' closer focus on the schools' results have resulted in a heightening of the students' outcome through a considerable validated effect in all three schools.

At the Commuter School, the principal mentions that they already in 2004 were prepared to work with evaluation and obligatory tests, because the school had a dive in the final test results of the older students. Since that time, they have been working intensively with a strengthening of the evaluation and the obligatory final tests, which has led to an improvement in the students' results in maths and literacy.

At the North school, they have been more focused on the curriculum and of differentiation of the instruction, and most of the teachers are skilled in this. But, it seems to be a social technology that has to be learned, because especially the new teachers are not very able to make this differentiation of instruction. Regarding cross-disciplinary instruction, it has decreased and it is less frequently used than the students were used to. As one of the Danish schools that have been living longest with a school structure with self-governing teams, there is a tradition in this school of cross-disciplinary instruction. With the school authorities' increasing focus on the basics in school, this trend has also put its mark on the North School. There has been a change away from cross-disciplinary instruction to more focus on mono-disciplinary instruction. The principal says that it is difficult to document

students' outcome of the instruction, because there only is little research in this area. A media researcher has made observations in the school, and he concluded that the students are very self-propelled. In the same vein, a development project at the school has confirmed this trend in that the teachers in the oldest classes say that the students are very self-sustained. Despite the lack of research on the students' outcome of the instruction, the principal is of the opinion that their subject knowledge is "second to none" and that "we stress the interdisciplinary instruction" even if it has been weakened by the external demands to the school.

At the West School, which is a school with many bi-lingual students, the principal say that the students' lingual capabilities matter when Danish is not the only spoken language in the school. That may be the reason why the principal has not noticed any improvement in the students' tests results. This school is the only one of these three schools, where the students' marks are still below the country's average for the school leavers. However, the school is adding value in producing test results above what is expected (CEPOS 2006).

As the aim of the minister of education has been to catch up on the bad Danish results of the PISA reports and, therefore, during the latest 5–6 years, has been focusing on the curriculum, documentation, national tests, quality reports in order to better the results of the instruction in the Danish schools this policy seems to have proven its efficiency in these schools. There has been an enhanced focus on the curriculum in the three schools, and in one of these schools, the Commuter School, the school's results in math and literacy has improved, and that in the other of these schools, the North School, the students' subject knowledge is very good, and as mentioned the third school adds value to student learning.

3.8 Now and Then: The Development in the Successful Schools

The political and administrative move to tighten the couplings between the national level and the local and school level in terms of standards and accountability has been very massive over the period of time we have visited the schools in this project. Under the heading of 'quality in education', a number of initiatives have been put into action. The dominant discourse of 'a good/successful school' has been challenged in shifting the focus from the traditional vision of 'Democratic Bildung' which encompasses the striving for basic skills and knowledge as well as a broader range of competencies, towards a more limited focus on basics like literacy and numeracy. A number of social technologies have been put in place to further this policy: quality reports from schools to local authorities and further on to the 'School Council', a semi-autonomous agency is one powerful technology; another technology is the set of national curriculum standards and national tests; annual student plans is another technology. When looking at the three schools, this political strategy seems to have been working: Student outcomes measured with the national tests have gone up and the principals find that the external expectations and technologies have given support to changing the professional discourse of schooling in their schools. However, the principals are concerned that this may influence the work on

the comprehensive purpose of schooling with focus on the social and personal competencies as well as the content matter competencies. They describe the new role as more re-acting to external expectations than acting and leading more pro-actively on the basis of schools' own educational visions.

So, the tightening of couplings made by the ministry is a fact of life for schools and school principals. This leaves the challenge to have schools and staff work – committed and hard – according to the aims and goals. The loosening of couplings inside schools: self-governing teams, self-evaluations, contracts, networking – to mention a few of them – are still very important means of action in all three schools. However, there are changes to the ways they are being put to use: The leading at a distance, that takes place in the relations between principals and teachers in self-governing teams, is changing. Principals are looking for new ways of influences that leave enough room for manoeuvre to the teachers to keep them committed.

When looking at decision-making as a communication process, we can distinguish three phases: The first phase is the construction of premises; here the stage, the frame, and the agenda are set; the discourses are developed and the positions are taken. The next phase is the decision-making, and the third phase is the connecting phase where one is interested in evaluating the effects of the decisions, e.g. are they accepted and followed (Moos 2008).

The principals have started to struggle more with the first and third phase. How can they describe the frames and the aims of the self-governing teams and the autonomous teachers sufficiently precise and not too tight? And they are struggling to evaluate whether the decisions have made connections: Have teachers done, what was agreed on or what they were expected to do? This seems to be a new and advanced phase in reflecting on and developing principal influences in schools that can have great influence not only on the relations between teachers and leaders, but also on the relations between teachers and students in class as well.

We find it interesting to look at the democratic possibilities for teachers first and foremost, because we find that there are clear links and connections between the conditions that teachers have and the conditions and frames that schools and teachers give students so they can develop a 'Democratic Bildung'. This kind of Bildung is not only at matter of knowing about democracy, but also is more a matter of acquiring democratic patterns of interpretation and democratic ways of life (Beane and Apple 1999; Dewey 1916). A 'Democratic Bildung' must therefore include the possibilities to test those interpretations and ways of living in real life.

Generally speaking, we see that the three Danish principals are struggling with sustaining their own and teachers' commitment to school, teaching and learning in the deliberations on how relations and communication in school should be. They should support the work on living up to external expectations and at the same time respect and care for staff and students. This has become a more challenging task than before because teachers often find that the external demands and expectations are too high and not to the point of what schooling is for, because some of the political and public expectations are changing so rapidly and so profoundly these years.

The discussion of 'producing results' and pursuing the comprehensive vision of 'Democratic Bildung' is a good illustration of one of the dilemmas principals have to act on and often find day-to-day solutions and semi-final decisions to.

The principals demonstrate in the talks with us that they are very much aware of the fact that what they do is only indirectly of importance for student learning. Because they acknowledge the priority of classroom teaching, they talk about relations, communication, interaction and forms of influence that involve many stakeholders in and out of school.

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Chapter 4
Sustainable Improvement: The Significance of Ethos and Leadership

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4.1 Introduction

The last 5 years' developments in Norwegian educational policy and reforms in public sector in general have raised new expectations toward schools, and principals are particularly challenged to respond to these new expectations. In re-visiting three of the successful schools which participated in the International Successful School Principal Project 5 years ago, we have paid attention to the principals' definitions of success in an age of structural and cultural changes. Also, we have explored how the principals are positioning themselves as leaders, while responding to our questions about sustained improvement.

The article starts by describing structural and cultural changes in the context of schooling. After providing an outline of the theoretical and the methodological framework, the findings are presented and discussed.

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4.2 Structural and Cultural Changes in the Context of Schooling

Norway has a strong ideological tradition of viewing schools as an expression of democratic political ideals and as a mechanism for preparing children to play constructive roles in a democratic society. During the last 5 years, there has, however, been increasing concerns about the quality of schooling and we have witnessed a development toward a stronger focus on educational quality in terms of student achievements and more output-oriented means of governing. The students' academic achievement has become a focal point in the Norwegian educational debate, and the center of attention has shifted to more or less well-defined expectations of what has to be achieved by whom.

The recent Norwegian national reform, the *Knowledge Promotion*, launched in 2006, includes new modes of governing structures. Increased focus is placed on basic skills, which reflects a change from *a focus on substantive aspects of schooling to an emphasis on a competence based assessment.* […] *This focus is maintained through national tests, which pursue two kinds of purposes: to evaluate the quality of education and to assess individual competencies* (Sivesind 2008, p. 479). There is an increased focus on measurement of achieved outcomes, and the new evaluation system is characterized by output regulation. The main arguments for establishing the new national evaluation system are related to the improvement of educational outcomes. The reform implies increased local autonomy, but at the same time methods and tools which mean more national regulation and control are introduced. This creates tensions and ambiguities in governing processes (Skedsmo 2009). Historically, Norwegian teachers have been trusted to do a good job, but recently other social groups also want to define educational quality, and they argue for more external regulation of teachers' work.

New strategies for reinventing government by establishing New Public Management, NPM, both at the central and the municipal level have emerged. On the one hand, it is argued that introducing NPM has been motivated by concerns about reducing disparities in educational outcomes across different social groups. This means that there is a need to strengthen state responsibility in terms of monitoring public sector services. On the other hand, it is often argued that the cost of public sector is too high, and NPM is an instrument for efficient service production, governed by a performance-oriented culture with a focus on results and efficiency (Olsen 2002). Both arguments are closely connected to the increasing focus on external evaluation during the last 10 years and the practice of holding schools accountable for outcomes achieved according to predefined criteria. The emergence and distribution of accountability models are the signifying hallmarks of the transition process (Hopmann 2007).

However, the accountability rhetoric suggests that competition will force schools to improve, but Norway currently lacks the mechanisms of competition assumed to be needed for such a system. Furthermore, educational institutions have been and still are important for ensuring the survival of the many small communities in a

country where the population is widely dispersed. In a country of less than five million people, there are 430 municipalities, of which 30% have less than 2.500 inhabitants, and only 8% have more than 25.000 inhabitants. These local municipalities have played, and still play, a strong role in school governing. Leadership responsibility at municipal and county level is shared between professional administrators and elected politicians. Through this linkage, education is connected to broader community affairs. Voices of different stakeholders and political parties are included in order to negotiate and obtain broad consensus about national educational policy. It is probably the many small, local communities that give Norwegian society its distinctive character, and as part of the Norwegian legacy, educational policy documents have a long history of balancing national and municipal governing (Møller 2009).

4.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP) and its methodology drew from sources in an earlier multi-perspective study of schools in England (Day et al. 2000). In revisiting the schools, our study is also informed by research on sustainable improvement in schools. The issue of sustainable change has broadly been explored in a project of long-term educational change over time based on eight case studies of high schools in the USA and Canada (Hargreaves and Goodson 2006). The findings based on this study highlighted how school improvement were affected over the long run by the broader culture and socio-political context, and how schools were vulnerable to shifting policies A main argument is that "sustainability of educational improvement, in its fullest sense, is unlikely to occur without a theory and a strategy that is more historically and politically informed" (Hargreaves and Goodson 2006, p. 35). It implies how particular initiatives can be developed without compromising the development of others in the surrounding environment, now and in the future. In other words, sustainable leadership is not just about keeping things going, but also about social justice, how leadership has an impact on other people within and beyond the organization.

Our study is dealing with change during a 5-year period with three particular schools as a focus. As such, a historical perspective and longer time frames are not forefronted in the analysis, but the issue of change and stability within the schools during these 5 years will be discussed in relation to the changes in the broader political context.

Closely connected to sustainability is the issue of leadership succession. It is predicted that more than 50% of the Norwegian principals will retire during the next 5 years. In addition, there is an increased mobility among school principals across schools, and the regulations for whether to choose insider or outsider as successors are not straightforward. A key issue is whether a transition in leadership establishes continuity or leads to discontinuity with past directions, and to which extent leadership succession is planned. On the one hand, schools which are recognized as

innovative may plan for continuity; on the other hand, leadership succession may be designed to create discontinuity to implement a top-down reform agenda, and to bring about much needed change. In reality, leadership succession in schools seems to end up as a blend of unplanned continuity and discontinuity, and is often spoiled by poor planning, or no planning at all (Hargreaves and Fink 2006). The business succession literature argues for creating a culture of leadership development throughout the organization. It means putting less of the burden on the shoulders of heroes, and developing leadership across people within the organization. In practice, this is not easy to do, and studies have demonstrated that a leader who is entering a new organization must take into consideration that he or she starts from an outsider's position and can only try to make an impact over time (Wenger 1998).

4.4 Methodology

Our sample included two combined schools (grade 1–10) and one upper secondary school (grade 11–13). One of the combined schools is placed in an urban district and has 575 students, the second in a semi-urban district with 237 students. In the urban school, the principal has been in office since the school started more than 10 years ago. In the other school, there has recently been a change in principalship. The new principal has been recruited from outside. The upper secondary school, located in a semi-rural district, has 700 students, and the principal who has worked at this school since early 1970s, first as a teacher and the last 16 years as a school principal, prepares to retire in 2 years. The school is going through major renovation and rebuilding, and he wants to be part of that project before he retires. All principals are male. Interviews with the principal and a group of teachers at each school were the major source of new data. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

The stories principals and the teachers tell about their experiences can be understood as a form of text construction. The assumption is that people create their understanding as leaders through an autobiographical process akin to producing a story (Josselson 2006, p. 4). The practice of narrative research is always interpretive, from framing the interview protocol, selecting the participants, transforming spoken language into a text, making sense of the meanings, and deciding what to highlight. In addition, each story is positioned and presented from the perspective of an individual with certain intentions at a specific moment in historical time, and is probably influenced by the expectations about who is considered to be in the audience (Eisenhart 2000).

In the process of creating meanings and structures of organizational reality, language is a fundamental tool because it legitimates power relations, rationalizes practices and traditions, and communicates the vision of the organization. Stories can be used to establish a dramatic picture of the past as a guide to organizational change, but also to organizational conservatism and maintenance. In examining what factors may help sustain school improvement over time, we have also paid attention to what can be labeled as defining narratives of leadership approaches in

our three case schools and the characteristics of dominating scripts of interaction. In one way, our analysis has a focus on the individual as unique, but our challenge has been to seek some understanding of the patterns that cohere across individuals situated in specific contexts.

4.5 Revisiting Ospelia Upper Secondary School

4.5.1 Structural and Cultural Changes

In our analysis 5 years ago, we concluded that the school had managed to sustain their progressive visions from the early 1970s. Furthermore, we provided a picture of a principal who "lived" his ethic of caring, and who argued that promoting equity and social justice was the main issue (Møller 2006). In addition, the principal was preoccupied with providing the students a voice in the school, and the student council was an active participant in decision-making processes concerning students.

Since our last visit, Ospelia Upper Secondary School has had a large growth in student population, from 550 to 700 students. This is due to a higher grade of settlement and migration to the county. The county government has decided to extend the existing school instead of building a new one and a rebuilding project has started, with the principal heavily involved in planning and following up. There has also been a change in the recruitment of students in terms of getting more students with weak academic achievements and low school motivation. One reason may be that Ospelia has a rumor and a history of dealing successfully with students with special educational needs. Another reason is that the County Authority has changed the rules for enrollment of students within the county and established free choice of schools based on academic achievements. As a result, the bright students tend to prefer going to schools located in the more urban areas.

Several of the senior teachers have retired recently and they have been replaced by many young teachers, 25 in number during the last 2 years. This has resulted in a drastic decrease in average age in staff. According to the principal, the senior teachers have been very aware of including the novice teachers socially. At the same time, the novice teachers have contributed to a development toward more teacher collaboration on subject matters. The principal knows how he would like it, and he handpicks his people. He emphasizes that he is preoccupied with hiring people with the right set of core values and personal traits more than academic skills:

> Principal: When we interview applicants for teacher positions, a main issue for me is the social part. I don't focus so much on their academic achievements, but more on personal characteristics, how they relate to colleagues and students
>
> *I: But would you say they also hold high-quality competencies in subject areas?*
>
> Principal: High-quality capacity and qualification for teaching is taken as a point of departure, but I don't take any notice of marks. I don't. I may pay attention to the average scores, but first and foremost I emphasize the personal characteristics.

As a consequence of the latest school reform, the Knowledge Promotion (K06), the school's contact with local companies and workplaces has increased. Entrepreneurship has been prioritized, and the school is now engaged in ten partnerships with local companies and workplaces. Partly because of this, a new leadership structure at the intermediate level has been introduced. It is described as a structure under formation and negotiation that is filled with tensions. Different tasks to take care of special needs students are still delegated, but the overall responsibility lies with one member in the leadership team. They are still working on how to share the new tasks most effectively within the leadership team.

The school has tried to adapt to the new student population. An environmental health worker is a new position at the school, to meet the new needs and to prevent drop-outs. This has proved to be a very successful strategy. Prevention of high drop-out rates is emphasized politically and the principal has made an effort to influence local politicians with respect to choosing a model which works. Another step to meet the students' needs is the focus upon visible leadership and more explicit expectations toward teachers and students. The principal has started to perform classroom observations to show interest and keep in touch with the students and the classroom processes. He emphasizes this is not in order to control the teachers. A shared set of rules for the whole school, with a common mark-system – as means for sanctions for the students has been developed.

4.5.2 Criteria for the Good School

According to the principal, a successful school is a school that succeeds in taking care of all children, regardless of socioeconomic or cultural background and abilities. He has not changed his criteria for the good school and responds in this way:

> Success always requires that we ask the following question: Success in or for what and for whom? Who are our "consumers"? The students? The parents? The teachers? My focus is the students. A successful school has employees who value and pay great attention to every student, who continuously seek to establish a culture of care and achievement. If you have a school with leaders and staff who first and foremost have an eye for every student, their needs and their talents, who are sensitive to student background characteristics, then we have the needed platform for a good school. Last, but not least, it has to do with mutual trust and good social relationship between students, teachers, school leaders. […] of course, we also have to pay attention to student outcomes, and on average it isn't totally bad, however, our drop out rate is very low, and that is a very important issue nowadays.

On the one hand, both the principal and the teachers consider low drop-out rate as an important success criteria, not at least due to the change in student enrollment. On the other hand, there is a much stronger focus on learning outcomes and student achievement in society, compared to 5 years ago. At Ospelia, the student learning outcomes are at an average level compared to other upper secondary

schools in the county, below average in the program for general studies but, above average in the vocational program for technical and industrial production. Given the background of the students enrolled in these programs, the principal is satisfied with the result.

4.5.3 Sustained Leadership Practices

For the most part, it is the human side of the school organization which is highlighted throughout the interview. The student council still plays a key role in the decision-making processes in the school, and in order to sustain this practice the principal works very consciously with the recruitment of students to the council. It is important to engage the right people, he argues, in order to fulfill the goal of democratic schooling. The principal talks about having an eye for every individual, and simultaneously showing a concern for the common good. Being a visionary leader is not the main point, but hiring the right kind of people is a key to sustainable improvement. This may be seen as a way of influencing the organization indirectly, and securing continuity. The core values and the criteria for a good school are sustained. Also, the main structure for school-based assessment where both teachers and students are active participants has been endured. The overall description of the school culture can be traced back to 5 years ago with an inclusive and good work environment, low sickness absence; students and teachers have close ties to the leadership team and a politics of open doors are practiced. The principal will retire within the next 2 years, but the issue of leadership succession is not an explicit part of his story.

4.6 Revisiting Brage Compulsory School

4.6.1 Structural and Cultural Changes

Five years ago, the case study demonstrated that the school worked in a very systematic way with regard to inclusive education. At Brage, "respect" was the key term for descriptions of meetings between people in general. It was shown that the principal, through an explicit discourse, opened up for democratic processes to the development of diversity in his school. This was done through the formulation of shared educational goals and explicit pedagogy (Vedøy and Møller 2007). Since our last visit, the school had gradually increased the number of students from 400 students to 575 students. Altogether, the school has 110 students with minority language background. The students, as they also did 5 years ago, come from two different socioeconomic areas. Approximately, one half of the students are still living in an area with low SES, while the other half of students have a

rather wealthy background. The proportion of minority language students at the school is constant.

A significant change in the student population, over the last few years, is that the school receives fewer minority language school starters without any proficiency in Norwegian. As a consequence, there is a considerable difference between the minority students 5 years ago, who knew little Norwegian, and today's students.

The principal still underlines the need of a good and functional structure. Since our last visit, the school has increased the number of teams with two. The present structure is one team from grades 1–4 and one team from grades 5–6. The school has separate teams for 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th grade. Another change is that the school has reduced the number of deputy heads. There is still a deputy head for grades 8–10, while the principal now have main responsibility for grades 1–7. With one deputy head at the secondary level and no one at the primary level, some teachers feel that the secondary level is given a stronger voice in the administration, since the principal also has to take all students into consideration. The principal emphasizes the positive consequence of the change. The resources they save through the reorganization give them the opportunity to rearrange resources in the school.

4.6.2 Criteria for the Good School

In our interview with the principal, he underscores that he has not changed his understanding of what counts as a good school. It is the same as 5 years ago. It is implicit in the narrative how he runs the school. His answer seems to be structures, respecting the students, and putting emphasis upon learning processes, learning outcomes and hard work. The principal has this to say about students' learning outcomes:

> In 2006, the first year with students graduating after all their 10 years of compulsory education at Brage, we had the 7th best exam results in Norway. We even beat the best school in Oslo and the whole bunch there. Last year we had a group of students that were… that I never in my lifetime thought would be able to get any results at all, and then they were totally or slightly over the average. That is maybe the most impressing result we have had, […] I looked at the list of students, and, yes there is Mustafa and Ibrahim, all the way down. So, everyone understands that we couldn't have done it well this year, because a new exam procedure was introduced, with both written Norwegian languages at the same day, and the weak and bilingual students got totally confused. […] But there is no damn way we are going to make this into an excuse. Now we have started a major work to improve the students' fluency in Norwegian. We focus upon it; we will not lean backwards and say that this is because of many minority language students.

In his opinion, the variations in student results are mainly a result of changing student groups: "We just have to accept that. That is why making school results public is totally pointless. If I were to choose my students, like a football coach does, it could have been the best school in the world. But I have to take what I get and more than that."

The principal has a clear sense of purpose related to how to create a learning environment in which all children may not only feel they belong, but also in which they may be successful. He is also proud of what he has accomplished, as the following quote illustrates:

> Principal: Really, I have an extreme belief in our organizational model, right, but it is dependent of a leader who is committed. That is evident. We do have arenas for following up, right, I have frequent meetings with team leaders; every second Wednesday, I have meetings with the teacher responsible for special educational needs. When I participate in the team meetings we, like I said earlier on, we discuss every single age group. What students are in trouble, how is the teaching developing, what kind of pedagogical arrangement, right. In this way I do have control over what is going on in this school. And we put a lot of effort in it.

In other words, for the principal at Brage, a successful school is a school that has the ability to care for every single student. One has to react early in order to use the resources in an effective way.

4.6.3 Positioning Himself as a Leader

The principal portrays himself as very close to students. He cares and has respect for both children and adults. He has a tendency to describe his own practice in contrast to what everybody else does, for instance, when he refers to his approach to designing the organization and determining its direction:

> Principal: … I have my educational background in special needs education, and I have been a leader at a special needs school. Here I learned that we have to be extremely systematic in what we do. […] Norwegian schools are suffocated by everybody who thinks we ought to have more resources. Then that is where we focus, and not on what we actually have. Then I have thought about how are we to organize a school? Yes, we need a structure where people are made responsible, and decision-making should be carried through as much as possible at the local level, while I as a principal have to establish the goals. I'm not bothered about dragging the staff along in meaningless processes about visions and all sorts of rubbish; we don't do that here, really. I can't imagine anything more heartbreaking than to open a web page and it says something like School X a good place to be – a good place to learn. What the hell does that mean?

The principal is positioning himself as a rebel who enjoys provoking. He likes to state most things in its extreme form, and portrays himself as successful, especially, with the most difficult students. It is his responsibility to inform teachers that are not suited for work in the school. He can also be described as a 'myth creator'. The narratives of Brage school are cemented by frequent repetitions when meeting new people (i.e., several of the stories he tells are more or less identical with stories he told 5 years ago). As a former special needs teacher, he knows and understands students with difficulties and behavior problems, and stages himself as preoccupied with structures with the school as a scene.

Collaboration with his superiors is not important, and he describes them more as barriers that have to be overcome in order to create a good school. The principal appears to have a clear vision of what he wants the school to be like. He portrays

a school where he as a principal has full control and that is why there are no behavior problems. Commitment is the key issue, and one can never learn commitment. He emphasizes his personal capacity, the ability to do what is demanded by him as an individual, and he reshapes being a school leader in ways that resonate with his biography.

4.6.4 Sustained Leadership Practices

The culture of the school can still be characterized as hard work. The principal underlines that there is no such thing as a free lunch. Learning is: "… hard work for the students and it is hard work for the school employees." At the same time, he brings up the humor and joy: "Yes, there is a lot of craziness here… for good or bad. But it is a hard working organization…very serious." Also, the teachers confirm the principal's description in that respect. The culture has been like this since the school was new. "It would not have been like this, if it had not been anchored in the principal's attitudes. Further, everyone sees what everyone does here, due to the school's architecture," one of the teachers underlined.

As long as the teachers work seriously, the principal trusts them, but they have to deserve the trust. The principal calls this relation "a gentleman's agreement". The teachers emphasize the principal's clear leadership style. He does not jump onto new fads and the situation in the school has been stable.

In the same way as 5 years ago, the school requires the parents to show interest and follow up their own children. Simultaneously, the school has been cautious with regard to requiring parents to participate in common activities because they fear participation will be too dependent on the parents' socioeconomic background, and shut out the group of parents from the area with low SES. Instead, the school has initiated meetings for parents within different language groups. In such meetings, the principal have lectured on Norwegian school laws and practices, about how the school works for promoting social justice, and parents are encouraged to ask questions. As a result, the parents continue to trust the school.

The principal has been on his post since the school was new, and so far he doesn't think of resigning. We asked the teachers what would happen if the principal resigned:

> T2: I think it would be a disaster.
>
> T1: I think the school would fall apart.
>
> *I: Why?*
>
> T1: Well, yes. It is Birger, he is a part of everything that is going on in this school… from the individual young student till the largest team. He has a part in everything, he…
>
> T3: He's here from you come till you leave, and he is here after you leave as well, you find much of his spirit in the walls here.

It seems like the teachers have become very dependent on their charismatic principal. It is an open question whether the school's success will be sustained if he resigns.

4.7 Revisiting Furuheia Compulsory School

4.7.1 Structural and Cultural Changes

In our analysis 5 years ago, we highlighted how the principal at Furuheia was labeled as a creative, artistic, caring, and energetic leader. This influenced both the school's visual environment and was apparent in the many projects in which the school was engaged. To achieve better learning, experience should be eventful, and interactions and collaboration should be focused in teamwork (Presthus 2006). Both the principal and the deputy principal are new, since our last visit. The principal was recruited from the outside 2 years ago, while the deputy head is a former teacher at the school. The year before the new principal arrived, there were some serious behavior problems in cohorts of the students. The new principal put this issue on the agenda, and this became the main focus for the school's work during his first 2 years. The effect has been very good. Now, both the teachers and the principal talk about fabulous students, and that the conditions for learning have improved.

The student enrolment is the same as 5 years ago, and the school has a relatively high level of students with special educational needs, 45 out of 237 students. Quite a few students struggle with reading, writing, and mathematics. However, that was also the case 5 years ago.

4.7.2 Criteria for the Good School

The new principal highlights the following factors as vital for creating a good school: Motivation, to be seen, compassion, caring grown ups, visibility, a high degree of academic knowledge, and close cooperation with parents. He appears to identify highly with the school vision. He talks little of the physical work environment. In our interview with the group of teachers, however, the physical working environment turned out to be an important area of concern. They highlighted the deficiencies in this area.

Compared to 5 years ago, we could distinguish a greater awareness of student outcomes:

> I: *What do you know about student outcomes at this school?*
>
> Principal: Well, tests and studies show that Furuheia school does not have scores above the average, neither nationally nor locally, in our municipality. This school struggles with the sort of outcomes that are visible in test results. That is something we have paid attention to. Like I said, we have made a school development plan, and the goal for 2010 is plainly that we will have motivated students that are eager to learn. Secondly, the students will have scores at average level compared to other schools in the municipality, and more students will reach the higher levels.
>
> I: *Does that mean that your scores are below average of the schools in the municipality?*
>
> Principal: Yes. We have the poorest scores. So, … I think everybody agree that, really, that this is long term work, but we are in a process of increasing awareness when it comes to testing.

When it comes to means of improving student outcomes, the principal tells about a staff study trip to Finland. They discussed the process of performing a test. So far, they had never thought of putting attention to teaching to the test. His story mirrors the central debate at the national level and demonstrates how the introduction of national testing in the Norwegian context, and also how the debate about the PISA findings has had direct consequences for educational practice in the local community. In his work to improve the student outcomes, he emphasizes the need for an action plan with assessable goals. But he, first and foremost, stresses the effect of intervention on behavior problems connected to better cooperation with parents.

If we compare his way of talking about a successful school with the stories of the former principal, we can single out an important key issue. The former principal had put his energy into school improvement, discussing and theorizing their educational practice, and put effort into writing applications for extra funding. The school had actually been quite successful in receiving extra money. The teachers described the former principal as a creative, open-minded, and exciting entrepreneur with lots of ideas, and above all, as a caring person. While the former principal balanced his focus between internal and external concerns, the present principal emphasizes the internal focus. One reason is probably because of the huge behavior problems which have appeared during the last couple of years. Another reason may be, as previously mentioned, the changes in the national educational policy with increased attention paid to learning outcomes.

4.7.3 Staging Himself as a Principal

The principal explains how all kinds of systems were in place when he started, but the teachers were a bit worn out. He portrays himself as an organization builder, and emphasizes a long term perspective in his work. In his former job, he had worked as a process consultant. "The reflective practitioner" is what he uses as an entry to organizational development. The focus is upon internal processes in the school. In addition, he draws on academic terms and references to research about school and education and characterizes himself as development-oriented, reflected, and preoccupied with research. As such he can be characterized as the "process consultant" who is also progressive, and he follows a tradition within Norwegian compulsory schools connected to taking care of social matters in a dialog-oriented way. White papers or political directions from national authorities are of less interest:

> I: … *What do you choose not to prioritize?*
>
> Principal: Yes, what can I say? … Maybe it concerns reading and interpreting papers sent out by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training or other central authorities. I am not that devoted to reading such documents.

The new principal describes himself as different from the former principal. He portrays the former principal as an eminent lecturer, who was much externally oriented. He himself works internally at the school to ensure everyone has a voice. His vice-principal is portrayed as more action-oriented with plain and short deadlines while he, as a principal, works with a strategic perspective. He experiences that they complement each other.

In his story, he started by bringing up his experiences as a new principal at this school and told that he was encouraged by the former principal to apply for the job. Starting up, he found the school culture very inclusive and he was met with interest, curiosity, and concern. He felt taken care of, and he has now learned that this is the way all newcomers are met by the staff at this school. He framed it like this: People are always ready to provide support.

The principal recognized that the teachers felt tired and needed more stability. This was due to the behavior problems in grade 9 and also a group of very demanding parents. He decided to give priority to solve these problems. Here, he could draw upon his earlier experiences as a process consultant and this gave him the opportunity to establish himself as a leader with authority. He focused a lot on reflection on action and on making tacit knowledge explicit. In addition, he chose to develop a close cooperation with parents, because of the home–school relationships that had withered somewhat over time. This was considered important in order to follow up the work for giving teachers and students a safe and satisfactory learning environment.

He argues from the perspective of what the staff needs and wants. His characterization of the staff was confirmed in our interviews with a group of teachers. They felt worn out after 4 years as a beacon school. Many people had visited the school, and it was difficult to manage the behavior problems among students that had come up simultaneously.

4.7.4 Sustained Leadership Practices

Especially, there are two areas the leadership practice has been enduring over time at Furuheia, even though there had been a change in principalship. The new principal appears to identify highly with the school vision, which was formulated 5 years ago. He also explains how all kinds of systems were in place when he started, and that the thorough structure for administrative routines the former principal had developed was still in place. The school secretary plays a key role in sustaining the work structure and the administration, and it allows him to focus mainly on educational practices and processes in the school.

Also, since the student behavior had been improved during the last year and more supportive conditions for teaching and learning have been created, the teachers were more willing to being engaged in strategies related to enriching the curriculum. The time has come to curriculum improvement.

4.8 Discussion

After our first study of the ISSPP schools in 2003, we highlighted in our conclusion the learning-centered approach as the focal point of the school's philosophy. In addition, team efforts and a strong emotional commitment to their work among

principals and teachers, and fulfilment of a democratic mission were important aspects (Møller et al 2007). Three years after the first study a major national educational reform, *The Knowledge Promotion*, was implemented. In our three revisits in 2008, we find that more or less unpredictable demographic changes as well as political priorities at municipal and county levels have impact on changes in leadership and everyday life at schools locally, in interplay with national reforms. This we can detect, for instance, in Ospelia, where the county policies concerning localization of higher secondary education results in a vast increase in the student population and a major rebuilding project. For the school, it is just as important to adapt to these local changes, and clearly experienced as more urgent.

However, we find that the central aspects we identified 5 years ago, still, are valid, although the way these aspects were interpreted and performed varied. As we have seen, the most significant change in approach to leadership practices were found at Furuheia, the school where, there recently, had been a change in principalship. In this regard, a crucial question is how these schools work in order to secure sustainability in leadership as well as sustainability of change. In matters of sustainability and change, one important aspect is how the principal's career stories are intertwined with their actual professional work. At Ospelia, we meet a principal who is late in his career. The principal at Brage is in his mid-career, while at Furuheia we meet a principal who is newly appointed. With these three distinct scenarios for succession planning, we will discuss how this aspect comes into play when trying to understand sustainability and change in our three schools.

At Ospelia, the principal is sharing with us his preparation for retirement, but little is said about a succession plan. He describes his participation in the rebuilding project of the school as one of his last contributions to the school. However, many of the choices he makes will have an impact on the future development of the school. Especially, the values he stresses when it comes to hiring staff members most likely will have a long lasting impact. In this area, his concern is to hire staff with good social skills. This communicates with the core values that have been sustained at the school. These are seeing the whole student, and with a humane touch getting the most out of each individual.

At Brage, the principal has been in office since the school started more than 10 years ago, but there is no mentioning of retirement. When interviewing the teachers, it seems like they have difficulties imagining the school without the present principal. There is no mentioning of a succession plan. On the other hand, much work and energy has been used in creating sustainable and enduring structures and systems for responsibilities and work carried out at the school. This was true both now and 5 years ago. In this respect, the teachers point to the thoroughly developed systems as a safety net, if the principal should decide to quit his job.

Furuheia is the school where both principal and deputy are new since our last visit. Here we find the most striking changes in leadership approaches, though the school vision is expressed as the same as 5 years ago. The new principal, who was recruited externally, conveys that the former principal had an influence on his choice of this position. In that respect, the former principal had an indirect say in the appointment of his successor. Both the new principal and the teachers emphasize

that the focus in leadership is another with the new principal. The former principal was characterized as creative, artistic, and energetic, and it is described how these qualities also influenced the ideas by which he led the school. It was a school with a lot of exciting development work going on. In addition, he had a talent for systematizing administrative routine work. The new principal describes how the thorough systems for the administrative work routines, made it easy to get into this part of the job. When it comes to development work, we get to understand that the teachers were in need of a break in order to focus more upon increasing serious behavior problems in cohorts of the student population. This allowed for him to use his field of expertise from former jobs to focus more on aspects like reflection on action and being a facilitator. He is in the beginning of his career as a principal, and reflects little of a succession plan for his own resigning, but more of how it experiences to be a successor in the job. He stresses what he experiences as a space for interpretation when it comes to focus in the schools development work, and how the former principal has created a room of maneuver for him in this field, when the administrative routines has been so thorough.

4.9 Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored the influence of principalship in fostering sustained improvement at the local school. Above all, we have focused the discussion on the stories of sustained leadership practice, as told by the school principals. The analysis includes how the principals are positioning themselves as leaders, while responding to external and internal expectations, and how they argue for their priorities.

Our main findings demonstrate, despite the new expectations which are raised toward schools in society, a situation of continuity at the local school. This is above all the case at Ospelia and Brage. Both principals communicate the same philosophy of schooling as was highlighted 5 years ago. Their work is characterized by a blend of human, professional, and civic concerns, and their intentions have been and still are to cultivate an environment for learning that is humanly fulfilling and socially responsible. They are both experienced and deeply committed principals, their stories convey confidence rooted in experience, and their message is about what makes people continue to work hard. The new principal at Furuheia emphasizes leadership strategies that differ to a great extent from those of the former principal. Still, his values and philosophy of schooling are very much in harmony with the descriptions of Furuheia 5 years ago.

The learning centered approach we identified earlier had been sustained during the 5 years, and all principals focused on multiple ways of influencing staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions. The continuity of success is reflected in the principals' capacity to promote good relationships among the staff members, and equity, social justice and the moral imperative of developing the whole child is still at the forefront of those working in these schools. All three principals present themselves as persistent, resilient, and optimistic. They are not dictated by the

shifting political contexts in which they work, but they demonstrate to some degree responsiveness to this context. The schools are political institutions framed by their history and tradition, and changes occur in interactions between internal dynamics and external events. The policy and school contexts interact with the individual lay theories of the principals. Our study shows that only additional institutional structuring has been brought to the existing way of organizing the work. But change can occur beneath the surface of apparently stable institutional arrangements. So far, it seems like the Norwegian principals have the "option" of paying little attention to managerial accountability. They demonstrate a rather relaxed attitude toward their superiors, and they do not run any risk by this approach.

The OECD project *Improving School Leadership* has emphasized the need for building sustainable leadership for the future by developing strategies to attract and recruit high-performing school leaders. Up till the 1980s, internal recruitment of principals was quite common within the Norwegian context. You had to start your career as a deputy before applying for principalship at the local school. Today, the issue of internal or external leadership succession is raised on the political agenda, but in our three schools this was not an issue. Only the principal at Ospelia knows he will soon retire, but there is no plan for succession. However, indirectly, by the way he is telling his story and the school's policy for recruiting new teachers, it seems as if he hopes for continuity with the school's direction and ethos.

Our analysis entails some limitations which make it problematic to present general claims about sustainability and leadership succession. The social positioning within society of both the school principals and the university academics probably shaped what was told. We realize that the stories could have been told in other ways in other contexts and with other audiences. Nevertheless, the analysis may offer a helpful perspective on the significance of ethos and school leadership in sustaining school improvement within a Norwegian context.

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Chapter 5
Swedish Successful Schools Revisited

Jonas Höög, Olof Johansson, and Anders Olofsson

5.1 Six Principals in Two Swedish Schools During 7 Years – The First Visit 2003

The Mountain and River schools are both secondary schools. Both were, according to statistics, not only performing well but also, by informants, considered to be good schools. They all had improved their results during four consecutive years prior to our first visit in 2003. The schools were located in small towns. Our model of analysis is based on the relation between the concepts, culture, structure, and leadership as prerequisites for success. Five years ago, both leaders were working with aligning the schools' culture and structure with the local society. Most of the teachers supported these changes and so did the parents. The teachers believed that the focus on the local society contributed to both students' social and academic development. The two principals considered good relations with the surrounding community a necessary resource in the improvement process of the school outcomes (Höög et al. 2005).

The principals we met at our two schools were very self-confident and outspoken, convinced of their capacity to implement higher efficiency and school improvement through changes in structure and culture of the school. They showed high self-esteem and an internal locus of control which helped them to challenge the problems. They knew that they had to act, being the ones setting limits and coming to crucial decisions after consultations with co-workers. To be able to exercise their leadership effectively, they developed professional authenticity in their role through democratic dialogues with their staff.

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Our principals did work for improvement in both academic and social goals for all their students. They showed an awareness of the relation between structure and culture of their school and they worked hard to bring those parts together to achieve success. For both principals, it was very important to work closely with the teachers, not only challenging their ideas but cooperating around important common visions and goals and in that way creating trust through dialogues and credibility for their decisions.

Seven years ago, we found that the concept of successful leadership in our two schools was closely related to the notion of school performance in the catchment context of the school. It was obvious that success must be qualified and analyzed in accordance to how the mission of schools is defined by the local school community which may in some respect deviate from national school improvement policy. The school and local community relation is even stronger today than before.

5.2 The Second Visit 2008/2009

Since 2004, the political discussion about schools in Sweden has been very influenced by the international comparisons of student outcomes in different countries (Linnakylä et al. 2006). This debate has been intensive on national and local political level but has not reached the schools. In a Swedish study, 24 principals were interviewed during the period when the debate was very intense but none of them mentioned the PISA studies or made any reference to Finland's good school results (Höög et al. 2007).

This debate is mentioned as one reason for the election turnout in 2006 and the following shift in government. The new government has made important changes in the system and also has increased the focus on successful student outcomes. They have changed the agency structure, introduced a Swedish State School Inspection and closed down the agency for school improvement, and strengthened the old National Agency for Schools. A new principal education started in 2009; a new teacher's education will start shortly; and we will also get a new school law and new national curriculum and syllabus during 2010.

