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Chapter 40
Leadership for Learning: What It Means for Teachers

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Introduction

Theories about teacher leadership and how it is manifested in practice have become prominent in recent times. Harris et al. (2007) reference to a ‘leadership industry’ suggests that the discipline has become very susceptible to new theories or labels (p. 338). Recent theories (Spillane and Diamond 2007), which loosely fit under the ‘leadership for learning’ umbrella, have emerged in response to the changing policy and professional context of schooling and to increasing concerns about student achievement. This emergence foregrounds the role that teachers can play in making a difference to student achievement.

Recent educational leadership titles also indicate this change of emphasis by recognising that it is those closest to classrooms who can best inspire the youth of today to reach their potential. Hess (2008) suggests the way forward is to ‘follow the teacher’. Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) similarly argue that it is teachers who represent the largest group of prospective leaders because they are the ones who can best serve as the real change agents for school improvement. The two authors liken this untapped resource to a ‘sleeping giant’, waiting to be woken. They argue strongly that the future of schools is ‘dependent on the productive engagement of teachers as leaders’ (p. ix). They also suggest that ‘this sleeping giant can be awakened by helping teachers believe they are leaders, by offering opportunities to develop their leadership skills and by providing school cultures that honour their leadership’ (p. 2).

Our purpose in this chapter is to explore some of the meanings attributed to leadership for learning and what these understandings mean for teachers assuming

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T. Townsend and J. MacBeath (eds.), *International Handbook of Leadership for Learning*, Springer International Handbooks of Education 25,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-1350-5_40, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2011

leadership roles. We use several case studies along with relevant literature to illustrate how teacher leadership is enacted in school settings in order to enhance student achievement. These case studies from Australia and New Zealand feature teacher leaders working in a variety of ways with other teachers. They include teacher leaders working with individual teachers, with small groups and with whole schools. We argue that, despite variations in how teacher leaders interpret, and are able to enact, their leadership, some generic principles relative to their work apply. In addressing this matter, we consider two leadership for learning frameworks – one fashioned by Crowther et al. (2002) and the other by MacBeath and Dempster (2009). The two frameworks include a focus on learning within an environment that encourages creativity and risk-taking by offering opportunities for shared dialogue on agreed matters. According to these frameworks, such an environment relies on school staff sharing leadership and accountability for student learning and achievement in classrooms.

Difficulties with Definition

Reconciling what we understand on the one hand, by leadership as a formal role within the teaching profession, and on the other, with a conception of leadership as influencing others and working with them is not easy. Any exploration of what teacher leadership and leadership for learning actually encompass within a school tends to challenge our existing conceptions of what we understand teachers and leaders do (Murphy 2005).

Murphy concurs with Crowther et al. (2002) when he claims that a 'massive amount of work is required to explore the meaning of teacher leadership' and to reach clarity of definition (p. 4). At one end of the continuum is the view that all teachers can be leaders (Barth 1999; Hess 2008). At the other end is the view that teacher leaders are the select few who see themselves as the 'superstars' of the profession, serving as instructional coaches or professional developers – roles that allow teacher leaders to talk about teaching rather than necessarily continue classroom teaching. Moreover, new and particular notions and forms of leadership are emerging as schools transform themselves to meet the needs of their students in the twenty-first century. Crowther et al. (2009), for example, suggest that it is difficult to imagine the evolution of a knowledge society without the teaching profession leading the way (p. xv). Yet the idea that all teachers are potential leaders remains contested.

It is a paradox that traditional notions of leadership assume that leadership occurs beyond the classroom rather than being closely connected to it. In endeavouring to provide some resolution to this matter, Hess (2008) suggests that teacher leadership begins in the classroom: '…the teacher is the captain in her classroom and it is precisely her effectiveness as a leader that will determine whether that class sails, sinks, or drifts somewhere in between' (p. 9). He explains that notions of teacher career are such that, typically, the best teachers move into administrative roles, which take them away from working directly with children. Murphy (2005) also describes the principles of teacher leadership as being grounded in classrooms, with effective teaching as a prelude to teacher leadership, thereby linking teaching, learning and leadership. Teacher leadership is thus collaborative work that is community anchored, involves a service function and is co-constructed and context-bound. Above all, teacher leadership is about making a difference to student achievement (pp. 68–69).