This characterizes the school climate in Sweden when revisiting the schools. Both River and Mountain schools had maintained high academic standards. The country "mean" for students when leaving grade 9 in the compulsory school system in Sweden has varied around 207 all 5 years. Table 5.1 shows the mean marks between 2005 and 2008.

Table 5.1 School means of the leaving certificate for the 9th grade at Mountain and River Schools. Year 2005–2008

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Mountain school	213	228	219	223	226
River school	204	220	222	207	211

The Mountain and River schools have been above the national average all 5 years. Also when the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students are taken into account, the results are even better compared to the national average. For the River school, we can see a dip in the results in 2008. This was explained to us as due to a shift in leadership. But the incoming principal is focused on increasing the "mean" marks.

The Mountain school was revisited in December 2008 and the River School in February 2009. The principal was interviewed twice and interviews were conducted with old and new teachers and students that had been there at our first visit and with new students. Structure, culture, and leadership are tools for the analysis of the interview data from the two schools (Höög and Johansson 2011).

5.3 The River School

The school is beautifully located between the coast and the mountains beneath a river. It is a 7–9 school with 300 students and 40 teachers.

Constant change and a balancing of structure and culture under the pressure from the surrounding world characterize the situation that must be managed by the principal. This means exercising a leadership in the school that from time to time adjusts to new demands and policy initiatives.

5.3.1 Structure

The school budget is decreasing due to demographic changes in the student population. The number of classes in the 9th year will be reduced by 50% due to fewer students. This implies changes in the structure of teacher teams and a downsizing of personnel. How to work this out is still unclear but the re-organization has to be finished when the fall semester starts. The principal sounds a bit worried about the future and the possibility to sustain the quality of the school and states that "We have to change the structure and try to stabilize it, but there will be more budget cuts in the coming years. The budget cuts starts from a high level with quite small classes, which is one reason for the good results." To transform into larger classes and new teacher teams will be a challenge: "The old teacher team structure was here before me and I have a feeling that they don't want to change even if they can understand that they need to."

Another problem is the change in the composition of the students; more students, especially in year 7 and 8, are in need of special support. Some of them have to be moved to another special school with help from a psychologist and remedial teachers. Because this is quite a new phenomenon for the school, it takes much energy and time, both for the teachers and for the principal. "But if you have high standards you don't give up and let go. We turn things around to create structures, groups and teaching forms to help all students succeed." Results from this activity are good, but it means that in this rather small city, some children are placed outside the school, which is problematic from a perspective of inclusion.

The superintendent in the municipality is new. She comes from a sector other than education and has not, yet, enough knowledge of the school system to be able to support or guide the principal. This is experienced as both a good and a bad thing. "I sometimes don't get the answers I need, but on the other hand it gives me freedom to find my own way." The principal means that it is important to have some freedom to form the way he wants the school to develop.

The new demands on accountability and results are not a problem for the principal; he is used to the focus on results in his former position and he thinks that the demand on teachers and students at River School is lower. Even if the teachers "produce" good results, those could be even better and the principal has an ambition to increase the efforts above the "comfort level." To achieve this, a new organizational frame has to be developed that, despite less resources, recreates tight teacher teams with good schedules and knowledge of all the students. The vision is to reach a school well organized, fun to work in, and also with a capacity to help students in need of special support.

The students' opinion about results is not so developed. They do not seem to think demands at the school are especially high. Talking about motivation, one of them says: "We study for our own sake." All four students have dedicated ideas as to what upper secondary school they want to go to and what program they want to apply for. They also hold track on their marks and want to be sure they achieve enough to get into the desired program. But as one of them says: "If I need better marks from the upper secondary school to be able to go on to the university, I can improve my marks". One other comment from a student that we found much linked to the culture was "My parents don't push me! They want me to have a pleasant life and have time for my special interests so they only want me to find the school not having the highest marks."

Last year, the marks dropped and the reason for this might be that the teacher teams started to dissolve due to notices of teacher overcapacity and budget deficits. To get back on track, the principal thinks that creating an organization better fitted to the number of students and staff is vital. Also needed are changes in pedagogy and instructions. A greater focus on the individual student "with individual development plans, mentorship and study technique it is important to be more precise as to how the work with the students should be conducted." The way to work together across subjects is a bit lost in one of the teams and the job with the students is what keeps this team together. Irrespective of the problems in the teacher teams the principal finds the social situation on the whole tight and well functioning.

When it comes to readiness for change (Björkman 2008) there are some teachers not too keen to alter their practice but most of them are. "The chances to succeed with change processes are as good here as anywhere else at comparable schools."

The teachers' thoughts are much in line with the principal's views. They think a new structure for the teacher teams is necessary but exactly in what form is not clear: "Should we build teacher teams based on subjects or classes or some other ground?" One teacher thinks that they should leave the rigid time schedule and open up for more collaboration between teachers in different subjects:

> to construct blocks with for instance maths and language, just to cross the border between science and humanities… you would gain in planning, instructional conversations, and also in what many are concerned about, the contact with students

A major problem seems to be the student participation (Ahlström 2009). The principal, the teachers, and the students agree that something has to be done to strengthen the class councils and the students' council. Because of the changes in teacher teams and principals, this issue has been put at a disadvantage. Both teachers and the principal agree that they have a responsibility to activate these forms for student participation both inside and outside the classroom.

While asking the students about structural issues and changes they should make if they became principals, they were, at first, uncertain; but after some thinking, they mentioned to restart student activities, like a music they used to set up and the management of a small shop in the school. They also would like to "reduce the growing difference between the classes over the last years and enhance connections between levels."

On the whole, the students are very satisfied with the teachers and their school. "It is a small school and you know everybody and feel safe and secure here even if we have had some troubles in some classes."

5.3.2 Culture

Everyone states that the school climate is good. That is the first thing all persons interviewed say when asked about the school. At the same time, they say: "It is a bit difficult to get a grasp of the school culture." Many voices tell that there is a sort of split between teachers who are focused mostly on the subjects and good marks, and teachers who want the students to grow as a person as well.

One teacher states: "I want to see the student grow as a person both in knowledge and as an individual person. Some teachers only strive to stimulate students to achieve in their own subject."

The principal also see differences between the teacher teams and the single teachers, in the way students are perceived, something he needs to tackle. Students see differences in the teaching style as, "some teachers are more social with the students and others are more focused on getting good student outcomes in their subjects."

About one half of the teaching staff lives in another larger municipality nearby. This means that they do not take part in the daily life during evenings and weekends like the "local" part of the staff. This tends to divide the teaching-staff, and the connection to the parents and the community is stronger among those who live in the municipality. This has some bearing also on the way the mission and the role of the school is anticipated. The teachers who live in the River municipality go along with most of the parents in seeing the school as first and foremost an institution where the children get a good upbringing and a viability, while the commuting teachers like to work in a good school with motivated and nice students interested in their subjects. This difference in basic views also has an effect on the culture in the teacher teams.

The new third principal's strategy here is to develop the school organization in the way he wants it and teachers who do not like that has to find out "whether they want to stay or find another school that might better fit their expectations as the role of the teacher."

5.3.3 Leadership

There is an interesting change in leadership in the River school following the three principal "regimes." The first principal, who saved the school from a crisis 8 years ago when some students tried to set fire to the school and everything was chaotic, is described very positively by everyone. He was authentic in his leadership style and managed to create a school based on democratic values, with distinct ways to work in teams and with an elaborated dialogue with and among the staff and the students – a democratic and transformational leadership with a combined focus on both the people and the task (Ekvall and Arvonen 1994; Leithwood et al. 1996; Mulford and Silins 2003; Törnsén 2009). This principal made a career as a superintendent in the River school district and later as a superintendent for upper secondary schools in a large nearby school district.

The second principal worked a lot motivating and arousing enthusiasm in the students. He arranged activities outside the normal school work like the student's music earlier mentioned and a lot of sports activities. He was also very generous to the teachers and promised them to fix things, and that they should be able to work in a desired way, but he did not keep his promises. He became known as a principal that always agreed with the person he last spoke to and that undermined the trust in him.

One teacher said: "A lot of conflicts started because he promised one thing to one teacher and another thing to the other and these promises would not go together in the way we had to work, and people started getting angry at each other."

There was also a very severe miscommunication where a couple of teachers got a notice by mail not having a job next semester without the principal having talked to them beforehand. The teachers, of course, were very upset and so was the union (Ärlestig 2008). When this principal left the school, it was in a "devastating shape," as one of the teachers expressed it. It was also during this principal's leadership in 2004/2005, the most severe drop in results took place.

The third principal, the one in charge during our visit is very focused on structure. He feels he needs to find and shape a structure for the teams and for an instructional leadership dealing with the students, building systems for mentoring and individual development plans. He started out, perhaps not really getting to know the teachers, but knowing who they are and what roles they have. He identifies that he does not take enough time working with them:

> I tend to get stuck in my office trying to work out the plans for reorganizing the school and don't have enough time to "walk the talk". I know I should be out there socializing more with both students and staff.

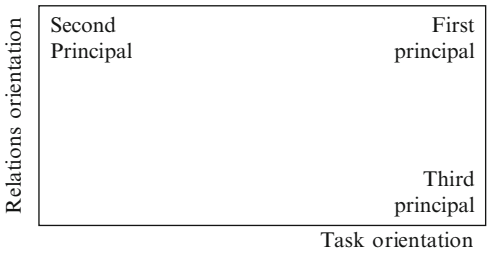

Fig. 5.1 The leadership style of the three principals

Asking about his own ideas about his leadership, he says: "I want to be plain and explicit in the way I want us to work, to formulate our goals as clear as possible. This is very difficult. Because of the decrease in resources, we have to mix the teams and the methods in an unfavorable way."

Utilizing the old (Blake and Mouton 1964) "Managerial grid," the schools' three principals could be described in the following way (Fig. 5.1):

The first principal succeeded in his relation to both the staff and the mission and structure of the school, the second aimed at satisfying all teachers without a strategy how to shape the organization, and the third is busy trying to find a way out of the "chaos" created by the second principal in combination with the new budget cuts.

There is good hope for the third principal since he is aware of the problem but he leans too much to the "task side" of his leadership. He is not "walking his talk" and he needs to change his behavior and start being out there among staff and students if he wants to be successful in the long run (Ärlestig 2008). He also seems to have good insights in the art of developing goals on the individual level. This is something he learned in his former position. He is optimistic about developing the school to an even better school because he knows it is possible – "we can do it. I've seen it happen before, so I know it is possible. But I have to develop a balance between steering and dialogue."

5.4 The Mountain School

This K-9 school with 175 students and 30 teachers is located in a mountain area. During the first visit, we met a self confident and successful female principal. She succeeded in collaborating with the local community and the school, including teachers, students, and parents. The students' outcomes were well above national average. She left the school in 2006 for a position in the school district administration and a new principal is leading the school during our visit.

5.4.1 Structure

During his first year, the principal introduced a new staffing system for the teachers. The old system gave, according to this principal, "the teachers to much influence, which resulted in increasing costs without increasing efficiency." He did not fully manage to change the staffing; perhaps, the only thing he created was a lack of trust in his leadership. His demands for a new general policy for all schools in the municipality in relation to staffing did not find any acceptance among other school leaders and this deepened the lack of confidence in him. Another question, which disturbed the principal, was the municipality's decision that their technical unit should take over school buildings and cleaners. These are examples that give an illustration of a principal too engaged in less important processes. Due to this background, it was not surprising that the principal had decided to leave and that the selection of a new principal was under process.

The teachers describe a structure of strong and well-working teams: "The teachers are professionals with a deep competence in their subjects and personal relations to the students." They distribute their work according to their qualifications for certain themes of tasks and subjects. The teachers also describe the staffing system, that the principal wanted to change and they argue for its qualities and are proud of it because it gives them freedom and responsibility in their work.

The teachers describe with pride the school's system for preventing and handling social conflicts. They are deeply committed to the system and have involved all students in these processes, in their classes or in separate groups of boys and girls depending on the problem. One teacher says: "Our way of handling these matters has led to a school culture with very few conflicts between the students." The students are also satisfied with the system for solving conflicts in the school and describe the strategy with commitment and pride. One student says: "It is safe today to go to the school and most of the students behave well both in and out of school."

The students describe the structure for the teaching they like the way they work today. The teachers introduce themes and the students solve problems and learn through activities together in the daily work.

5.4.2 Culture

The principal argues that even if he did not like the effect on staffing costs, the teachers' team organization they have gives great opportunities for creating and maintaining collaboration between all actors in the school (Möller 2005). Values supporting solidarity dominates the teachers and students' relations. The principal is not keen to set boundaries because he lost his attempt to alter the staffing procedure. He, therefore, gives the teachers high degrees of freedom to find best practices in relation to their own needs which might not always be the best for students. According to the

principal, this way of leadership gives the best learning environments, but as we see, it is a sign of laissez-faire leadership (Johansson and Begley 2008).

The teachers describe an open culture with a far-reaching responsibility and opportunities for the teachers in their work. Collaboration is a key-concept for the daily life in the school. They relate the positive social climate to the village and the forms of collaborations in the local society. But one teacher says: "I am missing the way she – the first principal – communicated with us and her leadership that was based on trust, dialogue and collaboration."

The students are proud of the Mountain School. The solidarity between students and teachers is strong; students believe in their teachers and like their teaching styles and the expectations they meet. The teachers have humor and are determined at the same time.

5.4.3 Leadership

The principal believes in openness and collaboration and refers to the fact that his door is always open. Students and staff can enter into his office at any time and have a chat on any question or topic. The principal argues for an open door policy and when the door is closed, it is most often with respect to the visitor. Despite this open door policy, he is not able to connect to the students and teachers in a trustful way. The teachers say in the interviews that the principal is not knowledgeable enough and therefore cannot be a leader for them in pedagogical matters.

The teachers compare the resigning principal with the previous one. They say: "She was a better leader, she discussed with the teachers before she took decisions. Further, she was a visible leader actively involved in the work with the students and teachers in the classroom." It still happens that the teachers take direct contact with their old principal when they want to discuss important topics instead of talking to the new principal.

The students express the same opinions as their teachers. They appreciated her spontaneous contacts with them and she knew the individual students' names. They also praised her ability to create and explain visions for the students. One student said to us about their old principal: "She stopped and talked to us in the corridor about different things, but the new one only sometimes says 'hello.'"

What can we learn from this case? The mistrust in the new principal from teachers, students, and parents forced the principal to give up his position and leave the school. The old structure and culture of collaboration between the teachers and the former principal was so well established that the new leader failed to create an own role and space in the school and when he also failed to introduce changes in the staffing system, he lost all his credibility. He should have created good relations and alliances with the teacher and the working teams when he arrived to the school before trying to change the ground structure (Persson et al. 2005).

5.5 The Third Visit 2010

5.6 River School

The situation in general is described as both good and not so good. The end of term and graduation day was successful. The school has won prices for entrepreneurship and for the collaboration with local companies in the technical subjects. The climate at the school is good; also, some problems for students in need of special support have been sorted out.

But the situation concerning the number of students and budget reductions is still tough. In a couple of years, student numbers have been halved due to demographics, which implies personnel downsizing and as a logical consequence of this, changes in the organization of the teacher teams are required. There also have been work environment problems (e.g., air circulation) during the last year.

The overall resources, though, are good and the principal has the opinion that results could be a lot better given these circumstances. He had his first-born child in the fall of 2009 and has been on part-time parental leave during the year; which perhaps in an international perspective is a bit unusual, but in Sweden, it is more common that the father also stays at home caring for the child. The principal for the schools for the younger students have been a deputy appointed part-time.

5.6.1 Structure

The principal's ideas about restructuring the teacher teams are interesting. He doesn't want to keep the team leader system, because it leads to passiveness among the rest of the team members. The task for the team leaders has been to drive school improvement but that hasn't happened. "If there's going to be any school improvement everybody has to contribute, and there are a lot of other tasks in school. Besides teaching the subjects, a teacher has to accept responsibilities to make the school function as an organization," he claims.

Furthermore, he also doesn't believe in fixed teams but rather a flexible system where teachers are combined in different constellations depending on the themes of subjects the students are following. The former fixed teams tended not to care about the other team students, only looking after their own. He has a feeling that this partly stems from the view some of the teachers have toward the students. The principal wants the teachers to care for all children in school and help them out when it is needed.

Downsizing in Sweden has to follow labor market rules that specify "the one latest employed has to leave first." This means that the younger teachers are given the notice while the older ones near to their pension age stay. The principal considers this as a major problem when trying to modernize the organization. But, he has been able to keep some of the younger teachers giving them special missions, for

instance, to work with students in need of special support. The response from those teachers is strong because they want to stay at the school even if they are offered other positions in the municipality. They hope that the employment situation at school will improve when the older teachers retire.

ITS is another topic that is on the agenda, and a huge development scheme has to be developed here.

5.6.2 Culture

The school culture is strong when it comes to a general appreciation of the schools' basic values, its connection to the community, good relations between teachers, students, and parents and there have been a long period of good outcomes since the first principal's turn around (see the first visit).

Despite this, there are some cracks in the wall. The teaching-staff is split in three in their concerns about the understanding of what a teacher should do, the view of the students, and the way ahead. One group supports the principals' new ideas about the organization in flexible teams working outside the teaching role and the willingness to work with and support students with reduced learning ability. Another group of the teachers opposes this and wants to keep the old system; especially, those who are more in favor of the subject-focused teaching style they have been performing before. Then there is a group, in between those two groups, who are not certain of their position.

As noted before, the people in the municipality is satisfied with the school. The number of students passing exam with grades in all 16 subjects is 90%, 15% higher than the national average. Parents want the focus of the school to stay that way and are not interested in pressing for higher marks. Those are good enough, they think. When put to the test, the principal admits that when he wants to focus more on raising the results for the sake of the students aiming at university programs, he is going to meet resistance. The parents think the students are well off with medium marks, and are supposed to stay in the municipality at the local labor market. The surrounding business community are strong supporters with own ideas of how to work together sponsoring the school with possibilities for students to work in order to get practical experience.

All this together characterizes a school community with its values based on the conception "a school for all and for the local society" rather than "a school for competition, higher education, and international carriers."

5.6.3 Leadership

The principal started out his first year trying to form an organization out of a chaotic situation. He also reflected that more dialog with teachers is needed to go through

with his strategies. During the academic year 2009–2010, and partly because of the principal's parental leave, it has been necessary to delegate to the teachers a lot of the implementation work concerning the new organization. This has led to a lot of communication about improvement plans, how to manage the current situation and, what his ideas of the future organization are.

To succeed with his work, he understands that even if he knows the personnel, and it's easy to get in contact with them, he has to come closer to the teachers socially to be able to develop strategies for his leadership. The ones he had when he arrived to the school didn't work. Those were based on economic incitements mostly because his former school was a private school with a strong emphasis on those; according to him: "University studies and high salaries are not motivational factors here as they were there". The strategy at this school has to be built on both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. It has been a tough period for the principal to both care for his new family and at the same time form a new structure and culture for the school and trying to align the need for a more cooperative team organization with the need for more personalized goals for the teachers and the combination of more demanding intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. He thinks that it has been a strenuous year and he knows he has a long way to go. He has to be ready to meet opposition from groups that will fight for "the old school," while he himself wants the school to "meet the students is his/her own world."

The final question "will they follow you?" was answered with a doubtful laugh, "no, well… perhaps the positive third of them, but I have to use both 'the stick and the carrot' to struggle for getting the middle group to follow too."

5.7 Mountain School

At the visit to the Mountain school, the third principal had finished his first year. The second principal had left the school just after our visit; he held his position for only 1 year. The student population is decreasing but the nativity in the local society is increasing. Local business runes with success and the inhabitants have faith and trust in the ongoing development for themselves and the village. The staff is relatively stable and consists of teachers between the age of 30 and60 years. New members of the staff are often recruited among educated teachers with roots in the village. This means that elder members of the staff might meet old students as their new colleagues.

The new principal came from another part of the country but he had some private experience of the municipality as a yearly visitor. His decision to apply for the position as the principal was made because of his good experience of the local society and culture during his visits. He didn't know much about the school, the teachers, and the students; so, it was quite a challenge to say "yes" when the position was offered to him.

5.7.1 Structure

During his first year, the principal learned about the local school culture and at the same time, initiated an implementation of new structural elements as well as a change of the attitude among the staff. At first, he had reorganized the staff and employed two remedial teachers. This was done to facilitate an inclusion of "students in need of special care" in their classes and a qualified support for those students. He claimed that the teachers accepted this structural change of the staff. Another change of the structure, the realization of which could take some time, was new collaboration forms in the working teams regarding responsibilities and duties, especially for the students' social behavior, habits, results and communication with the local society. On this issue, the new principal met some resistance from the teachers. They confirmed the structural changes but the older teachers in the staff disliked the principal's attempts to introduce new collaboration forms among the working teams of teachers. The young teachers seemed to adapt them.

5.7.2 Culture

The principal meant that there was some inefficiency inherent in the communication between the teachers and the local society. He took a mobbing case as an example. Instead of initiating an open attitude and discussion within the school and with the students' parents, the teachers tried to solve the problems without support from them and without involving them in the problem solving. On the other hand, the teachers had different opinions; some of them wanted the principal to take the practical responsibilities and act in front of the teachers at the same time, as the principal claimed that it was the working team of teachers who should produce open forms of communications to the parents and the local society.

In other cultural areas, the teachers impressed the principal. They did really care for their students and were well-trained and skilled teachers. They also perceived themselves in the same way and thought that they were running their duties and teaching well. However, in one important question, the principal recognized a deep discord among the teachers. Some of the older teachers really disliked the new principal's leadership style and still missed the "first" principal who now had a higher position within the local educational administration. When things weren't all right, according to the old teachers, they openly took contact with their old principal. The old as well as the young teachers confirmed that it was a strategy for some of the old teachers. At the same time, some of the younger teachers felt bad and really disliked this informal way of ruling.

The teachers openly discussed and described the conflict together. The colleagues seemed to be well aware of their shortcomings and benefits, which could be seen as

a collective strength. A very important statement from teachers during their discussion was, a little bit surprisingly, “the new principal will stay.”

5.7.3 Leadership

The principal asserts that he had an open conversation with his staff at the same time, as he was aware that a change of structure or culture must be realized with respect and patience. He also recognized weaknesses in his strategies and has initiated changes without having the staff’s commitment. The new form of “teacher teams” was one example.

He had an open and inviting attitude toward the students and they often visited him at his office. The teachers were pleased with this side of his leadership. On the other hand, some of the old teachers really were disturbed by his attitudes toward the local society and the staff; they wanted him to alter his starting point and suggest alternatives for the changes and moves he wanted to make.

He was strong in his conviction in what direction to move, but he needed to be both more dialog-oriented and daring to take a stand in tricky questions to make the whole staff to follow him. However, the teachers were convinced that their new principal was going to stay at the school for many years.

5.7.4 Comments

The school had, during some years, been exposed to challenges of different kinds. The instabilities in the leadership of the school are, of course, remarkable. The cleavage between old and young teachers is another challenge. But, still the learning outcomes are over average and the teachers are well aware of that fact, with a smile on their lips and a twinkle in the eye!

5.8 Discussion

It is obvious that as a researcher, you are more attentive to the changes in school policies than the stakeholders in the school. The new, more outcomes driven national policy, was never mentioned during our two first visits. One explanation might be that both schools are better than average and not too concerned to improve their results. Another is that the school has a good reputation among stakeholders and the public. The school’s result is better than expected in relation to the SES of the parents. This is interesting because the teachers say that the results could be even better and they, then, need support from the parents, but the parents don’t want their children to study harder. For both the schools, the important mission was

to have a school that could produce both good social and academic outcomes and happy students who liked to go to school.

Principals and teachers at both places communicated well with the parents and the local community. Interesting is also that the local culture considered the school important, but at the same time, parents made it clear for the children that they don't expect them to take the homework too serious. This creates a "good is good enough" culture at both schools, but there are teachers that support this culture and also teachers that think the students could do much better. Surely the principals saw the potential for raising the students' performance furthermore even if we have to remind ourself that these two schools are performing well over national average, when assessed either with the mean grades or with the number of students that fail in different subjects.

During our third visit, it became obvious that the new principals recognized some problems in the communication between parents and the schools. At Mountain school, the principal wanted the teachers to act more open in relation to the local society at the same time, as at least some of the more dominant teachers claimed that it was the principal's job.

What was interesting at both schools was that the principals succeeding the first very proficient principal were not fully accepted. In both cases, the first principal had created a culture of very strong collaboration between the principal and different teacher teams. This was not only based on trust, dialogue, and knowledge, but also a great deal of social competence. The new principals could not live up to the demands from the teacher teams and were not sensitive enough to understand how to approach the existing structures when changes were needed. It might always be a problem to replace a popular leader, than live up to high expectations and, perhaps, also handle the sorrow people can feel losing a leader who meant more to them and just an administrator.

One observation is that we often talk in Sweden about challenging leadership, but our two examples rather give evidence of a leadership based on trust, dialogue, and collaboration. We saw in our first visits to these schools a lot of collaboration between the principal and the teacher teams, but that was missing this second time. In the Mountain school, the teachers said that they expected their incoming principal to have a leadership based on trust, dialogue, and collaboration. From research, we also know that teachers emphasize the importance of trust and collaboration for being a good teacher (Blase and Blase 2003; Ärlestig 2008). When you think of it, in these interactive processes might lie a good proportion of challenge: "If you do this, I trust you will collaborate and keep the dialog going, but if I don't …."

It is obvious that both schools had sustained success in relation to social and academic national objectives. The success had been created by the first principals in both cases. They had been able to reform the structure and culture of the schools. The reformulation of the school's purpose had also been accepted by teachers, students, and parents and in line with the ideal of the local community. But it is also clear that the second principals could not live up to the expectations from the teachers and the students of being authentic in style and presenting as a person in all relations. We find it very interesting that the culture based on trust, dialogue,

and collaboration that was in place demanded such a high quality leadership that the second principals in both schools were unable to match these expectations.

Albeit this, it is obvious during the third visit that the third group of principals have experienced a stronger emphasis on student outcomes from the municipal school leadership, the national agencies, and the general political climate in Sweden. They have met this accountability demand during a period of downsizing of student numbers and staff. To handle this mixed situation, they work hard striving to develop new structures for teacher teams, better support for children in need and changing values concerning the teachers' view of students and the role of a teacher. Modernization of teaching practices is also on the agenda.

A leadership combining structural and cultural changes based on a developed dialog both on a group and an individual level is required. All in all, the prognosis for the new principals seems to be good and even better student performance could be expected coming years. They still have a positive climate among teachers and the parents to lean against.

Finally, we found at both schools, a strong relationship between structure, culture, and leadership. And if one of these factors changes, the balance between them can affect the outcomes of the school. We also found that principal leadership can be substituted with a teacher team leadership strong enough to uphold the relation between structure and culture. We conclude that our first two principals were successful and created two successful schools that were able to survive and produce very good student outcomes even with less proficient principals, as long as the teacher culture was intact (Höög et al. 2005). The two latest principals seem to take the challenge to win back the teacher opinion with hard work to restructure the schools to make them better fit the demands of a new age in Swedish schooling without loosing the strengths of it. We also consider the fact that the relation with the local community is of importance for the teachers' opportunity to maintain high outcomes is a result of a sustainable culture with positive attitudes to education among the local society, parents, and students.

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Chapter 6
Building and Sustaining Successful Principalship in an English School*

Christopher Day

6.1 Introduction

Resilient leadership for improved learning for children is characterised by a clear sense of moral/ethical purpose related to how to create a learning environment in which all students and staff may not only feel they belong to, but also may be successful. Yet, such leadership requires that leaders are beacons of hope, engage in risk, distribute trust progressively in a wise and timely manner and are able to be resilient and build the capacities of others to be resilient.

To understand the world of English school principals, it is necessary to focus, albeit briefly, upon the reformist policy context in which they lead. Their work and that of their teachers has, since 1988, been subjected to a continuing raft of centrally generated and imposed reforms aimed at raising standards of academic achievement and, more recently, actively attending, also, to students' well-being (Ball 2001; Day 2003; Day and Smethem 2009). Schools have been forced to focus more than before upon raising students' test and examination scores because their quality is judged and reported publicly in this way. Principals are key players in the successful implementation of such reforms and are themselves judged according to the extent to which their school succeeds in meeting the criteria for success set by the central government. Research in England has, however, found that schools which are successful in raising standards of academic achievement are also successful in other areas (Day et al. 2007, 2009). The specific centrally driven reforms enacted between 2001 and 2008 – the two periods of the research reported in this chapter – differed.

* This is a revised and extended version of Day (2009).

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However, the dynamic context of systemic and curricula change, which all principals were required to respond, remained the same. Thus, successful principals in England and elsewhere were and are those who are able to be adaptive, exercise strategic acumen and continue to drive improvement agendas within an increasingly broader and more complex range of external and internal collaborations, and who are able to do so within consistent and clear frameworks of broad ethical and moral purposes which are at the heart of their educational commitment.

> What drives me is that I passionately believe in comprehensive education. In Catholic schools there is the opportunity to explore the deep spirituality which I would hope is inclusive. So it's very fulfilling work that I do.
>
> (Principal)

This is an account of the ways in which one experienced secondary school principal developed and sustained his success over a 13-year period. The chapter is organised in three parts: 1. Developing success – the first 7 years; 2. Broadening and deepening – the next 6 years; 3. Progressive leadership trust – the person and the acts. The chapter provides multi-perspective qualitative and quantitative data which complements and extends the empirical work of Bryk and Schneider (2002), Tschannen-Moran (2004) and Seashore-Louis (2007). The data suggest that trust was an important feature of his success as leader and the success of the school; that, it may be understood as value, disposition, behaviour and consequence; and that, to contribute to the school's success, it should be exercised on individual, relational and organisational levels.

Judging how exactly principals who have achieved success manage to sustain and embed the conditions, strategies and relationships which have made this possible into the life and fabric of the schools they lead, ideally, requires researchers to 'live' in the school over the period, for observing, discussing and understanding the history and everyday actions of the principal, and others will provide the most comprehensive and authentic account. For all but a small handful of anthropologists, however, this is impossible. This, therefore, is an account which uses the individual perspectives of a range of stakeholders interviewed at separate points in time, separated by a 6-year period, for its warrant, alongside written judgements made of the school by external agencies and other proxy indicators of success, e.g. various forms of recognition and measurable pupil attainments. Even, this is only made possible by the results-driven, performativity culture in England which both ensures, on the one hand, that any improvement or decline in student progress and attainment is documented against government-imposed benchmarks and targets on an annual basis, and, on the other, that schools are provided with reputational and financial incentives to change.

6.2 Raising Standards: The First 7 Years

When we first visited this 55 strong teacher, 1,000+ church aided high school for 11–16 year old students situated in the north-west region of England in 2001, Tom had been the principal for 8 years. It was his first principalship but he had extensive

teaching experience as an English teacher, then Head of Department, and, for 5 years prior to his achieving the principalship, a deputy principalship at another school in the region. During his career, he had also gained a Fullbright scholarship to study for a Masters degree at an American university and had, for 3 years, worked for a United Nations Development Programme in Africa. He was in his 50s. The school itself was in a rural setting close to a small town. It drew its students from a wide, predominantly white private housing area. Only 9% of students were entitled to free school meals (a proxy indicator of relative socio-economic status) and 13.5% of students were classified as having 'special educational needs'. The average size of teaching group (class) was 28.5 (for 11–13 year olds) and 22.4 (for 13–16 year olds). Unathorised student absence from school was 0.1% compared with the national average of 1.1%. The Ofsted (an independent external agency) inspection report of 2001 had noted that since its last report (in 1995), the school had become oversubscribed, an indicator of the positive impact of Tom, over his first years as principal:

> The headteacher and senior staff work very closely together. The vision for the school's development comes very much from the close, effective working relationships between senior and other staff, but the clear direction comes very much from the headteacher. The school development plan is well structured, reflecting considerable involvement by all staff, and has well-expressed-priorities, with the realistic costing, time-frames, and criteria by which success can be measured. The initiatives of individual staff are recognised and valued and examined closely to see how they can be best used by the school … At present, the headteacher and senior staff observe teaching and provide effective feedback to teachers.
>
> (Ofsted 2001, p. 11)

In terms of examination results for school leavers aged 16 years, the percentage of students gaining five or more A*–C grades had risen from 60% in 1997 to 71% in 2000, the national average for schools in England in that year being 49.2%. Indeed, in 2002, the percentage had risen to 72%. During the same period, the school had undergone a £300,000 'facelift'. Perhaps, as important was the observation that, 'standards achieved by pupils have improved and the quality of teaching has improved' and that the students, 'work hard and with obvious enjoyment and this is predominantly due to the high expectations of teachers and excellent relationships established in all classrooms'. In addition, it was noted that student behaviour, in and out of classrooms, was 'outstanding':

> In classrooms and around school pupils behave extremely well; they are courteous, attentive and respond very well to all of the activities organised by the school.

This principal clearly focused on teaching and learning by nurturing relationships between expectations, work ethic and efficacy alongside care, engagement and achievement. Observations of teaching had concluded that, 'teaching is good throughout the school and it is never less than satisfactory. In 88% of lessons, there is good teaching and in 32% it is very good and sometimes excellent'. Crucially, the Ofsted report identified 'outstanding leadership' by the principal and other key staff with the principal, staff and governors 'fully involved in reviewing performance and evaluating improvements'.

In 2002, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Schools identified St Peters as, 'a particularly successful, outstanding school'. However, attention was also drawn to the school's limited financial and accommodation resources (the school had originally been built to house 600 students), a fact communicated by the principal in a written appeal to parents of Year 8 (12-year old) students in February 2002:

> The Government's promises to resource the nation's schools fairly, outlined in its 'Fair Funding' proposals, have not been met. Instead, the gap in funding is widening all the time … The school regularly makes representations to MPs and councillors and we hope that parents will do the same … But in the meantime we must do everything we possibly can to ensure our own children are not disadvantaged. They get one chance only. They can't wait until politicians start honouring their promises.

A survey of parents and carers, carried out in 2001 by the Ofsted team (a national, independent school inspection agency funded by government), had attracted returns of 718. In answer to a range of questions, the response had been overwhelmingly positive, and, at a meeting between the inspection team leader and parents held before the inspection, 'parents expressed overwhelming support for the school'(Table 6.1).

On 20 January 2002, The Sunday Times national newspaper had ranked the school as one of the top five schools in England for 'value for money' when the academic results were matched against house prices and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Schools had identified St Peters as, 'a particularly successful, outstanding school'. In one of the regular, twice monthly Parents' Newsletters (September 2002), Tom had also reported:

> The school has been designated by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as a Beacon school because of a track record of sustained excellence.

In the same Newsletter, Tom also announced that, 'with the backing of our parents, we'll be setting our sights in 2003 on becoming a "specialist" science school as well', and that:

> At the heart of what makes our school so successful is the support we receive from our parent body – and the winners are the children for whom we are care so much!

Since the 1995 inspection, the school was judged to have made good progress, with, now, no significant use of non-specialist teachers, significantly improved monitoring, evaluation and planning for further improvement, and more effective management of health and safety issues.

It was only secondary school in the region to have been awarded such status. One factor which was fundamental to Tom's leadership of the school in 2001 was his strong, student-centred value stance:

> The Government's promises to resource the nation's schools fairly, outlined in its 'Fair Funding' proposals, have not been met. Instead, the gap in funding is widening all the time … The school regularly makes representations to MPs and councilors and we hope that parents will do the same … But in the meantime, we must do everything we possibly can to ensure our own children are not disadvantaged. They get one chance only. They can't wait until politicians start honouring their promise.
>
> (Principal)

Table 6.1 Results of the survey of parents and carers (Ofsted report 2001)

	Number of questionnaires sent out 1,013				
	Number of questionnaires returned 718				
Questionnaire return rate	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	45	49	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school	48	41	3	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good	57	37	1	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	40	46	8	1	4
The teaching is good	59	35	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	48	36	7	1	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	69	28	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	78	20	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents	57	32	5	1	5
The school is well led and managed	73	23	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	62	31	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	61	30	3	1	5

Another was the importance that Tom placed on parent consultation and engagement. A survey of parents and carers, carried out in 2001 by the Ofsted team (a national independent school inspection agency funded by government) had attracted returns of 718. In answer to a range of questions, the response had been overwhelmingly positive, and, at a meeting between the inspection team leader and parents held before the inspection, 'parents expressed overwhelming support for the school':

> He likes to get parents involved in the school. He spends ages with them when they are here. He goes round talking with people. He's not one to stand back and let them come to him. He goes to them. He makes them feel important.
>
> (Teacher)

In the 7 years of principalship prior to our first visit to the school, Tom had earned a reputation not only for raising standards of student achievement but also for integrity of purpose and conduct which extended beyond his relationships with teachers and students into the community outside the school gates. Governors, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and students spoke of Tom's focus, his dedication, his care, approachability and refusal to be complacent:

> He has a very clear focus about where he wants the school to go. We are given every opportunity to move with that. He doesn't get it right all of the time and I don't think he's particularly precious about that either.
>
> (Teacher)

> I think it's a very caring school … He's a really good listener … always at your level. He doesn't think he's better than anyone else. He deals with things, sorts things out. Since I've been here I've noticed things getting better and better. He knows where he's going. He's got plans. Everything's really well organised … All the other deputy heads have got the same sort of ethos he has. They've all been trained to his standards. Everybody's aware of where we're going.
>
> (Support staff member)

> He's very much the lynch pin that motivates others.
>
> (Governor)

It was Tom's strong, caring and involved presence at every level which was so remarkable and so important to those within the school:

> You see him on every level, in the yard with pupils. He'll shake your hand and give you a word of approval. He's there holding doors open. He's not too busy to deal with any pupil who's causing problems. He leads by example. Faced with a difficult parent, he would be very firm about where the school stands. He'd defuse the situation. He'd make them a coffee, probably. He makes everybody a coffee! It's not often you see a headteacher in a staffroom making coffee for people coming to the school.
>
> (Teacher)

Such approachability, availability and presence were key aspects of his leadership:

> I would have thought it was my job to be around. At lunch time and break time I try to spend some time in the dining room and certainly get out and talk to the kids … so the kids are used to seeing me around and will talk to me. I do watch people teaching … but I don't want to be too invasive. When the bells go, I like to be where there's crowds of kids, just watching them go by and keeping an eye on things. We also have a briefing in the staffroom every morning. My door is always open … It's very, very common for pupils to come to see me.
>
> (Principal)

Fielding has long argued that successful schools are those which are person-centred communities in which, 'not only is the functional for the sake of the personal, and the personal achieved through the functional, but the influence of the personal on the functional is transformative of it …' (2003, p. 5).

Such approachability, availability and presence were key aspects of his leadership:

> He does have collegial openness and approachability. He wouldn't think anything about speaking to you about personal matters or giving you a hug if you're sad. He's very intelligent and very articulate. He's absolutely superb with parents. With those who are very supportive and those who are being a little bit difficult. He can laugh at himself. He is honest. If there are things he's not happy with, he will support you to get it right rather than hold a grudge. He's absolutely wonderful. He's good at PR. He's absolutely passionate about Catholic comprehensive education. It's a vision that most of us share even those of us who are non-Catholics because we're very much a community.
>
> (Teacher)

6.3 Conviction Leadership: Courage and Moral Purpose

Tom described his approach to leadership as being founded upon systems management, educational ideals and relationships:

> Certainly you need systems, but it's also about effectiveness where its not about colluding with people but engaging in a relationship where you care about people and you want things to be right for them … I think if you absolutely believe in what you're doing, about changing people's lives and doing it because it's right to do it, the sum of that becomes greater than the sum of the parts and it moves everybody on. Often when a parent or member of staff comes to see me, there are things we've got wrong, and it's about being big enough to say so.
>
> (Principal)

He expressed a deeply felt anger about a government which had, in his view, 'infantilised' teachers and his determination that every student should have the right to learn:

> Part of the job is about having the courage of our convictions. The profession is being infantilised. We are being asset stripped of our sense of our own worth … So perhaps another of my jobs, in terms of my vision, is somehow to create an internal alternative culture but also be an advocate for a change in the way in which the profession's being treated to avoid the haemorrhaging out of the profession. We live in a time when mantras have become almost like nostrums that are not moving us at all … The policy that we have on discipline is called, 'We come here to learn' and it's phrased in terms of children's rights. We rank order those rights and the right of children who want to learn has primacy over all other rights. So we will not allow children to deprive other children of the right to learn. That message goes home every year to every parent. So children who stop others from learning forfeit the right, temporarily, to be in the classroom. We will also phone the parents straight away. We owe it to the kids to make the curriculum as interesting as possible. They have the right to be taught in a way that's going to engage them, but the staff have the right, too, to be able to teach.
>
> (Principal)

Tom's leadership of this school was grounded in his strong belief in children's right to learn.

Allied to this, was his determination to involve students more actively in school-wide decision making processes:

> He formulated the pupil council last year. It was his baby. The political side of the head is leaning slightly to the left, one would say. He believes very much in the dignity of the individual, human rights. It is demonstrable of his valuing of children and their input into the school.
>
> (Deputy Principal)

Tom's rhetoric was translated into action, for example, in his broad view of what counted as valid learning opportunities, and his determination that children should have a range of educational experiences:

> I want somehow to hold on to serendipity, to allow things to happen in the school which are not necessarily what (government) thinks we should be doing. I know we do lots of things that other heads would not countenance. We have lots of retreats, we take kids away, we have speakers for the day when we close the curriculum down; and my view is that they're often what children remember. I think we have to be courageous enough to do those things. I've always been a subversive. If we can undermine and chew away at and dismantle this awful, micro-managed rat race that's being pushed on us, that stops us from breathing …
>
> (Principal)

Thus, whilst Tom's benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability and competence – facets of principal–teacher relationships identified as contributing to trust (Tschannen-Moran 2004, p. 19) – were identified, so too were his commitment to students and, associated with his, high expectations of teachers' performance.

> He's a nice man and he's easy to get along with, but he doesn't suffer fools gladly. He knows a lot about his staff. He's very supportive and an honest man and if people are not pulling their weight his main concern is that they are not ripping the kids off. We're here to educate the children and if somebody isn't doing their job, he'll tell them.
>
> (Deputy Headteacher)

6.4 Broadening and Deepening Success: The Next 6 Years

Despite the successes which had been achieved by 2002, for Tom, there was still more work to be done. 'Specialist Science' status had not yet been won – with it would come enhanced status and government matching finance. The principal had also been advised by the 2001 Ofsted Report to improve access to information technology; to improve the availability and standards of accommodation for students and staff; and to develop target setting methods for the 11–13 year old students. In addition, the principal himself wished to increase opportunities for independent learning. It was interesting to note, during our 2008 visit, the further success which had been achieved. In the years between our visits, the school had gained 'Specialist Science' status. It had also become a new 'Leading Edge' school, through which it was recognised as being able to provide support for other schools.

Table 6.2 External success indicators, 2002 and 2008

External success indicators	2002	2008
	Ofsted report (2001) 1. School oversubscribed 2. Quality of teaching improved since 1995 3. Outstanding leadership of principal 4. Only secondary school in region to be awarded 'Beacon' status 5. Overwhelming support for the school by parents *Value for money* • 'Sunday Times' ranked the school in the top 5 nationally as offering 'value for money' *Student achievement* • Students gaining 5 × A*–C grades increased from 60% in 1995 to 72% in 2002	*Ofsted report (2006)* • Assessed as a good school with outstanding features i.e. (i) student behaviour; (ii) partnership with others to promote student well-being; (iii) students' moral, spiritual and cultural development; (iv) care, guidance and support for students; (v) students' development of workplace and other skills. • School oversubscribed • All teaching good or better, none less than satisfactory • Strong leadership and clear vision of principal, 'well supported by SLT and governing body' • Designated 'Leading Edge' school • Governors committed/supportive *Value for money* • School achieved Specialist School Status (and seeking additional specialist 'language' status) • 'Investor in People' award *Student attainment* • Examination results 'well above the national average'

6.4.1 External Success Indicators

The school had improved its academic results year on year in science from 41.4% in 2003 to 56.9% of students gaining level 5+ in 2007 and at level 6+ from 59% to 75%. In Maths, results had improved from 29.6% to 39.9% at level 5+ over the same period and in English, at level 5+ from 90% in 2005 to 91% in 2007 and at level 6+ (the highest) from 34% to 56%. The amount and range of in-house professional development opportunities for all staff (but tailored to individual needs) had also increased during this period, particularly those which related to the development of a greater range of pedagogical practices in classrooms and strategies to support home and independent learning. In response to the annual district survey of students' views of their school experiences, students at the school were in the highest quartile for their positive responses to the statement, 'Teachers' comments help me to improve my work'. The school supported students, also, through a formal mentoring system (Table 6.2).

One change in the policy landscape, however, had somewhat adverse effects upon the way in which examination results were assessed at the age of 16 years. Whereas previously schools were able to count 5 A*–C grades, regardless of

Table 6.3 Internal success indicators

Internal success indicators	2002	2008
	School culture • Staff and students report, principal's clear focus, vision, care, dedication, approachability, strong presence, moral purpose and high levels of interpersonal relationships, staff retention *Student engagement* • Teacher–student relationships core to success • Passionate about education • High rate of student attendance • Student participation (student council)	*School culture* As in 2002 *Student engagement* • Student performance data now used to track progress and identify under-achievers *Curriculum enrichment* • Resourced programme of curriculum enrichment • Extended school opening hours (7 am–9 pm), enabling breakfast provision, after school care, range of extra-curricular activities and evening classes for the community

subject, by 2007, among the five subjects counted for inclusion had to be English and Maths. Thus, although results in Tom's school had risen to 72% in 2002 and, in 2007, 75%, when English and Maths were included, they were 62.6%, though this remained well above the national average.

6.4.2 Key Internal Improvement Strategies

At the time of our second visit, in 2008, the school had not only sustained its academic progress under Tom's leadership, but also improved. Its 2007 SEF (a Self Evaluation Form which the Government had introduced based on the external inspection framework) reported that its status as a Beacon school, specialist science college and leading edge school had attracted additional resources which had, 'enabled the school to resource a programme of curriculum enrichment [e.g. the introduction of separate science subjects], to develop partnerships with other secondary schools [e.g. a shared programme for gifted, able and talented students] and to offer a range of evening classes for the local community (Table 6.3)'.

> Well basically I do think that the school is moving forward all the time. Tom has been here fourteen or fifteen years now but he's an immense project driver. He does want to move the school forward all the time and there is no room for complacency. He is constantly driving and innovating and debating with the SLT on how to move things forward on all issues: on curriculum; changes to homework and home learning styles; the way he's driving CPD (continuing professional development) – other people are in charge but Tom is driving that. He is project driving everything that the rest of us are doing. Of course, you know, the extreme pressure is the GCSE results and we take dips and we have peaks and that's really more to do with the economic and social makeup of the year group and the traumas and personal lives that are going on. But, as far as moving the school forward, he is innovative and he leads by example.
>
> (Assistant Principal)

The school was now open from 7 am to 9 pm in response to a new Government policy for 'Extended Schools' and this allowed, 'breakfast provision, a range of after school activities and the funding for parents to have a safe place for their children', when they were unable collect them at the end of normal school time. Its priorities for 2007–2008 were numerous (29 listed) and its overarching aims were to:

1. Improve its CVA (context value added) examination ratings for students aged 13 and 16 years, particularly in targeted subjects
2. Strengthen provision for delivering the five outcomes of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda (a government initiative which focuses attention upon the broader well-being needs of all students)

6.4.3 Key Improvement Strategies

Since 2002, also, the school had extended the range of its external partnerships. For example, with two other secondary schools to develop a shared 14–19 vocational curriculum, with police and other welfare services, with the area's Youth and Community team, with the ten designated primary school partners and the community programmes of two local specialist sports colleges. It also intended to meet the now 'statutory requirement' to provide ICT for all KS4 (14–16 year olds) students. It is clear from this and much other data, unable to be reported here because of the restrictions on length, that this principal had not been complacent over the 6-year period that he had both introduced a range of new initiatives and deepened and extended the emphasis identified in the first visit upon distributing leadership, succession planning, tracking pupil progress, improving the teaching and learning environment, and engaging the parents and the governing body. He had, also, built new partnerships with schools and other agencies (Table 6.4).

6.4.4 Personal Attributes

All the evidence from him and others confirmed that there had been no dimming of his commitment, passion and energy nor changes in the core values which underpinned all that he did (Table 6.5).

> When you talk to him he is almost breathless with the passion all bubbling out but often half formed, you know, and he's thinking as he's talking and therefore it's not well formed and pristine but developmental. And he loves doing that: he loves throwing out an idea and he'll immediately bring three people in so they can have a debate there and then about it. I always feel that this is why this is such a good school because things are happening rather than are going through the motions. It's never dull here; it's exciting.
>
> (Local Authority/District Senior Adviser)

Table 6.4 Key improvement strategies

Key improvement strategies	2002	2008
	1. *Initial priorities* Student council; school environment; student behaviour (the right to uninterrupted learning); parental engagement (Newsletter); teaching standards (introduction of quality standards); school visibility (Beacon); change through consultation; professional learning and development (mainly in-house); educating the whole student; purposeful change 2. *Change leadership* Always consults with staff and governors; purposeful; considered change; models teaching by commitment to problematic 15+ group; begins to distribute leadership; raises finance for improving conditions for teaching and learning; builds capacity by CPD (in-house); models core values (care and achievement); promotes 'inclusive' agenda; engages in succession planning; nurtures collective pride and sense of community	1. *Sustained and extended emphasis upon:* Student consultation extended; school environment (e.g. alfresco area for students); student feedback on teaching; parental engagement (website; newsletter; student diaries); teaching standards (data informed teaching development); school visibility (Leading Edge; Specialist status); change through consultation (annual SWOT analysis); CPD (professional learning and development) tailored to individual needs; extending workplace learning and cultural opportunities; purposeful change; increased leadership distribution; increased succession planning 2. *Change leadership* As in 2002 3. *New emphases* (i) *Extended networks* New partnerships with schools (e.g. share 14–19 vocational curriculum, programmes for gifted, talented and able students) and other agencies (e.g. police/social services) (ii) Provision for delivering the 'Every Child Matters' agenda; Inter-school and inter-agency partnerships; 14–19 curriculum development; ICT for all 14–16 year olds; formal student mentoring system; classroom observation; school website; focus on work–life balance/well-being of self and staff

6.5 Progressive Leadership Trust: The Person and the Act

To read and digest what happens in the school on a daily basis and the variety of links, networks, partnerships and projects in which the school plays leadership roles is to wonder at the sheer magnitude and complexity of the leadership of schools in the twenty-first century in England, and, in doing so, to reflect upon the values, qualities, skills and roles of the successful principal as more than 'primus inter pares'. Interviews with Tom, staff, students and governors in 2008, 6 years after our first visit, provided evidence of the esteem in which Tom as a person and as a professional was held and the contributions which he had made through who he was (as a professional and a person), and how he exercised his leadership(the strategies he used).

Table 6.5 Personal attributes

Personal attributes	2002	2008
	Personal attributes 'A born teacher'; high levels of interpersonal relationships with the range of stakeholders (pupils, all staff, governors, parents); courageous in decision-making; self-doubts; insistent/persistent in moving the school forward; honest, fair, courageous; faith-driven, strong vision; never complacent; involved in all initiatives in different roles; an excellent orator; always seeking feedback (data) to inform him of progress and care; chose to live in area and send his children to the school	*Personal attributes* Commitment and energy; praise; knowledge of students and staff; presence (MBWA); passion; calm and courteous; no room for complacency/moving forward always; highest standards of respect; highest standards of academic achievement; 'a thinker'; self-knowledge/reflection; ability to move beyond the immediate; concern for success for all; vision, values, authority
	Overall perspectives on self as leader Core principles of the pupils' well-being, academic achievement and broad education; open, honest, with integrity; central role to provide an environment conducive to learning; central role to promote culture of care and achievement	*Overall perspectives on self as leader* As in 2002

The opportunities for staff and students to learn and achieve more were a consequence of Tom's leadership and an important part of this were his beliefs in their abilities to exercise responsibility with accountability, allied with his disposition to exercise trust. Over the years, he had broadened and enriched acts of curriculum and community, modelling the importance of building personal and academic relationships and established appropriate collaborative structures in which roles, responsibilities and accountabilities were progressively distributed. Through these, he had embedded a particular organisational set of values based practices in the school – at the heart of which was the ethic of care with achievement. The final part of this chapter will, therefore, focus upon the trust qualities and acts which were key factors in sustaining success.

6.5.1 Trust Qualities

School principals have a particular responsibility for promoting trust among all members of the school community. The data from this research show that although this was an unstated aspiration it was a key component of capacity building and decisions about the extent to which leadership was distributed. Eight 'facets' of leadership trust were identified consistently by colleagues within and out of the

school. These both confirm and extend the five which were identified by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003):

- **Benevolence**: confidence that one's well-being will be protected by a trusted party
- **Reliability**: the extent to which one can count on another person or group
- **Competency**: the extent to which the trusted party has knowledge and skill
- **Honesty**: the character, integrity and authenticity of the trusted party
- **Openness**: the extent to which there is no withholding of information from others

(Hoy and Tschannen-Moran 2003, in Hoy and Miskel 2003)

Our data suggest that, to these five facets, three others may be added:

- *Wisdom*: the extent to which the leader makes timely decisions which are in the interests of the students, the school and its staff
- *Educational Ideals*: the extent to which hope and optimism are nurtured, realised and renewed by the leader
- *Care*: the extent to which the leader is seen to care for the personal as well as the academic selves of others

6.5.2 Individual, Relational and Organisational Acts of Trust

It is not only the assurance of trust alone which will improve teaching, learning and achievement in schools (though if it is absent, there is less chance of improvement), but its manifestation through the eight facets of trust, the quality and consistency of the leader's values, dispositions, and actions and interactions, as expressed, in particular, through organisational structures and individual and social relationships within and between five sets of school members and external stakeholders. Bryk and Schneider (2002) identified three settings present in improving schools in which relational trust was exercised:

- Principal and teacher
- Teacher and teacher
- School professionals and parents

(Bryk and Schneider 2002, p. 41)

Two others identified in this research are:

- Principal, teachers and support (non-teaching) staff
- Principals and external agencies (including schools)

In charting how Tom continued to build success, it is clear that key components were the structured opportunities which he initiated in these settings, which enabled individual and collective leadership capacities to be developed. He did this by (i) modelling care in his relationships with staff, pupils and parents; (ii) enabling and encouraging collaboration between teachers so that responsibilities and professional ethics were shared; (iii) demonstrating that, whilst care was not used as a means to improve pupil performance, its presence did, nevertheless, have an

indirect effect through the associated increases in attendance, engagement with learning, self efficacy, sense of agency and commitment. Schussler and Collins (2006), in research with students aged 10–12, identified five components of care: (i) opportunities for success; (ii) flexibility (in teaching and learning); (iii) respect by teachers for students; (vi) a 'family' ethos; and (v) a sense of belonging. These were all present in this school; and they were foundational, rather than functional, part of the core values which Tom led, part of the conditions for teaching and learning.

These may be the reasons why staff described themselves, positively, as working hard, with moral purpose as a strong part of their sense of professional identity. It may also be the reason why staff stayed and why some who had left the school returned. Moreover, whilst in some schools, 'the commitment to goals of care and nurturance [may be] a significant source of depressive guilt among teachers' (Hargreaves 1994, p. 146), in this school, it was not; and this is likely to be closely associated with Tom's leadership of the trust agenda. In this respect, it is especially interesting that the external Ofsted inspection report of 2002 highlighted as 'outstanding', care, guidance and support for students; the school's work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being; and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Fielding has long argued that successful schools are those which are person-centred communities in which, 'not only is the functional for the sake of the personal, and the personal achieved through the functional, but the influence of the personal on the functional is transformative of it …' (2003, p. 5).

6.5.3 Organisational Trust

Research in five high schools in the USA over a 3-year period by Seashore-Louis (2007) identified institutional trust as another important indicator of trust and predictor of student achievement. The research identified 'social cohesion' as an important indicator of institutional trust. Her findings are confirmed in the data from this research. In Tom's school, staff, students and parents spoke of the collective sense of purpose and participation, application of common behaviour protocols, co-operation and data informed (rather than data-based) decision-making as the norms of their schools. An additional finding from this research is that the individual, relational and organisational trust which underscored these changes took time. Whilst some norms were reported to have been established in the early years of the principal's tenure, others were developed over a longer period. Choice and combinations of strategies, timing, sequencing and pace will depend upon principals' judgements about the contexts which they inherit as well as their aspirations for the future.

> Trust is established through a commitment period during which each partner has the opportunity to signal to the other a willingness to accept personal risk and not to exploit the vulnerability of the other for personal gain … As participants begin to feel more comfortable with one another, there may be a tacit testing of the limits of trust and influence and attempts to arrive at a mutual set of expectations …….
>
> (Tschannen-Moran 2004, p. 42)

Although Tschannen-Moran found that relationships became 'fairly stable' within eighteen months in her study of three urban elementary schools, in Tom's school individual, relational and organisational trust were not only broadened and deepened over a much longer period but were a continuing focus of his attention. He recognised that trust must be exercised and repeated in each of these settings if success for all was to be achieved.

These may be the reasons why staff described themselves, positively, as working hard, with moral purpose as a strong part of their sense of professional identity. It may also be the reason why staff stayed and why some who had left the school returned. Moreover, whilst in some schools, 'the commitment to goals of care and nurturance [may be] a significant source of depressive guilt among teachers' (Hargreaves 1994, p. 146), in this school, it was not; and this is likely to be closely associated with Tom's leadership of the trust agenda. The combination of personal and academic interest taken by Tom in staff and students had become a collective feature of the life of the school and was reflected in what all staff interviewees reported about their own attitudes, commitments and behaviours.

6.6 Conclusion

It is important to recognise that building successful leadership takes time and depends upon the principal establishing vision, hope and optimism, high expectations and acting with integrity in order to nurture, broaden and deepen individual, relational and organisational trust. The extent and depth of initial or provisional trust will depend upon a number of past as well as present factors. For example, if the principal inherits a school whose members have a history of experiencing distrustful relationships, then it may take longer than if the reverse were to be the case. Figure 6.1 below illustrates the ways in which trust may be progressively distributed and embedded.

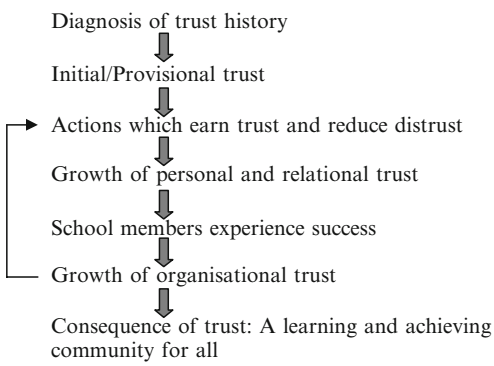

Fig. 6.1 The progressive distribution of trust

This will not be a linear process, since the growth of trust in human relationships exercised in policy, social and personal contexts of change will be subject to many challenges, not all of which may be anticipated. Thus, Fig. 6.1 illustrates the need for each growth point of trust to be followed by further actions which earn trust and reduce distrust. The progressive distribution of trust is a process which must be led and managed. To do so successfully requires qualities of wisdom, discernment and strategic acumen. Tschannen-Moran found that:

> Discerning the proper level of trust requires wisdom and discernment on the part of the educational leader. Optimal trust is prudent, measured and conditional.
>
> (Tschannen-Moran 2004, p. 57)

The data in this study show clearly that this principal exercised trust in this way and that such trust was broadened, deepened and embedded over time. For Tom, the process of trusting others was neither naive nor calculative, but rather, an expression of five factors:

1. *Values and attitudes*: beliefs that (most) people cared for their students and would work hard for their benefit if allowed to pursue objectives which they were committed.
2. *Disposition to trust*: a history of received trust and observing in others benefits deriving from trusting relationships.
3. *Acts of individual, relational and organisational trust*: the increasing distribution of internal and external leadership influence and broadening of stakeholder participation.
4. *Building, broadening and deepening trustworthiness*: through repeated trustful interactions, structures and strategies which show consistency with agreed values and vision.

Successive interventionist reforms in England have focused upon (i) raising pupils' levels of attainment in a relatively small range of learning; (ii) implementing quality assurance and control through external inspection; and (iii) increasing the contractual and bureaucratic accountability of teachers through, for example, annual performance management systems. Whilst, in recent years, the government in England has increased the resources available to support schools in the implementation of such centrally initiated reforms, the reforms themselves have often been criticised as resulting in a reduction in the emphasis in schools upon teachers' interpersonal qualities and technicising and intensifying teachers' work (Hargreaves 1998; Nias 1999; Froude 2005; Ballet and Kelchtermans 2003). The trust qualities and their consequences for sustaining success identified in this research indicate, however, the reverse. Tom and his staff had countered the possible negative effects of reform pressures such as these. Statements by a range of stakeholders clearly indicated that good teachers in this school were judged themselves not only in terms of their cognitive and technical competencies but also the extent to which they engaged in internal and external relations which were imbued with compassion, care and understanding – all key components of trust. They were able to sustain their 'a priori' duty of care for the personal as well as the person as performer.

Because school life is characterised both by bureaucratic and professional relationships, it is the responsibility of every principal to create and sustain the conditions in which trust may be progressively established, strengthened and distributed to the level that it can be observed in a range of organisational structures, staff and student relationships and outcomes, especially in terms of expectations, work ethic, engagement, ownership, efficacy, sense of achievement and achievement itself. It is reasonable to suggest, then, that at least part of the success sustained by this principal in this school was a consequence of his values, disposition and wise and continuing exercise of progressive trust.

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Chapter 7
Sustaining School Success: A Case for Governance Change*

Stephen L. Jacobson, Lauri Johnson, and Rose Ylimaki

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is built on the premise that sustaining school success over time is different than building the short-term capacity necessary to sustain transient, often externally imposed, organizational goals. As such, sustainability requires schools to develop the capacity to self-renew and while there are individual outliers of self-renewal among progressive and innovative schools, few in-depth studies of sustainability over time can be found in the literature (Giles and Hargreaves 2006).

In the 2005 issue of the Journal of Educational Administration (Jacobson et al. 2005) devoted to the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP), the research team from the University at Buffalo – State University of New York (UB) reported the practices of seven principals in the western part of New York State whose schools had improved student academic achievement under their

*This chapter expands on an article by Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki, and Giles that originally appeared in a special issue of *Journal of Educational Administration* (Moos and Johansson 2009) devoted to the sustainability phase of the International Successful School Principalship Project. We wish to thank Corrie Giles for his contributions on that earlier work and for all of his efforts as a member of the University at Buffalo research team.

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leadership (Jacobson et al. 2005). Since then, four of these seven principals have retired, one has moved to a supervisory position in her district's central office and of the two still at the same school, only one has managed to sustain the academic success of her school's students (Jacobson et al. 2009). This African American woman, who has over 30 years of experience as an educator, became the school's (Fraser Academy) Principal in 1994. She was selected after a nationwide search and became the most symbolic appointment of what was then a newly formed partnership between a regional bank and a school that was markedly under-performing by almost any measure of student academic and affective achievement.

Under this principal's leadership, the school experienced a remarkable turnaround in performance as revealed in our 2002–2003 data (Jacobson et al. 2007). This subsequent examination of Fraser Academy, now called the Fraser Community Charter School (FCCS), adds to the literature on educational sustainability by reporting data collected in 2007–2008, thus creating a longitudinal case study that ascertains how one school managed to sustain success over time.

Using a research protocol that was only slightly modified from the earlier study (Day 2005), the UB team returned to FCCS 5 years after our original collection of data. We once again used standardized test score data gleaned from New York State Education Department (NYSED) school report cards; interviews with school leaders, teachers, and parents; and reports generated by FCCS's governing board. We also used the same conceptual framework originally derived from the three core leadership practices identified by Leithwood and Riehl (2005): setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organization; as well as the enabling principles of accountability, caring, and learning we developed in our study (Giles et al. 2005; Jacobson et al. 2005).

We found that being faithful to the direction set by the principal (i.e., holding everyone accountable for children learning at mastery levels within a caring and nurturing environment) necessitated redesigning the organization (converting from a traditional public school to a district charter school), in order to maintain the continued development and capacity of the staff around the principle of learning. In other words, sustaining success at FCCS has been an ongoing effort to create a governance structure that supports and rewards organizational learning through both self-renewal and personal and collective professional growth.

To provide a clearer backdrop against which key decisions made by FCCS leaders can be understood, we begin with a brief overview of educational governance and funding in the United States. Next, we offer a definition of sustainability in order to frame our analysis of the self-renewing practices that ultimately developed at FCCS. We review the research protocol and then present our initial findings using data from the NYSED report cards and excerpts from our interviews to illustrate our key points of analysis. The quotes presented were selected from our transcripts because they add authenticity to the interpretations of the authors. Though many more quotes could be included, these participant observations were selected because they best exemplify the perspectives elicited from members of the FCCS community: leaders, teachers, and parents around each area examined.

The chapter concludes with some preliminary interpretations about the decisions and practices we believe promoted self-renewal and educational sustainability at FCCS.

7.2 Governance, Funding, and Becoming a Charter School

When compared to the other nations involved in the ISSPP, public education in the United States is relatively decentralized, with primary authority vested at the state rather than at the federal level. On average, federal funding accounts for only 7% of all resources an American school receives (the remainder being a combination of state and local revenues). Nevertheless, federal policies in the United States can have a significant impact and, since No Child Left Behind was enacted in 2002, schools nationwide are operating under an accountability regime based upon standardized achievement tests. Schools that do not make adequate yearly progress are subsequently subjected to remedial actions and, if no improvement is noted, progressively punitive consequences that can ultimately include reconstitution and/or replacement of staff.

In New York (NY), where FCCS is located, annual report cards that track school performance are published by NYSED. Should a school or district continuously underperform, parents can opt to educate their children elsewhere, which can have a negative impact on local property values. Since property tax represents the most commonly used mechanism to finance schools at the local level, and since local taxation typically makes up a considerable portion of a school's fiscal support (usually 45–50%), public funding for education can be markedly eroded. Such a loss in funding can then have a deleterious effect on human resource allocations because teacher contracts in NY are negotiated at the local level. This dynamic relationship between funding and teacher resources is central to the present case. When we first visited Fraser in 2001–2002, it was a traditional public school in New York State's second largest urban district. Funding and human resource decisions, such as hiring, firing, and transfers, are handled by the district's central office in accordance with the teacher contract. Sharply declining student enrollments, due in part to report card revealing poor academic performance as well as newly enacted State legislation allowing for charter schools, coupled with a very weak local economy, led to severe budgetary constraints that threatened district-wide teacher layoffs. Even though Fraser Academy had gone from being one of the worst to one of the best schools in the district subsequent to the Principal's arrival, under the district's master teacher contract, teacher seniority and not the school's leadership ultimately determines who gets laid off and how transfers, both voluntary and involuntary, are handled. "Last hired – first fired" rules are rigidly enforced by the district's teacher union, and where opportunities arise, veteran teachers from any school in the district can "bump" junior teachers anywhere else, including Fraser, regardless of how productive those junior teachers might have been.

Having a teachers' seniority, rather than their on-the-job performance, determine who would go, who would stay, and who could transfer into the school was an option that Fraser's leadership found not only problematic but also unacceptable in light of investments already made in teachers' professional development.

Before examining the choices that were available to Fraser in confronting this problem, we next provide a working definition of sustainability to frame our analysis of the self-renewing practices that would begin emerged at FCCS.

7.3 Organizational Sustainability

"Organizations have varying degrees of capacity for change. Some organizations seem to have become rigid, inflexible, and unable to change; others have a built-in capacity to shift, move, and adapt quickly to changing conditions" (Ulrich 1997: 194).

Disenchantment with the results of "managed change" (Louis 1994) has led to a renewed interest in "the development of local capacity in successful school improvement efforts" (Leithwood et al. 1998: 243). For our purposes, "capacity building" within a school will be defined as "creating the conditions, opportunities, and experiences for collaboration and mutual learning" (Harris 2002: 3). This type of organizational learning is oriented toward the building of social capital rather than simply accomplishing externally mandated tasks. As such, the self-renewing orientation of organizational learning theory is dependent upon both the conscious creation of supportive organizational conditions – structure, shared commitment and collaborative activity, knowledge and skills, leadership, feedback and accountability (Marks and Louis 1999), and the building of networks of relationships grounded in mutual support, care, trust, and consensus (Giles et al. 2005). However, in rapidly changing circumstances, supportive external as well as internal conditions are also necessities (Marks and Printy 2003; Stoll 1999), if the self-renewing capacity of a school is to be sustained over time (Bryk et al. 1999; Mitchell and Sackney 2001). But sustainability, as an overarching organizational goal, does not simply mean enduring over time. Instead, we borrow our conceptualization from the United Nations Brundtland Commission on the environment and development, "Meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations 1987: 43). This ecologically oriented report emphasizes the capacity of organizations to self-renew and, if applied to schools, underlines the importance of ordering institutions in ways that are sustainable in the long-term (Giles 2007).

7.4 Becoming a Conversion Charter School

The district's looming budget crisis in the early 2000s led the leadership at Fraser Academy into discussions about how to best sustain student performance gains made subsequent to the partnership with the bank in 1994. As the principal told us, the greatest threat was seen as potential teacher layoffs and transfers,

> We would have lost a lot of staff and inherited an older, perhaps disgruntled staff that didn't want to be here. In order to avoid that, after we had put in so much time, so much emphasis, so much money and professional development, we did not want to lose the progress that we had gained.
>
> (Principal)

The bank's concerns about protecting their considerable investments in teacher training and staff development in light of the threatened layoffs were made quite explicit during our interview with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the school's governing board, who also serves as a Vice President with the partnering bank,

> Under the district's policy you take the next person on their list and that person might not be interested in learning a new program … We felt it wasn't a sustainable or viable position to continue to invest in the school just to see our investment disappear. We went to the Superintendent and said, 'what can we do about this?' And within the system there really wasn't anything that could be done; seniority pretty much dictated where teachers would end up in the situation of the lay-offs.
>
> (CEO)

Fraser's governing board began looking at alternative governance models to traditional district control and the only feasible option seemed to be conversion to a charter school. There are two models in NYS Charter School legislation: (1) the independent charter school, which starts from scratch with no building, no teachers, no students, and no unions; and (2) the conversion charter, which is an existing public school that remains in the same building; keeps as many teachers, with the same union representation, as want to stay; and, most importantly, keeps its same students. (Details about New York Education Law Article 56: The Charter Schools Act can be found at: http://www.nycsa.org/Legislation/CSLaws/CS%20law.pdf).

Because Fraser's leaders, "… were committed not just to that school, but to that neighbourhood" (CEO), the conversion charter model was seen as the school's best and, from the perspective of the Principal, perhaps its only viable option,

> The plus side is that our students would be grandfathered in. We would not be a start-up. All the teachers who wanted to remain would remain and they would still be in the teacher's union; that was absolutely wonderful.
>
> (Principal)

To complete the formal transition from being a district public school to conversion charter school, both the District and State Board of Education authorizers require a majority of parents' vote in support. The election produced a parent turnout of over 80%, with almost 100% voting for the conversion. Subsequently, and to the delight of the Principal, the demographics of FCCS have remained much the same as before,

> We're still considered a neighborhood school because we do not bus and our socio-economic status is the same. We're still in the 90+% poverty index and our student population is still mainly African American – we're 99% African American … Governance also remains the same for the most part. Apart from a couple of people leaving our board, the governance structure that had been set up almost 15 years ago is still relatively the same. There's a lot of experience in that board in terms of overseeing the school and in terms of what we're looking for as a board from the school.
>
> (Principal)

Becoming a conversion charter school also provided FCCS with greater fiscal autonomy and human resource flexibility. Greater fiscal autonomy meant that funding would now come from the State through the district and then FCCS would control the whole of its allocation, thus allowing for far greater discretion on what and how much the school could spend on professional development. Human resource flexibility meant that FCSS did not have to deal with district contractual issues such as seniority "bumping" rights or hiring constraints, such as the district's teacher residency requirement – FCCS could now recruit teachers from anywhere, much to the obvious relief of the CEO, as seen in the following quotes.

> Now we have control over the whole budget and with that came the biggest positive impact – complete hiring flexibility. We weren't burdened by the residency requirement that the district had, so we could recruit anywhere. Being in the banking sector and doing a lot of searches for personnel, we're pretty used to doing that and have connections and contacts that we were able to utilize because we hire, for example, management development students right out of undergraduate or executive associates out of business schools so we have contacts within most of the schools around New York State and we figured let's open this up. We had never been able to do that before, because under the district's policy you would take the next person on the list and that person might not be interested in learning a new program. Now when we hire, we say, "This is what we do, are you interested?" Or, "do you even have experience perhaps in this that would let you start at a faster pace?" The two sort of go hand in hand in terms of synergy of hiring and then seeking out the qualities that we are looking for in any teacher vacancy.
>
> (CEO)

Becoming a conversion charter school also meant that teachers choosing to work at FCCS are not eligible for tenure, operating instead under renewable multi-year contracts.

> When we went charter, those teachers who were coming are actually on leave from the district. If they had tenure, then they would have it if they go back. Whatever they had, they kept. If there were lay-offs, they would be put on a preferred eligible list. If one of them wanted to go back, they were welcomed back.
>
> (CEO)

Even with these protections, the departure of veteran teachers fearing loss of tenure and union protection if they stayed at FCCS became the school's greatest challenge. Since the conversion to charter in 2004, 27 of 41 teachers (66%) who were then at Fraser have subsequently left, and these departures became the greatest challenge to sustainability that FCCS faced.

Before examining this problem, FCCS's response to it, and the strategies the Principal employed to sustain school improvements begun prior to conversion, we take a quick look at the research methods and analytic framework utilized for this study.

7.5 Methods and Analytic Framework

For this study, we used NYSED report card data on standardized test scores, as well as annual reports generated by FCCS's governing board. We gathered field notes from school visits and conducted ten interviews that included: three school leaders

Table 7.1 FCCS versus District on state tests (% mastery)

Grade 4 ELA	*1998–1999*	*2002–2003*	*2007–2008*
FCCS	26	56	59
District	29	34	42
Grade 4 Math	*1998–1999*	*2002–2003*	*2007–2008*
FCCS	60	95	72
District	54	58	53
Grade 4 Science	*1999–2000*	*2002–2003*	*2007–2008*
FCCS	76	84	79
District	47	51	63
Grade 5 Social Studies	*2002–2003*	*2007–2008*	
FCCS	92	79	
District	50	53	
Grade 8 ELA	*1998–1999*	*2002–2003*	*2007–2008*
FCCS	41	30	66
District	31	22	28
Grade 8 Math	*1998–1999*	*2002–2003*	*2007–2008*
FCCS	43	70	77
District	22	32	34
Grade 8 Science (Regents)	*2002–2003*	*2007–2008*	
FCCS	96	80	
District	65	50	
Grade 8 Social Studies	*2002–2003*	*2007–2008*	
FCCS	66	64	
District	40	31	
AVE. (%) Diff.	12.6	29.4	27.8

(the Principal, Assistant Principal and the CEO/Vice Chairman of FCCS's Board of Trustees); six teachers (three veterans who were on staff before the charter conversion, two teachers new to the school, and a former teacher who is now an Assistant Principal at another district school); and a focus group of six parents, five of whom have sent their children to FCCS subsequent to its going charter.

From the NYSED data, we found that FCCS had maintained its improved level of academic performance in relation to other district schools. Table 7.1 reports comparisons of the percent of students achieving mastery at FCCS with the district average in 1998–1999, 2002–2003, and 2007–2008, and FCCS exceeds the district average in 20 out of 21 comparisons, over 95% of the time. In 1993–1994, the year before the bank partnership, Fraser Academy exceeded the district in only 20% (two out of ten) of comparable comparisons. Moreover, the average difference in the percent of mastery learning at FCCS as compared to the district grew from 12.6% in 1998–1999 to 29.4% in 2002–2003, and then dipped just slightly to 27.8% in 2007–2008.

Further proof of the school's sustained success was brought to our attention by the CEO, who proudly told us about the results of FCCS's 3-year performance audit required by NYSED for a charter school's renewal.

> Consultants review every program, from leadership to parent participation to extracurricular activities to all your curriculum, English, math social studies, how you're teaching all of these, how you're meeting the Standards and then you're graded on roughly 15 categories. It sort of a 1, 2, 3, 4 scale, with 1 the highest. Our school scored a number 1 in all but one category.
>
> (CEO)

In other words, FCCS has sustained laudable student achievement scores, even in the face of the district's budget crisis and its conversion to a charter.

As in the original study, our analytic framework is based on three core leadership practices which Leithwood and Riehl (2005) contend are necessary, but insufficient, conditions for success regardless of context: (1) setting directions and developing a set of shared goals to create a common purpose; (2) developing people toward the achievement of those goals through provision of individual and collective support; and (3) redesigning the organization to match its objectives.

Our first study revealed the Principal at Fraser to be masterful at adapting these core leadership practices to the changing contextual conditions and constraints her school faced. Her initial recalibrations were early stages in the school's capacity for improvement and they were not always immediately productive. Nevertheless, her use of three principles enabled Fraser Academy to continue to move forward: (1) accountability, by leveraging external pressure from state testing and internal teacher peer pressure to raise expectations about improved student achievement; (2) caring, by creating a safe, nurturing environment conducive for learning by students, teachers, and parents; and (3) learning, by making student, faculty, parent, and organizational learning the focus of the school's work. Once the learning principle was collectively accepted as the school's central purpose, it became easier to identify obstacles and redesign the organization to remove them. In our first examination, these obstacles included scheduling that didn't allow for common planning; poor instruction by teachers who needed additional professional development; and resistance to change on the part of some teachers unwilling to accept the idea that children from high poverty communities are capable of high levels of academic performance. In turn, each of these obstacles was identified and then successfully addressed (Giles et al. 2005). But now the issues to be confronted were those arising from FCCS's conversion to charter.

7.6 Responding to Charter Conversion

Subsequent to Fraser's conversion to a charter school, quite a few teachers left for a variety of reasons; most concerned with losing tenure, others because of a district retirement incentive intended to reduce the number of teacher lay-offs, and a few by "mutual agreement" with the Principal, in other words, for less than satisfactory on-the-job performance. A former teacher, now an Assistant Principal at another school, described how the Principal tried to dispel teachers' fears:

> (The Principal) had a meeting with all of us and gave us her word that the union would still be in place. We had it laid it out for us. There was a lot of fear and I think that maybe the union kind of injected that fear in the teachers, so they left.

Nevertheless, several teachers left, taking with them years of professional development and experience. As one veteran teacher explained:

> I understood why some teachers left. They wanted the security of the district's union protection, but I have to say it was devastating to think that half of our collective knowledge about language arts and other academics, as well as how to work with our children, just walked out the door.

This transition also created ambivalence among the new teachers hired:

> Even though we came in knowing we can do the job, we still felt the emptiness from what the veteran teachers left. We knew we were filling shoes.

A year after conversion, there was a renewed concern among some new teachers about their "rights" under the contract (a concern perhaps instigated by the union). The principal once again confronted the issue head on at a meeting where she laid it on the table –"What's going on? I see it, I feel it, I hear it." She asked them to report back to her how she could help and then left the room so that teachers could speak honestly with one another. One veteran teacher noted how the meeting and the principal's acknowledgement of their concerns cleared the air and contributed to a renewed sense of purpose focused on the school's mission.