Towards Leadership for Learning

In this section, we tease out from the literature the 'ingredients' that need to be at hand in order to facilitate leadership for learning. How these ingredients come together to produce various forms of teacher leadership is apparent in the case study accounts of Australian and New Zealand teachers that follow.

Shared Leadership, Distributed Leadership

Hargreaves (2002) maintains that, in today's society, school leaders need to know more about, and to take a more active involvement in, students' learning than ever before. They therefore need to remain abreast of the rapidly changing conceptions of what students need to learn and how that learning should be conducted (p. ix). However, the demands of school leaders' work in today's society are such that they cannot do this and the rest of their work on their own. School leaders accordingly need to work closely with teachers to build relationships of a kind that enables teachers and their students to engage in ongoing and productive learning within rapidly changing political and social contexts.

Mitchell and Sackney (2000) and Sergiovanni (2001) concur. Leadership for learning, they say, requires a broader base of participants than has been the case previously if it is to have the necessary impact on student learning (Robinson et al. 2009). According to Gronn (2000) and Reeves (2008), in a schooling context leadership needs to be reframed in terms of the work teachers do alongside one another. The practice of what has come to be known as distributed leadership rests on the understanding that leadership tasks consume more energy than a sole leader can possibly provide in a school. Creating opportunities for others to engage in leadership activities helps address not only issues of leadership succession but also efforts to sustain school improvement (Harris et al. 2007).

Murphy (2005), however, claims that traditional notions of leadership, particularly the acceptance of formal roles, limit opportunity for teachers to see themselves as leaders beyond their own classrooms. Murphy regards this situation as problematic because power tends to inhibit learning with teacher colleagues. Hargreaves (2002) agrees. He contends that 'the potential for lasting leadership has been subverted by locking up leadership in the roles and behaviours of a few individuals' (p. xi). Teaching, he continues, should be the core profession in today's knowledge society because teachers are the key agents of change: '… teachers are the midwives of that knowledge society - without them, without their competence, our future will be malformed and stillborn' (p. x). Wrigley (2003), in presenting a similar argument, refers to the resurgence of interest in teachers as leaders as the new agenda for school improvement.

Hargreaves (2002) stresses that teachers who are supported by high-quality principalship can, given the chance, lead (p. ix). He refers to this relationship between leaders and teachers as parallel leadership (p. xii), involving collaborative learning of the kind evident within professional learning communities (Hord 1997).

A Conducive Culture

Leadership must connect with learning for teachers and students. Barth (2001), Stoll et al. (2003), and Wrigley (2003) are among the leadership writers who position schools as 'houses of learning', where, if the conditions are conducive, teachers can engage in dialogue with one another so as to enhance their teaching practices. However, because, as these authors explain, schools remain entrenched in models of professional development that tend to have others determining learning agendas, teachers need to take more ownership of these in order to invigorate their teaching practice and thereby increase their responsiveness to student learning needs. Reeves (2008) urges schools to question whether their current forms of professional learning are actually working for school improvement. Lieberman and Miller (2004, p. 9) observe that the organisational structures of schools, which are underpinned by prevailing norms of isolation and privacy, make it difficult for teachers to have the time and space to talk and learn from one another during the school day.

Reeves (2008) promotes the potential of direct observation of classroom teaching. She suggests that classrooms can become learning grounds for teachers as well as students. Shared experiences of and about their own practice in classrooms allow teachers to gain new or enhanced understandings and to consider alternatives, especially once they learn to trust and value their interactions with their colleagues. Ways need to be found to foster these collegial interactions because it is through such collaborations that teachers can pool their expertise and learn from one another.

Mitchell and Sackney (2007) highlight notions of inclusiveness, wholeness and connection in their work on professional learning communities (p. 31). They suggest five principles of engagement that underpin the success of such communities. These are deep respect, collective responsibility, appreciation of diversity, a problem-solving orientation, and positive role modelling (pp. 32–34).