7.6.1 Hiring New Teachers

While the loss of veteran teachers was a negative consequence of conversion to charter, greater flexibility in hiring was a positive result. Instead of having to accept whoever was sent by the district's central office, the principal and the CEO told us that candidate recruitment and selection were now the school's responsibility,

> It meant that we had to strengthen our interview strategies so that we could attract and hire the teachers who had what it would take to continue what we were doing. We were looking for energetic teachers; we were looking for teachers who didn't necessarily know our programs or our curriculum, but who were willing to learn it, to put in the time to learn it, who believed in the children.
>
> (Principal)

> Now when we hire, we say, "This is what we do, are you interested?" Or, "do you even have experience that would let you start at a faster pace?" The two sort of go hand in hand in terms of synergy of hiring and then seeking out the qualities that we are looking for in any teacher vacancy
>
> (CEO)

In the process of hiring new faculty, the Principal has been successful in attracting a more diverse faculty, including a handful of African American male teachers, and teachers who are "about the business of the children." As one veteran teacher noted, "She's been able to tap into people who really have a love for what we do."

7.6.2 Sustaining Teaching and Learning: Teachers' Perspectives

Early in her tenure, the Principal set the school's direction for curriculum based on a philosophy that provides teachers with an understanding of how children acquire literacy through a balance of shared, guided, and independent instructional strategies. This model also supports the use of authentic materials (e.g., literature trade books and primary sources) in authentic contexts (e.g., reading and writing books and other documents for actual use by real audiences). When the UB team returned to FCCS in 2008, the school's hallways revealed evidence of the balanced literacy program, including student writing, written descriptions of artwork, and student responses to literature. Classrooms filled with books and displays of student writing further attested to the centrality of balanced literacy education, which differs markedly from the district's scripted textbooks, pacing guides, and related workbook materials – an approach FCCS would have had to use had it not become a conversion charter school. While some teachers admitted to an initial resistance to this new model, most credited the Principal with implementing an instructional environment that allowed children to learn, regardless of past failures.

By 2007, the staff had worked through these challenges and became a high performing school with additional advanced placement classes, even receiving a designation as a model literacy site. This designation meant that the consultants who developed the model now recognized excellence in literacy instruction at this once failing school. In fact, as the assistant principal noted, the faculty's commitment to the balanced literacy program was one of the main reasons for the school's conversion to charter status.

> We know that the language arts program is a phenomenal piece. If we had stayed in the system, we would have gone back to a basal program … by having the charter system in place, not only did we get to keep that program but we got to improve it and live with it.
>
> (Assistant Principal)

While converting to a charter provided a way to keep the language arts program, the conversion also created a major challenge because of the number of veteran teachers who left. As one veteran teacher described it:

> I understood why some teachers left. They wanted the security of the district's union protection, but I have to say it was devastating to think that half of our collective knowledge about language arts and other academics, as well as how to work with our children, just walked out the door.

7.6.3 Developing New Teachers

Even with the departure of these teachers, the Principal continued to work hard at sustaining high expectations for teaching and learning. As the Assistant Principal put it, "Her expectations are high, but she will help people get there. She does not

just throw you into the water." In particular, the Principal and veteran teachers recognized the need to help new teachers use the balanced literacy program because:

> Each year we have to hire staff. That forced us to set up a system in which we immediately immerse them in our programs, our reading and writing programs so that they can learn it, and we pair them with a master teacher and a mentor and just do whatever is necessary to get them up to speed right away.
>
> (Principal)

> There was no time for new teachers to hang back and watch. We needed the new staff members to get on board quickly, which meant we needed to work together and do peer coaching in classrooms.
>
> (Veteran teacher)

The reading specialist described professional development efforts as "scaffolding and supporting teachers in their classrooms, helping them get the program in place and figuring out where to target their efforts." Grade level teams began meeting regularly, at which, "Someone models a literacy lesson and then the grade level team talks about what we saw, what worked, and what needed to improve."

New teachers talked about the professional support they received, e.g., this teacher's description of her first year:

> I remember being overwhelmed and [the Principal] put me in touch with the [literacy] consultants … The great thing about FCCS is that any teacher who feels unequipped is given support immediately. If you keep quiet they won't be able to help you, but your results will show and then they will recommend that you attend workshops and with a mentor teacher. I never felt like [the Principal] and the other teachers were unapproachable.

Another new teacher agreed, but also expressed a lack of confidence and a fear of "letting the principal, her fellow teachers, and the children down." She continued:

> From the time I started at (Fraser) Community Charter School, I was swept up in support for teaching. I went to [the consultants] right away the first summer. I had a peer mentor in my classroom several times a week, and we talked at grade level meetings about our lessons. I got pretty good results the first year, but always wondered if I was really doing okay or as good as the teacher next door. The veteran teachers are so natural because they've been going to training for years. I woke up a lot of mornings afraid I would let everyone down, but there was no time to really dwell in it.

In these new teacher comments, we hear the fears and challenges associated with rapidly acquiring a balanced literacy philosophy and instructional practices that veteran Fraser teachers had perfected over several years. At the same time, these new teachers clearly recognized the importance of the job-embedded mentoring, immersion, team dialogue, and other continuous training opportunities to their rapid professional growth and instructional proficiency.

While many veteran teachers acknowledged the pressure of sustaining the success of the language arts program, they also described their feelings of empowerment in their leadership roles with the new teachers. One teacher who became the expert in comprehension for intermediate grade students, sharing teaching strategies at short

morning meetings, described it this way, "By allowing me to share strategies that worked, I felt empowered that I could be a leader … it gave me a glimpse of what I could become."

Another teacher, who became a member of a team charged with helping new teachers noted:

> Because of the pressure of the new teachers and the testing, we had a SWAT team and they used to come in to 4th grade classrooms. The new teachers would take a group and the SWAT team would come in and take another group … the support was there. It was hard in some ways, but I have to say I felt really good about taking a leadership role in keeping the program moving forward in spite of all the staff changes.

In fact, teacher leadership has become institutionalized over the past 5 years with the formation of a school-wide leadership team, which is represented by one teacher from each grade level that meets at least twice a month to coordinate FCCS's staff development activities.

7.7 Sustaining the Instructional Success

Beyond staff development and peer support, the principal managed staff changes through the creation of explicit curriculum maps at each grade level. These curriculum maps provided new teachers with a guideline for the skills and strategies necessary to help children meet state standards in time for the assessments. As the reading specialist explained:

> We decided we would need to treat all teachers like reading staff. The new teachers would need to attend all of the [consultant] trainings like the reading teachers did. Because we had to think about the tests, we also met with each grade level and actually mapped out what was going to be taught to get the kids ready for the assessments. That was generated from [the principal].

The principal initiated and supported the use of curriculum maps in order to make literacy expectations more explicit for new teachers. As she put it, "With all the new teachers, we needed to make our expectations very explicit. Curriculum maps helped us to do that." Veteran and new teachers alike commented about how much they learned from the development and implementation of these curriculum maps. One veteran teacher's comments are illustrative:

> The maps really helped all of us keep on target. So as part of modelling and peer coaching discussions in our grade level meetings, we would look at our maps together to see where we could all improve to help kids meet their targets.

A new teacher added:

> It really is impressive how much the principal knows about teaching. They're not just telling us we need to teach this way, they are attending the workshops with us. They are leading and learning with us.

In other words, the principal and assistant principal modeled appropriate supported instructional leadership and invited teachers to join them in managing the curriculum for their new charter school.

7.8 Curricular Innovations

7.8.1 Additional Time for Instruction

The ability to sustain success was also evidenced by several curriculum innovations. For example, in response to the increase in accountability mandates over the past few years, students and teachers meet for 4 h at the school on Saturday mornings from November through mid-March in order to provide additional support and reinforcement for the state reading and math exams. The Saturday morning program is mandatory for those students who are scoring below grade level, yet many other students choose to attend either voluntarily or at the urging of their parents, which requires teachers to provide creative avenues to reinforce skills. There is also a summer program for incoming kindergarten students so that the transition to the school will be smoother once classes begin in the fall.

7.8.2 Advanced Placement Courses

In an effort to retain their 7th and 8th grade students who might otherwise be "creamed" off by more selective "magnet" programs around the district, Advanced Placement (AP) courses in math, language, and science have been added to make students more competitive for the district's most selective high schools. As one veteran teacher put it:

> There was one point in time, especially when I first came here, our students had no opportunity to get into the better high schools. Now it's expected that the majority of them will go to the top high schools, and they do.

These advanced placement curriculum offerings helped Fraser Community Charter School members, especially students and parents, develop and expand their aspirations for higher education.

7.8.3 Single Gender Classrooms

Students in 7th and 8th grades were also reorganized into single-sex subject classes in order to eliminate distractions and enhance student learning, particularly for African American boys. While the principal believes the practice has improved classroom behavior, especially among the boys, student perceptions about the practice are mixed. In her words, "the boys love it and the girls hate it."

7.8.4 Changes in School–Community Relationships

One last facet of the school's strengths that needs to be revisited is its ongoing relationship with the community. Since becoming a charter, FCCS uses a lottery system to fill enrolment and it has a lengthy waiting list of prospective student candidates. Most students still come from the immediate neighborhood, which is predominately poor to working class and African American. But, since it has become a charter school, students from throughout the city are now eligible to attend. As a result, the school's community is more diverse in terms of socio-economic background than during our first visit and its parents savvier, as noted by a veteran teacher with 16 years of experience:

> Parents have become a lot more sophisticated and I'd like to think we really made a big difference in that … those that understand that value of education are knocking the doors down to get here. … the transient rate is a lot more stable. The attendance rate is much more stable and higher. So that takes smart parents, an educated parent to understand that.

There have also been improvements to the school's physical plant and its surrounding grounds, including the annexation and renovation of an abandoned branch of the county library, the addition of an early childhood center and the creation of well-staffed comprehensive health care clinic available to the school's students and their families. Signs of positive changes in the immediate neighborhood are also evident including a recently renovated city park adjacent to the school, complete with basketball hoops and a surrounding fence that is available as a play space for Fraser's students during the school day and neighborhood youth after 5 pm. By responding to the social, emotional, health, and recreational needs of its students and their families, FCCS has become the model of a "full service" school (Dryfoos and Maguire 2002); one which helps to anchor the neighborhood and functions as the centre of the community.

Many of the parents and community members we interviewed commented on how the school's students exhibit a positive presence, which helps contribute to the safety and stability of the neighborhood. As one long time community resident noted:

> At one time, around dismissal time, I hated to leave the house. But now you can pinpoint the (Fraser) student … other kids they would probably give you back talk and what not. The (Fraser) kids are very respectful.

One veteran teacher we interviewed, who lives in the immediate neighborhood near the school, cited the principal's role "in teaching the teachers and the leaders of the school what's really important for the community … (to) encourage and influence the children and the families (in) self-pride."

According to parents, the required school uniforms, which were instituted with Fraser's conversion to a charter school, have become an important part of "representing" self-pride both at school as well as in the surrounding community. The institution of the school-wide uniform policy has become an important symbol that "helps the children recognize their sense of responsibility and commitment to the

school." (Assistant Principal). The school uniforms have proven to be very popular among the students and widely supported by the parents, as one of the long-time parents in the school noted:

> … people in the community … speak highly of the uniforms and how the kids look and how they behave and how they represent the school when they're out.

The school's partner, the bank, helps to subsidize the cost of these uniforms by providing up to 50% off the cost for those family who can't cover the whole amount and a partnership with a national discount company offers dress shoes at a reduced rate. One of the parent volunteers coordinates the purchasing and distribution of the school uniforms, making sure that every student is provided for (discreetly) because, as he puts it, "we're a close knit community as far as the school. (We) don't allow the kids to go without."

Other strategies that were introduced earlier in the principal's tenure to help bring parents into the school, such as "coffee sips" and "Father's Day" dinners, have now become well-established traditions. Fraser Community Charter School has moved from being a school in transition to a "settled" organization with the capacity to quickly involve new parents into the life of the school through well-attended open houses, multicultural assemblies, and service as volunteers. But ironically, these more institutionalized parental activities, as well as the increased safety and stability in the surrounding community – both primarily the result of the school's sustained success (Jacobson et al. 2007) – have led to a reduced need for the type of grass roots activism that characterized Fraser's earlier school–community relationships. The teams of Fraser parents who patrolled the school grounds in their identifying "Parent Patrol" jackets when we first visited in 2002 are no longer in operation because there is no longer a need for their services.

While the school's success has changed certain aspects of its relationship to its expanded community, maintaining positive community relations has been a critical component used by the Principal to keep everyone's energy focused on sustaining school success.

7.9 Conclusions

Our return to Fraser Community Charter School, 5 years after our original study, revealed that the principal has maintained the same clear sense of purpose and direction that she brought to the school when she first arrived 16 years ago, and the school remains the safe, nurturing learning environment we witnessed in 2002. She continues to hold everyone – teachers, support staff, students and their parents, community members, her leadership team, and herself to very high expectations, which continues to yield solid and improving student performance, even in the face of eroding economic conditions in the district. FCCS's leaders redesigned their organization's governance in order to protect their most valuable asset for improving

student performance – a faculty in whom they had already made considerable professional development investments. They recognized that sustaining school improvements long-term depended on the self-renewing capacity of its teaching force through a combination of careful selection, supportive socialization and focused, on-going professional development offered by veteran colleagues and professional consultants. This support was particularly important for new teachers immediately upon their joining the faculty and then subsequently provided regularly thereafter.

We believe that becoming a conversion charter school proved to be the key component of organizational redesign that freed Fraser from prior district constraints and made on-going professional development for the faculty a safer investment thereafter. Moreover, it is this on-going investment in the professional capacity of its teachers and support staff that has sustained FCCS's direction and success over time.

Although the enabling principles we first observed in 2002 are still operative and fundamental to daily operations, they have evolved. For example, accountability was initially driven by external forces and then leveraged by the principal to focus faculty objectives. Now, accountability has become internalized by faculty, parents, and students, so that they each hold themselves personally and collectively accountable for maintaining high performance.

Caring still remains the most visible principle at FCCS, not just because the school is a safe haven in a high poverty community but also because it is now a source of community pride and the engine of self-renewal, especially with the recent additions of an early childhood and health care center.

Finally, the enabling principle of learning has become the school's central core around which all other activities revolve. Faculty conversations now focus on the "craft" of teaching and improvements in student learning, all in service to FCCS's efforts to better the life opportunities of its students and community.

When we first studied Fraser Academy in 2001–2002, we reported the remarkable turnaround of a once-failing, high poverty, urban school that coincided with the formation of a bank partnership and the arrival of an exemplary principal. But questions remained as to whether Fraser could sustain its success, especially after the principal had gone. Based upon our current analysis, FCCS has sustained its success and the principal is still the central figure in maintaining its direction. But a significant organizational redesign helped allay concerns about continued long-term success, even beyond the principal's eventual retirement. Structures for teacher self-renewal are now in place, which create on-site collegial professional development through the leadership of the teachers themselves. Sustained success makes FCCS increasingly attractive to parents across the district, parents who will never allow it to return to the sorry state of its past. The next step in this longitudinal study will be to return to FCCS after the principal is no longer at the helm, to see the next steps in this remarkable evolution.

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Chapter 8
Sustaining Leadership Through Self-renewing Communication

Lejf Moos

In the Swedish case of revisiting two schools 5 years after the first visits, we read:

> "What was most interesting at both schools was that the principals succeeding the first very proficient principal were not fully accepted. In both cases the first principal had created a culture of very strong collaboration between the principal and different teacher teams. This was based on trust, dialogue and knowledge, but also a great deal of social competence. The new principals could not live up to the demands from the teacher teams and was not sensitive enough to understand how to approach the existing structures when changes were needed. It might always be a problem to replace a popular leader and then live up to high expectations and perhaps also handle the sorrow people can feel losing a leader meaning more to them than just an administrator". (Höög et al. 2009, p. 751)

8.1 Introduction

This extract from the Swedish case is an illustration of core elements about how successful principals in the case schools are shaping their leadership and thus the relations to other agents inside and outside school, in order to sustain the development and success of their schools. The principals demonstrate that sustaining success in a changing world means to be aware of changes in political and educational expectations and at the same time remembering the basic purpose of schooling, the comprehensive education for social justice – in some places labeled: the "Democratic Bildung."

Sustaining successful functions and culture in schools is first and foremost done through involving and empowering teachers to be learning professionals and by restructuring and reculturing organization to be learning organizations – here

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called: "self-renewing organizations" – by shifting the focus from leaders to leadership and diverse forms of distributed leadership with more focus on communities than on individuals.

Distribution and empowerment in case schools take place through deliberations and negotiations where teachers are given voice, and teachers and leadership enter into 'semi-permanent consensus' on reaching a "sufficiently shared" and "good enough understanding" of the current situations, the intended aims, and external expectations. In most cases, we see two interconnected forms of distribution, two social technologies: Firstly, there is much productive collaboration and sharing of leadership in communities like teams of leaders and teams of teachers. Secondly, there is a renewed focus on sensemaking in the person-to-person everyday interactions and communication in the educational and organizational practice: Values and direction for school development (Starrat 2003) are being shaped and negotiated between teachers and leaders when they build on ethics. A basic assumption for this chapter is here: "the power of the better argument" (Habiermas 1984) – on diverse forms of trust.

The analyses will draw on the analyses in the case stories from all countries in the study and will include illustrative extracts from them.

8.2 Sustainability

Sustainability can be understood with reference to the United Nation's Brundtland Commission (Nations 1987): "Meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Taking this understanding as our point of departure, we can see that sustainability in schools is not an environmental question about the survival of the human species and the Globe, but a matter of long-term thinking of educational purpose and organizing in organizations. Sustainability then refers to the school's ability to respond in proactive ways to the external and internal expectations (Hargreaves and Fink 2006).

An interesting interpretation of sustainability in schools and school leadership was made in (Jacobson et al. 2009), when they referred to a statement from one of the US Principals, who talked about his quest for sustainability in forming his school into a *self-renewing* organization.

The external, political, and cultural expectations are the basis of schooling. Schools are institutions of society. But very often we find – from a professional point of view – that the present administration and political management are focusing on less important issues and disregarding long-term cultural and educational aims and values. Organizational self-renewing needs to be oriented toward the building of reflection, deliberation, critique, and social capital rather than simply accomplishing externally mandated and fast changing tasks. This means that schools need to be learning organizations that are not responding automatically to external expectations

and demands, like single-loop learners, but are reflecting on the expectations and the current practice in order to adjust to new circumstances like double-loop learners (Argyris 1977) and it means that most agents in schools must take responsibility and are given room to do so, for the general leadership in schools.

This means that we have to shift the understanding of school development – and thus of successful school principals – from the work of individuals toward a more organizational, collaborative understanding – from leader toward leadership. This is not news to the principals in our case schools, and it has been underscored in most schools over the past 5 years.

They have focused on the interdependencies within school and between schools and their present and future contexts. The principals in our cases know that their schools are placed in and are part of local communities in every respect: Culture, social circumstances, economical, history, caring for past and future generations, etc.

All schools can tell how they work on distributing leadership and on developing the learning at all levels. The first level is leadership teams. Those are widely used because no one person can reach the whole school and all the actors in it. Principals also experience that sharing knowledge, observations, and thoughts with peers and teachers are important features in leading a school because no one person can observe everything, nor can they know everything, nor develop thinking on her/his own.

Many case schools are developing their organizations into being team-based networks, or webs. Leadership is parallel to being distributed from the principal to leadership team and also being distributed to teacher teams. On one hand, this trend seems to leave more room for maneuver to teachers and focusing on colleague-based capacity building in teams, while at the same time principals develop new ways of influencing teachers. Sensemaking is done in many forms – like setting the scene, producing narratives of the school's future, focusing on important differences in the everyday life of schools – or through the use of new social technologies like annual plans, team meetings with the leadership, and other regular meetings (Coburn 2004; Coburn and Stein 2006; Spillane et al. 2002; Weick 2001).

There are clear indications that many principals are turning their attention toward more direct interactions and communications with teachers on a practical day-to-day level: observing classroom teaching, consulting teachers individually and in team meetings, and not relying too much on strategic plans and formal visions.

Leaving more room for teachers does not mean that principals abstain from leading teachers, but they develop new forms of influences (Moos 2009). Generally there seems to be a trend toward recognizing that teachers need to be self-leading (Foucault 2001), meaning they are given room for maneuver followed by tighter standards and more detailed demands for accountability. When some couplings are loosened, others are tightened (Weick 1976). Principals are also aware that teachers need to be given support and care so that they can manage the choices and room for maneuver, they are given, and thus creating a safe and secure working environment for them.

In the first case from Australia (Drysdale et al. 2009), we see how this female principal, Jan, focuses on the core purpose of schooling and on community support. She is, in and with the leadership team, open and invitational and emphasizes

collaboration and consultation, before decisions are made. She has built a school with much teacher-involvement, teacher-leadership, and teacher-teamwork and with close connections between teachers and leaders in the day-to-day interactions and communication:

8.3 Murray South Primary School

> She had a long and enduring commitment to all children receiving the best possible range of educational experiences, opportunities to succeed and to reaching their full potential.
>
> (Principal, 2004).

She had introduced the notion of the school moving from a "rules-based" approach to a "values-based" approach. Building positive relationships was a cornerstone of her approach to improving teacher morale and commitment, and establishing community support. Her personal characteristics included integrity, high energy, sensitivity, enthusiasm, and persistence.

> It is a good, successful school, which aims to consistently provide high quality education and continuously improve.

… She was observed to be influential and purposeful. Her style was open and invitational rather than confrontational. As one experienced teacher remarked:

> Even if you have done the wrong thing you feel like you are being congratulated. (Experienced Teacher)

Her approach to decision-making was described as "collaborative," "democratic," and "consultative.". Key decisions were discussed in forums where issues could be openly raised by staff. Jan and her assistant principal Julie worked as a team. Julie had been selected to the position because she was perceived to have complementary skills. Jan was the communicator who was able to articulate the vision and build relationships. Julie was the curriculum leader whose expertise was in teaching and learning. Indeed, the revisit confirmed that the success of the school relied on both Jan and Julie, and increasingly on teachers involved in leadership teams.

Jan had developed a structure that promoted professional learning teams at each level, and she had empowered the teams to set their own goals and try new approaches … . Teachers were encouraged to be leaders at every level and both individuals and teams were expected to be accountable for their performance. Interestingly, while she empowered staff she was also a "hands on" leader. She frequently visited classrooms and provided support where possible… The school was able to maintain its overall performance and the principal's leadership continued to be a major driving force. The impact of her contribution has to do with who she was – her personal characteristics, her leadership style, and her personal philosophy and values that helped shape the culture of the school. Most particularly she had the ability to build strong and sound relationships with a wide audience.

She was effective because she was able to model behavior and act with integrity … . But it was not only who she was, but what she did and how she did it. Her interventions included those identified in the literature (e.g., (Leithwood and Day 2007)) such as building trust, making it a safe and secure place to work, building a positive school culture, and providing opportunities for quality professional learning. She built appropriate structures that encouraged learning teams and built important connections and alliances within the community that helped provide support and resources for the school. Jan's leadership was identified as helping the school sustain its current level of performance and promote continuous improvement. (Drysdale et al. 2009).

In order to get closer to understanding what leaders actually do, I need to introduce and discuss concepts like leadership, influence, and communication.

8.4 Understanding Leadership, Understanding Influence

One commonly used understanding of leadership in schools is distributed leadership: Distribution of some decisions to teachers in classrooms and teacher-teams or working in leadership teams are widely used because no one person can reach the whole school and all actors in it.

However, as Spillane and Woods et.al. (Woods 2004; Spillane and Orlina 2005; Woods et al. 2004) argue, distributed leadership can take many forms. At the core of their concept of leadership is the notion that leadership is not the actions of the leaders per se, but the interactions between leaders and other agents. Leadership is therefore "an influencing relation" between leaders and followers that takes place in situations (that can be described by their tools, routines and structures). Leadership is performed in interactions and communication that influence, and that are understood to influence other persons. This "influence through communication" concept is parallel to Spillane et al.'s understanding of interaction-concept because both focus on the relations between leaders and teachers. The actions of the leader are only interesting if they are understood as leadership actions by the followers or co-leaders.

Leadership influence is thus communication that in principle can be understood as a three phase process: There is *production of premises* for decision-making (sense making or setting the scene). It is *decision-making* itself, and it is the *connections* to decisions that are being made by followers (Moos 2009).

In the first phase of decision-making: Construction of Premises, influence is present because of how premises are defined or produced, and by whom: Who (individuals, groups, institutions) defines the situation or the problem at hand? How is the dominant discourse on which decisions and actions are based created, or how is "the definition of reality" constructed? (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; March and Olsen 1976; Meyer and Scott 1983; Røvik 2007; Torfing 2004).

It is important to distinguish between agent driven and structural influences. There are a number of ways that individual agents or groups of agents can influence the minds and interpretations of other agents. They can set an agenda (Barach and Baratz 1962); influence sense making and set the stage (Stacey 2001; Weick 2001); and enter into educational activities, negotiations, or other interactions (Spillane and Orlina 2005).

Secondly, decision-making is a complicated procedure involving the selection of accepted and sufficiently important premises that are influential enough to be taken into account. Decisions can be made by individual or collectives of agents. Decisions can also result in a new agenda for discussing or making decisions about the field, or for the description and regulation of new behaviors.

Decisions are often built into structures: Legislation, societal, social, and financial frames. Institutions are constructed because of political processes and power struggles that have sanctions attached to them. The agents' forms of direct power also have the possibility of sanctions being attached to them. However, none of these forms can guarantee results unless they are viewed – or even identified – as legitimate forms by the people and groups affected by them. On the other hand, decisions construct the premises for new decisions. This construction is the case with leadership decisions that form the premises for employer decisions.

The third major phase of influence is the connection phase. Inspired by communication theories (Thyssen 1997), a communication is only viewed as an effective communication if it "irritates" the other people to such a degree that it chooses to connect, to stop and reflect on, and possibly alter, their reflection process and practice. Whether or not the other agent is connecting can be difficult to detect, since some reactions might occur long after the "irritation" has taken place. On the other hand, there is no point in talking about influence without effects. If the act of law does not change anything concerning citizen behavior or if army privates do not follow a colonel's orders, then we will not talk about a real influence. The ways in which connections are made become an important feature of the construction of premises for future decisions.

An area of connections is constituted by evaluations and assessments. The broad field of evaluation and assessment is currently undergoing basic transformations. National as well as local systems and organizations need documentation for the use of resources in the organizations in their jurisdiction. An important aspect of the hunt for transparency involves finding out to whom agents and organizations should be accountable, and which values they should be accountable for. Schools must answer to a range of different accountabilities, i.e., a marketplace accountability that focuses on efficiency and competition, a bureaucratic accountability that focuses on outcomes and indicators, a political accountability that focuses on citizen satisfaction and negotiations, a professional accountability that focuses on professional expertise, and an ethical accountability that focuses on social justice (Firestone and Shipps 2005; Moos 2008). Schools must simultaneously answer to all of these accountabilities, consequently creating numerous dilemmas for schools and school leaders.

The principals are struggling with the first and third phase: How can they describe the frames and the aims of the self-governing teams and the autonomous teachers, sufficiently precise and not too tight? And they are struggling to evaluate whether the decisions have made connections: Have teachers done, what was agreed on, or what they were expected to do? This seems to be a new and advanced phase in reflecting on and developing principal influences in schools that can have great influence not only on the relations between teachers and leaders, but also on the relations between teachers and students in class as well.

I find it interesting to look at the deliberative and participative possibilities for teachers first and foremost, because I find that there are clear links and connections between the conditions that teachers have and the conditions and frames that schools and teachers give students so they can develop a "Democratic Bildung." This kind

of Bildung is not only at matter of knowing about democracy, it is more a matter of acquiring democratic patterns of interpretation and democratic ways of life (Dewey 1916; Beane and Apple 1999). A "Democratic Bildung" must therefore include the possibilities to test those interpretations and ways of living in real life.

The discussion of "producing results" and pursuing the comprehensive vision of "Democratic Bildung" is a good illustration of one of the dilemmas principals have to act on and often find day-to-day solutions and semi-final decisions to.

The principals demonstrate in the talks with us that they are very much aware of the fact that what they do is only indirectly of importance for student learning. They talk about relations, communication, interaction, and forms of influence that involve many stakeholders in and out of school.

But secondly, I find it interesting to look at teachers' room for maneuver because this is the foundation for them acting as responsible leaders.

8.5 Three Forms of Influence

We can distinguish three general forms of influence: direct influence, strategic influence, and reciprocal influence. The *reciprocal influence* has many forms: setting the agenda, sensemaking, as will be described later on, and constructing the premises for decision-making, as described above. In the core of those forms is the deliberations, the reciprocity of relations, and the acceptance that agents are dependent on each other. They have more often than not diverse perspectives on education and professional work and diverse interests and values, but they need to find an appropriate and pragmatic level of consensus in order to proceed from one situation to the other, from 1 day in the schools life to the next. This kind of influence is working in the everyday life and in the interactions and communications between agents. We heard principals talk about it and focus on it more frequently when we revisited the schools than when first we visited them. This is a sign that school leaders are getting more out of their offices and into staff rooms, classrooms and corridors.

The second form of influence is named *strategic influence*: Leaders of organizations have to produce strategic plans for 1, 2, or 3 years. Here they evaluate the status and describe the goals, initiatives, and direction for the period to come. In many places, much work is being invested in this kind of paper only to see that the administrative and political premises for the plans are being changed every so often. The detailed aims and actions laid out in strategic plans are not met, but on the other hand, they can serve important purposes by indicating a direction that everybody can use as a map that can help them make sense of their situation (Weick 2001). So the impact of the plan is more in the field of sensemaking than in the field of strict plans for the future.

Thirdly we can describe the *direct influence* (Barach and Baratz 1962). Here an agent makes the decision and communicates it to the followers to obey by. Principals in our study, of course, also make use of this kind of influence, but there is a clear tendency that they are trying to use the other kinds of influence more than the direct

influence. Often they emphasize the first phase, the construction of premises, by involving teachers in making sense of the situations and the demands before decisions are made. In some cases when schools are in challenging circumstances and firm actions are needed very fast, principals take the lead and make decisions. In other cases where principals are new to the school and a shared sense of the culture and the values has not been established yet, principals also take the lead. When there are big disagreements between individuals or groups in the staff, or if the external expectations collide with teachers' professional identities or opinions, principals have to make decisions. There is a clear tendency that when the external standards, aims, or demands for accountability are very tight – like in high-stake testing systems, then principals are using more direct power than in other systems, as shown in the analysis of the initial case stories (Moos et al. 2008).

In the next section, we follow the distribution of leadership of teams in Danish case schools:

8.6 Distribution of Leadership to Teacher Teams

After the first visits to Danish schools, we could describe how the process of modernization is working in the interplay between decentralization and the loosening of organizational couplings (Weick 2001) between central agencies and local agents, which produces less prescriptions from the central government for the municipal level and the school level (e.g., with regard to finance and administration).

We also could observe similar processes within schools as leadership was decentralized from the principal to teacher teams and to individual teachers. It was new that teacher teams were being inserted as a permanent link between the leadership and individual teachers. New tasks and duties were being distributed, thereby loosening the organizational couplings (e.g., practical annual and weekly planning of lessons, parts of finance management), while other tasks were being re-centralized (e.g., target setting and evaluation of instruction and learning), thereby tightening the organizational couplings.

There was, in the second round of visits, a growing focus on networks like teacher teams. Teachers worked in teams within the frames and directions given by – and often negotiated with – the leadership. Leadership was performed at a distance from the self-governing teachers. At the same time, we saw the unfolding of different social technologies. Many of those were in the forms of meetings: Educational Council Meetings (all teacher staff and leadership meet regularly according to the acts of the school), all staff meetings (teachers and other staff and leadership meet once or twice a year, according to regulations), team interviews (teacher teams meet with the principal), and "employee development interviews" (individual teachers meet with the principal once a year). There were also annual plans (teachers plan the instruction for a grade for a year and hand it in to the principal), and student plans (plans for individual students' progress in all subjects).

That meant that leadership influence was less direct and more in the form of sense making, setting the agenda, and institutionalized influence. Within the teams, teachers had to collaborate very closely and therefore had to invest their personality in this part of work as well as in the relations to students and classes. It was not enough that they invested their time and presence; they had to be motivated and engaged.

The principals seem to be more focused on their roles as what could be called meta-governors, i.e., to control and support the conduct of involved parties conducts (Sørensen and Tofting 2005). In this way, it is important to influence the teachers in indirect ways to

do what – in the principal's opinion – is necessary to be done, without having to tell so directly. It is about influencing through setting an agenda and through this, showing a direction for the school (Moos et al. 2007; Moos and Kofod 2009), and this pertains not only to the teachers and the students but also in relations to the parents.

At the West School, the principal considers herself as part of a leadership team, and as she says, "we are at hand when needed," and she mentions that the leadership team are needed and used primarily as conflict mediators. Otherwise she considers the leadership team as a service body to the teachers and she believes that the leadership team should "keep their fingers to themselves" if not called upon by the teachers. It may be considered as a rather passive and weak attitude toward the teachers. It may on the other hand also be interpreted as a consequence of the beginning of the distribution of leadership tasks to the teachers in a distributed leadership (Spillane 2006).

The principal in our three cases are very much aware that they have to translate external demands and expectations to internal direction for the school development. They take new expectations to teachers and discuss with them how to transform old practices into new practices that are compliant with the demands. An example is that the demands for testing are being transformed into summative evaluation of use for planning and teaching. They are also using external demands to legitimize their own ideas in translating new external demands into their own visions. The basis for the translations and transformation is trust in teachers: Principals believe that teachers basically are in authority and that they are doing their outmost to assist student learning.

One of the more important forums for exercising principal influence is the annual team meeting when she sets the agenda and negotiates meaning. For example, we observed in one meeting that she insisted that teachers should maintain and develop their authority in relation to students.

Over the past years, some teachers have made more claims on leaders to be present in the daily life and education in school. Therefore, leaders are participating in teacher team meetings and are very active in showing their appreciation in teachers' practice. It has become more important that leaders assist teachers in drawing lines between their work and the responsibilities of other stakeholders. The relatively new demands from teachers seem to place principals in a "pastoral leadership" position (Foucault 2001). At the same time, principals lead through social technologies like contracts and self-steering teacher-teams (Moos 2009a) and most importantly through setting the scene for discussions and decisions and making sense of the external and internal life of school for and with teachers.

In relation to parents, the principals are now clearer than ever before in demanding that their experiences and expertise be respected.

The collaboration in the leadership teams has been strengthened in order to sustain the progress of the school and thus the continuity of school practice. This means that the principals and deputies underline that school leadership is basically a function carried out by persons.

We see that the three Danish principals are struggling with sustaining their own and teachers' commitment to school, teaching, and learning in the deliberations on how relations and communication in school should be. They should support the work on living up to external expectations and at the same time respect and care for staff and students. This has become a more challenging task than before because teachers often find that the external demands and expectations are too high and not to the point of what schooling is for, because some of the political and public expectations are changing so rapidly and so profoundly these years. (Moos and Kofod 2009)

Short quotes from the Swedish case can illustrate the same tendency toward team working: "The principal argues, even if he did not like the effect on staffing costs, that the teachers' team organization has been given great opportunities for creating

and maintaining collaboration between all actors in the school. Values supporting solidarity dominates the teachers' and students' relations. … The teachers describe an open culture with a far-reaching responsibility and opportunities for the teachers in their work. Collaboration is a key-concept for the daily life in the school. They relate the positive social climate to the village and the forms of collaborations in the local society. But one teacher says: "I am missing the way she – the first principal – communicated with us and her leadership that were based on trust, dialogue, and collaboration". (Höög et al. 2009)

A summary of key observations in all of the case stories can also serve as an illustration of this trend: *Designing and managing communities, leadership, organization and relations, communication.*

Five years ago principals were encouraging collaborative decision-making, teamwork, and distributed leadership in a collective culture and in structures that support collaboration. Participation in decision-making, premise production, and connections were part of a safe and secure environment for teachers. At the latest visits to the case schools, we found:

Australia: Relations between principal and teachers are collaborative, democratic, and consultative. A leadership team has been established on the basis of complementarity: The principal is curriculum leader, and the deputy carries vision and is a relations-builder and communicator. Teachers are being involved and the teacher teams act as learning teams. The school community is turned around to being a friendly atmosphere with trust. Classes and students are given responsibilities (e.g., by making their own code of conduct). There are many extracurricular activities. So one gets a "'Country club feel."

Denmark: Leadership teams as well as teacher teams are pivotal features of schools. Principal's relations to individual teachers, teams, and the whole staff are multilayered and often take place in an intricate mix of meetings. Contracts between principal and teacher teams and individual teachers are important tools for leading.

Norway: There is a growing involvement in student council and student participation in one school. Respect is a key descriptor for relations. In all schools, more teacher teams are being established. Members of the leadership team are responsible for specific parts of the school. The culture of one school is based on hard work.

Sweden: The teacher teams are central to the schools. They focus on creating a good but not an excellent school. The principals' role is to work with the organization of the school and discuss quality questions with the teachers.

England: There are strong indications of the school's work on improving student's personal and social well-being and competencies. The school is open for students from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. and with many extracurricular activities. The principal is collaborating and distributing leadership tasks and consulting with staff and at the same time, models teaching in workplace learning. Organizational trust is pivotal; social cohesion is an indicator of trust.

USA: The school has been restructured to fit learning needs. Leadership teams have been established with teacher-representatives from each grade level. There is a self-renewal culture with careful selection of staff, supportive socialization of teachers, and on-going professional development with internal veterans and external consultants.

Many case schools are developing their organizations into being team-based networks, or webs. Leadership is being distributed from the principal to leadership teams and further on the teacher teams. The trend is different from case to case with the Nordic cases being more similar to each other than to the (AU-UK-US); however, there seems to be a general trend to distribute influences from principal to staff.

On the one hand, this trend seems to leave more room for maneuver to teachers, individually and in teams, while at the same time principals develop new ways of making their influence noticeable through sensemaking in many forms and through the use of new social technologies like annual plans, team meetings with the leadership, and other regular meetings. In many cases, middle leaders, specialists are brought in to give support to teachers.

Generally there seems to be, with different speed and depths, a trend toward recognizing that teachers need to be self-leading (Foucault 1991), meaning they are given room for maneuver followed by tight standards and demands for accountability. Principals are aware that teachers need to be given support and care in order that they can manage the choices and room for maneuver, they are given, and thus creating a safe and secure working environment for them. This is often in a form of "pastoral leadership" (Foucault 2001, 1978); Moos and Johansson 2009).

8.7 Understanding Team Work

Distribution from leaders to teacher teams and individual teachers take in a general way the same directions as decentralization and recentralization take in the relations between the state and municipal authorities to schools – The contract. This means that the state and municipal authorities have decentralized parts of the governance to schools: The management of finances within the budget and the day-to-day management of schools. On the other hand, we have witnessed that the authorities have tightened the couplings with schools when it comes to curriculum and outcome accountability.

In schools, we see that part of leadership is being distributed to teacher teams, e.g., managing the weekly plan, the special needs resources, the substitute teachers, and the purchase of learning materials. On the other hand, there are being made stricter contracts between school leadership and teams when it comes to the outcomes of teaching.

The parallel between the macro-level (state and municipality in relation to schools) and the micro-level (school leadership and teams) goes further: In both

cases, there are rooms for maneuver for schools and for teams: At the macro-level, schools have to and can translate the external expectations into internal directions, and this process leaves room for interpretations and negotiations. This is also the case at the micro-level: Teachers can, in the teams, negotiate and interpret the contract with the leadership after having reached an internal consensus in the team. It is fair to conclude that the interpretations, deliberations, and negotiations within teams and between team and leadership are important foundations for teachers' empowerment. In fact, they can rehearse leadership functions and roles in teams. The processes challenge the overview of the whole school and the relations at this level and thus empower teachers' leadership competences (Gronn 1998). At the same time, teachers are more involved in the construction of premises phase of decision-making, as they enter into deliberations and negotiations with leaders giving them more influence on the practices in school.

Teachers find in many cases that their situation is changing fast: Student attitudes are changing and so are parents' expectations due to changes in society and culture. Authorities' expectations and modes of governance are changing and so are relations within school – only to mention a few of the new challenges. In many cases, we see that this has made teachers more inclined to collaborate and to consult leaders. In many of the cases in the study, we see that teachers demand principals and other leaders to come closer to the everyday life in classrooms. They want principals to visit classrooms and observe education in order that they can consult them and use the deliberations to reflect on their practices.

8.8 Communication and Interaction

In the Swedish case story, we read the report from the revisits to schools where the dialogue and communications between school leaders and teachers and students is being underscored:

> The teachers compare the resigning principal with the former one. They say: "She was a better leader, she discussed with the teachers before she took decisions. Further, she was a visible leader actively involved in the work with the students and teachers in the classroom". It still happens that the teachers take direct contact with their former principal when they want to discuss important topics instead of talking to the new principal. …The students express the same opinions as their teachers. They appreciated her spontaneous contacts with them and she knew the individual students name. They also praised her ability to create and explain visions for the students. One student said to us about their old principal: "she stopped and talked to us in the corridor about different things but the new one only sometimes says hallo" (Höög et al. 2009).

The US case story reports on a very interesting feature in one of the schools: The introduction and induction of new teachers that was being done in ways that empowered veteran teachers as well: "Each year we have to hire staff. That forced us to set up a system in which we immediately immerse them in our programs, our reading and writing programs so that they can learn it, and we pair them with a master teacher and a mentor and just do whatever is necessary to get them up to speed right away." *(Principal).* A veteran teacher describes the situation in this way: "There was no time

for new teachers to hang back and watch. We needed the new staff members to get on board quickly, which meant we needed to work together and do peer coaching in classrooms." The reading specialist described professional development efforts as "scaffolding and supporting teachers in their classrooms, helping them get the program in place and figuring out where to target their efforts." Grade level teams began meeting regularly, at which, "Someone models a literacy lesson and then the grade level team talks about what we saw, what worked, and what needed to improve." While veteran teachers acknowledged the pressure of sustaining the success of the program, they also felt empowered by their leadership roles, "By allowing me to share strategies that worked, I felt empowered that I could be a leader … it gave me a glimpse of what I could become." Another noted, "It was hard in some ways, but I have to say I felt really good about taking a leadership role in keeping the program moving forward in spite of all the staff changes." (Jacobson et al. 2009)

The summary of all case stories can give another description of the tendencies in most schools to focus more on the micro-level, direct, face-to-face interactions and communications between leaders and teachers as ways of influencing both leaders and teachers, and understanding and developing people.

"Five years ago we found that principals were engaged in stimulating teachers intellectually, promoting reflection, and modeling desired commitment, values, norms, and practices. There was a continuous work on building capacities that could fit the new demands and expectations of policy makers, parents, and students, and there was in many places a constant struggle to build persistence for challenging circumstances. Five years later we found:

Australia: Teachers form professional learning teams that set their own goals and try new approaches with support from the principal who is also "hands on" visiting classrooms. This encourages teachers to be "accountable" leaders in their own right, while giving support and building trust in teachers.

Denmark: Principals often lead in indirect ways by setting the agenda or the scene. Most teachers are working in self-steering teacher teams with a high degree of responsibility and autonomy but also with new forms of internal accountability. Principals and leadership teams try to strike a balance between "leading at a distance" and being "at hand" and supportive to teachers.

Norway: One principal says that he makes observations in classrooms to show his interest. Teachers in another school must deserve principal's trust by working hard. The principal names it "a gentleman agreement." New projects are started only after involving all involved.

Sweden: The old successful principals that left focused a lot on pedagogical leadership through collaboration with, and trust in, teacher and teacher teams. The two intermediate principals did neglect the close collaboration with the staff. The third group of principals say they will focus on quality in teaching and – perhaps – collaboration.

England: There are high levels of interpersonal relationships between principal and teachers. Capacity building is based on data and is formed to fit individual needs. There is an increase in leadership distribution.

USA: The principal scaffolds and supports teachers in classrooms and makes use of teaching specialists, subject teams, and peer mentors. Leadership teams are formed with teachers from all grade levels. A good tool has been to make curriculum maps at all grades.(Moos and Johansson 2009)

In some cases, it has become more visible, that there is a focus on building and sustaining trust between teachers and principals. In some instances, the basis for trust is being spelled out clearer than before: Principals can trust teachers who are accountable and hard working.

There is more work on building teacher teams; in most cases, distributing parts of leadership from principals and middle leaders to teacher teams and individual teachers. At the same time, there is a growing closeness between principals and teachers in professional and personal relations of trust, support, care, and, may be most of all, clear direction and expectations.

8.9 Sensemaking

In order to get even closer to the actual relations in the communication and interaction between principals and teachers, I observed among other interactions a meeting in the educational committee of one of the Danish case schools (Moos 2007). The communication in this meeting proved to be exemplary to much of the communication I witnessed in many interactions over several days of observation. This was in our first visits to the school, in 2005.

Participants at this meeting were the principal, the deputy principal, a school district consultant, and three teachers. The reason why the consultant was present was that the committee should discuss a self-evaluation of teacher's and leader's activities in a school development project, led by the consultant. All participants had made marks of the items in the questionnaire with colors: red is 'not good'; yellow is 'moving'; and green is 'OK.' This was done in preparation for the evaluation the committee was to write.

The first theme is teacher teams:

Theme	Teacher teams
Principal	*We shall work through the evaluation in three areas. It builds on an evaluation from 2001 and then: Have we progressed?; What do we write now, in 2005?*
Teacher 1	*I find only a few red (no development)*
Principal	*How do you understand "basis for collaboration"?*
Teacher 1	*We may sit with the team and try to figure it out with the other teachers*
Teacher 2	*Nothing has been written*
Consultant	*I see the same in other schools. It is difficult to be concrete*
Teacher 2	*We were very ambitious when we formed teams but did not write down our expectations. That would have been good.*
Principal	*I think the teachers are right. They need support and the leadership could have been more explicit in our expectations on the teamwork. We ask questions in the team-meetings, but we could help more here.*

Teamwork has proven difficult to most teachers. It is a relatively new feature that the principal has worked hard to develop. In this short conversation, we can see that the principal is acknowledging the teachers' difficulties and transforming them into a shared challenge: Teachers need to collaborate and leaders must find ways to give them support by being more explicit. The communication can be interpreted as a negotiation of the ways teachers see the challenge. The principal points to a weak point she can see in the questionnaire, a red item – collaboration in teams – and by introducing the term "basis for collaboration" she is influencing the ways teachers perceive the situation. The challenge is not collaboration in a broad sense, but it is now being narrowed down to having explicit expectations toward collaboration and here she can help.

The second theme is documentation. The local authorities have demanded stricter forms of documentations of outcomes of education:

Theme	Documentation
Principal	*What is your attitude toward these descriptions?*
Teacher 3	*They are annoying words on paper; the evaluation talk*
Teacher 2	*We often take stuff we would have made anyhow. Maybe we should look at a short project and describe it in details*
Consultant	*The authority is producing systems for that*
Teachers 3	*What does "signs" mean? We are drowning in paper work*
Teacher 1	*We cannot do this all of the time, but we need to show the environment what we are doing*
Principal	*I would like to say, that we need to be able to answer to these questions. We cannot show what we have chosen and we need to test diverse methods. It is clearly a demand from the top that we need to document. The demands are intended to give teachers tools to improve teaching. Leadership will describe frames.*

The school authorities have set the evaluation and documentation agenda, but teachers feel it is a waste of their time. The principal needs to be loyal to the demands and so she stresses the positive aspects of this work: The need to legitimize the work to the local community and getting more visible. She indicates a compromise between the authority and teachers in pointing to the need for testing out diverse methods. A testing phase in school development is normally seen as a soft way to produce changes: By testing, you are in command of development and you can roll it back if you want to, is the general feeling. On the other hand, she is also loyal to teachers in stressing that this is a top down initiative. The principal is creating a space for negotiations with teachers and indicating that they will be heard. They will be involved in producing the premises for decisions on which methods will eventually be chosen.

Danish schools can, as a result of negotiations between the National Association Of municipalities (the "school owners") and the Teacher Union, from 1999, choose to organize work in self-steering teams. This is a formal construct where schools can choose to delegate/distribute a number of management/coordination tasks from school leadership to teacher teams: Planning the week schedule in classes, managing special needs resources, managing substitute teachers, and managing purchase of learning material. This is at this point, in 2005, very new to this school.

Theme	Self-steering teams
Principal	*I have marked the work on self-steering teams with red because I was deeply disappointed last year over the fact that you would not take responsibility for the division of labor between teachers.*
Teacher 2	*It is a big workload so one retracts a bit to thinking on oneself. We were responsible for the work in team one, but not for other teams*
Principal	*Many participated, but they did not take responsibility*
Teacher 1	*Yes, we participated*
Principal	*You have no expectations that it could work differently?*
Teacher 2	*It is not going to change, I think*
Consultant	*Self-steering teams would start this development. Is it still very much "privately practitioners" (in isolated classrooms)*
Principal	*This is not a work that teams take responsibility for. The leader needs to do that*
Teacher 3	*What do you mean? If we cannot reach a consensus by negotiations, it must surely be the leader that makes decisions*
Principal	*You could make use of objective facts like the need for having both female and male teachers in all classes*
Teacher 1	*We may not have the overview that you in leadership have and therefore we do not want to spend time on it*
Principal	*Last year nobody wanted to say what would be a good solution*
Deputy princ.	*You did not involve yourself at all*
Principal	*It would be good for us if the teams too are responsible*

It is obvious that the principal sees the idea of self-steering teams as a means to support teachers' authority and participating in decision-making. Teachers do not see it this way. To them, these are tasks that belong to the leadership and to negotiations between individual teachers and the principal, because this is the way it always worked.

Theme	Self-steering teams Cont.
Teacher 2	*We do not have the overview so we do not want to spoil things for anybody*
Principal	*But if you have trust in the things we produce, then it may be fine*
Teacher 1	*We are not unwilling to collaborate*
Principal	*This is accepting leadership in a way that I would like not to have. But it is ok, if you have trust in it*
Teacher 2	*I have never heard complaints over your suggestions as you are listening*
Principal	*Some teachers do grouse. Let's go on to the next theme*
Teacher 2	*We have progressed. People are getting aware of their influence. It is getting better and better*
Deputy princ	*Maybe self-steering teams would be of significance here*
Teacher 1	*We have more strings than that of committees, etc.*

The principal seems to accept that there is, at this point in time, in 2005, a rather massive teacher resistance to self-steering teams. It has been discussed for more than a year at a number of meetings, but teachers have found several ways of prolonging the process and to objecting to making final decisions on the subject. Nevertheless, she and the deputy principal mentioned the option every time there is an opportunity.

In the period between visit one and revisiting the schools, the local authorities declared that all schools should establish self-steering teams. This made the task much easier for the principal.

8.10 Understanding Sensemaking

The analyses build on this concept "An organization is 'a network of intersubjectively shared meanings' that are sustained through the development and use of a common language and everyday interactions" (Walsh and Ungson (1991) cited in (Weick 1995), p. 38). This means that organization is communication. Agents affiliate to the community as they share the meanings of relations and tasks. The affiliation emerges in the day-to-day interactions and communication as we saw an illustration of in the Danish case.

Leading schools entails at the end of the day being observant and attentive to the purpose of schooling, the education – the "Democratic Bildung" – of children and youth. This task can be interpreted as the pursuit of giving support to and provoking students' effort to find the meaning of self (identity), of relations to the other, and the community (sociality) and the world (knowledge and insight). As most of students' relations are with peers and teachers, the principal must try and demonstrate the end purpose in her/his relations to teachers.

The sensemaking processes between principal and teachers are pivotal because they can and should serve as models for the sensemaking processes that teachers enter into with students. Sensemaking takes place in many forms of communication, written as well as spoken. Here, I shall concentrate the analyses on the ongoing spoken communication.

According to Weick et al. (2005) we can see sensemaking as a communication that builds on the interactions that principals and teachers have experienced and gone through. When "the flow of action has become unintelligible" (2005, p. 409), it needs explanations and defense: What happened? What did I/we do? How can it be interpreted and understood? Like in the case, where the principal refers to the practice of evaluation, documentation, and collaboration. Those reflections are being mixed with contemporary expectations – e.g., new external demands – into a story of how things are right now in the perspective of how it might or should be: We used to …, we are expected to …, we should ….

Weick et al. (2005) defines sensemaking in this way:

> Sensemaking involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing. Viewed as a significant process of organizing, sensemaking unfolds as a sequence in which people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage ongoing circumstances from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively, while enacting more or less order into those ongoing circumstances. (p. 409)

The stories told of the past are then being used as aspects of building premises for decisions on the future. The sense that principals and teachers make in these situations, in the interactions and communications, are made in social settings, in communities and are therefore outcomes of shared, social activities of communication (Wenger 1999).

> When we say that meanings materialize, we mean that sensemaking is, importantly, an issue of language, talk, and communication. Situations, organizations, and environments are talked into existence. (Weick, ibid)

Both teachers and leaders contribute to and are part of this interaction and can thus influence the communication and the outcomes of it: the sense – or the shared understanding, meaning – that participants make of the situation, the practice, or the expectations.

The starting point for sensemaking processes are often situations of surprise or astonishment where the reality does not match the expectations; so, there is a need of explanation. The astonishments can – when first noticed, bracketed and labeled – act as irritations, provocations to the common sense, understanding, and thus activate sensemaking processes. Most often, however, they do not because we have developed defenses in our consciousness that guide irritations into not being noticed (Leithäuser 1979). In some cases, we see that the irritations are big enough and many members of the situation are provoked. But it is also a commonly used leadership strategy to point at aspects or features of practice or the life of schools in order to irritate other members' awareness and in this way start sensemaking processes. When actors highlight situations or actions, it is often because they find them to be problematic and while starting to put the phenomenon into language, they also indicate a hunch as to the solution, and thus to new actions. This is what happened, when the principal in the beginning of the meeting asked what the teacher understood by "basis for collaboration."

Weick summarizes (ibid, p. 413):

> Answers to the question "what's the story?" emerge from retrospect, connections with past experiences, and dialogue among people who act on behalf of larger social units. Answers to the question "now what?" emerge form presumptions about the future, articulation concurrent with action, and projects that become increasingly clear as they unfold. (Weick et al. 2005)

The analyses and discussion of sensmaking are micro-sociological, communications analyses of relations and interactions between individuals in organizations.

8.11 Sensemaking and Deliberation

If we change the perspective from a micro- to a macro-sociological and policy perspective on societies and states – a discussion of democracies – we can, maybe, shed new light to the micro-sociological analyses. The intention of doing so is to try and develop links between the trends and intentions in democracies at a societal level and the discussion of how leaders and teachers, the professionals, in schools can build the practices in schools in ways that are supportive of a student's "Democratic Bildung."

Bridges from society to school can be established with (Biesta 2003) theories of the need for schools to "create opportunities for action"; Bernstein's (Bernstein 2000) theories of students' democratic rights in schools that shall be enacted through enhancement, inclusion, and participation in decision-making; and with (Beane and Apple 1999) theories of democratic schools that point to a number of key issues like the open flow of ideas, the use of critical reflection, and the concern for the common good and the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.

It seems to me that the underlying demand is for giving students voice and that is the opportunity for deliberations in schools. This builds on a notion of a deliberative

democracy that is an attempt to build a connection between liberal and communitarian democracy (Louis 2003).

The basis for *liberal democracy* is described as a special form where the free individual is capable of making his/her own choices and pursue own interests and so take care of his/her own life. Another dimension of this kind of democracy is the protection of the free individual in that it is given certain rights or is making social contracts. In other words, individuals are seen as autonomous even if they are part of a community and they have formed their opinions before entering into the community. They are not bonded together by shared values, but majority votes are the preferred way of mediating opinions and reaching decisions.

In the *communitarian democracy* individuals are seen as partners in social communities, bond together by a set of shared moral and social values. Values are generated within the community and can change over time. Members of a community are orientated toward a set of shared goals and are conscious of the social bonds. These communities can be the state or smaller parts of states.

The connection between those two forms is the *deliberative* democracy. Both liberal and communitarian democracy concepts see the state as a central arena for all kinds of communities. The liberal concepts see politics to be formed through complex interplays between agents in different arenas and networks both within and outside the state. The society is seen as decentered, and political processes can take place in many arenas, within and outside elected bodies, like parliaments and city councils. Deliberative democracies are seen as associations whose affairs are governed by public deliberation of its members (Englund 2006). A number of conditions must be met in this kind of democracy: The individual's rights that can be met in that the democracy is representative; the other is that the deliberations demand that individuals are able to a high degree of reflexivity and responsiveness toward other members of the community. A basic understanding in this concept is the concept of social identity.

I find that the position Karen Seashore Louis takes is productive in this argument:

> Many contemporary democratic theorists argue that the most essential element of democratic communities today is their ability to engage in civilized but semi-permanent disagreement. Articulating a humanist voice that calls for respecting and listening to all positions – but then being able to move forward in the absence of consensus – will be the critical skill that school leaders need to develop when the environment makes consensus impossible. (Louis 2003, p. 105)

8.12 Trust

One immensely important precondition for building relations, be that in collaborations like teams or in the face-to-face interactions between individuals in schools, is trust. This is demonstrated clearly in the UK case story (Day 2009). Here data are analyzed and theories are developed.

In this part, I shall build on this understanding and other sources as well in making my point that there is a need for trust and not only that, but that in schools there is a need for trust that is based on cognitive sources like rational communication.

Social relations are one basic aspect of society. According to (Warren 1999), democracy is about political relations. These are social relations characterized by fights and conflicts over goods. Thus power is a fundamental aspect of social relations. As a result, the social conditions for trust seem to be weak in political contexts because: "Trust … involves a judgment, however tacit or habitual, to accept vulnerability to the potential ill will of others by granting them discretionary power over some good. When one trusts, one accepts some amount of risk for potential harm in exchange for the benefits of cooperation …" (Warren 1999, p. 311).

Traditional and inherited social relations are being contested and are therefore being transferred into a political field that is characterized by challenges and conflict, but at the same time by new developments and change. Politics is oriented toward the future. Challenges can bring about changes, but at the same time they bring uncertainty and risk. Trust is necessary because politics is oriented toward the future. Stable and predictable situations on the other hand, which secure the conditions for trust, would render trust superfluous.

Warren discriminates between two forms of trust: *Particular* trust – confidence that emerges in face-to-face situations between people who have common interests, who depend on the same things or are bound by culture. So confidence builds on *affective* sources (love, friendship, child-parent relations). The second form is *generalized* trust, which is developed when a society depersonalizes functions. Generalized trust must build on cognitive sources: institutions, strangers, business connections, and political representatives. An example would be the trust in abstract systems (Giddens 1991). So, one can distinguish between *confidence* that is based on experience and, as such, on the past, and *trust* that is not based on experience but rather on the belief that the other person is not going to disappoint expectations.

Trust is a modern phenomenon, according to Seligman (in Warren, p. 323), because with modernity came individuality as the element in human activities that is not totally congruent with the role one plays. An element of choice, discretion, and freedom has been injected into social relations. Here, morality and thus trust enter into the picture.

Today, confidence must be supplemented with trust. Luhmann (in Warren, p. 323) writes that the complexity of the social order creates a need for more coordination and therefore the need for determining the future; this in turn creates a need for trust because the need for future coordination is seldom met with confidence. Thus, there is a need for new forms of trust that no longer emerge from an immediately experienced world and are no longer secured by tradition: "In democratic relations, trust ought to have cognitive origins because individuals ought to be able to assess their vulnerabilities as one dimension of self-government" (Warren, p. 331). The truster needs to be able to judge the *interests* of the trustee without losing the advantages of trust: "The benefits of cooperation, the possibilities for new kinds of collective action, the securities of reduced complexity for the individual, and the advantages of increased complexity for society as a whole." (Warren, p. 332).

There are, writes Warren, important and clear connections between democratic institutions and trust. Institutions rely on trust and in communication with their environment they can strengthen and give support to the development of trust by

negotiating with individuals and by being transparent and legitimate in their decisions. At the same time, trust can lend support to deliberations as a way of solving political conflicts, and political discussions can generate trust (Ibid, p. 337).

8.13 Summary

The theoretical or philosophical background for this chapter is a basic understanding of communication, the communicative rationality developed by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 1987). A communication is, in his theory on universal pragmatism, seen as being legitimized, if it strives toward "the strange unconstrained force of better argument." This means that the relations in communication are aiming at mutual understanding with a minimum of domination in what will always be asymmetric relations in bureaucratic organizations.

The potential for rationality in communication is inherent in communication itself. Communicative rationality thus refers primarily to the use of knowledge in language and action, rather than to a property of knowledge.

This means on the one hand that the person, who produces the "better argument," is the de facto leader in the situation. On the other hand, leadership in schools is also formal management delegated to formal positions in bureaucratic organizations: Teachers over students, principals over teachers, and so on.

The principal is of course the formal leader in schools as teachers are in classrooms. They are designated to a position with the power to make decisions. According to the thinking presented here, everybody in the communication can influence the decision-making if they give the "better argument." That means the argument that is being accepted as the better argument by persons who are involved in the communication and who are affected by the decisions.

This kind of influence is most often positioned in the "construction of premises" phase or in the "connecting phase" and the forms can be seen as deliberations or negotiations.

This ideal is often contested in real life, but this is, according to Habermas, still inherent in communication itself. Therefore, there is a better chance to have it prevailing if relations in schools are being communication at short range, where all participants can have a chance of being heard, listened to, and eventually given influence. Deliberation is, therefore, the foundation for schools to sustain their leadership, success, and development and thus for schools to become and stay "self-renewing."

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Chapter 9
Sustainable Improvement and Leadership in Challenging Schools

Rose Ylimaki, David Gurr, and Lawrie Drysdale

9.1 Background

There is growing interest in sustainable leadership that contributes to successful school change over time. While educational leadership scholars (e.g., Blankstein et al. 2009; Davies 2007; Fullan 2005; Hargreaves and Fink 2006) vary somewhat in how they conceptualize sustainability, most definitions emphasize long-term development, resiliency, and self-renewal. Davies (2007) defines sustainable leadership as "the key factors that underpin the longer-term development of the school. It builds a leadership culture based on moral purpose which provides success that is accessible to all" (p. 11). Sustainable leadership studies have been prominent in recent years; however, few studies explicitly consider sustainable leadership in challenging school contexts.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine sustainable leadership in successful US and Australian schools that are considered challenging due to shifting demographics or growing populations of low SES and minority students. Consonant with that purpose, this chapter is organized into three main sections. We begin with a brief discussion of literature on leadership in challenging school contexts and sustainability. Next, we discuss US and Australian case studies that illustrate leadership for long-term success and sustainability in challenging contexts. We then discuss our findings in light of literature on sustainability and conclude with implications for future research, leadership preparation, and practice.

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9.2 Leadership in Challenging School Contexts

In the 1980s and 1990s, many studies of school leadership in high-poverty schools were conducted in the context of US research on "outlier" schools that were effectively educating children of low socioeconomic background (e.g., Lezotte 1997; Louis and Miles 1990; Purkey and Smith 1983). Such "effective schools," as they came to be known, were considered outliers in response to concerns that concluded out-of-school variables (i.e., socioeconomic status) were more important to student achievement than in-school variables, which largely had no effect. Effective schools research identified strong, even directive, instructional leadership by the principal as essential for the creation of safe, orderly, and positive school environments that were conducive to learning in challenging contexts (Murphy 1990). Along with this clear and focused school mission, high expectations for everyone, student time on task, and positive home–school relations were other factors noted in effective schools (Lezotte 1997; Louis and Miles 1990; Purkey and Smith 1983).

In Australia, serious interest in effective schools did not emerge until the mid-1980s, and the paralleled the US research, especially the focus on schools in challenging circumstances. For example, Caldwell (1998), Gurr et al. (2005) and Mulford and Johns (2004) provided a complex view of principals' leadership, primarily democratic and indirect but also directive and purposeful in their approach to school improvement. Further, effective leaders in challenging Australian schools were particularly adept at setting and monitoring small achievable goals for improvement of physical and academic aspects of the school. Importantly, for many schools in challenging circumstances, principals prioritize improvement of the physical school environment and student behavior (Gurr et al. 2005; Mulford and Johns 2004).

Across several reviews of successful school research, there is now strong agreement about the key features of school leadership (Leithwood et al. 2006; Leithwood and Riehl 2003, 2005) with four leadership dimensions identified as necessary but not sufficient for success in any context: (1) setting directions; (2) developing people; (3) redesigning the organization; and (4) managing the instructional program. In the next several paragraphs, we consider the studies of effective leadership in challenging schools in relation to this framework.

Setting directions. Effective principals set a clear direction by developing and communicating shared goals that encourage a sense of common purpose and high performance expectations (e.g., Marsh et al. 2002). Across effective schools research, leaders who were particularly effective in challenging schools set clear directions with achievable goals, often beginning with improvements in the physical school environment. At the same time, these leaders clearly communicated high expectations for learning. In the US effective schools research, for instance, scholars reported that effective leaders focused directions on the creation of "safe and orderly school environments" and the establishment of high expectations for all children (e.g., Lezotte 1997). Scholars who examined principals of challenging Australian schools characterized direction setting as more of a shared responsibility; however,

these researchers also reported that the principals' first directions concerned improvement of the physical school environment and student behavior (e.g., Fleming and Kleinhenz 2007; Gurr et al. 2005).

Developing people. As in any school context, the effective leaders of challenging schools offered teachers intellectual stimulation and individualized support. But in challenging schools, school leaders often had fewer resources for professional development, and thus, relied on their own expertise in the technical core of schooling. In the US literature, for instance, the principals were depicted as strong instructional leaders whose expert knowledge of current curriculum and instructional practices served as the "pedagogical lighthouse" for the school (Edmonds 1979). Likewise, in the Australian studies (e.g., Gurr et al. 2005; Gurr 2007; Hardy 2006), principals actively developed teachers in the use of research-based intervention strategies proven to improve academic performance of low-achieving students. Many successful principals focus their efforts on developing teachers, knowing that leadership that impacts on student learning is largely indirect and mediated by the work of teachers (Gurr et al. 2006).

Redesigning the organization. Effective schools' literature and other studies of effective principals frequently depicted principals of challenging schools as authoritarian or directive as they worked to bring order to chaos in the school. Many of these studies (e.g., Lezotte 1997; Purkey and Smith 1983) also found, however, that after these leaders stabilized safety and improved the physical school environment, they were more democratic, redesigning their schools as professional learning communities. In so doing, these principals modified existing school structures and processes to increase professional collaboration and dialogue among teachers and to improve home–school relationships. For example, in the USA, principals deliberately changed the nature of task assignments and routine procedures to increase professional dialogue around school goals (e.g., Purkey and Smith 1983; Rosenholtz 1987).

Managing the instructional program. Successful principals also paid close attention to curriculum and instructional improvement efforts in their challenging, high-poverty schools. According to Leithwood and Riehl (2005), four sets of leadership practices are included in this general category, including staffing the school's program with teachers well matched to the school's priorities; providing instructional support; monitoring school activity; and buffering staff from distractions to their work (i.e., protecting instructional time). In US effective schools research (e.g., Edmonds 1979), effective principals were characterized as strong "instructional" leaders who focused their efforts on managing curriculum standards development, monitoring student progress toward curriculum standards, and protecting instructional time in classrooms. While the type of leadership is mostly indirect, there are examples of more direct instructional leadership (Gurr et al. 2010).

From these successful school leadership studies, we began to develop a common lexicon of effective leadership in challenging school contexts. Beyond the four leadership dimensions identified by Leithwood and Riehl (2003, 2005) – namely,

(1) setting directions, (2) developing people, (3) redesigning the organization, and (4) managing the instructional program – our cases exhibit Davies' (2007) conception of resiliency as well as self-leadership, influence on others, and engagement with the broader context. In the next section, we present cases of sustainable leadership development over a 5-year period in the challenging US and Australian school contexts.

9.3 Sustainable Leadership in Challenging Schools

Each section begins with a discussion of national context, highlighting issues that have created additional challenges for many schools and their leaders. The next part of this section examines specific cases of sustainable leadership in challenging school contexts. We conclude with a discussion of similarities and differences across the US and Australian cases as well as implications for future research and leadership preparation.

9.4 US Cases

9.4.1 Context

In recent years, educators in the USA have experienced societal and school demographic changes accompanied by accountability mandates that demand high student performance in all schools. The impact of changing demographics created numerous challenges in two of the US cases described in this chapter.

9.4.2 The Impact of Changing Demographics

In the last two decades, several important changes have occurred in the societal demographics within which US schools operate. More specifically, the data reveals that population increases are primarily due to immigration, and the immigration patterns are changing. For example, almost two thirds (64%) of all foreign-born residents arrived subsequent to 1980, most coming from non-English speaking Asian and Central and South American nations (Spring 2004).

US populations are also becoming increasingly culturally diverse; it is projected that between 1990 and 2050, the percent of the population of Hispanic origin will be almost triple, growing from 9% to 25% (making them the largest minority group by far) and the percent Asian will be more than double, growing from 3% to 8%. During the same period, the percent Black will remain relatively stable increasing only slightly from 12% to 14%, while the percent White will decline sharply from 76% to 53%.

One important outcome of changing demographics evident across the US context is that this diverse group is overpresented in high poverty schools, serving a majority, minority population in large urban areas (e.g., Frankenburg et al. 2003). Moreover, children in large urban centers are among the poorest citizens of these countries. The National Condition of Education (National Center for Education Statistics 2002), for instance, reports that 15% of all children 5–17 years old currently live in households where the annual income is below the poverty level, with the percentage almost double (29%) for children living in central cities; a figure some would contend markedly underestimates the magnitude of the problem (Frankenburg et al. 2003). These demographic shifts were highly evident in the cases of Fraser Academy and Colman Elementary described below.

9.4.3 Fraser Academy

Fraser Academy is a K-8 school located in a high-poverty neighborhood of an urban center. The principal is an African American female in her late 50s with a reputation for "turning around a failing school" in another urban setting. Since the beginning of the principal's tenure 16 years ago, Fraser school has risen from being one of the lowest performing schools in its district to one of the highest. The Fraser Academy principal focused her early efforts on securing the building and providing students with a safe learning environment and gradually focused her efforts on curriculum and the organizational structure. Although this principal faced an enormous task of creating a safe learning environment, changing teacher expectations, and setting a new direction for a failing urban school, she had personal resiliency and additional resources from a local bank that sponsored the school improvement process. Because the school has sustained high academic performance, parent involvement, and community partnerships over time, the bank has also sustained its commitment to the school.

Like many principals featured in the US "effective schools" studies, the Fraser principal had a strong curriculum and instructional management background when she assumed her position and knew first-hand the power of authentic literacy instruction for struggling learners. Early in her tenure, she sent several teachers for training at the Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project, whereby teachers gained theoretical understandings of the reading and writing process and then used those understandings to inform their teaching. Teachers also learned to integrate literacy throughout the academic and humanities curriculums in authentic ways. At the same time, the Fraser principal developed teachers' leadership capacity as team leaders of curriculum committees, literacy project implementation planning groups, and professional development.

The Fraser principal redesigned her school around professional learning and modeled appropriate instructional leadership behaviors. As a result, she gradually influenced teachers to take on leadership responsibilities. In so doing, she influenced teachers to cultivate deep understandings of how children acquire literacy and

content area curriculums in ways that helped build teacher leadership capacity throughout the school. When we revisited the school in 2005, Fraser was in the process of designation as a Teachers College Literacy model project, whereby other teachers from across the state could come and observe literacy instruction at Fraser.

Further, the Fraser principal nurtured and sustained strong parent and community involvement in school initiatives. If this principal needed parents to help with an initiative or community issue, parent volunteers would fill the school auditorium at a moment's notice. As teachers and parents developed their leadership capacity, they also learned how to communicate more openly about student learning and community needs and how to become more active learners themselves. As one teacher put it, "[The principal] practices what she preaches about authentic, active learning and high performance for all children with the adults in the school. You're expected to be a learner and implement that learning effectively in your classroom." A walk through the building reveals numerous parent volunteers and a sustained literacy curriculum with students reading and writing authentic literature in authentic contexts in spite of high teacher turnover during the charter conversion process. Furthermore, the principal is a respected and active community leader.

In sum, when the US team returned to Fraser Academy 5 years after the initial case study, we found that the principal's and teachers' love for children, education, and professional learning sustained them through difficult leadership experiences. The principal, teachers, and parents were self-driven leaders, committed to the core mission and values of Fraser Academy, and these commitments, values, and shared leadership capacity sustained them and made them resilient enough to withstand accountability pressures and other demands. School-community relationships were strong and vital for children's learning and community revitalization. At the same time, many teachers and parents expressed concern about what will happen when the Fraser principal retires. We include the next case of Colman Elementary for its deliberate long-term development and succession planning; however, the principal retired before we could revisit the school.

9.4.4 Colman Elementary

Colman Elementary School (K–5) is located in Sagamore, a first-ring suburb of a large Western New York urban district and has an enrollment of 513 students. The teaching faculty of the school is entirely White and female, and many have spent the majority of their teaching careers at the school. Like many first ring suburbs adjacent to US cities, Sagamore has become more racially, socially, and economically diverse in recent years, and longtime teachers from Colman note changing family structures in the school. Yet, students at Colman Elementary have consistently outperformed students (from schools with similar demographics) on standardized assessments over several years prior to data collection.

The principal is a White female in her late fifties with previous experience in urban, high-poverty schools; she has a caring, democratic leadership style and strong

pedagogical knowledge. Although she did not face the security challenges and achievement problems of Fraser and her previous schools, the veteran teachers at Colman greeted her with apprehension because she was from outside the district and an "unknown." She also notes that when she arrived, the school was "extremely traditional, teacher-centered, and the staff lacked cohesion and a sense of community."

Like Fraser, the Colman principal had strong pedagogical knowledge and quickly recognized the need for a more student-centered direction and philosophy appropriate to increasingly diverse student population. As she put it, "Teachers were quite traditional and very teacher-centered. I knew there would need to be a major shift in their thinking if we were to maintain our achievement level and improve it." She also recognized that teachers would need to have ownership of any philosophical changes; so, she quickly instituted shared decision-making teams to support emerging teacher leadership and organizational learning capacity. In the words of one of the teachers, she "boosts us up." Using these teacher-run committees, the principal developed and implemented a school-wide program of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson 2004) that gradually became the prevailing philosophy in the school. In other words, the Colman principal provided indirect influence on student learning by redesigning her school around collaboration and by developing teachers as instructional leaders.

At the same time, the Colman principal actively worked to cultivate and nurture diverse parent involvement. The school had a history of strong parent involvement; however, most parent involvement featured middle class families. In light of demographic shifts, the Colman principal personally encouraged minority parents to get involved in various school activities and parent groups. As accountability pressures increased, the principal used test data to solidify the school's commitment to differentiated instruction and equitable achievement for the school's increasingly diverse population.

In essence, the Colman principal fostered and sustained leadership capacity to support a major shift in teaching philosophy in her school. While the Colman principal did not have as many serious issues to overcome as in the Fraser case, she had to sustain high school performance with an increasingly diverse student population; a challenge faced by many contemporary US principals. The Colman case is an exemplary model of how to share leadership, develop parent involvement among increasingly diverse families, cultivate a student-centered philosophy, and maintain high school performance in the midst of changing demographics. Before the Colman principal retired, the school and district made a conscious decision to fill the principal role internally with a teacher leader committed to the school mission and philosophy. Five years after the leadership change, Colman Elementary staff members have been able to sustain their child-centered philosophy and high academic performance.

9.5 Australian Cases

The Australian educational context has many challenges and competing pressures. There is a bi-partisan emphasis by the major political parties on population growth with conservative projections indicating that Australia's population will increase by

more than 50% within the next 50 (ABS Population Projections, Australia, 2006–2101, cat. no. 3222.0) with most of this increase due to migration and an aging population rather than an increased birthrate. It is also likely the most of this growth will be in metropolitan areas, as Australia is characterized by large capital cities and then a thinly dispersed population outside of these cities. This places stress on the cities to provide services to newly arrived migrants, many of who will not have English as a first language.

Across State/Territory and Federal levels of government, there is considerable interest in developing successful schools in all contexts, for all students. Drivers for this focus include increased accountability (both locally, and increasingly internationally through PISA, TIMMS, and OECD country comparisons), competition between the public, Catholic and independent sectors, tensions between the State/Territory and Federal governments, greater knowledge as to what works in schools, and, above all, a desire to provide quality school education. The government school system, in particular, has the challenge of meeting the needs of students in communities which have low levels of income and meeting the needs of indigenous students; whilst Australia does well on international testing programs such as PISA and TIMMS, there is also a long-tail of underperformance mainly in indigenous and poor communities (Gillard 2008).

In this section, we report on the work of John Fleming at Bellfield Primary School (1992–2005) and Jan Shrimpton at South Morang Primary School (1999–2009); both government primary schools. In both cases, we have visited these schools on more than one occasion over several years. John's work is described more fully in Fleming and Kleinhenz (2007), Gurr et al. (2003), Gurr (2007), Hardy (2006), and Jan's work in Drysdale et al. (2009), and Gurr et al. (2011).

9.5.1 John Fleming, Bellfield Primary School

Bellfield was a small (220 student) government school in a high poverty suburb of Melbourne. During John's principalship, over 85% of families received government assistance, out of which 61% were one parent families and 25% were from non-English speaking backgrounds; in a system of over 1,600 schools, less than 20 schools had higher levels of poverty. It is located in an economically depressed area that is, in 2010, the subject of a major re-organization of government school provision in the area called the Heidelberg Schools Regeneration Project which involves the amalgamation of Bellfield Primary, Haig Street Primary, Olympic Village Primary, Northland Secondary College and Banksia ~ La Trobe Secondary into one Prep to Year 12 school, a birth to Year 4 school, and specialist years 10 to 13+ school:

> The project will deliver the Heidelberg community with state-of-the-art facilities and technology to help support students in their education, from birth to adulthood. (www.nmr.vic.edu.au/heidelberg)

While the Bellfield Primary School site will eventually close, it was a stand-out school in this area, with student performance exceeding expectations (e.g., in 2005, it was well above the stage average for reading, writing, spelling, number and mathematics at year 3 level) and with this largely due to John Fleming's leadership of the school for 10 years.

John is a passionate educator who wants to make a difference to lives of students and this was, and remains, his key reason for being a principal. After 15 years as a teacher, John became the assistant principal (1992) and then principal (1996) of Bellfield Primary School where he remained until he moved to another school in 2006.

John has exceptionally high expectations and a very positive, "can do" attitude. He demonstrates a strong belief that every student can learn and achieve in all areas. For example, he believes that with appropriate teaching, all children can be independent readers by the end of year 1 (age 7). He demonstrates a high level of energy, excellent pedagogical and curriculum knowledge, and a capacity to develop and align staff. He is ever present, regularly visiting classes to work with students and teachers, to help them improve. John's clearly articulated values, beliefs and vision, focus on providing teachers with individualized support and developing their personal and professional capacity. There are also organizational and community capacity elements that John has emphasized, especially building a physically and emotionally safe environment, building social capital and developing parent-school partnership. John is different from most principals in that he can demonstrate direct influence on the quality of instruction, curriculum and assessment and student learning.

A clear learning and social framework, backed by research evidence, practical experience, and a combination of presence, passion and energy, allowed John to create and sustain an aligned and energized learning community, one in which students were able to do their best. He developed a view of education that includes four pillars as he describes:

> The first pillar is that we believe in teacher directed learning, not child centred learning. The second pillar is that we believe in explicit instruction. Our third pillar is exceptionally important; we believe in moving kids knowledge from short term to long-term memory. Our fourth pillar states that none of the top three will take their place effectively unless you have very good relationships with your kids.

With the four pillars there were also "six givens": excellent relationships between students and teachers, high expectations, excellent presentation skills, provision of feedback, display of student work, and setting the right tone for the school. Having a clearly articulated view concerning core pedagogical approaches is part of the story. John also has a clear understanding about the type of school environment that will promote learning. Students, he says, essentially need three things: They need teachers that care for them, they need friends, and they need to be given work at their level of ability. Importantly, when John first arrived at Bellfield PS one of his first challenges was to make the school a physically and emotionally safe place for students. The physical side was helped by developing an agreed whole-school approach to working with students. High expectations, developing pride in the

school, and celebrating student achievement both academic and non-academic, all helped to make the school emotionally safe.