Martin-Kniep (2008) critiques the prevailing isolation of colleagues in schools and calls for structural changes to traditional staff hierarchies and school rooms and offices so that schools can become true professional learning communities. He considers that effective professional learning communities are those that have three main elements. The first is a learning focus, where participants receive the support and resources they need to develop their individual understandings, skills, strategies, and processes (p. 21). These learnings are shared and connected to schools' needs to support students' learning. The second element is leadership in terms of developing the leadership capacity of the participants. Here, the members use what they have learned to influence the work of other adults. The third element is 'communities that last', emphasising the need for participants to be proactive in regard to change processes so as to ensure appropriate and ongoing development of processes, structures and practices (p. 24). Each of these elements requires equal attention to maximise the talent from within and to extend the potential of the learning community even further.

Others expand this 'connections' theme by moving into the realm of networked learning communities (Jackson and Temperley 2007; Stoll 2009), including international networks (Stoll et al. 2007). Jackson and Temperley argue that networking for professional learning in a knowledge-rich world is more than making a case for 'beyond school collaboration and enquiry as *opposed to* internal professional learning … [or] networked professional learning community *instead of* professional learning community' (p. 45). What else is needed is a new form of belonging and engagement among teachers within and beyond the boundaries of their respective schools. Teachers need to learn from one another, learn with one another, and learn on behalf of one another. As they do so, they become more and more conscious of the processes informing their own learning about teaching and student learning. Jackson and Temperley suggest that three fields of knowledge – practitioner knowledge, public knowledge and new knowledge – underpin this learning, which they call meta-learning. The authors use metaphors of threads, knots and nets to illustrate how teachers can work together to create the knowledge and skills they need to improve students' learning and achievement.

Stoll et al. (2007) claim that international networks are valuable sources of learning because such 'networking … enables them [teachers and leaders] to share and tease out principles of good practice, engage in in-depth dialogue across schools, create knowledge to respond to particular challenges that any one school might find hard to resolve, observe colleagues elsewhere, experience fresh perspectives, reduce isolation, and see their own school through a different lens' (p. 63). Robertson and Webber (2002), and subsequently MacBeath et al. (2006), demonstrated the value of extending country boundaries when researching leadership for learning programmes across countries. They found that these exchanges not only supported leaders and teachers in their work but also challenged them to explore different ways of thinking and acting in relation to their roles, including how they could work together to share leadership.

Disciplined Dialogue

The important part played by what Swaffield and Dempster (2009) call disciplined dialogue in respect of effective learning communities and networks cannot be underestimated. This form of talk, which the authors define as ‘informed, inclusive and enabling’ (p. 118), helps teachers talk with one another about ideas and concerns in a ‘constructive’ (p. 106) way that allows them to develop trusting relationships with one another and to view their colleagues as learning resources. In their accounts of the Australian school revitalisation programme ‘Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievement in Schools’ (IDEAS), Andrews and Lewis (2007) describe how school-wide processes can be used to help teachers not only bring a shared approach to their pedagogy but also engage in future thinking about their roles and their work. They found that as the teachers engaged in collective dialogue with one another, they developed understandings that could not easily be created by individuals (p. 133). In short, the teachers were harnessing the power of the collective rather than being left to reflect on their own. Swaffield and Dempster (2009) caution that disciplined dialogue needs to be encouraged by systemic change that gives teachers opportunities to work through conversations about practice with one another.

The concept of the professional learning community encompasses this intent, as is evident in the account by MacBeath et al. (2006) of their Carpe Vitam Project, which they describe as ‘a sequence of … conversations about learning and conversations as learning’ (p. 13). It was ‘through those multi-level conversations’, the authors continue, that ‘the meaning of leadership [was] grasped both intellectually and in action’ (p. 13). The conversations took the teachers and leaders through the phases of storming, norming, performing and reforming, during which the participants made connections, extended their thinking and were challenged to think in new ways. These ways, MacBeath and colleagues point out, required participants ‘not simply to incorporate new ideas into one’s familiar comfort zone but to challenge some of the very premises on which thinking and practice rest … this tripartite routine has proved its applicability and transferability at classroom as well as at school or inter-school level’ (p. 14).

We have argued that three ingredients matter when linking leadership with learning in schools (shared and distributed leadership, conducive cultures and disciplined dialogue). We now provide four case studies across two countries to illustrate the ways in which teacher leadership is enacted in school settings. The schools and teachers are anonymised.