He had a clear vision and established excellent school community alignment, managed the educational production function in a very hands-on manner, had high expectations about academic learning, and was expert at developing a supportive work climate. John loves the challenge of helping people to develop, and particularly enjoys working with teachers to improve their practice. Staff members are encouraged to attend professional learning, either within the school or outside. John is an active participant in internal professional learning, promotes supportive teacher feedback and models to staff appropriate behavior and the importance of learning. John works extensively with teachers and expects all to show commitment to the students and to the school, and to want to improve. He realizes that not all the teachers will be extraordinary teachers, but if they are willing to support the school direction and to work to improve their practice, then John will support them "100%." For John getting the most out of teachers is about creating a high expectation, data-driven learning environment. As John describes, sustaining success is about creating "a culture in which teachers are accountable, keeping data that is fair dinkum [real], setting high expectations, going in and watching teachers teach formally …"

9.5.2 Jan Shrimpton, Morang South Primary School

Morang South Primary School is a co-educational government primary school that was first established as a rural school in 1877. It is situated some 23 km north of the central business district of Melbourne. The school caters for children from Preparatory Year to Year 6 with an age range between 5 and 12 years. The school was moved to a new site in 1996 to cater for new housing estates being built in the now outer suburban area. The school had grown from 322 students in 1999 to a peak of 611 in 2005, and then declined to 512 students in 2008 due to new schools being opened nearby. In terms of the index of community socio-educational advantage (www.myschool.edu.au), 16% of students are in the bottom quarter and 74% in the lower middle quarter, indicating that disposable income for most families is low. The proportion of students with English as a second language is at the median level of Victorian schools (morangsouthps.vic.edu.au/pdf).

Morang South Primary School was visited in 2004 and 2008. The last visit occurred just before Jan retired. Jan was appointed in 1999 due to government concern about the school's poor performance. She had earlier made her reputation in turning around school performance at Olympic Village Primary School (see the Heidelberg Schools Regeneration Project mentioned previously); this was important as she both had a confidence in her work as principal and a repertoire of skills and knowledge to use. When we visited the school in 2004, performance had significantly improved on all measures of success. The principal was credited as the main driving force due to her strategic interventions and personal leadership.

The key features of her leadership were her leadership style, personal philosophy and values, and personal characteristics. In terms of her leadership style, she was described as a positive role model, inspirational, and empathetic. Jan's style was consultative and conciliatory. Her personal characteristics included integrity, high energy, sensitivity, enthusiasm, and persistence. Her personal philosophy was centered on developing the whole child and not just focusing on academic results. Most importantly, she was able to rebuild the relationship among staff and with the community. The first key strategic intervention was to mend fences with the parents and the wider school community who had been alienated by the previous school administration. She reached out to the community by going out and meeting them on their own terms. She re-engaged parents, for example, by gaining consensus on a set of school values that became the cornerstone of the school's social competencies program. She established close relationship with community agencies, services organizations, and tertiary institutions to gain support and initiate support programs for students.

Other interventions include Quality Education Program in the classroom, establishing teams across the school, recruiting talented teachers, opening-up classrooms so that teachers work more often in teams, and introducing a "values-based approach" as opposed to a "rules-based approach" to develop good student behavior.

When we returned, we found that the school had maintained its performance, despite internal and external changes. External changes included changes in government policy and new initiatives (e.g., a new curriculum and assessment framework, increased emphasis on student learning outcomes), demographic changes such as increasing cultural diversity and lower income levels in the families attending the school, and the impact of new schools in the area. Internally, there was a 15% decline in enrollments due to opening of new schools in the area, and the staff profile was now much older as several talented younger teachers had gained promotion to other schools and they had not replaced due to the declining enrollment situation. We found that the reasons she was able to maintain success were for the same reasons that had brought about the initial turnaround – her focused leadership, an inclusive leadership style, and personal characteristics, values and competencies that focused on developing and supporting people. The 2007 School Review Report from an external school reviewer noted:

> It is a good, successful school which aims to consistently provide high quality education and continuously improve (School Review Report 2007)

The report attributed the success to a strong sense of purpose and community, a high level of collegiality, strong leadership, and quality professional learning.

Jan had done well to maintain performance given the impact of the system reforms, demographic changes, and the nature of the changes in school staffing profile. Jan attempted to embed the changes that she had initiated over time and was somewhat reluctant to instigate new changes, especially as some of the systems reforms (such as an increasing emphasis national test results) went against her philosophy of educating the whole child. Because of this, we have described Jan as a "Restorer–Builder" who was able to restore the school's reputation,

performance, parent-staff relationships, and community support. She was able to build the capacity of staff and community to engage in school improvement. She was not, however, willing to gain further student learning improvement at any cost; she emphasized a balance between striving for high academic results and developing the whole child and maintaining a supportive school environment.

9.6 Discussion

In this section, we discuss similarities and differences in sustainable leadership practices from the US and Australian cases. To begin, the US case schools sustained success over time, and while the Fraser principal's tenure exceeded that of Colman, both schools and leaders exhibited several dimensions of sustainability that are relevant to challenging schools:

- A combination of self-leadership, personal leadership resiliency, and commitment to the schools' mission supported the principals and other school members through long-term development.
- The principals establish high expectations for academic and non-academic success.
- The principals influenced others and fostered teacher leadership capacity in ways that enabled school resiliency and self-renewal.
- The principals engaged with the broader community context.
- They fostered and sustained child-centered school philosophies that unified school and parent/community efforts.
- The principals modeled deep understandings of curriculum and current instructional practices.
- Previous experience made a difference in the principals' abilities to sustain success in their challenging school contexts.

For the Australian schools we featured two schools: Bellfield PS was a school in very challenging circumstances, and while Morang South PS was less challenging, it represented schools on the outer fringe of a large metropolitan city and how these schools cope with changing circumstances. The leadership of John and Jan illustrate several important features for sustaining success in challenging circumstances:

- Schools have to be physically and emotionally safe places for students and staff.
- School's leaders need to develop educational beliefs, values, knowledge, and an educational direction that fits with their school's context, and then use these to help drive improvement.
- High expectations for academic and non-academic success are important.
- People are important. In particular, teachers need direct and indirect support and encouragement to develop their teaching.
- Knowledge is important. Principals are key to ensuring that teachers understand what works in schools.

- The curriculum needs to be rich and pedagogy needs to be targeted to the learning needs of students.
- Data on student and school performance is necessary but not sufficient for school improvement. Setting directions, developing people, developing the school, and managing teaching and learning are the key leadership areas of action that lead to improvement, supported by a range of appropriate data.

Across the US and Australian cases of schools in challenging circumstances, then, it is evident that the four leadership dimensions of setting direction, developing people, developing the school, and improving teaching and learning identified by Leithwood and colleagues were significant in their sustained success over time. The four principals had clearly articulated views on education and helped their schools set appropriate directions. They were all concerned with the professional development of teachers and other staff as part of building capacity and teacher leadership. All principals were focused on improving the quality of the teaching and learning, and in essence all were instructional leaders who directly or indirectly influenced teaching and learning. They created and/or developed guiding educational philosophies, structures, processes and practices within the school to support teachers and students as the schools developed over time. Whilst these dimensions were important for these schools, and probably necessary in any context, there were other factors that seemed to be especially important for the challenging contexts of these schools.

In all cases, the personal side of leadership was demonstrated to be a key factor, and perhaps this is even more important when the context presents significant challenges. The principals were committed to making a difference. Their commitment underpinned other qualities such as resilience and their motivation to sustain their efforts over time. They had high self-efficacy and they carried with them high expectations of themselves and others. Further, these principals all emphasized the importance of establishing excellent personal relationships within the schools. It is also important to note, however, that none of the principals were willing to attain high test scores at the expense of the whole child and a supportive school environment.

Closely related, the principals created safe child-centered learning environments. Early in their tenures, all four principals provided a secure, nurturing environment for learning. In the most challenging schools, the principals physically secured the building, limiting access to the school and screening visitors (Fraser principal), or seeking intervention orders to prevent disruptive parents from entering the school (John Fleming). It also meant more careful scrutiny of who had access to classrooms and when it was appropriate to enter, so as not to disrupt instruction. These security initiatives were coupled with efforts to make the school more inviting to children and adults alike. In essence, while doors were being locked, the school was actually more open than in the past, so long as your purpose in coming to school passed the aforementioned test of being in the interest of children (Ylimaki et al. 2007). Over time, these principals all gradually shifted their efforts from the learning environment to curriculum development. While these cases differed in terms of curriculum and pedagogical philosophy, all of these principals nurtured and sustained child-centered curricula.

Another key dimension was building community. More specifically, these principals reached out to their communities. They clearly understood that they could not succeed in isolation. They built bridges and connected with their communities. They showed a genuine interest in their communities by modeling appropriate behavior, playing a unifying role, demonstrating high expectations and investing emotion in their relationships. Often, they extended their leadership into the wider community by establishing strong working relationships with community agencies and institutions to support the school. It is important to note that support was reciprocal; community agencies and organizations frequently provided resources and other support for school improvement. Leithwood and Steinbach (2003) argued that for schools in challenging circumstances to achieve exceptional student learning outcomes, principal and school members were required to engage with families deeply, to ensure that family and educational cultures were mutually supportive (e.g., aspirational, valuing school, ensuring students got to school on time, and so forth) and that social capital was enhanced (e.g., ensuring students were connected with the wider world, bringing community expertise into the school and so forth). The Fraser and Morang South principals, and to a lesser extent the Colman principal, are outstanding examples of this as they not only focused on developing staff, but also on developing parents so that they could actively and purposefully engage with the school. The principal of Bellfield, whilst he gained parent support, was more focused on developing staff and the school environment, and less so on developing parents and family cultures. He enhanced the social networks of students, but it may well be the case that had he focused more on family educational cultures student outcomes may have been improved further.

Commonalities across cases are immediately apparent, but so too are some differences. The case study schools differ both within countries and across countries in size, background history, particular challenges, stage of sustainable development, curriculum philosophy, and culture. Further, schools differ with regards to size and racial and ethnic diversity. Nonetheless, all of the principals overcame numerous challenges to foster and sustain school success over time.

Drawing on our case study findings, we suggest that leadership preparation programs give particular consideration to nurturing and sustaining leadership in challenging schools. Aspiring school leaders need to understand the extent to which leadership skills contribute to success over time and how these skills are mediated by challenging school contexts. Regarding future research, studies of school leadership in challenging schools needs to be expanded to include a longitudinal component to help practitioners and policymakers better understand: (1) how school improvement and the leadership practices that support it evolve over time; and, (2) the factors that need to be considered in terms of sustaining improvement after the first successful leader leaves. As many schools face the challenges featured in this chapter (e.g., shifting demographics, security, accountability, rapid curriculum changes and teacher turn-over), principals must have the skills and resiliency to build teacher leadership, parent/community support, and commitment to foster and sustain school's success over time.

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Chapter 10
Sustaining Improvements in Student Learning and Achievement: The Importance of Resilience in Leadership

Christopher Day, Olof Johansson, and Jorunn Møller

10.1 Introduction

This chapter is organised in two parts. The first discusses the definitions of success provided by principals in six of the countries in the ISSPP project who sustained the success of their schools. As part of an ongoing international cooperative research project, we revisited schools 5–6 years after our initial research with them to find out to what extent the principals who had stayed in the same school had been able to sustain their earlier success and whether changes in the external social and policy and internal environments had affected them. We found that, although they adapted their leadership practices according to their judgements about how changes in external and internal conditions might be mediated, their core values remained constant and a source of their resilience. The second part then explores the nature of leadership resilience and identifies a cluster of qualities which are associated with it.

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10.2 Sustaining Success

Our interviews with these successful principals and key members of their staff in schools in six countries, each with their unique political, social and educational traditions and each at a different stage of implementing the 'New Public Management' agenda might be expected to reveal different perceptions of what success meant to them. On the contrary, however, all spoke of success in broadly similar ways. Improving and supporting working conditions, a focus on staff motivation and development, and close cooperation with parents were all vital factors for creating and sustaining a successful school. They talked about equity and equality, and the moral imperative was at the forefront of the purposes and practices of those working in these schools. Both principals and teachers wanted to 'make a difference' in these terms. Even though the focus of educational reforms in defining success of educational outcomes in terms of student test scores had become a central issue for principals in all the countries, it did not seem to influence these principals' approaches to leadership. They argued that depending on student enrolment, student outcomes would vary from 1 year to another and that education was not only about raising test scores.

Success was defined broadly in terms of improving academic, social and personal progress and achievement and attainments which are externally acknowledged. In this sense alone, it seems that, regardless of geographical, political, social, educational or linguistic contexts, principals have visions for the progress and achievement of their students which are underscored by a deep seated belief in principles of equity and social justice, democratic engagement, well-being, individual achievement and attainment, social harmony and success for all. Here are examples of how principals from these six countries participating in ISSPP spoke of their criteria for success:

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

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

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

> You can't ask people to do things that you're not willing to do yourself. If you're not willing to stay after and come in on Saturday, and if you're not willing to sit in the office and help a kid who's after school, then don't ask anyone else to do it. These things have happened. Leading by example, especially a willingness to do the hard work of teaching is the biggest thing that's made a difference. She's going a stand out on the street corner with everybody else in the rain to make sure the kids all get outside. I think if you honesty look at it, it's made all the difference in the world.
>
> (Teacher, USA)

> To me, a successful school is able to motivate students, and to provide a safe and sound learning environment. It is important to create this foundation for learning. The school should not be evaluated based on marks or test scores only, because it will create a misleading picture. The most important aim is to develop active citizens, to develop a collaborative attitude, tolerance and creativity, and that is not easily measured by tests in basic subjects.
>
> (Principal, Norway)

Five years after the initial visits to successful principals, those who had remained in the same school in six countries were revisited, with staff and students, re-interviewed and documentation concerning the school was analysed and compared. Below we provide brief illustrations of how principals and their schools had been affected over the intervening years.

10.2.1 Australia

A primary school in Australia had been identified as a 'turnaround school' in 2003 and its success had been identified with: 'Improved performance in literacy and numeracy … development of a clearly defined philosophy; collaborative, happy, committed staff; positive and rich learning environment for the children; community support; and a sound reputation in the community' (Drysdale et al. 2009: 701).

In 2008, the school had changed as a result of demographics and initiatives by the Education Department. The head was about to retire and had planned for her deputy to succeed her. The school had, however, maintained its overall performance and there had been a decline in incidents with serious consequences 'from 481 in 2004 to 26 in 2007' (ibid: 703). Jan, the head, had:

> Built appropriate structures that encouraged learning teams and built important connections and alliances within the community that helped provide support and resources for the school.
>
> (ibid: 706)

Yet, Jan's resilience had been tested by the new results-driven governmental agendas and it was noted that the school staff were more comfortable in their ambition than they had previously been. The Australian example, then, shows that, whilst principal resilience is a necessary condition for sustaining success, it is insufficient in itself for meeting new uncomfortable challenges. Both Jan and her successor were driven by strong ethics of social justice within moral purpose.

10.2.2 Denmark

As with the Australian case, the Danish researchers found that in revisiting three secondary school principals, the changing external policy contexts had influenced their work. Yet, whilst in all three cases they were, 'very much aware that they have to … take new expectations to teachers and discuss with them how to transform old practices into new practices that are compliant with the demands' (Moos and Kofod 2009: 716), nevertheless, 'The basic for the translations and transformation is trust in teachers' (op. cit: 716). However, sustaining their own and their teachers' commitment to school, teaching and learning 'has become a more challenging task than before' (op. cit: 716) as, 'the dominant discourse of "a good/successful school" has been challenged in shifting the focus from the tradition vision of "Democratic Bildung" towards more focus on basics like literacy and numeracy' (op. cit: 716).

10.2.3 England

Again, the dominance of policy discourse continues to create more challenges for schools in England. However, Tom, the head of a secondary school continued to achieve success. In 2002, he had said:

> I want somehow to hold on to serendipity, to allow things to happen in the school which are not necessarily what (government) thinks we should be doing … I think we have to be courageous to do those things … If we can undermine and chew away at and dismantle this awful, micro-managed rat race that's being pushed on us, that stops us from breathing …
>
> (Principal)

In 2008, the school remained successful both in terms of value-added student national attainment results and in enriching both the curriculum in school and community and other (inter-school) partnerships and networks. A long standing colleague said of Tom:

> When you talk to him he is almost breathless will all the passion … it's never dry here, it's exciting …;
>
> (LA Adviser)

Tom and his staff had countered the potentially corrosive effects of reform by asserting their 'a priori' duty of educating the whole person. In leading this, Tom has exercised the progressive distribution of trust with staff, pupils and parents in building and sustaining capacities for care and achievement. As Tschannen-Moran has observed:

> Discerning the proper level of trust requires wisdom and discernment on the part of the educational leader. Optimal trust is prudent, measured, and conditional.
>
> (Tschannen-Moran 2004: 57)

10.2.4 Norway

Norwegian schools, also, had been subject to changing instrumental policy discourses in the years between the first and second visits. Yet, the work of two of the principals who had stayed in the same school continued to be, 'characterised by a blend of human, professional and civic concerns' and their intentions have been and still are to cultivate an environment for learning that is humanly fulfilling and socially responsible (Møller et al. 2009: 739). Both principals, like Tom in England, were experienced and deeply committed to these and all, like Tom, focused on, 'multiple ways of influencing staff motivation, commitment and working conditions … and the moral imperative of developing the whole child' (op. cit: 739). At an upper secondary school, the principal emphasised that the core values for the school were the same as they were formulated 5 years ago, as were the criteria for a good school; to see the whole student and to get the best out of each individual. The school's practices and the principal's involvement in the student council and student participation had also been enduring. The student outcomes were at an average level compared to other upper secondary schools in the county, but the principal argued that one has to take into account the recruitment of students in terms of getting more students with weak academic achievements and low school motivation. The school was located at the periphery, and the bright students with good marks from compulsory education had a tendency to choose schools located in more urban areas. At this school, they also had attracted students with special educational needs because the school had become known in the local community to do excellent work with such students. The principal stressed that the school's mission was to provide good teaching and learning environment for all their students and in particular for those students with great problems. A low drop-out rate was considered as an important success criteria, given the background of the students enrolled.

None of the principals limited their understanding of success to excellent student outcomes, but took the students and the school context into consideration when they defined success. A professional ethos seemed to be guiding their work. As with principals in other countries, a common characteristic was equity and social justice as personal commitment, an ethic of care and a concern for the common good. At the same time, the principals argued that it would be wrong to establish a dichotomy between an ethic of care and working for high academic achievement on the part of the students. Particularly, the principal at the multicultural school emphasised that he focused a lot on improving student achievement, 'we will not lean backwards and say that this is because of many minority language students'. He had a clear sense of purpose related to how to create a learning environment in which *all* children may not only feel they belong to, but also in which they may be successful. The high support of the parents was considered as criteria of success, particularly at compulsory level. They were not dictated by the shifting political contexts in which they work, but they demonstrated to some degree responsiveness to this context rather than compliance.

10.2.5 Sweden

As with other successful principals in ISSPP, the two secondary school principals were initially, 'very self-confident and outspoken, convinced of their capacity to implement higher efficiency and school improvement through changes in structure and culture of the school' (Höög et al. 2009: 742).

> They showed high self esteem and an internal locus of control which helped them to challenge problems.
>
> (op. cit: 742)

Five years later, both schools had maintained high academic standards. Although, as in other countries, there had been a policy shift towards more outcomes-driven work, the dual emphasis on social and academic outcomes and 'happy' students had remained. In the two schools, cultures of collaboration between the principal and different teacher teams, 'based on trust, dialogue, knowledge and a great deal of social competence' (op. cit: 751) remained. It is very clear that the democratic approach to lead together with the teacher teams in both schools has been very successful, that the teacher teams really experienced being part of the leadership in the schools and that they took pride in being able to give the students an excellent learning experience whilst at the same time being able to present good test scores to the school board.

10.2.6 America

The examination of how an elementary school principal with more than 30 years of experience as an educator, sustained success in a high challenging school context, resulted that, 'Sustaining success … has been an on-going effort to create a governance structure that supports and rewards organisational learning through self-renewal and personal and professional collective growth' (Jacobson et al. 2009: 754). The school had not only improved its level of academic performance in relation to other district schools, it had, 'the same sense of clear purpose and direction' (op. cit: 762). Moreover, as with those in our other cases:

> … the principal is still the central figure in maintaining its direction. But a significant redesign (in becoming a Charter school) helped allay concerns about continued, long-term success, even beyond the principal's eventual retirement. Structures for teacher self-renewal are now in place, which create on-site collegial professional development through the leadership of teachers themselves.
>
> (op. cit: 763)

What all these stories also reveal is the addition and accumulation of responsibilities, accountabilities and number of tasks which principals have had to manage and, in many cases, lead. These, inevitably, call for the possession and application of broader sets of political, intra- and inter personal and organisational qualities, strategies and skills. Because all principals need to lead and manage in social arenas

which are often charged with emotion, they need to be emotionally resilient, to possess an inner strength which will enable them to lead.

10.3 The Nature and Need for Resilience

Resilience has always been desirable in principalship but has now become an imperative. Yet, there is little external research on the nature and enactment of resilience and its relationship to successful principalship. This second part of the chapter will, therefore, examine the nature of resilience as a psychological and socially dynamic construct in three areas:

1. Emotional resilience
2. Challenges to resilience; schools which serve disadvantaged communities
3. Resilient qualities associated with success

10.3.1 Emotional Resilience

To lead at one's best over time requires resilience. It is an essential quality and a necessary capacity to exercise both for principals and teachers. Whilst the concept of resilience elaborated in the discipline of psychology helps clarify the personal characteristics of trait-resilient people, it fails to address how the capacity to be resilient in different sets of positive and negative circumstances, whether these be connected to personal or professional factors, can be enhanced or inhibited by the nature of the external and internal environments in which we work, the people with whom we work and the strength of our beliefs or aspirations (Day et al. 2006).

Thus, the more traditional, psychologically derived notions that it is, 'the ability to bounce back in adverse circumstances' do not lend themselves to the selfhood or indeed the work of school principals or their staffs. The process of teaching, learning and leading requires those who are engaged in them to have a resolute persistence and commitment which is much more than the ability to bounce back in adverse circumstances.

Rather, it is a construct that is relative, developmental and dynamic (Rutter 1990). It is thus both a product of personal and professional dispositions and values influenced by organisational and personal factors and determined by individuals' capacities to manage context-specific factors. For example, teachers may respond positively or negatively in the presence of challenging circumstances, and this will depend on the quality of organisational or colleague leadership as well as the strength of their own commitment. Extended collaborations, for example, need to be managed in order to avoid their potential for 'collaborative inertia' (Huxham and Vangen 2005: 13). The social construction of leadership resilience acknowledges, as the psychological construction does not, the important effects of such personal, professional

and situated pressures on the capacities of heads to sustain their emotional well-being and professional commitment.

We can describe many situations where the emotional well-being and professional commitment of the principal is challenged by changes in school public policies or laws decided by the government or the parliament. When existing professional norms, traditions, roles and ways of working are disturbed, staff may feel threatened and emotionally insecure. In these situations, where external and internal environments need particular attention, the leader's resilience capacities may be severely tested. However, successful leaders seem to know that, whilst giving voice and arguing for another standpoint seems to be impossible where there is a new law, they can find room to manoeuvre, for example, by using all the leeway there is in the law in accommodating it into their own school system. In doing so, they are able to manage the emotional turbulence which often accompanies externally initiated reform. This is a strategy we can find among all successful principals in relation to the demands of new public management accountability, and it demands resilience.

10.3.2 Challenges to Resilience: Schools Which Serve Disadvantaged Communities

A growing amount of research evidence suggests that whilst there are generic qualities, strategies and skills which are common to all, successful principals who lead schools serving disadvantaged communities face a greater range of more persistent, intensive challenges than others and so not only need to posses these qualities to a greater degree but also need different qualities and skills which are specific to the context of their schools.

Because many of the students in these schools are at greater risk of under achieving in their personal, social and academic lives, it is particularly important to examine conditions which may work to improve this. It is not that principals in more advantaged schools work less hard or are less committed, but rather that the sets of skills and attributes used by principals in more disadvantaged schools is different and, we found, more complex, than those in more advantaged schools.

> Different leadership strategies may be effective in different circumstances and also … the principal's purposes and the ways they act out their beliefs, values and visions in the contexts in which they work make the difference between success and failure.
>
> (Day and Leithwood 2007: 174)

By any standards, being a principal is a tough job, then, in cognitive, emotional and physical terms. But it is also important to remember that all principals are not successful and that some schools underperform year after year in relation to expected outcome even when we control for social factors. Most of the times we blame the students but the right answer is probably that both teachers and leaders underperform. That these kind of schools are allowed to underperform year after year is in all democratic societies a democratic problem. In these contexts, the principal might

still have strong moral purpose and high resilience but not the strategies or skills to change the school culture. So resilience is not, in itself, an indicator of or condition for success.

10.4 Resilience Qualities Associated with Success

There are four qualities, in particular, that successful principals in particular seem to possess which build and sustain resilience in their schools:

1. A willingness to take (calculated) risks based upon clear educational values despite the vulnerability of doing so
2. Academic optimism
3. Trust
4. Hope

10.4.1 Vulnerability and Risk

Pat Thomson, in her recent book, 'School Leadership: Heads on The Block?' (2009) characterises principalship as a risky business and cites Beck et al. (1994) who argue that the growth of a risk society has caused three practices to be integral to the everyday life of principals:

1. Risk assessment – the development of calculative practices which anticipate possible risks
2. Risk avoidance – taking decisions based on the potential for adverse consequences
3. Risk management planning – the development of rational plans to be used when risks become reality to deal with effects and prevent them spreading

(Thomson 2009: 4)

She juxtaposes these practices, however, with, 'an overemphasis on regurgitation of prescribed materials that lead to failure of experiment, to dream of possibilities, to explore potential avenues and to face the reality of making a mistake' (Thomson 2009: 8). Successful classrooms in successful schools are those in which risk occurs. Principals who encourage this may be said to be vulnerable to criticism where what they do does not comply with policy imperatives; and others have noted the need for courage, an essential virtue of successful leadership. International research on successful principals' work has shown that among the qualities of successful principals are those associated with risk taking in the interests of challenging the boundaries of teaching and learning for the intrinsic and extrinsic moral good of the learners rather than compliance with the relatively narrow attainment targets of governments. Successful leaders embody, also, a passion for learning and an abiding sense of optimism (Day and Leithwood 2007; Day et al. 2011).

It is important, however, to challenge the view that government or parliament targets for schools always are narrow and short-sighted. In most democratic societies, these targets are the result of long and rigorous evaluation processes. A policy is not necessarily wrong or ill advised simply because it goes against the existing school culture. Even here, the resilience of the principal is of great importance. If the principal has a strong belief about teaching and learning for the best of all children, new targets can be analysed and understood by the leader in a way that promotes his own standpoints. Again, the resilience capacity will help a principal to implement new policies continuing to look at children's learning as more central than test scores. This underlines the importance to resilience of strong values, knowledge and understandings.

10.4.2 Academic Optimism

Academic optimism in teachers has been defined as teachers' individual and collective beliefs, 'that they can teach effectively, their students can learn and parents will support them so that the teacher can press hard for learning' (Beard et al. 2010). It includes, 'cognitive, affective and behavioural components of optimism merging into a single integrated construct' (op. cit: 1142) and is associated with relational and organisational trust (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Seashore-Louis 2007) nurtured, built and spread by successful principals.

Whilst it follows that academic optimism is a necessary constituent for success for teachers it is not unreasonable to argue that academic optimism is a characteristic which is common to all successful heads too. Indeed, Beard et al. (2010) also associate academic optimism with 'enabling' school cultures, defined by Hoy and Miskel (2005) as hierarchies that help rather than hinder and systems of rules and regulations which guide problem solving rather than punish failure.

10.4.3 Trust

The Oxford English Dictionary defines trust as, 'confidence in or reliance on some quality or attribute of a person or thing'. Trust is, then, associated, also, with, 'the quality of being trustworthy, fidelity, reliability and loyalty' (www.oecd.com). In other words, trust and trustworthiness are in a reciprocal relationship. It is claimed that, 'a presumption of trust rather than a presumption of mistrust helps individuals and organisations to flourish' (Seldon 2009, Preface).

> As role models, leaders across society must meet two key criteria of trustworthiness: behave ethically and be technically proficient. The power of leaders to build or destroy trust is vast. Without honesty and competence, suspicion will grow …
>
> (Seldon 2009: 26)

In these words, Seldon captures the power of school leaders to determine the moral purposes and culture (the norms of behaviour, the way we relate to each other) of the school.

Trust is an individual, relational and organisational concept, and its presence and repeated enactment are as vital to successful school improvement as any expression of values, attributes and the decisions which heads may make. It cannot be fully separated from any of these elements of leadership. Indeed, recent research has suggested that, 'trust in leaders both determines organisational performance and is a product of organisational performance' (Seashore-Louis 2007: 4).

It follows that the progressive distribution of trust is an active process which must be led and managed. To do so successfully, however, requires more than actions. It requires that the leader possesses qualities of wisdom, discernment and strategic acumen. Moreover, trust in organisations is not unconditional:

> Discerning the proper level of trust requires wisdom and discernment on the part of the educational leader. Optimal trust is prudent, measured, and conditional.
>
> (Tschannen-Moran 2004: 57)

A resilient leader of a democratic organisation, who wants to move his or her school forward, needs to be able to make decisions about the school and learning processes in such a way that the staff consider the decisions to be democratic and fair. Trust in an organisation requires transparency in the leadership.

10.4.4 Hope

Successful leadership is, by definition, a journey of hope based upon a set of ideals. Arguably, it is our ideals that sustain us through difficult times and changing personnel and professional environments. They are an essential part of resilience:

> Having hope means that one will not give in to overwhelming anxiety … Indeed, people who are hopeful evidence less depression than others as they maneuver through life in pursuit of their goals, are less anxious in general, and have fewer emotional distresses.
>
> (Goleman 1995: 87)

The evidence from research is that resilient leaders who sustain success in student learning and achievement are always beacons of hope in their schools and communities.

However, whilst resilience is an essential attribute, in itself it is not enough. Poor leaders (and teachers) may be resilient. They may survive without changing, without improving. Resilience without moral purpose, without a willingness to be self-reflective and learn in order to change in order to continue to improve is not enough. Resilience, then, cannot be considered in isolation from these and other constructs of commitment, competence, agency, vocation, individual and collective academic optimism, trust and hope-based.

10.5 Discussion

Revisiting these successful school principals provided strong evidence of how sustaining their moral and ethical values and purposes, particularly those concerned with promoting equity and social justice, had contributed to the continuing success of their schools. During the last three decades, there have been increasing concerns about the quality of schooling. Emphasis on competition and individualism have increased and it can be argued that these are now valued over cooperation and interdependence. We continue to witness a development towards a stronger focus on educational quality in terms of student achievements and more output-oriented means of governing. The external policy focus has shifted to more or less well-defined expectations of what has to be achieved by whom, and only those outcomes which meet the predefined criteria seem to be considered as success (Hopmann 2007). The main findings based on revisiting successful school principals 5 years later, demonstrate, however, a situation of continuity in the promotion and application of a broader concern for the education and well-being of students at school level.

Outcome-based expectations are often imbued with paradoxes and ambiguity, and as such the situation is creating leeway for practitioners to interpret the policies. Aims and initiatives for quality development may be imposed externally, or they may be results of local decisions. However, these successful principals look upon themselves as guardians of certain values that are now at risk. They view their schools as both autonomous institutions and 'embedded in and accountable to' system level structures, whether they be at district, regional or national levels. Through these linkages, education is connected to broader community affairs. In most local authorities/districts/municipalities, teachers in these schools still enjoy considerable trust and autonomy, and relationships are not very hierarchical in practice. Even though the work of leaders in schools has been influenced by the discourse of New Public Management, with a focus on managerial accountability, schools still have considerable room to manouevre. Successful principals recognise this and pay little attention to managerial accountability. A successful school, in the view of these principals and their staff, is a school that succeeds in taking care of all children, regardless of social-economic or cultural background and abilities and gives each one of them the very best learning experiences possible.

These principals' stories mirror to some degree the central debates at national levels and demonstrate how the PISA findings have had consequences for educational policy, particularly in the Nordic countries. However, the argument is that the guidance of educational policy and practice committed to equity and social justice requires something more than approaches to accountability reliant on narrow measurement and performance indicators. So, despite the new expectations which are raised towards schools in society, the main findings demonstrate a situation of continuity at the local school level. This continuity of success is reflected in the stories of principals' capacities to promote good relationships among the staff members, and the moral imperative of developing the whole child which is still at the forefront of those working in these schools. Their schools' main aims continue to be to

provide good learning opportunities so all children can become good citizens in the future. Improving and supporting working conditions, focusing on staff motivation, close cooperation with parents, and working for equity are all vital factors for creating such a successful school. It still seems to be leeway for school principals to interpret the national educational policy to match their own values.

What is clear, then, from the evidence provided by multi-perspective research into the ways in which successful principals in each of these six countries lead is that:

1. Initial success did not mean that principals could 'consolidate' or 'stand still'. All were continuing to expand and depend on what success meant for pupils, teachers and the community.
2. All had been subject to continuing interventions through new government-initiated accountabilities and standards-driven reforms. This had affected all that work to a greater or lesser extent.
3. All had met these challenges without sacrificing their core moral/ethical purposes, by building collegial, collaborative, cultures within and outside the school.
4. All had progressively distributed leadership across the school but had done so in contexts of informed trust.
5. All remained pivotal to the schools' success and, in the context of this lecture.
6. All had demonstrated resilience.

10.6 Conclusions

School leadership is a relational concept, and, in the six countries illustrated in this chapter, is situated in democratic governance structures and policies that aim at educating students for citizenship in a democratic society. Though there are country- and culture-specific differences in the meaning of democratic, these are not radical. Leadership for democratic education includes recognising the basic values and rights of each individual; taking the standpoint of others into consideration; deliberation in making decisions; embracing plurality and difference; and promoting equity and social justice. Our findings demonstrate that for successful leaders, there is no dichotomy between discourses and practices of social justice and working for high academic achievement on the parts of the students. On the contrary, leadership for improved learning for children is characterised by a clear sense of moral/ethical purpose related to how to create learning environments in which all students and staff may not only feel they belong to, but also in which they may be successful. Yet, such leadership requires that leaders are beacons of hope, engage in risk, distribute trust and hope progressively in a wise and timely manner, and are able to be resilient and build the capacities of others to be resilient.

Leadership is also about power, and school principals are vested with formal powers that include a range of means of compulsion and reward, including economic and

structural sanctions. The power of the principal has its source outside the school because it is delegated by the State. Our research shows how successful principals, in collaboration with their staff, continually work to mediate government policy and external changes so that they are able to be integrated with the school's values. The principals had a democratic mission and their leadership had an impact on other people within and beyond the organisation. Moreover, they lead in the knowledge that despite the democratic rhetoric in policy documents across all the countries participating in the study competition, and individualism are on the rise and valued over cooperation and interdependence, living in changing definitions of what a democracy means should cause all of us to deliberate about our values and our choices.

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Chapter 11
Preparation for Sustainable Leadership

David Gurr, Lawrie Drysdale, Rose Ylimaki, and Stephen L. Jacobson

11.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the preparation pathways of successful school leaders who have been able to sustain school success. We do this through comparing two countries, the USA and Australia that have contrasting preparation contexts and provide endpoints in a formal to informal continuum for principal preparation. Across the USA, there is generally a requirement for formal pre-service leadership preparation, whereas in Australia there are no formal preparation requirements, or within most school contexts, expectations by employing authorities in regard to formal or informal preparation. In between these extremes, countries such as England and Sweden have moved to more formal requirements in recent times (e.g., the once voluntary National Professional Qualification for Headteachers in England is now a mandatory precondition for applications for headship), but also have a range of support programs in place providing a mix of voluntary and mandated programs for aspirant, new, and continuing principals (see Jacobson et al. 2011). Other countries, such as Denmark, have a range of non-compulsory formal and informal support programs for emerging and established school leaders, with expectations that

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school leaders will participate in these programs and be supported to do so by the municipalities which govern their schools (see Gurr et al. 2011).

We describe the preparation and work of four principals: Jan Shrimpton and Bella Irlicht from Australia (their real names), and the principals of the Fraser Academy and Hamilton schools from the USA (pseudonyms for the real schools). Three of the principals have shown the ability to be successful school leaders over many years (Jan, Bella, the Fraser principal), two have done so across several schools (Jan and the Fraser principal), and one has gone on to a district leadership role (the Hamilton principal). All of the principals illustrate Davies' (2007, p. 11) conception of sustainable leadership described as "the key factors that underpin the longer-term development of the school. It builds a leadership culture based on moral purpose which provides success that is accessible to all." Further, these exemplary leaders exhibit resilience in sustainable leadership, often in the face of intense challenges, such as shifting demographics, high poverty, and teacher resistance to pedagogical and organizational change. Yet, these principals have sustained success both in terms of their leadership, and, most importantly, in terms of the schools they have led.

11.2 Preparing School Leaders in Australia

In Australia, a 4-year teaching qualification and certification are the only formal requirements for school leaders, and so leadership development tends to rely upon an apprenticeship model in which aspiring school leaders gain the necessary skill and experience on the job as they move up the ranks to the principal class (Su et al. 2003). While higher qualifications are not mandatory, possession of such qualifications may lead to promotion to leadership roles (Anderson et al. 2008). For example, an internal evaluation of participants in the first four cohorts of the Master of School Leadership at The University of Melbourne indicated that of the more than 160 participants, between 29 and 50% had gained a formal promotion during the duration of the program (Anderson and Gurr 2008). In recent years, across all states and territories, there has been an increase in the range and quality of leadership programs available for novices through to experienced school leaders, including formal and informal programs, coaching, mentoring, and shadowing programs, regional-based programs, internships, and paid leave to attend professional learning programs and conferences in Australia and overseas. Using Victoria as an example, the government and Catholic school systems have developed leadership frameworks (www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/bastowinstitute/resources/DLFschooleaders.htm; lsf.vic.catholic.edu.au), and are establishing leadership centers to provide an appropriate vehicle for the range of leadership development programs offered to cover all leadership roles in schools (www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/bastowinstitute; web.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au/index.php?sectionid=350). The government school leadership development program has been described in an OECD review as "an outstanding example of large-scale reform…at the cutting edge" (Matthews et al. 2007, p. 28). Even with the

availability of these programs, the lack of a requirement for leadership qualifications in addition to teacher certification places Australia at odds with countries such as England, Sweden, and the USA, which have licensure requirements, often satisfied through professional and graduate study programs. For the principals we describe below, the newer programs were not available, and so they had to construct their own learning, both to prepare them to be leaders and to develop into successful school leaders. It remains for future research to determine if the more recent approach of providing a rich array of non-compulsory programs (which has similarities with countries such as Denmark) provides improved preparation for sustained successful school leadership.

11.3 The Australian Principals

11.3.1 Bella Irlicht

Bella Irlicht is an example of a principal who understood that she needed to have knowledge and skills beyond that of a teacher if she were to be a successful school leader. During her time as principal of Port Philip Specialist School, Bella gained several formal qualifications including a Masters in Education, and Graduate Diplomas in Educational Administration, Curriculum, and Student Welfare. As well as having formal qualifications, she traveled within Australia (e.g., participation in professional associations such as the Australian Council for Educational Leaders, and Education Department programs), and overseas (e.g., Fullbright scholarship to study fully serviced schools, Arts-based education conference in Europe), engaging in numerous professional learning programs and observing exemplary practice. She was a superb networker who sought the counsel of many experts – if there was knowledge that she lacked, Bella would find someone to help. At a personal level, she continued to develop her leadership skills and in her tenth year as principal engaged a professional coach (an experienced former principal), ahead of a trend in coaching that is only now gaining momentum in Australia (see www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/teachlearncoaches.htm; www.principalsaustralia.edu.au; www.growthcoaching.com.au/for-education-leaders).

Bella had drive, determination, high expectations, and entrepreneurial spirit that allowed her to convert the knowledge and skills into the reality of an outstanding specialist school through initiatives such as (see Drysdale 2007):

- Developing outstanding facilities
- Creating a fully serviced school to meet the educational, emotional, and physical needs of students
- Developing independent living skills in students to ensure their success in life after school
- Using an Arts-based curriculum as the means to provide an outstanding educational program

All of this was driven by a single desire – to create a world-class specialist school. It is the combination of these personal qualities and the knowledge and skills developed in formal and informal professional learning programs that define her success. An example is shown in the impact of a study tour she did in the 1995 to explore the concept of fully serviced schools. This trip was made possible through gaining a competitive Fulbright Scholarship, the support of the Education Department, and her contacts with people such as Professor Caldwell at The University of Melbourne who first suggested that fully serviced schools might be a way to achieve her vision of a world-class specialist school. The result of this trip was that she could see how a fully serviced school might be possible and then set about creating a school that now provides an extensive range of additional services such as physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, arts therapy, and dental treatment on-site. There was, in the conceptualization of Loader (1997), clearly a desire by Bella to place herself in a position where she might stumble over new ideas, and then, because of her personal qualities and professional drive, she was able to act upon these ideas for the benefit of her students.

In sum, Bella epitomizes the idea of a life-long learner. She participated in formal and informal professional learning to improve her knowledge and skills to enable her to be a successful school leader.

11.3.2 Jan Shrimpton

In contrast to Bella, Jan did not have Bella's clarity of mission (to create a world-class specialist school), although she did have strong social justice beliefs and enjoyed working in challenging school environments. Through a strong motivation to do well, she developed a personal leadership style that led to her successfully turning around two poor performing schools, and like Bella, participation in formal and informal professional learning programs, both in and out of schools, helped her to understand leadership and how to improve schools.

Jan had a love for learning and participated in as many formal and informal programs as possible. While she was a regional Student Welfare consultant, she participated in a 6-week intensive residential leadership development program run by the former Institute of Educational Administration (Victoria). She explained how the program was life changing and gave her the confidence to stretch herself to take on the role of principal.

> I was introduced to leading academics who taught me that I could be a leader. By doing the course and reading I felt that to bring the team together was what leadership was about.

It was soon after her time at the Institute of Educational Administration, with a sense of confidence in her abilities, that she applied for and was appointed as a principal of a small school, which she described as "out of control". With her developing educational philosophy, recent learning from the leadership programs, experience as a successful teacher, and developing confidence, she took on the role believing

that if she could bring the staff together as a team, that this would make a difference to the learning outcomes of students. She succeeded in initiating a school merger and creating a "turnaround" by creating a new school identity that led to significant improvement in student learning outcomes. Throughout her time as principal, she continued to engage in professional learning (through Education Department programs and those of professional associations such as the Australian Council for Educational Leaders) and networking, always seeking new ideas that could be used at her school. Importantly, her leadership focused on developing strong relations with staff and fostering a team approach across the schools, so that a culture of continuous change was fostered. Her professional learning also helped her to understand the areas in which she was not strong. For example, Jan did not claim to be a pedagogical and curriculum expert, but she was knowledgeable of outstanding practice, and she was able to recruit and develop staff who were expert in these areas.

In sum, Jan combined professional experience with formal and informal professional learning to ensure she had the knowledge and skills that allowed her to turn around two schools, as we explained in the chapter in this volume.

11.4 Preparing School Leaders in the United States of America: US Context

In order to better appreciate the approach to preparing school leaders most commonly used in the USA, three key contextual factors need to be understood: (1) the decentralized nature of educational governance; (2) the bifurcation of administration and teaching in American public education; and (3) the almost universal requirement of formal pre-service leadership preparation.

11.4.1 Decentralized Governance and Policymaking

The locus for educational governance and policymaking in the USA resides at each of the Nation's 50 state capitols (as well as the District of Columbia). While the Federal government often attempts to influence school policies through sanction and reward programs such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), ultimately it is the individual states that must formulate the legislation that complies with federal initiatives. When it comes to formal requirements for the preparation and certification of school administrators, there has never been a coordinated federal initiative or mandate. Instead, issues related to educator preparation and certifications have been determined at the state level. As a consequence, there are currently 51 sets of such requirements, with over 500 leadership preparation programs nationwide and a plethora of certification and preparatory models.

11.4.2 Bifurcated Roles and Required Pre-service Leadership Preparation

Unlike Australia, the requirement of formal pre-service accredited preparation for aspiring school leaders has had a very long history in the USA, with the first formal training programs appearing in the early twentieth century (Brundrett 2001). Over time, the roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators became markedly bifurcated with teachers attending primarily to instructional issues within the classroom, while principals focus more on the administration and management of the larger organization (Hill 2002). In fact, many principals complain about the fact that the weight of their administrative responsibilities severely constrains the time available for them to address instructional issues (Louis et al. 2010). Moreover, the supervisory functions of school administrators in many states make their work managerial/confidential, thus forcing them to terminate their membership in the teacher unions they once belonged to.

Another consequence of these bifurcated roles and responsibilities is that aspiring school leaders in the USA have little opportunity to experience the type of apprentice model commonly utilized in Australia, other than perhaps a brief administrative internship that is a required part of some, but not all, university preparation programs.

Similar to their Australian counterparts, most American school leaders have had prior teacher preparation, certification, and classroom experience. But unlike their Australian counterparts, once American school leaders get certified as an administrator and obtain a formal leadership position such as principal or assistant principal, very few ever teach or return to the classroom again. In other words, the bifurcation of teacher and administrator roles and responsibilities has firmly entrenched the almost universal requirement of formal pre-service leadership preparation so that aspiring administrators develop their managerial/supervisory skills before they can obtain a first posting.

11.4.3 The Movement Toward Leadership Standards

While the federal government has taken a hands-off attitude about leadership performance and preparation, many state education leaders have sought to define a set of common performance standards for school administrators that can be utilized across jurisdictions. Specifically, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards is a set of performance standards for educational leadership first developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers in 1996 with the express purpose of improving school leadership preparation, certification, and practice across the USA. These standards were subsequently revised in 2007, in collaboration with the National Policy Board on Educational Administration (NPBEA – see http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/elps_isllc2008.pdf), intentionally linking six key performance standards to the NCLB legislation. Each standard begins with the same

stem phrase, "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by…"

Standard 1: Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
Standard 2: Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
Standard 3: Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
Standard 4: Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
Standard 5: Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
Standard 6: Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Each standard is then followed by a set of functions that give it purpose and form.

Adoption of the ISLLC Standards is voluntary and, by mid-2010, they have been adopted by 35 states, with several more considering their use in a nationwide effort to provide a more standardized accreditation and accountability regime for school leadership preparation programs and administrator certification requirements.

11.5 Administrator Certification and Leadership Preparation in New York

New York State has long had among the most formal requirements for administrator certification in the USA, with a Masters degree and a minimum of 60 graduate credits beyond the baccalaureate required. But in 2004, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) generated even more rigorous regulations for the preparation, certification and examination of school leaders, with the espoused goal of ensuring that all preparation programs become outcome-based, theory-driven, internally coherent and integrated, focused on teaching and learning, and grounded with an intensive clinical experience. The new regulations provide for three categories of administrator certification: (1) School Building Leader (SBL) – building level positions up to the principal; (2) School District Leader (SDL) – district level positions up to the superintendent; (3) School District Business Leaders (SDBL) – district business office positions up to the assistant or associate superintendent for business. Note that the preparation and certification focus in New York is on an individual's level of organizational responsibility, i.e., building, district or business office, and not on specific roles, such as principal or superintendent, which is more commonly the case in other states.

Currently in New York, an individual aspiring to become a certified administrator must complete a state approved preparation program (typically 30–36 graduate credit hours beyond a masters degree), that includes a required 400–600 h clinical internship, and then successfully pass the State test specifically designed for one of

the three certification areas listed above. Upon the approval for these new guidelines by the State Legislature, over 50 preparation programs statewide revamped their existing curricula accordingly.

11.6 The Leadership Initiative for Tomorrow's Schools

Well before NYSED redesigned its requirements for administrator certification, the University at Buffalo had developed an innovative leadership preparation program that anticipated many of the State changes to come, and through which one of our USA principals graduated. It serves as a good example of the type of leadership preparation programs available in the USA. Further, the Hamilton principal (described later) completed her principal certification in the Leadership Initiative for Tomorrow's Schools (LIFTS) program.

Originally designed in the early 1990s and revised regularly based upon best-practice findings from the research literature on school leadership, the LIFTS program is a 36-credit hour, 2-year program (including summers) that combines intensive coursework with a minimum of 600 h of practical administrative internship experience. Although the internship can be done on a part-time basis over the course of the program, ideally it is an intensive full-year, full-time (40 h/week) assignment. For its efforts, LIFTS has been recognized as one of the most innovative programs in the USA (Jacobson et al. Winter 2006).

To be admitted for the SBL or SDL certification, LIFTS applicants must hold a Master's degree in an area functionally related to their teaching (e.g., science or special education), permanent teacher certification (or state certification as a school counselor, psychologist, or social worker) and 3 years of successful teaching or equivalent experience in schools. Candidates for the SDBL certificate need not have been a teacher and their Masters degree is typically from a more business-related program, such as a Masters in Business or Public Administration.

Successful applicants must have demonstrated leadership potential, both in and outside of schools; effective oral and written communication skills; the ability to work in collegial cohort groups and an insightful understanding of teaching, learning, and the educational enterprise. In addition to transcripts of prior coursework, letters of recommendations and a writing sample, 2–3 person teams of academics and field practitioners interview each of the top candidates and typically 12–20 students are selected to be in a 2-year LIFTS cohort. These interviews are intended to verify information found in the written documents, to determine a candidate's willingness to commit to the rigorous 2-year program and to get a sense of their "goodness of fit" with a cohort model that emphasizes collaborative and collective leadership.

Once selected, LIFTS candidates engage in the following key program design features:

- They study in cohort groups that build a community of inquiry and foster an understanding of collective leadership.
- Their course of study is an integrated curriculum organized around real problems of practice, for example, to better understand the impact of context on

leadership practice, a recent cohort developed a comparative study based on site visits to three schools: an urban elementary school, a rural middle school, and a suburban high school. The current cohort is developing a policy option brief for an area high school seeking to improve and sustain student performance in a cost-effective manner.
- They must complete an intensive, field-based, experiential component of study involving a clinical internship of no less than 600 h.
- They are individually mentored by an experienced school leader, often a LIFTS alumnus, throughout duration of the program.

A 95% placement rate into school administrator roles (ranging from principals and assistant principals at the building level, to superintendents, assistant superintendents, and directors at the district level) for graduates of the LIFTS program suggests that these individuals seem to have the leadership knowledge and skills that area school districts are seeking. The LIFTS program also has features found in leading USA leadership programs such as being research-based, having curricular coherence, providing experience in authentic contexts, using cohort groupings and mentors, and enabling collaborative activity between the program and area schools (Davis et al. 2005; Darling-Hammond et al. 2007).

11.7 The USA Principals

11.7.1 The Fraser Academy Principal

Having been an educator for almost 40 years and having "turned around" two failing, high need schools including the Fraser Academy this school leader credits informal experiences dating back to childhood, through college and leadership preparation, right up to and including her present professional career as having shaped her personality and style of leadership. She describes herself as having been a shy and sensitive child, which enables her to understand and respect shyness and sensitivity in others, whether child or adult. As she told us,

> When I see children who are shy and reluctant to participate in class, I understand. They, too, need teachers who are perceptive and sensitive to their needs. These are two of the characteristics I look for when interviewing and hiring staff. My staff must be kind, respect our children, strive to understand our children and demonstrate empathy, not sympathy.

Being a sensitive leader also means being highly visible in order to build school pride and ownership of issues and solutions. She works hard to make everyone feel personally responsible for the success or failure of a plan of action the school has undertaken.

Another facet of her personal life history that has affected her leadership was growing up in an almost completely segregated minority environment. She graduated from a high school with a 100% African American population and a university that had a minority population of less than 2%. As a result of these experiences, she

values the merits of having a multiracial-multiethnic school staff that teaches the curriculum through a multicultural perspective.

While in college, she came to appreciate the value of listening, collaborating and studying in groups, in order to gain new insights into problem solving through the perspectives of others. As a consequence, team-focused, collaborative strategies are currently being used at her school as a professional development tool and as a process in for shared decision-making. Staff members are organized into groups based on their interests, skill levels, grades and/or issues of concern and the impact of this type of learning and solving problems has been demonstrable, especially in terms of improved and sustained student achievement.

She is quick to note that during her leadership preparation, it was the work of Thomas Sergiovanni (see Sergiovanni 2007, for a compendium of many of his important papers) that had the most powerful impact on her educational philosophy and professional development. In the process of becoming what Sergiovanni refers to as a "community of leaders," she realized that teachers, administrators, parents, students, and others could become collectively responsible for envisioning and implementing school reform. Sergiovanni's research helped to organize her thoughts and plan of action because it gave her a clearer understanding of the benefits of shared-decision making, collaboration, and mentoring. She realized that no matter how great the school leader¸ positive and effective change is impossible without teamwork. And so, when she became a school leader, she saw the need to create an environment supportive of collaboration – one that would support flexibility and positive change, and value the contributions of others, as one of her key responsibilities.

In sum, this exemplary principal feels that it is through an accumulation of lifelong experiences and professional training that she evolved into the leader she is.

11.7.1.1 The Hamilton Principal

In other publications, we have described how this principal led the turnaround of a failing urban elementary school in her very first posting as a principal (Jacobson et al. 2007; Ylimaki et al. 2011). Her initial success at the building-level led to her rapid promotion into a central office leadership position in the same large urban district. Because her advancement came so quickly, when we went back to analyze sustained school success in our initial sites 5 years later, she was long gone from the building. Nevertheless, we have decided to include her preparation in this discussion because she brings several interesting facets of sustainable leadership development to the fore. First, unlike most principals, she was not a teacher before she became an administrator; she was a school counselor. Second, the Hamilton principal served as a school counselor at Fraser Academy, under the supervision and mentoring of the principal we described above. In fact, her most formative years in that role were during the time when Fraser was beginning its remarkable improvement. Finally, when she opted to begin preparing for a leadership position, she applied to and was accepted by the LIFTS program, and graduated as a member of the program's fourth cohort.

Since she had not been a teacher, when asked how she learned about instructional leadership, the Hamilton principal praised her experiences in LIFTS as well as her time spent with the principal from Fraser Academy:

> I did not have classroom teaching experience so curriculum and instruction was a major gap for me going into leadership. I have to say the LIFTS program gave me excellent preparation. We had two courses dealing with curriculum, instructional leadership, and supervision. I probably felt the most prepared for classroom supervision from these courses. They were excellent. I also have to credit my internship experience with the Fraser principal. She's been a tremendous mentor for me. I was there when she started her tenure and saw what she did to turn the school around. Every school is a bit different, of course, but I felt like I had a mental model of how to lead a challenging school from the beginning.

Further, the Hamilton principal talked at length about how the combination of the collegial LIFTS learning environment, her counseling background, and relationship with her mentor at Fraser inspired and sustained her through the challenges of leading a "turn-around" school. As she put it, "My LIFTS cohort members really supported me after the program. We bonded in our learning experiences together, and I really learned what it meant to be part of a team. My counseling training and experience gave me listening and team-building skills, but the cohort experience made me feel what it was like to be part of a leadership team." This experience was directly transferable to the school context as many Hamilton teachers and staff members credited the principal's team leadership abilities and excellent listening skills with long-term success at the school. As one teacher put it,

> When I work with groups at Hamilton, I feel like I am part of a larger mission. I've been able to stick with our plan because the principal really has shown us what it takes to work as a team. She's a quiet leader and leads from behind, but I think she's really helped me and other teachers find the energy to stay the course and make this school a better place for teaching and learning.

Being a collaborative leader also meant rolling up her sleeves and working daily alongside teachers in classrooms and on the playground. The Hamilton principal actually taught eighth grade when she could not find a highly qualified teacher, which as noted earlier in this section, is highly unusual for US principals. It is, of course, an important symbolic act and one that models good behavior (Robinson 2007; Sergiovanni 2007). When teachers and staff members saw her working alongside them, they became increasingly committed to the school improvement process. One teacher put it well when she said, "I was not sure when we got a new principal to run our tough school, but she stood out in the rain watching kids at the bus right alongside us. And she taught alongside us in classrooms. Her commitment was really inspirational." The Hamilton principal associated her commitment to Hamilton with her lifelong belief in the value of education. In her words, "Education has been such a powerful force in my life, and I want to share that with children, particularly those who do not have a strong advocate at home."

As part of her experience in the LIFTS program, the Hamilton principal came to appreciate the role of core values in leadership standards. All LIFTS students develop a leadership platform linking their core values to the state leadership

standards. Early in her tenure, the Hamilton principal quickly communicated her values to staff members and children. Staff members and students often heard her say, "You will not fail in this school. If you want to fail, there's a school up the road where you can fail." As a consequence, she focused all staff efforts on research-based intervention strategies coupled with intensive efforts to build a safe and supportive learning culture. Staff members participated in professional development focused on literacy and positive, proactive student discipline that proved instrumental in Hamilton School improvement.

In sum, the Hamilton principal's successful leadership developed through a combination of her counseling background, the motivational collegiality of her leadership preparation program, and exemplary mentoring from the Fraser principal.

11.8 Discussion

While both Australian principals described their leadership preparation as not including formal requirements to gain knowledge outside of the school experience, these principals were both intellectually restless and actively sought new ideas to supplement their significant on-the-job training about what works in schools, and to improve their leadership. This was important for ensuring that their ideas were fresh and that they were leading schools at the forefront of contemporary learning. There are several aspects to their long and successful leadership of schools that are broadly relevant:

- They had a love for learning, and participated in whatever formal or informal programs were available.
- They had a strong career orientation and they accepted personal responsibility for their development to create their own future. This included participating in formal and informal professional learning, and through reflection on their practice and learning through experience.
- Strong personal motivations to create excellent schools and to be excellent leaders drove much of what they did.
- They established a set of values and beliefs, suitable for the schools they led, which guided their actions.
- The principals fully engaged in professional networks, including regional and state committees, to offer their expertise, and to gain from the experience both personally and for their schools.

In regard to the US principals, although the Fraser principal had far more experience than the Hamilton principal, both described personal experiences and leadership ideas from their preparation programs that motivated them to commit to their schools. In fact, the Fraser principal's tenure exceeds 16 years, and under her leadership, Fraser advanced from one of the lowest to one of the highest performing schools in the district and state. When the Hamilton principal moved to central office, her school had improved to proficient status.

There are several dimensions to principals' leadership for sustained school success that are relevant:

- A combination of personal experiences and motivating ideas from leadership preparation inspired the principals to commit to their schools and missions.
- Sustained school success requires some level of school stability.
- These successful principals had a love for children, education, and professional learning that sustained them through difficult leadership experiences.
- They established a set of values and principles that guided their actions.
- Previous experience (in the case of Fraser) and strong mentoring experiences (in the case of Hamilton) made a difference in the principals' abilities to sustain success in their challenging school contexts.

In reviewing the work of these principals, four important insights emerge. The first relates directly to their leadership preparation and includes a complex combination of personal experience, and formal and informal leadership preparation. Despite the different contexts, all the principals spoke of how it was a combination of experience and learning that helped them to develop as successful school leaders. There was not an emphasis or one over the other, and it did not matter whether there were regulatory requirements for qualifications or not. Beyond active involvement in formal and informal leadership preparation programs, all the principals had personal and professional experiences that enabled them to be better leaders and to help create successful schools. They were all restless learners, always seeking new ideas and new ways of doing things to improve their schools and themselves. They were also reflective, both of themselves as continuously evolving leaders, and of the development pathways of their schools. There was a strong sense that these principals were actively responsible for their own professional growth and this was regardless of registration requirements; they met any formal requirements for being a principal, but went far beyond these by constantly updating their knowledge and skills.

In writing this chapter, there are three additional areas, while not directly related to leadership preparation, that seem to be important to the sustained success of these principals and important areas to consider in the development of future successful leaders: the values, beliefs, and principles that help guide their work; exerting a wider influence on education; and an ability to foster a sense of stability in a culture of continuous change.

1. Values, beliefs, and principles: These principals have values, beliefs, and principles that helped them with their work. These helped to guide their actions and, importantly, were appropriate to the contexts they work in. For example, having a belief that all children can learn and that they are entitled to an outstanding, high expectation education, helped to drive the Fraser principal's work in transforming a dangerous, low performing school, and in Bella's development of a world-class specialist school from very humble beginnings. They all loved working with children, developing staff, and creating outstanding schools, and they demonstrated a genuine love for learning. Valuing working in schools

and being life-long learners, promoted a high level of integrity in their leadership across their school communities. Believing that change is a normal feature of schools, and understanding the principles of leading change, helped these principals lead their communities through many difficult times.
2. Wider influence: The principals were not content to just influence their own schools as they also sought ways to influence other schools through, for example, participating on system/district level committees. Of course, for all of the principals, participation in this research project has been a way of influencing conceptions of successful school leadership; the Fraser principal has been involved in two international conferences associated with the ISSPP.
3. Stability in change: Whilst there was continuous change happening both within their schools and in the wider context, there was also a sense of stability in the schools led by these successful principals. These schools were purposeful places, with a clear sense of future direction, albeit within a continuous improvement focus. These principals were good at working with the wider context, especially in terms of providing effective, and contextually sensitive responses to change that were mandated or optional. They also were active in seeking new opportunities for their schools in the wider context.

As in many instances of this type of rich, case-study–based research, there are no prescriptive answers to how we might develop successful leaders who can sustain success. Nevertheless, fostering rich professional experience with formal and informal learning is important for sustaining school success. As part of the professional learning, the experiences of our principals suggest that it would be useful to nurture appropriate values, beliefs, and principles; encourage engagement with the wider educational community; and develop change leadership skills.

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Chapter 12
The Hurricane of Accountabilities? Comparison of Accountability Comprehensions and Practices

Lejf Moos, Guri Skedsmo, Jonas Höög, Anders Olofsson, and Lauri Johnson

12.1 Introduction

During the past 5 years since we visited the schools and principals were included in the International Successful School Principals Project for the first time, major changes have occurred in the ways of which schools are governed and managed, particularly in the Scandinavian countries. When we started the project, one challenge was to find a common approach to define "successful" schools and leaders. In countries such as England, USA, and Australia, it was possible to define successful schools and leaders based on information about school outcomes in terms of student achievement on standardized tests and in England and Australia based on inspection reports. In the Scandinavian countries, such information was not yet available

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(Moos et al. 2005; Møller et al. 2005). Since then, the "hurricane of accountability" has reached all countries in the project. In the Scandinavian countries, this recent development is, first of all, characterized by an increased focus on student achievement and performance measurement as a key part of evaluation processes. Second, it implies a changed concept of educational quality which in form seems to be defined by expectations about specific outcomes. Third, it indicates a belief that any divergence between the expected outcomes and the level of achievements can be identified (Skedsmo 2009). Along with this development, schools are increasingly being perceived as the unit of measurement and the need to make actors such as principals and teachers accountable is emerging.

Although similar trends can be identified across countries, the ways in which evaluation procedures and accountability processes are implemented and practiced seem to differ. While principals in Australia, England, and USA are more experienced in dealing with measurement, test results, and accountability mechanisms, the Nordic principals seem at this stage to be exploring ways to handle new expectations which include the comprehensive and holistic goals which are part of the national curricula (Johansson and Moos 2009).

This chapter aims to describe main changes in school governance with an emphasis on the establishment of systems to control and monitor educational quality. Moreover, it aims to investigate similarities and differences in the ways of which principals in the USA on the one hand, and principals in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden on the other, respond to expectations about improving student outcomes, and how they interpret their mission and adapt to new trends in school administrative structures. To achieve these aims, we have formulated the following research questions to guide our analysis:

– What characterizes recent changes with respect to systems or procedures which are developed to monitor educational quality and improve student outcomes?
– How do the principals in our study respond to policy expectations and the increased focus on student outcomes as a key part of school governing processes?

The methods used encompass secondary analyses of the case studies in the different countries, which took part in the project from the very beginning in 2003 and the revisiting phase 5 years later in 2008. Besides these secondary analyses, interviews with the authors have been conducted to test hypotheses about similarities and differences between countries with respect to policy issues, school governance processes, as well as cultural aspects that can help us to understand different types of accountability practices and how the principals perceive and respond to new expectations.

12.2 Theoretical Perspectives

School governing structures and processes have changed remarkably since the early 1980s in the UK, the USA, Australia, and Canada, and since the early 1990s in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. These developments were influenced by New

Public Management reforms which can best be described as an overarching set of principles that are being played out in various ways in different countries (Hood 2007; Moos 2009). In general, this set of principles accentuates a focus on flat and flexible organizational structures, hands-on professional management, evaluating performance according to explicit standards, flexible structures, and management by objectives and results (Rhodes 1999; Olsen 2002; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004; Heinrich 2005). In the field of education, these reforms involved the decentralization of finances and administration from states to local authorities or to institutions as a powerful tool to make the educational systems more responsive to the demands of the market and to make public sectors more efficient and cost-effective.

This decentralization trend has been coupled with more central regulation in terms of establishing systems for evaluation and monitoring of educational quality, e.g., standardized testing. Moreover, curricula and standards for student achievement are to a greater degree developed centrally and according to cross-national frameworks, e.g., the European Framework. The curricula can be characterized as competency-oriented, as they emphasize developing basic competencies in literacy, numeracy, and science (Sivesind and Bachmann 2008; Karseth and Sivesind 2009). This makes it easier to develop standards which can be used to assess student achievements and to compare student achievements nationally and internationally (Moos 2006). The PISA and TIMMS tests are examples of how student achievement is monitored internationally.

An issue of major importance when one cross-read the case studies in the initial phase of the project, as well as the case studies from the revisiting phase 5 years later, is the relationship between the central authorities and the local levels, i.e., the schools and the municipalities. In brief, the reason for choosing these relations is that there are differences between the countries in the power relations between the national/central political and administrative levels and the local level at schools. This will be explored further in the chapter.

Increased central regulation and the need for control and monitoring are linked to accountability, as well as the introduction of incentives, performance appraisals, and sanctions. Accountability can be seen as an aspect of evaluation processes. It can be argued that this is first of all due to underlying ideas about making school practices visible and transparent in order to ensure the quality of the school system as well as the public trust. Second, it is presumed that there will be no change or improvement of practice unless central actors are held accountable for the results achieved (Popkewitz and Wehlage 1973; Strathern 2000a, b; Dubnick 2005).

Researchers have developed different typologies to describe how key actors are held to account. The typologies have been developed over time and, as such, they differ according to how accountability is defined. Some researchers look upon accountability as systems, others describe accountability in terms of different forms, processes, or social practices (Skedsmo 2009). While older typologies seem to focus on institutionalized accountability related to different spheres and roles in a hierarchy, newer versions express how forms of accountability are included in what is referred to as performance management and directed toward individuals (Ozga 2009).

For the comparison between countries, in this study, we have chosen to characterize school governing processes and accountability practices in terms of different

kinds of logics. We have chosen a systematic accountability typology, developed on the basis of Moos (2003) and Firestone and Shipps (2005):

- *Market-logic*: Schools are seen as services, where service providers deliver educational products to consumers. Core concepts are consumers' choice, competition, and efficiency.
- *Managerial logic*: There is a focus on planning, control, standards, top-down management, and transparency.
- *Public logic*: The governance of schools takes place through political processes involving policy makers, parents, students, and professionals.
- *Professional logic*: Schools are managed and led according to professional, educational standards, and professional ethics.
- *Ethical logic*: Schools are held responsible for the comprehensive and overarching upbringing, the education of democratic citizens (Moos 2010).

For our purposes these five categories have been compressed into three:

The first is: Have the *national* and *local administrative, managerial* expectations changed – as interpreted in act, regulations and official discourses and also in official standards and criteria for success and criteria for accountability? And closely linked to this: Have the demands from the *marketplace* changed – as interpreted in the competition situation and the financial situation?

The second category is: Are the *political* and *local community* including parents' expectations the same as 5 years ago? In our case stories, the local political and community expectations are more important than the national political expectations.

And the third accountability category is: Do *professionals* interpret how they best meet the needs of learners and of learning organization, and their own needs, in the same way as they did 5 years ago? And closely linked to this: Are the *cultural-ethical* ways of looking at the needs of the children and adults in the schools, of students' education, and of their relations to the bigger community understood in the same way as they were at the first school visits. Here we are looking at themes like "in loci parenti," care, "Democratic Bildung" (Moos 2008) and "education for social justice" (McKenzie et al. 2008) as well as participation and critique, equity, and care. The basis for those discussions is the cultural and ethical aspects of teachers' and principals' practice, the "internalized and socially encouraged value systems" (Firestone and Shipps 2005, p. 88).

12.3 National Managerial, Administrative Expectations and Marketplace Demands

Analyzing characteristics of recent changes across the cases produce two distinctive pictures. The accountability/New Public Management (NPM) regimes in the USA, England, and Australia (case studies from the USA are discussed in this chapter) have been sustained and in some cases tightened. The "second generation of accountability

regimes" in our project, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, are also tightening the couplings between state and schools. Quality management systems and evaluation procedures which focus on monitoring and improving students' outcomes are being implemented. The carriers of the development are dominant political discourses of "competition of the knowledge economies" and educational effectiveness. Social technologies like international comparisons, bench-marking, and league tables are indicators of marketplace logics, and different kinds of contracts are used to make key actors accountable. Case-by-case summaries are more detailed and diverse:

12.3.1 Denmark

Revisiting three schools we found that the tightening of couplings between the state, local authorities, and schools had accelerated; curriculum and evaluation of student outcomes had to some extent been taken to the national level and a number of social technologies were put in action to the same effect. To mention only a few: The quality reports from schools to local authority to ministry had been introduced; National testing had multiplied from one grade (school leaving tests) to all grades.

Four to five years ago, we saw signs of re-centralization from the government, in a move to create schools as economically autonomous entities with strong demands for being accountable to government. The Ministry of Education presented much clearer and detailed goals for teaching and learning on a national basis. It was also constructing new testing and accountability systems. There were clear signals that relations between levels of the public system were being based on mistrust.

When it comes to couplings of educational and content matter we now see a picture of strengthening the couplings. The relations between the central level and the local and school level have changed rather profoundly over the 4–5 year period as demands for managerial accountability have been moving from political discussions and discourses toward administrative practices. National testing is slowly being implemented in all grades in the basic school. New systems of quality development and documenting, the "Quality Report" has been introduced and implemented. The formal intention of the Quality Report is to form the foundation for dialogue between schools and local authorities and at the same time report the state of affairs in the school district to the School Agency (Moos 2009).

This tendency is accompanied by the move to describe and prescribe the subject content of education more than previously. This tendency has been visible for 10–15 years, but now that the evaluations and planning technologies are being introduced, it is being more visible and present in the schools' everyday life and thus in school leadership and the relations between principals and teachers. The principals in the ISSPP schools tell us that the trend to narrow the interest in schooling from the general Danish vision of the comprehensive and broad "Democratic Bildung," meaning emphasis on both subject competences and personal and social competences, to focusing on basics skills; literacy and numeracy, is growing rapidly at present.

The school leadership brings the external demands to the teachers saying: "Let's see how we can use this in a productive way. Can national tests and student plans be used to legitimize the school to parents? Can we couple the new plans with what we used to do: the student portfolio? Tests are mostly rituals and the results are difficult to use for educational purposes."

Schools make development plans, now Quality Reports, to the municipality every year. Says the principal: "My task is to translate them to teachers so the plans can be turned into developmental activities, in order to give meaning to teachers. It is about me trusting teachers." The principal uses the same phrase as the principal of the West School: They have to translate the external demands to teachers in order to have them accept and implement the demands.

In 2007, very many municipalities (school districts) were merged into bigger entities; so, instead of the traditional dialogue between school authorities and schools the new municipal directorates have made many politics, regulations, and principles on paper. Some have the forms of contracts, based on benchmarks and evaluations, and they display a general lack of trust. What the school sees as an external quality control – from the authorities – is conflicting with the internal quality development. Therefore, the professionals have chosen to give the external control only a minimum of attention – only what is needed.

Private schools have been a major feature of Danish schooling system for more than a century. More than 15% of all students attend private schools. The competition between private schools and public schools has thus always been a fact of life. Five years ago, parental choice of public schools was made free, so now public schools also compete between themselves.

12.3.2 Norway

Educational policy has changed quite extensively since our first visits to the case schools. Traditionally, public schooling was regulated through the Education Act and the national curriculum which defined the overall purposes of public schooling, as well as for the individual subjects (Bachmann et al. 2008; Sivesind and Bachmann 2008). Furthermore, considerable investments in teacher education have also been an important strategy to ensure the quality of public schooling (Karlsen 1993; Gundem 1993). There has, until recently, been no focus on testing student achievements and assessment of outcomes according to criteria of educational quality or standards. Actually, testing was seen as an alien element both by teachers and researchers (Hertzberg 2008). This system was built on trust in teachers providing all students with education according to their needs and abilities. The introduction of the National System for Quality Assessment in 2005 increased the focus on educational outcomes in terms of students' performance demanding new modes of school governing. This system includes tools such as national standardized achievement tests which, when they were tried out for the first time in 2004, represented the most radical break with traditional forms of assessment.

The formal purposes of the evaluation tools in this system, as they were presented in 2005, are to provide information about student achievements to improve learning at the individual level as well as the systemic as a fundament for national policy making (Skedsmo 2009). By function, tools such as national tests also contribute to controlling and monitoring schools with respect to educational outcomes achieved and progress of quality development. This function is, however, partly concealed in the public discourse about tools such as national tests (ibid.). At the same time, the purposes related to improvement and development are strongly emphasized.

With respect to the new tools in use to govern the Norwegian schools, they seem to be based on a different logic which challenges traditional conceptions and values related to schooling in Norway. Comparisons of results are a central element in gathering information about educational outcomes to gain oversight. The results of groups of students, schools, municipalities are compared, as well as the national progress seen in relation to outcomes produced in other countries. The use of results is closely linked to new forms of input governing expressed as expectations related to improvement of outcomes (ibid.). National programs are launched focusing on basic competencies. Schools and municipalities can apply to participate and receive in turn, funding for their participation. However, the results of this testing are still seen as a limited indicator of the quality of education which has to be embedded into a wider understanding of the school's program and context. After the third round of standardized testing, the role the results play in policy making and school governance, both nationally as well as locally, is still in development. The attention being paid to the results at the municipality level in terms of how the results are perceived, understood and used, especially by the media, varies from municipality to municipality. The municipalities are defined as the "school owners" and have the responsibility to follow up the schools. The three case schools are located in three different municipalities/counties. So far, there seems to be an increased awareness in these municipalities with respect to the schools' results on national tests. According to the interviews with the principals and teachers, other criteria of success seem to be more emphasized, for instance, the schools' work with students who have special needs, and low dropout rate among the students.[1]

After the Local Government Act of 1992, and also as a consequence of the influence of the New Public Management strategies, many municipalities restructured their organizational model three administrative levels to two. In many cases, the administrative mid-level leader from the old model was left out, leaving the Chief Executing Officer (CEO) still on top, with administrative departments located and organized according to function. Leaving out the administrative mid level meant that municipalities lost people with the expertise within the fields of education and schooling. In order to fulfill delegated tasks from the national level, many principals therefore had to take on more responsibilities (Møller and Paulsen 2001; Møller et al. 2006). One of the case schools, Brage, is located in such a "two-level-municipality"

[1] This is the case for Ospelia upper secondary school.

and report on less support from the municipal level. He reports directly to the CEO and an office at the municipality is supposed to provide services to the schools, such as caretaker services. According to the principal at Brage, these arrangements do not work properly. It is part of the municipal strategy to save money. As a result, Brage School has caretaker services 1 day a week, which means that the principal and the administrative staff take on a range of caretaker tasks.

12.3.3 Sweden

New and ongoing research in Sweden shows that for the moment, the new accountability system in Sweden is under implementation. Local authorities begin to take the new national political reforms seriously. Different strategies are chosen but the goal is clear: the students' educational outcomes must improve.

When we revisited the two Swedish schools, they had experienced a 16 year long journey of school changes starting with the new system based on management by objectives and results that were implemented in 1994 with the new national curricula (LpO 94). The compulsory educational system was changed from one of the most centralized to one of the most decentralized. The main responsibility for the compulsory education was delegated to the municipal authorities. During this early period of decentralization, the allocation of resources to schools was also changed. Instead of resources specified by the state for regulated activities, the municipalities now received an unspecified sum of money as the national support for schools. The funding decreased about 20% over a period of a decade. The principals got new duties; they became responsible for a budget in balance at the same time as they answered for the learning outcomes and civic objectives. The state established a kind of market-oriented situation for the principals, they had to keep and, at best, increase the number of students not to lose the incomes of their schools. They also really had to become leaders for their staff, contribute to their development, and support them in their work as teachers thru career development discussions.

The National Agency for Education became the authority for the quality of the Swedish compulsory school and national assessment in English, Mathematics, and Swedish. The leftwing government reintroduced a form of a school inspection, imbedded as one of several duties for the National Agency for Education. This was done in 2003 with the purpose to increase the control of learning outcomes in the compulsory school. The inspection was an old form of control and had been used earlier in the Swedish school system. Systems for quality assurance were distributed to the municipalities and the National Agency for Education evaluated the results. This system for evaluation of the quality of the Swedish compulsory school began to be criticized in the public debate and a political discussion about schools in Sweden was influenced by the international comparisons of student outcomes in different countries. Important changes in the system were implemented between 2003 and 2008. The decentralization of compulsory education came to an end and the power to steer schools was strengthened on the central national level.

When the right wing won a majority in the Swedish election for the parliament in 2006, an increase in focus on the learning outcomes took place. The minister of education set the agenda for quality and assessment of learning outcomes in the Swedish schools. He claimed that Swedish students' learning outcomes were decreasing in international comparative studies as PISA, and the old left wing government was held responsible. Adding to this, the increasing differences between schools, as well as between municipalities that was discussed among teachers in the beginning of 2000 was further noticed. Studies of the grading system showed large differences between grades and national tests in most schools. Some schools raised grades compared to test results and other schools lowered them. The National Agency in a report called it different cultures of assessment. This became important arguments for the new government to establish an independent agency, the new Swedish Schools Inspectorate. The objectives and results oriented steering systems was considered a failure and ought to be restored.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate was established the first of October 2008. It has the responsibility for: (a) Investigate complaints – and demand that measures be taken, (b) Regular supervision of all schools Quality assessment ensures an in-depth investigation, (c) Approve licenses for independent schools, and (d) Control of National Test correction. All schools are to be inspected every third year. One other important change in the Swedish School system is the opening of independent schools. The number of independent schools has grown more than expected, especially on the secondary school level. In Stockholm, there are more students in independent secondary schools than in the public secondary schools today. This puts a strong pressure on public schools to try to recruit students through marketing campaigns and better results. The management systems for independent schools have been developed through large business combines creating challenges for the public schools governed in a more traditional manner.

The new directions in quality policy also include new grades and new forms of assessments. The grading now used has "no pass," "pass," and "pass with distinction" in the beginning of the described period. Now the new government suggests six different marks. At the same time, grades will be introduced earlier in the school, and a new form of written assessment about the students learning progress also will be introduced at the same time as a form of information to the students and parents. A new principal education started in 2009, a new teacher's education shall start shortly, the secondary schools system is being changed, a new school law is decided, and there will also be a new national curriculum and syllabus. In some of these issues, the political situation is still unclear and matters are debated between the blocks.

Swedish schools are inclusive in the sense that all children have the right to go to school and most of them stay at school until their 18th year. Due to the steering documents, schools also should be equal in the quality they offer and social and civic objectives are held as important as academic objectives in the same documents. Most municipalities apply budget systems with consideration for SES. On the other hand, emerging differences in both the system and the results show that schools in Sweden are becoming more outcomes-oriented and marketized.

The introduction of independent schools with businesslike administration and leadership has forced Swedish public schools to go in the same direction. One interesting variant of this is that entrepreneurial public schools with a special freedom do develop its own organization based on collaboration with trade and industry. The new principal training program has courses in school law as well as objectives and results steering but still under a mantra of the learning organization.