Case Studies

A Defined Teacher Leadership Role: The Specialist Classroom Teacher (New Zealand)

This case study highlights a New Zealand initiative designed to retain teacher leaders in classroom settings so that their leadership actions influence other teachers in ways most likely to enhance student learning and achievement. The case study is of an early career secondary teacher named Ruby, appointed to a position called a specialist classroom teacher (SCT). The SCT role offers teachers a career pathway that keeps them connected to classroom teaching but simultaneously enables them to work with colleagues to enhance their teaching practices.

The role, which has some similarities to the advanced skills teacher role in other countries, appeared in New Zealand secondary schools after the 2004 settlement of the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement. It began as a pilot programme in 2006, was favourably reviewed in 2007 by Ward, and has continued with some modifications since. The components of the role are designed to promote more effective teaching practice and to enhance student engagement in learning (Ministry of Education 2009).

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

The work of the SCT is strongly focused on learning – on finding ways for teachers to have conversations about student learning and achievement in classrooms. The principles of trust and confidentiality underpin this work: teachers need to know that the concerns they share about their practice will not be used against them by the school's senior management team.

Supportive colleagues, such as the SCT, can make the difference as to whether teachers stay in the profession or opt out, as Donaldson (2005) and Elvidge (2002) found from their respective studies into teacher retention. The quality of beginning teacher mentoring and induction and the support given to teachers once they have gained their registration is another important factor in relation to teacher retention (Cameron 2009).

Ruby's story, which follows, shows how one school retained a promising teacher by encouraging her to take on the SCT role.

Ruby's Story

Ruby, a secondary English teacher in her late 20s, 'stumbled into' teaching. After gaining her teaching qualification, she taught for 6 months in a relief position before heading overseas. In England, she accepted a position at a school on the outskirts of London. The school was under 'special measures' and therefore at risk of closure. The position was a tough one, especially for a beginning teacher. Ruby was not treated as a beginning teacher and learned to survive through her own efforts. Six months into her time at the school she was asked to assume a leadership role as assistant head of English. Ruby somewhat reluctantly accepted this role and, despite its challenges, survived. The success she experienced teaching disengaged learners identified her as not only a competent teacher but as someone who could work comfortably alongside other teachers.

Back in New Zealand, Ruby became one of the 57 early career teachers participating in a nationwide New Zealand study called the Teachers of Promise study (TOPS) (Cameron et al. 2006). This longitudinal study tracked, over several years, the career paths of these teachers from their third year of teaching. Ruby's career is of particular interest because she changed countries and schools, moved into leadership and management roles, yet still maintained her classroom teaching role.

Ruby's first teaching position on returning to New Zealand was filling in for a teacher on maternity leave. She then took up a full-time position at a co-educational urban secondary school, where once again she encountered disengaged students. Her first challenge was to establish routines to settle a class which had already had four other teachers in the first 3 months of the year. After several months, Ruby added a leadership role to her classroom work that of assistant head of department (HOD).

Reflecting some time later on what she found satisfying (or not satisfying) about this dual role, Ruby said, 'I don't like the paperwork … I don't like a lot of the responsibility … but I do enjoy the teaching, getting them motivated and making a difference'. She said she appreciated the opportunity of a leadership role, but could only cope with her classroom teaching if she took her planning and marking home. The job, she explained, had begun to consume her life because she was determined to do the very best for her students. Juggling the two roles frustrated her, and was preventing her from being the kind of teacher she wanted to be: 'I'm not feeling the same energy in the classroom, and my main focus hasn't been teaching at all … I don't like feeling as though I'm not putting everything into my teaching, and I don't get as much enjoyment with my class'. Fortunately, a senior staff member, having noticed the long hours and work-life imbalance that Ruby was experiencing, strongly urged the school's senior managers to provide better support for Ruby, which they did.

A short while later, Ruby was appointed to the position of SCT. By the end of the TOPs project, Ruby had held the position, along with her classroom teaching and HOD roles, for 4 years. Two years after taking up the SCT work, she commented:

> I have appreciated the shift from HOD to specialist classroom teacher, where the focus is much more on helping people in the classroom and actually being given the opportunity to do that. The year before, I felt that needed to be done but I didn't have the time. To be able to do that has been really rewarding. It is about helping people and working with people and doing all those things. As HOD you can certainly see the need for it, but you were pretty stuck with the paperwork and administration side of things. The two [roles] complement each other very well, and I am very happy with it.