12.3.4 USA (New York)

The US ISSPP case studies conducted in 2002 were focused on leadership in challenging environments and involved seven schools in Western New York, six of which were classified as "high need" schools by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). These schools were studied shortly after the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was enacted. NCLB is the reauthorized version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) originally passed in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson and reauthorized every 7 years. While schools in the USA are largely funded by local property taxes and state funds, this act is the main US educational law which sets forth the conditions under which local schools and districts receive federal funding and has assumed increasing political importance. NCLB requires that states administer annual proficiency tests in reading and math for all students in grades 3–8. Under NCLB, test scores must be reported for subgroups such as ELL (English Language Learners) students and specific racial and ethnic groups. To comply with NCLB, there is a standard metric. A school must demonstrate that each subgroup of students has made "adequate yearly progress" or AYP. Failure to make AYP can result in school closure, reorganization, or conversion to a charter school. NCLB and state accountability legislation have greatly increased performance-based accountability expectations for local schools (Cobb and Rallis 2008).

In the initial study of the schools, rather than viewing the external pressure as an obstacle, the ISSPP principals were knowingly using state testing to focus and leverage their own high expectations for student and faculty performance, particularly in three schools (Costello, Hamilton, and Fraser Academy) which had initially come under scrutiny by the New York State Education Department for low student achievement. These principals used achievement data to determine school goals and improvement plans; to stimulate collaborative dialogue, shared learning, and recognition of the importance of professional development; and to monitor progress and overcome obstacles to improvement.

When revisited 5 years later, four of the US ISSPP principals had retired, one moved to a central office position and, of the two still at the same school, only one had managed to sustain school success, the principal at Fraser Academy. In the main governance change at Fraser Academy, the school had undergone conversion from a public school to a district charter school in 2004 (see Chap. 10 in this volume for a fuller discussion of this process). Market-based arrangements such as charter schools have proliferated in the USA since 2002, particularly in high poverty urban school districts such as the one in which Fraser Academy is located. Charter schools

are essentially public schools that are exempt from state and local regulations and compete for students in a particular geographic area. Governed by state charter school laws (which vary across the 50 states), charter schools in New York State can designate a longer school day and school year, enact different curriculum from the district they reside in, and hire their own teachers who are not tenured and need not be members of the teachers union (although in Fraser's conversion charter model the union was retained). In the New York state school district in which Fraser School is located, 14 new charter schools have started up over the last 10 years.

In the face of a looming district budget crisis, the principal of Fraser Academy utilized her school's new charter school status to maintain control over the hiring of teachers and the school's balanced literacy curriculum in the face of district layoffs and a new more rigid district-mandated curriculum. When revisited 5 years later, Fraser Academy seemed less pressured by state accountability demands than in 2002, perhaps because it has consistently achieved AYP and become a model demonstration site for their balanced literacy program.

In 2010, the focus on federal management of curriculum and teacher quality has intensified under the current US government's Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative in which the states competed for over 4 billion dollars of federal money. Under the federal criteria, those states which developed plans that adopt a common set of federal "college and career ready" curriculum standards in reading and math, develop data systems to assess student progress, tie teacher evaluations to student achievement, and encourage the development of charter schools were most successful in receiving funding. New York State was one of 11 states that successfully competed for this funding over two rounds. Half of the 700 million dollars they were granted will be used to develop a statewide data infrastructure that can track individual student progress even if the student moves to another school district.

12.4 Local, Public Community and Parent's Expectations

There is a growing tendency in most of the cases towards looking at local community (including parents) as separate from the local governing of schools (municipal authorities) and very much so from national governance. The focus on cooperation with parents seems to grow in several countries. At the same time, school principal in more cases are seen as integrated partners in local governance (as part of the authority) in a move to cut down on and weaken the local authority and leaving more decisions/forms of influence to national authorities. Summaries of the case-by-case accounts are more detailed and diverse:

12.4.1 Denmark

School parent collaboration seems to have grown very much over the years. That is in accordance with the Act on the Folkeskole where it is stated "the Folkeskole shall

in collaboration with the parents and the students give the students knowledge and skills…" It is here directly demanded from the school that it has a close collaboration with the parents. All principals report that they are focusing more on collaborating with parents. For a period of time, the principal of the Commuter School participated at all parent class meetings in order to discuss the values of the school. The principal of the North School has emphasized the use of test results to legitimize the work of the school to parents. The principal of the West School is underscoring the need to see parents as collaborators to new teachers.

It is a shared experience that parents are important partners in the effort to establish legitimation in the local community.

There were diverse arguments for strengthening the links with parents in the case schools. It may be due to the fact that at the Commuter School, a temporary crisis had surfaced between the school and the parents due partly to a dive in the students' final tests. As a consequence, the principal took this incident as a pretext to initiate a work with school's values together with the parents. As another way to improve the collaboration with parents the principal participated in all meetings between teachers and parents. The principal describes the relationship between the school and then parents as good; consequently, this process has been a success. This value works in cooperation with the parents and the principal's attending all meetings with parents are two examples of how and in which areas the cooperation is realized.

At the West School, the focus on the parents may have a connection with the fact that the school is going to merge with a neighboring school, and that the parents at the school board are strongly opposed to that. The principal tells that the school in general has a good and constructive cooperation with the parents.

At the North School that has been working in a contractual system both with the local school authorities and internally in the school between the teachers and the students and between the teachers' teams and the school leadership, the principal has involved the parents in the contract negotiations. As such, the school board becomes actively involved in the school's prioritizations and hence takes part in the overall goal steering of the school.

12.4.2 Norway

The number of students in all the three schools has increased the last years. This is due to changes in the region in terms of new people settling down and also because many parents want their children to go to this particular school. As mentioned earlier, all the three schools have a reputation in the community for taking good care of children with special needs. In Ospelia School, which is an upper secondary school, this has caused changes in the student population for this particular school and they have more students with weaker academic performance enrolled compared to 5 years earlier. In order to meet the diverse needs of the students, the principal has hired a social worker. This has also been a successful initiative in order to prevent drop out.

The principals in the three schools have different strategies regarding collaboration with the parents and community interaction. At Brage school, there is a large group of students with lower SES compared to the rest of the students, and the principal has chosen not to involve the parents that much in school activities, because this will make the differences among the students more obvious. In this school, there are also a large number of students with immigrant background. To respond to this diversity and the different needs of the parents, the principal has chosen to have a differentiated approach to the parents and he has met with different groups separately to discuss school issues.

Due to major behavior problems among groups of the students, the principal at Furuheia school has chosen a different approach, namely to initiate close collaboration with the parents to solve these problems. To notify parents immediately and to arrange meetings with the students, their parents, and the teachers to discuss the problems and how to solve them has been a successful way to improve the social environment among certain groups of the students. As a kind of direct feedback system, the principal has also initiated a system where the students receive red and yellow cards when they do not follow up on the rules.

Ospelia School, which is an upper secondary school, has initiated extensive collaboration and partnerships with the local companies. The school, the local companies, the local community as well as the students enrolled in vocational training programs benefit from this collaboration.

12.4.3 Sweden

School and community interaction is strong in the two small municipalities where the Swedish schools are situated. But that they are small also implies that some of the teachers commute. In River school, about one half of the teaching staff lives in another larger municipality nearby. That result in a differentiation of the contacts and understanding of the schools mission between staff and the parents and public. The teachers who live in the River municipality go along with most of the parents in seeing the school as first and foremost an institution where the children get a good upbringing and viability, while the commuting teachers likes to work in a successful school when it comes to academic outcome. This difference in basic views also has an effect on the culture in the teacher teams.

School results concerning the number of students that get a pass is very good in both schools and the parents want the focus of the school to stay that way and are not interested in a change towards a more market oriented academic development. When put to the test, the principal in River school admits that when he wants to focus more on raising the results for the sake of the students aiming at university programs, he is going to meet resistance. The parents want the school to educate for the local labor market to strengthen the municipality in the long run. Every third family in the River School municipality has an own firm. When we interviewed students, three out of four said they should choose secondary school programs with

a bearing on the local business that are strong supporters of the school with own ideas of how to work together sponsoring the school with possibilities for students to work in order to get practical experience.

All this together characterizes a school community with its values based on the conception a school for all and for the local society rather than a school for competition, higher education, and international carriers.

In both municipalities, the principals had experienced a stronger emphasis on student outcomes from the municipal school leadership, the national agencies, and the general political climate in Sweden. They have met this accountability demand during a period of downsizing of student numbers and staff. To handle this mixed situation, they work hard striving to develop new structures for teacher teams, better support for children in need and changing values concerning the teachers' view of students and the role of a teacher. Modernization of teaching practices is also on the agenda.

A leadership combining structural and cultural changes based on a developed dialog both on a group and on an individual level is required. All in all, the prognosis for the new principals seems to be good and even better student performance could be expected in the coming years. They still have a positive climate among teachers and the parents to lean against.

12.4.4 USA (New York)

An analysis of home-school relationships (Johnson 2007) in three of the initial US ISSPP case study schools (Costello, Coleman, Fraser) revealed that efforts to involve parents and the community in these schools ranged across a continuum, with Fraser being the most inclusive and Costello the least. Each of these women principals, two African American and one White, worked to create a trusting environment in their school where parents and community members could feel welcome and comfortable. At Fraser, the newly appointed African American principal transformed the school's relationship with parents through an ethic of care and the use of "open door" strategies. In this school, the discourse of "care" could be described as empowering, for the principal made hiring a diverse faculty who identified with parents and held high expectations for student achievement a priority. At Colman Elementary, a predominately white middle class school with changing demographics, the principal emphasized a sense of belonging and the importance of personal connection with parents. Because racially diverse Costello Elementary had a previous reputation for low student achievement and inconsistent student discipline, the new African American principal's goal was to create a safe and nurturing child-centered learning environment that focused on addressing students' basic social and emotional needs. As one of the parents put it:

You see (the principal) telling children "You're important. We're glad you're here." … all the children feel that this school is for them, that they are important here.

Faced with safety issues in the surrounding neighborhood at Fraser Academy, the principal brought together parents, teachers, and the block club to form an "action group" to pressure city officials and established a "parent patrol" to disrupt the drug dealing in the city park near the school. By modeling agency, Fraser's principal enabled parents to become successful advocates and lobbyists in accessing and mobilizing community resources needed for their neighborhood. In their words, "from the beginning she's (the principal) included the parents in every decision that's being made around here."

Although Colman's principal initiated workshops for parents and enlisted them as full members of the site-based decision-making team, it is the personal relationships and her advocacy for parents that made the difference in school-community relationships. As one of the parents described her approach:

> She will listen to you as a parent… she will speak to the teachers on your behalf and get you the support you need. She will get you the help you need, and that's something that's been helpful, kind of a go-between between parents (and teachers).

At Costello Elementary, recognizing that her hard-hitting style could be intimidating to some of the parents, the principal hired a parent liaison and utilized the guidance counselor in the school to help enlist parents as volunteers and coordinate parent workshops. But, there is little evidence that parents were involved in decision making in this school.

Five years later, parents at Fraser Academy embraced the school's conversion to charter status. To complete the transition from public school to charter, New York authorities require a majority of parents to vote in support. The election at Fraser School produced a parent turnout of over 80%, with almost 100% voting for conversion. A lottery system was instituted to fill openings and the school currently maintains a healthy waiting list of prospective students. While the school still largely draws from a poor and working class African American population living in the immediate neighborhood, as a charter school, students from throughout the city are eligible and some parents from outside the neighborhood drive their children to the school.

There have also been signs of changes in the immediate neighborhood, including a recently renovated city park complete with basketball hoops and a surrounding fence that is available as a play space for Fraser's students during the school day and neighborhood youth after 5 p.m. Routines and strategies to attract parents early in the principal's tenure such as "coffee sips" and "Father's Day" dinners have become well- established traditions in the school. Fraser has moved beyond a school in transition to a "settled" organization with the capacity to quickly involve new parents in the life of the school through well-attended open houses, multicultural assemblies, and as classroom volunteers.

Ironically, more institutionalized parent involvement activities and more stability in the surrounding neighborhood has also meant that there is less need for grass roots activism. The teams of Fraser parents who patrolled the school grounds in their identifying "Parent Patrol" jackets, when we first visited in 2002, are no longer in operation because there is no need for their services.

12.5 Professional and Cultural-Ethical Expectations

In some countries, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, there seems to be an increased focus on improving students' outcomes. Thereby, it is also an increased need to monitor students' progress, and different assessment practices are developed to document and improve educational quality. Although the principals in the Scandinavian case schools are more concerned with students' outcomes in terms of academic achievements, they still have the comprehensive "Democratic Bildung" perspective high on the agenda.

In some of the "old accountability regimes" – Australia and England –, there is still a strong focus on testing students' performance according to state standards, as well as national teaching programs, but principals underscore the need for the broader, more comprehensive focus: the whole child, caring, social competencies etc. There seems to be an understanding that the managerial accountability system should be given its share, while schools also should give more attention to the broader education.

It is a new situation for principals in the Nordic countries, but the principals in the (AU-UK-US) systems are getting used to the situation and finding their ways.

12.5.1 Denmark

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

Since the beginning of the 90 s and with renewed pace from 2001, the Danish comprehensive educational system has been undergoing a process of thorough transformation under the influence of strong international currents; neo-liberal currents have linked educational thinking very closely to the economy and to neo-conservative trends of back-to-basics, more subject-oriented teaching, re-introduction of testing at all levels of primary school, and also of other social technologies (Moos 2003; Krejsler 2005).

The political trend towards narrowing the focus of schooling seems to be successful in terms of test results. All three schools perform better now than previously in the national tests. The challenge to the principals is to sustain this development and at the same time take care of the comprehensive vision of "Democratic Bildung" (Moos et al. 2007).

The principal finds that most of the adjustments are in line with the thinking of the Commuter School if only they stay focused on "Democratic Bildung." Thus the

translation of the new demands is easy, she claims. This is supported by the fact that most of the new accountability technologies are similar to those being used in the school already. The efforts to develop the school into a learning organization are still relevant and active in the life of the school.

We find that there are clear links and connections between the conditions that teachers have for deliberation, participation, and collaboration and the conditions and frames that schools and teachers give students so they can develop a "Democratic Bildung." This kind of Bildung is not only at matter of knowing about democracy, it is more a matter of acquiring democratic patterns of interpretation and democratic ways of life (Dewey 1916; Beane and Apple 1999). A "Democratic Bildung" must therefore include the possibilities to test those interpretations and ways of living in real life.

The discussion of "producing results" and pursuing the comprehensive vision of "Democratic Bildung" is a good illustration of one of the dilemmas principals have to act on and often find day-to-day solutions and semi-final decisions to.

12.5.2 Norway

The last year, two of the schools got results way below the average locally as well as nation ally. At one of the schools, the students performed way over the local and national average. However, this year and the next year, the principal at this school expects the results to decline. The low performance, as well as the expected low performance, is explained by the recruitment of students. All the three schools have a reputation for taking good care of weak per forming students and students with special needs. Most of the students in the two combined primary and lower secondary schools come from the local community, but a large group of students, especially at one of the schools, have parents who have applied to get their children into this school. One of the principals problematize the student recruitment related to test performance in the following way:

> If I could choose my students as the football trainers do, then I would have had the best performing school in the world when it comes to test results. That is clear. But this is not the case. We have to help all our students to do their best and this is why it makes no sense to make the test results public accessible (Principal at Brage).

The case studies of the Norwegian schools show that schools respond to new expectations by planning and coordinating development projects and reporting on the local level. Nothing is really at stake for the schools if they perform badly on the national standardized tests or the School-leaving-Examination. With respect to the different accountability logics, professional and ethical aspects seem to be high on the agenda for the principals in these case schools. They emphasize that they have a responsibility towards providing good learning opportunities for all the students and the focus seems to be on finding ways to cultivate an environment for learning that is humanly fulfilling and socially responsible. However, compared to 5 years ago, there is an

increased awareness with respect to using tools such as screening tests and locally developed tests in order to monitor progress among the students, which is exemplified by the excerpt below:

> The school's results on the national tests were below the average scores nationally and also locally. We are working on improving the students' learning outcomes in terms of getting higher scores on the tests. We have developed an action plan which emphasise improving the motivation to learn among the students. Moreover, we are to a larger extent using existing screening tests to document the level of achievement and we develop new tests and material to be used in English and Mathematics. We also participate in a Mathematic project initiated by the municipality. English, Mathematics and also Science are our main subjects for improvement (Principal at Furuheia school).

The same principal also states that the school has prioritized using some time to prepare the students on the type of tasks given on the national standardized tests and to deal with the test situation itself. Another principal reports that they, for years, have prioritized using screening tests to categorize the students according to different levels. This is part of the school's strategy to adapt the teaching to the needs and abilities of the students. From fifth grade, they differentiate between four levels characterized by the same colors, which are used to describe the levels of difficulty of alpine pists. Green represents the easiest level, then blue, red, and black refers to the most difficult level. The principal emphasizes that this strategy has been important in order to provide good learning experiences for all the students, and to motivate the students to work harder to learn. All the three principals are aware of the changes in the education context, and they demonstrate to a certain degree responsiveness to these changes. They are all deeply committed principals and have clear visions and strategies, and act according to what they think are the best for their school and for the students. The collaboration between the schools and the municipalities/counties is characterized as good, and they feel supported by their superiors at the municipal/county levels.

12.5.3 Sweden

In our project "Structure, Culture, Leadership – Prerequisites for Successful Schools", we unfold a measure of successful schools based on both academic and civic objectives. Civic objectives are outlined by the National Agency in a system for schools' evaluation of quality and are about norms, values, and personal development. It contains issues close to those connected to the "Bildung" concept. Results from the project show a stronger leadership in schools that fulfils both academic and civic objectives. In Sweden, the civic objectives are central and most principals hold them high, are concerned about how to measure those to make them comparable to the academic objectives when schools are assessed. The more focus that is attached to the measurable academic objectives the greater this worry becomes.

There are no official data describing the opinion among Swedish principals in general concerning the hurricane of accountabilities. Some indication can be found

in a group of principals' analysis of their situation and challenges given in an assignment for the principal training program. None of the principals that were asked mentions the new goal and results oriented school system as a problem perceived by themselves or their teachers. But, indirectly it is shown through the concern the principals have for their own and for their teachers' workload.

The new accountability system implies an increased demand for judgments and assessments in writing (individual development plans) to students and parents, besides the ordinary grading every year. The expansion of the grading and test systems challenges not only the principals and teachers' time schedules but also their inner motivation to intensify the grading, assessing, and evaluating, as many might feel, at the expense of a more constructivist view on learning.

Another reaction related to the more businesslike management system introduced in the schools comes from our principal in the River School (see Chap. 10). He has a background as a deputy principal in an independent secondary school. During the interview, he claims that he is going to get a real hardship to introduce the same management principals used in his former school when applying them in the River school. Especially, the individualized salary system fully carried through will create resistance he thinks.

In the Mountain school, the principal had to develop the teacher's relations to each other as well as to the parents and the local society. Coming from another part of the country, he didn't know much about the internal habits and relations in the school. Collaboration forms with the local society was also an important part he didn't know so much about, but a problematic bully case forced him to analyze the school culture. The students still showed good academic results; so, the principal had the possibility to work a lot with the teachers' internal collaboration forms at the same time as new relations to the local society could be developed.

At first, the teachers didn't share the principal's view of the need for a change in collaboration forms with the local society. The principal expected the teachers to take a new and open discussion with parents on any question but the teachers thought that social questions as bullying was the principal's responsibility. Introducing new forms of working teams at the same time as remedial teachers were employed became the principal's strategy. He was convinced that it would contribute to a better inclusion of all students. In the end, the teachers supported this endeavor.

The principal worked under hard pressure from the local authorities and the funding for his school was decreasing. He was aware of the new forms of accountability and chose to work with structural changes to create new attitudes among his staff to maintain the schools' high academic performance at the same time as the fulfillment of the civic goals were increased.

To summarize, concerning culture and ethics, the Swedish schools hold a high profile. As mentioned earlier, social and civic objectives are considered very important; activities against bullying are strong and student health promotion is debated with inclusion as a headline. Swedish schools have special programs for immigrating students and the National Agency has proclaimed a certain year for a national endeavor to highlight norms and values in school. All these norms and basic values seem to be lasting through the hurricane.

12.5.4 USA (New York)

Using state accountability measures such as high stakes testing to focus the school's direction setting (Leithwood and Riehl 2005) was not entirely without objection in the ISSPP schools. A few veteran teachers (particularly in Costello and Hamilton schools) were critical during our initial visit in 2002 of what they perceived to be a loss of professional autonomy and the lack of time to impact affective learning. Teachers of students with special needs were the most critical, often noting the inappropriateness of standardized testing for their students and the "psychological damage" it was causing. Some special education teachers said they felt marginalized by principals who they perceived as concentrating more on test scores than on the needs of these youngsters.

Informal accountability pressure, in the form of peer pressure from other teachers, also emerged in those schools where leaders were successful at facilitating collaborative goal setting, most notably Coleman, Fraser Academy, and Hamilton. Peer pressure became a factor when teachers felt cared for and principals were seen as strong instructional leaders who engaged their faculty. When principals engaged in collaborative learning in relation to new program initiatives and established programs for parents to support children's learning at home, teachers placed more informal accountability pressure upon themselves to improve their teaching.

Five years later, the greatest challenge with Fraser Academy's conversion to a charter school was teacher turnover, when two thirds of teachers who were then at Fraser left to take early retirement or preserve their tenure within the district. These departures became the school's main catalyst for its subsequent self-renewal as the Principal and those veteran teachers who remained recognized that new teachers had to learn the new curriculum quickly in order to meet the school's objectives. As one veteran teacher noted,

> There was no time for new teachers to hang back and watch. We needed the new staff members to get on board quickly, which meant we needed to work together and do peer coaching in classrooms.

While veteran teachers at Fraser Academy acknowledged the pressure of having to sustain the school's success, they also felt empowered by their new leadership roles and took even greater ownership in the school and its programs. When we revisited Fraser Academy, teacher leadership had become institutionalized with the formation of a school-wide leadership team represented by one teacher from each grade level that meets at least twice a month to coordinate staff development activities. As one veteran noted, "It was hard in some ways, but I have to say I felt really good about taking a leadership role in keeping the program moving forward in spite of all the staff changes."

Concerns evident in many high poverty US schools that the press of high stakes testing has "narrowed" and "standardized" the curriculum (Sleeter 2006) in favor of literacy and numeracy were not evident when Fraser was revisited. Free from state

scrutiny because of their consistent achievement on statewide exams, the school had maintained at least some emphasis on a multicultural approach and developing good citizenship amongst its students.

12.6 Conclusion

In the Scandinavian countries, we see common trends towards decentralization of financial and managerial tasks and at the same time there is an increased re-centralization in terms of establishing different types of assessment systems and practices which aim to document and monitor students' outcomes. The centralization also includes traditional input-oriented means of governing such as the national curriculum. The reformulation of curriculum aims into competency aims, can in certain ways be seen as a narrowing of the national curriculum and a movement away from the traditional concept of "Democratic Bildung." When revisiting the Scandinavian case schools 5 years later, we can see that all the principals to a greater extent refer to the new managerial expectations when they talk about how they run their school. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have implemented new national systems for quality assurance, building on national standards, national tests, and quality reports from schools to a national Agency (Denmark), inspection of schools and a new national Quality Agency (Sweden) and comparisons of student outcomes (Norway).

However, the Scandinavian principals seem to differ with respect to types of assessment practices and the extent to which outcomes achieved are tied to consequences for the actors involved in terms of being held to account. In the Swedish and the Danish case schools, the assessment practices are linked to other means such as teachers' salaries (Sweden) and a contractual system (Denmark) which implies holding the individual teacher to account. In the Norwegian case schools, the new managerial expectations result in introducing programs to support teaching and learning as well as tools to monitor students' progress on school level.

Compared with the Scandinavian principals, it seems as if the principals in the US case schools, who work in a tight accountability and performativity oriented system, are more inclined to accept the standards and testing as a fact of life. However, there is a tendency that the principals, also in Australia and the UK, find that the national standards are not good enough indicators for a good or a successful school. They agree with principals in the looser accountability countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) that schools' core purpose is broader than basic skills.

This observation suggests that the high stake testing systems are effective and technologies are efficient when it comes to govern schools in line with national standards from the top of the system. Principals tend to be more compliant with national or regional standards for educational outcomes and less critical to those standards. The governmentalization has been brought to a new and more radical phase where social technologies, implemented by governments are being conceived as natural – neither disputed nor disputable – facts of life.

Expectations from the local community and degree of collaboration with parents, seem to develop differently. In the Danish case schools, there is more emphasis on partnerships between the school and the parents, because principals now know that parents are (also) consumers of the services that schools deliver (to phrase it in a managerial way that is becoming very commonly used). In the Norwegian case schools, there is a close link between school and parents, when it comes to solving problems at schools, and in Sweden there is a clear tendency that parents see their school as an integrated part of the local community, and thus want school to educate their students to be able to take over jobs in the local community.

There is a broad understanding amongst principals in the case stories that the core purpose of schooling is to give a holistic, comprehensive education focused on education for citizenship and education for democratic citizenship, to mention only two different terms for the endeavor. The purpose of schools is seen to provide a comprehensive education with a responsibility to community – education for democratic citizenship – and learning (also called "Bildung" with a German concept), so the students can grow or develop into independent and enlightened adults who are action-competent with regard to equity and social justice.

At this stage in history, this tradition is being met with a general trend towards more emphasis on detailed standards for student achievements in some basic subjects and a strict testing and examination system. The trend has been shown to have an impact on the ways schools are managed and led. There are differences between the reactions in the Scandinavian countries: The Norwegian and Danish principals find they have to maneuver in several dilemmas because of the clash between traditional ways of understanding the purpose and the new expectations related to improving student outcomes. The Swedish principals seem not to experience those dilemmas because they can more easily accept the national goals and quality measurements.

Principals in schools in the tighter accountability and performativity countries (UK, US, and Australia) are more inclined to accept the standards and testing as a fact of life. However, there is a tendency in Australia and the UK that many principals find that the national standards are not good enough indicators for a good or a successful school. They agree with principals in the looser accountability countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) that schools' core purpose is broader than basic skills.

This observation suggests that the high stake testing systems are effective and technologies are efficient when it comes to govern schools in line with national standards from the top of the system. Principals tend to be more compliant with national or regional standards for educational outcomes and less critical to those standards. The governmentalization has been brought to a new and more radical phase where social technologies implemented by governments are being conceived as natural – neither disputed nor disputable – facts of life.

The observation also suggests that the tight accountability systems foster a tendency in school leadership toward more focus on direct influence and on institutionalized forms of power – "telling" – while school principals in looser accountability systems are more inclined to exercise indirect and consciousness controlling forms of power – "selling" – leaving room for negotiations with staff (Moos et al. 2007). The last observation could have very strong implications for the democracy in schools and for democratic education.

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Chapter 13
New Insights: How Successful School Leadership Is Sustained

Lejf Moos, Olof Johansson, and Christopher Day

The rich data provided by revisiting the principals combined with the analysis of previously collected data and a consideration of changes in social and policy contexts in which principals work has enabled us to provide a unique international perspective on how successful leaders sustain their success. Our case stories encompass education in six countries and stretch over a period of 5 years. They give us new and challenging knowledge, not only about the values, qualities, skills, and knowledge which successful principals hold and apply in order to achieve and sustain success, but, importantly, how they influence teachers' teaching and in student learning and achievement. The analyses and arguments in the case stories and their further development through six thematic chapters have enabled us to view sustainability from diverse perspectives. The first chapter took a communicative perspective on leadership: sustaining success through sense-making communication in the everyday practice. Chapter two took as its point of departure a psychological perspective on school leaders' resilience as a precondition for sustaining success in leadership. The third chapter on sustaining improvement and leadership in challenging schools took a systemic perspective on schools. And the fourth chapter analysed two different forms of preparation for leadership. The last chapter analysed cases from Denmark, Norway, Sweden and USA (New York). It found that, although there were differences in the pace of changing policy regimes for

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leadership, the directions towards increases in contractual accountability were broadly the same. The responses of these successful school leaders were, however, strikingly similar.

The strategies successful school principals in this book chose to foster learning and sustained success in their schools are analysed inductively in this chapter through a theoretical framework of leadership for democratic education (Woods 2005; Moos 2008). This offers a lens to understanding associations between leaders who: are driven by a belief in the basic values and rights of each individual; take the standpoint of others into consideration; consult widely in making decisions; embrace plurality and difference; and promote equity and social justice. Through these, have a lasting impact on other people within and beyond the organisation and a capacity for resilience. It also offers a lens to understanding the kind of relations and communications that school leaders can enter into with teachers and other stakeholders in order to further democratic education understood as a mixture of academic, personal and social competences.

13.1 The Self-renewing School: Sustaining Leadership Through Self-renewing Communication

Successful leaders empower teachers and re-culture the organisation through negotiation and deliberation: self-renewing communication.

The principals in our cases demonstrate, that sustaining success in a changing world means to be aware of and be able to respond to changes in political and educational expectations, take others with them in doing so, and at the same time asserting the basic ethical and moral purpose of schooling, a comprehensive education for social justice.

Sustaining successful systems, structures, roles and accountabilities, and improving cultures and achievement in schools is first and foremost achieved by these principals through involving and empowering teachers to be lifelong learning professionals and by being prepared to restructure and re-culture their organisations in response to changing social and policy environments by shifting the focus from leaders to leadership and diverse forms of distributed leadership with more focus on relations and communities.

13.1.1 The Distribution of Influence

One key element in and across the case studies was the association between the capacity of the organisation to engage in change for improvement and the sharing of responsibilities and accountabilities among all staff in the school. The informed

distribution and the power of many rather than a few to influence was achieved through the progressive distribution of leadership (Day et al. 2011). This was evidenced in the case schools through deliberations and negotiations where teachers were given voice and teachers and leadership entered into 'semi-permanent consensus' on reaching a 'sufficiently shared' and 'good enough understanding' of the current situations, the intended aims and external expectations and practical ways to respond to this within the broad educational values framework agreed in the school. In most cases, there were two interconnected forms of distribution, two social technologies: Firstly, there was much productive collaboration and sharing of leadership in communities through, for example, teams of leaders and teams of teachers. Secondly, there was repeated evidence of a renewed focus on sense-making in the person-to-person everyday interactions and communication in the educational and organisational practices of the principals. Values, ethics and direction for school development were shaped and negotiated between teachers and leaders through (i) formal management delegated to formal positions in bureaucratic organisations: teachers over students, principals over teachers; and (ii) the power of the better argument in which the person, who produces the 'better argument', is the de facto leader in the situation. On the other hand, leadership in schools is also formal management delegated to formal positions in bureaucratic organisations: teachers over students, principals over teachers and so on.

This ideal of 'the better argument' is often contested in real life, but this is, according to Habermas (1984) still inherent in communication itself. Therefore, there is a better chance to have it prevailing if relations in schools are being communication at short range, where all participants can have a chance of being heard, listened to and eventually given influence. Deliberation is therefore the foundation for schools to sustain their leadership, success and development and thus for schools to become and stay 'self-renewing'. Important for sustained success, therefore, is that the leadership process leads not only to distributed leadership but also to distributed responsibility among all the involved staff in the school. Distributed responsibility is a key factor to success for these principals.

13.2 Sustaining Improvements in Student Learning and Achievement: The Importance of Resilience in Leaders

Because schools and classrooms are fundamentally environments with high levels of social interaction and are characterised by tensions and dilemmas at all levels, leadership resilience is not only the capacity to bounce back in adverse circumstances, but also being able to find or produce the necessary room for manoeuvre in order to lead according to ethical and moral purposes and enact as well as espouse democratic values on a daily basis. However, resilience is only possible and productive if leadership trust and trustworthiness is being produced and reinforced simultaneously.

13.2.1 A Focus on Achievement: Finding Room to Manoeuver Within Democratic Values

Taken together, our findings demonstrate that for successful leaders, there is no dichotomy between discourses and practices of social justice and working for high academic achievement on the parts of the students. On the contrary, leadership for improved learning for children is characterised by a clear sense of moral/ethical purpose related to how to create learning environments in which all students and staff may not only feel they belong to, but also in which they may be successful. Yet, such leadership requires that leaders are beacons of hope, engage in risk, distribute trust and hope progressively in a wise and timely manner and are able to be resilient and build the capacities of others to be resilient.

Our research shows how successful principals, in collaboration with their staff, continually work to mediate government policy and external changes so that they are able to be understood and integrated with and as the school's values. The principals have a democratic mission and their leadership has an impact on other people within and beyond the organisation. Moreover, they lead in the knowledge that despite new and sometimes challenging democratic intention in policy documents across all the countries participating in the study, competition and individualism are on the rise and valued over cooperation and interdependence. Living in world where changing definitions of what is a democratic and good society effects how we define what the term 'successful schools' means and should cause all of us to deliberate about our values and our choices, but at the same time understand the importance of arguing and be able to show success for all children in a time where sustained improvement is not considered enough.

13.3 Transformational and Instructional Leadership Functions Are Especially Pivotal in Challenging Schools

Across the cases of schools in challenging circumstances, it was evident that the four leadership dimensions of setting direction, developing people, developing the school, and improving teaching and learning were a necessary but insufficient condition for sustaining their success over time. Principals had clearly articulated views on education and helped their schools set appropriate directions. They were all concerned with the professional development of teachers and other staff as part of building capacity and teacher leadership. All principals were focused on improving the quality of the teaching and learning. In essence, they were both transformational and instructional leaders who directly or indirectly influenced teaching and learning. They created and/or developed guiding educational philosophies, structures, processes and practices within the school to support teachers and students as the schools developed over time. Whilst these dimensions were important for these schools, and probably necessary in any context, there were other factors that seemed to be especially important for the challenging contexts of these schools.

13.3.1 Personal Commitment

In all cases, the personal qualities of leadership were demonstrated to be a key factor, and perhaps this is even more important when the context presents significant challenges. The principals were committed to making a difference. Their commitment underpinned other qualities such as resilience and their motivation to sustain their efforts over time. They had high self-efficacy and they carried with them high expectations of themselves and others. Further, these principals all emphasised the importance of establishing excellent personal relationships within the schools. It is also important to note, however, that none of the principals were willing to attain high test scores at the expense of the whole child and a supportive school environment.

13.3.2 Community Engagement

Closely related, the principals created safe child-centred learning environments and building community. More specifically, these principals reached out to their communities. They clearly understood that they could not succeed in isolation. They built bridges and connected with their communities. It is clear that the personality of these principals is viewed as a key factor for their success. Commitment, engagement and attitude are used as wheels for getting and that fact opens up for questions related to search processes for principals and the construction of principal preparation programmes.

13.4 Preparation for Sustainable Leadership: Building on Experience

The examples from the USA and Australia provide contrasting preparation contexts and provide endpoints in a formal to informal continuum for principal preparation. Across the USA, there is generally a requirement for formal preservice leadership preparation, whereas in Australia there are no formal preparation requirements, or within most school contexts, expectations by employing authorities in regard to formal or informal preparation. In between these extremes, countries such as England and Sweden not only have moved to more formal requirements in recent times (for example, the once voluntary National Professional Qualification for Head-teachers in England is now a mandatory precondition for applications for headship and the same is the case for all newly appointed principals in Sweden), but also have a range of support programmes in place providing a mix of voluntary and mandated programmes for aspiring, new and continuing principals. Other countries, such as Denmark, have a range of non-compulsory formal and informal support programmes for emerging and established school leaders, with expectations that school leaders will participate in these programmes and be supported to do so by the municipalities, which govern their schools.

Whilst both Australian principals described their leadership preparation as not including formal requirements to gain knowledge outside of the school experience, these principals were both intellectually restless and actively sought new ideas to supplement their significant on-the-job training about what works in schools, and to improve their leadership. This was important for ensuring that their ideas were fresh and that they were leading schools at the forefront of contemporary learning.

Both USA principals described personal experiences and leadership ideas from their preparation programmes that motivated them to commit to their schools. These successful principals had a love for children, education and professional learning that sustained them through difficult leadership experiences. They established a set of values and principles that guided their actions. Previous experience and strong mentoring experiences made a difference in the principals' abilities to sustain success in their challenging school contexts.

When these two cases and those in other countries within and outside the project are analysed in relation to principal training, a very mixed picture occurs. A general conclusion is that the policy level in most countries does not seem to believe in compulsory principal training. This is very obvious in EU, where England and Sweden are among the few countries that have compulsory education for principals. It is also interesting to note that the most successful school country, according to Pisa – Finland – has no compulsory training for principals. Behind this lack of political interest for principal training, we can sense the idea of personality factors and their importance.

13.5 The Hurricane of Accountabilities?

During the past 5 years since we first visited the schools, major changes have occurred in the ways of which schools are governed and managed, particularly in the Scandinavian countries. Since then, the 'hurricane of accountabilities' has reached all countries in the project. In the Scandinavian countries, this recent development is, first of all, characterised by an increased focus on student achievement and performance measurement as a key part of evaluation processes. Second, it implies a changed concept of educational quality, which in form seems to be defined by expectations about specific outcomes. Third, it indicates a belief that any divergence between the expected outcomes and the level of achievements can be identified. Along with this development, schools are increasingly being perceived as the unit of measurement and the need to make principals and teachers accountable is emerging.

Although similar trends can be identified across countries, the ways in which evaluation procedures and accountability processes are being implemented and practiced seem to differ. Across the Scandinavian countries, for example, there is a common trend towards decentralisation of financial and managerial tasks and at the same time there is an increased re-centralisation in terms of establishing different types of assessment systems and practices which aim to document and monitor students' outcomes.

In the intervening years between the first and second visits to schools, Denmark, Norway and Sweden had implemented new national systems for quality assurance, building on national standards, national tests and quality reports from schools to a national Agency (Denmark), inspection of schools and a new national Quality Agency (Sweden) and comparisons of student outcomes (Norway). Centralisation also included traditional input-oriented means of governing such as the national curriculum. The reformulation of curriculum aims into competency aims that can in certain ways be seen as a narrowing of the national curriculum and a movement away from the traditional concept of 'Democratic Bildung'. When revisiting principals in the Scandinavian case schools 5 years later, it was clear that all the principals referred much more often than before to the new managerial expectations when they talked about how they ran their school.

Whilst principals in Australia, England and USA are now more experienced in dealing with measurement, test results and accountability mechanisms, the Nordic principals seem at this stage to be exploring ways to handle new expectations which include the comprehensive and holistic goals which are part of the national curricula. Compared with the Scandinavian principals, it seems that the principals in the US case schools, who work in a tight accountability- and performativity-oriented system, are more inclined to accept the standards and testing as a fact of life. However, these successful principals, in common with those in Australia, and the UK find that the national standards are not good enough indicators for a good or a successful school. They agree with principals in the looser accountability countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) that their schools' core purposes include, but are broader than, the basic skills currently being emphasised by government policies.

13.6 Implications for Democratic Education

The research reported in this book suggests that principals who sustain success continue to exercise a strong sense of educational agency. Although ever more punitive contractual accountability systems foster a tendency in school leadership towards more focus on direct influence and on institutionalised forms of power – 'telling' – school principals in both tighter and looser accountability systems are more inclined to exercise direct and indirect forms of personal and positional influence – 'selling' (Moos et al. 2008) – through emphasising trust and trustworthiness, strong and clearly articulated values, agreed ethical forms and norms of behaviour and persistent engagement with both internal and external communities.

The last observation could have strong implications for our understanding of democracy in schools and for democratic education because we see a shift in the ways democracy is perceived in school. Traditionally, school is seen as democratic, if it gives students, teachers and leaders room for 'participation' in decision-making. This perspective has always been difficult to implement in schools because there will always be non-symmetrical relations in this context. In short, we can say that

teachers are (supposed to be) more knowledgeable and they are, like the school leader, given formal power over students.

So, if the focus is shifted from participation and decision-making towards deliberation and constructing premises for decision-making, we can see a much larger room for manoeuvre opening up to students, teachers and leaders; all parties can influence the way they perceive and anticipate learning, education and leadership and thus everybody can take part in constructing the worldview of members of the community on which they make decisions – if they are invited and encouraged to deliberate and negotiate.

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