It was obvious from Ruby's comments that the SCT work along with adequate resourcing in relation to her other two roles had rekindled her commitment and energy for the job. She explained that being an SCT had allowed her to engage in more collaborative working relationships with her colleagues, and with and from them learn more about pedagogy. It had also, importantly, meant not having to choose between being a teacher or a leader. 'I couldn't ask for a better role', she said at one point: 'It's not about leaving one thing and moving on to another, it's been develop and grow together'.

The fact that the role of SCT does not, as she often reminded us, encompass a power relationship but a learning relationship centred on classroom practice is precisely what appeals to her. The classroom observation component of her SCT role has been particularly important in this regard: ‘The more I am seeing other teachers, the more I reflect on my own teaching and my own practices … When you are teaching someone else, that is obviously the best way to learn yourself, as suddenly things start to click, and when you see it in someone else, you can identify it’.

The SCT role was not without challenges though. During interviews, Ruby spoke of issues related to confidentiality and her need to be sensitive to occasions when her colleagues experienced low morale and low self-esteem. But these moments, Ruby said, were ameliorated by the lifelong learning aspect of her SCT work. She valued the opportunity to learn and reflect alongside her colleagues and not be seen as an expert. She also enjoyed sharing practice in an open culture, where dialogue about one’s work was ‘not about having to pretend to be perfect’. Formal learning occasions for teachers in the school, such as reading and research groups, where new strategies were discussed and critiqued, complemented her more informal learning.

The elements of Ruby’s SCT role show close alignment with the components of the two leadership for learning frameworks promoted by Crowther et al. (2009) and MacBeath and Dempster (2009). These components are a focus on collegial learning, drawing on the knowledge and resources that colleagues can offer one another, a school-wide learning culture that encourages creativity and risk-taking, shared dialogue around an agreed focus, shared leadership, and shared accountability for student learning and achievement.

Quality Learning Circles (New Zealand)

This second case study focuses on leadership for learning within a group setting known as the quality learning circle (QLC). We have included this model and a description of it in action (see below) in this chapter because it offers teachers an organisational structure that allows them to meet and engage in disciplined dialogue about their practice. One of the most important features of the QLC is that the learning that occurs in the circle is shaped and led by the teachers themselves; learning is not imposed by others. Teachers thus also share leadership of the learning: they collectively decide on the learning focus and how the circle will function. The model can be used within a school or with teachers from different schools.

Stewart and Prebble (1993) suggest that while QLCs can operate in a variety of ways, three steps are typical: *selecting a focus* for the talk (this typically relates to some aspect of classroom teaching); *observing one another in classrooms* to see the focus enacted in a real setting; *reflecting on, discussing and developing collective meaning* from the shared experience. Teacher talk, according to Stewart and Prebble, is the distinguishing feature of each step of the QLC model. When teachers tell stories about what works and does not work in the classroom, they discover that other teachers have similar concerns (Lovett 2002a). Learning within the QLC differs from that experienced in other professional learning opportunities. The latter typically reinforce more dependent cultures, where teachers come to understand that if something is important, others will tell them what they need to know. All they need to do is wait to be told (Lieberman 1995). Fullan (1993) drew attention to such dependence and passivity when he referred to teachers as the 'victims of change'. The QLC model subscribes to the notion of teachers as '*agents* of change', which Fullan prefers. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) offer another metaphor when considering the benefits of the type of learning that occurs in QLCs, that of 'awakening sleeping giants'. Such learning, they explain, lets teachers become leaders because they have opportunity to teach their colleagues what they know and at the same time learn from them. This type of leadership experience, moreover, keeps teachers connected to classroom life rather than moving away from it.

In our present times of continual curriculum change and increased calls for accountability, teachers are at risk of being overwhelmed by their professional learning and the expectation to keep up to date (Lovett 2002a). Fullan (1993) argues that learning agendas determined by others can leave teachers feeling powerless and lacking the necessary motivation because they do not see the learning as relevant to their own and their students' needs at that time. A QLC model challenges the notion that 'others know best' because it allows teachers to create learning opportunities by alternating leadership and 'followership' as colleagues bring their respective expertises to the fore in response to questions and concerns. This is teacher leadership at its best because leadership is connected to learning. It encompasses, says Frost (2006) 'human agency':

> All members of a learning community have the capacity to influence [one another] because being an agent is what being a human being is all about. Being an agent or having agency involves having a sense of self encompassing particular values and a cultural identity, and being able to pursue self-determined purposes and goals through self-conscious strategic action (p. 20).

A QLC in Action

In New Zealand, Lovett (2002a, b) and Lovett and Verstappen (2004) published accounts of two QLCs, one comprising teachers from different schools and the other comprising teachers from within the same school. The example featured here describes the journey of eight teachers from different schools who were invited to form a QLC to explore the potential of several recently released national assessment reports for classroom teachers. None of the teachers knew one another, but each wanted to learn more about the ways in which the information supplied in the reports might help them as classroom assessors. They met at fortnightly intervals for a full year, having gained teacher release time from their schools to do so. Each member agreed to trial one assessment from a report and to share her experience with the other circle members. Each meeting thus included a minimum of eight assessment tasks for discussion. As time passed, the members established respect and trust for one another and became more open in sharing insights from their practice. They found the regularity of the shared talk about teaching with other interested colleagues stimulating, affirming and beneficial to their practice.

None of these teachers would initially have described her QLC experience in terms of leadership for learning or teacher leadership, because this particular QLC included a facilitator who took responsibility for working with the group to establish an agreed protocol for the fortnightly meetings and to determine which report to focus on at each meeting. The facilitator was careful not to convey expert knowledge about the reports but instead prepared summaries of the assessment tasks to focus the teachers on the content of the reports. The facilitator then invited the teachers to talk about ways in which they might use the assessment tasks or information reported from the national testing to inform their own teaching programmes. She modelled being a teacher–leader–learner to the circle and expected each member to do the same. In time, they did.

The eight teachers also had opportunities to observe one another in their classrooms. The observations were a paired event, with each teacher taking turns as an observer-learner in the partner's classroom. The teachers planned and agreed on a particular aspect of classroom learning as the focus of the observations. However, getting the teachers ready and willing to participate in these observations was not easy. Their initial enthusiasm for moving beyond their own classrooms waned when they realised the risks associated with having another teacher observe their practice. They did not want to disappoint their observer–learner and felt particularly anxious about trialling assessment tasks that were new to them. These feelings fortunately dissipated as the teachers became immersed in the experience and realised that the others had the same initial disquiet. Rich discussions eventually followed each observation session. In the end, all teachers said they had found having 'fresh pairs of eyes' observe their practice and their students' capabilities extremely valuable.

Table 40.1 provides examples of the ways in which the QLC helped the eight teachers develop the mindset and skills to engage in teacher leadership for learning activities.

Through their collective experience of the QLC, the teachers demonstrated that teachers can become leaders without being conscious of doing so. This again suggests that the traditional notion of what it means to be a leader can be a stumbling block with respect to leadership for learning. Barth (1985) maintains that teachers should stop complaining and take charge of their own directions for learning, arguing 'if principals and teachers don't want to be the dependent variable in attempts to improve schools, they will have to become the independent variable' (p. 357). Teacher leadership has the potential to keep schools focused on their core business, by allowing teachers to teach one another what they know about teaching, learning and leading. Teachers can be leaders if they believe in the connections between collegial cultures and improved learning and teaching. But they cannot do this by themselves, which is why principals (the people who can supply the needed release time for talk) and teachers need to make it happen together. This consideration is explored in the next case study.

Table 40.1 Benefits of the QLC model

Benefit	Teachers' comments
Reduces teachers' isolation	'It's great being with a variety of different teachers … just talking with other teachers and getting their ideas'. (Lara)
	'We are never sure what others are doing. I think it is important to know what is going on across the city … the opportunities to do anything outside the school are so rare'. (Lois)
Structured meetings	'I probably wouldn't have done anything as in-depth on my own … I wouldn't have done it without the meetings'. (Lois)
Sharing what works in the classroom	'I think being able to share with each other the things we were doing … has prodded us into, 'Oh, that looks all right. Oh, I think I can handle that one', and I'll have a go at it. The meetings have developed into a style that's functional and effective'. (Diane)
Active engagement with teaching resources	'The meetings have encouraged me to use the resources … I look forward to seeing everybody and seeing how they've gone on the tasks … I'm always enthused when I go away to try some of the activities'. (Katrina)
Time to talk	'As teachers we need time to reflect, and this situation with the QLC is perfect … It's people who have similar interests or experiences … It's actual time to talk to other people about what we do. As a teacher I don't get enough of that'. (Lois)
Shared leadership and learning	'Here we have to do an equal amount to bring to it because we are all helping each other … I think the QLC is good because we have some sort of ownership of it'. (Mavis)

Whole-School Improvement (Australia)

The two cases presented here are drawn from research[1] into teacher leaders working as members and facilitators of in-school-management teams – called IDEAS[2] school-management teams – during whole-school change. The two cases (further below) focus in particular on the role of teacher leadership in leading the whole-school *ideas* process in the IDEAS project.

IDEAS is a whole-school revitalisation program developed by researchers at the Leadership Research Institute, University of Southern Queensland (USQ). Ten years in the making, the programme is the result of thinking, dialoguing and critiquing by educators from schools, education systems and the university. It operates in schools throughout Australia and in Singapore. The conceptual base of IDEAS is captured in Fig. 40.1.

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[1] See Andrews et al. (2011), Andrews and Crowther (2003, 2006), Andrews and Lewis (2000, 2007), Chesterton and Duignan (2004), Cuttance (2001), and Crowther et al. (2002, 2009).

[2] Innovative Design for Enhancing Achievement in Schools.

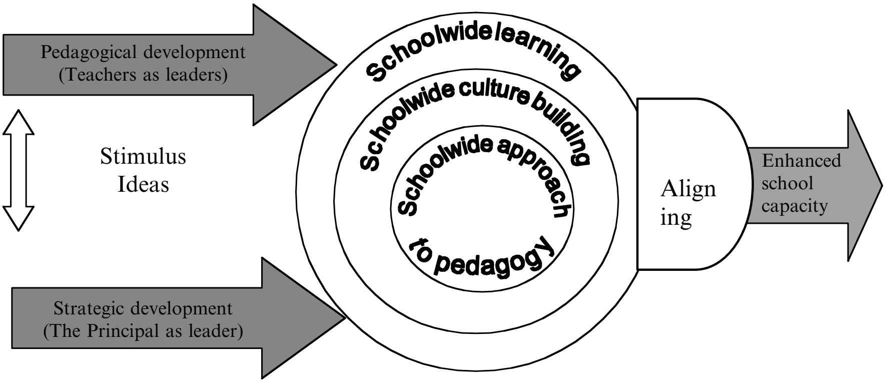
Pedagogical development
(Teachers as leaders)
Stimulus
Ideas
Strategic development
(The Principal as leader)
Schoolwide learning
Schoolwide culture building
Schoolwide approach to pedagogy
Align ing
Enhanced school capacity

Fig. 40.1 The contribution of parallel leadership to school improvement. (Crowther et al. (2009), p. 66)

Table 40.2 Key aspects of teacher and principal roles relative to effective leading for learning: case study findings

Role of teachers		
Leading learning of professional learning communities	Leading whole-school improvement	Role of the principal/formal leader
• Develop collaboration	• Engage and motivate colleagues	• Enable
• Use disciplined dialogue	• Work with 'other leaders'	• Facilitate re-culturing
• Enhance and deepen the learning of others and their practice	• Use professional dialogue • Develop new ways of working	

IDEAS emphasises the most essential findings of research on school improvement (revitalisation), that is, enhanced school outcomes are most likely to occur as a result of collaborative action involving whole-school strategies (Cuttance 2001; Newmann and Wehlage 1995). The process of school improvement is led by principals (meta-strategic development) in a mutualistic relationship with teachers (pedagogical development) – the concept of parallel leadership. Parallel leadership engages processes of professional learning, culture building and school-wide pedagogy (SWP) so as to enhance a school's overall capacity to produce positive outcomes for students.

Central to IDEAS are five operational principles of practice: (1) teachers are the key to successful school revitalisation (see Table 40.2); (2) professional learning is best thought of as a shared collegial process within each school; (3) a 'no blame' mindset should permeate organisational problem-solving; (4) a 'success breeds success' approach should guide teachers' analyses of their professional practices; and (5) alignment of school processes is a collective responsibility. Adherence to these principles provides a deliberate basis for the professional community to create, within their school community, a renewed purpose and revitalised practices. These principles come into effect in the IDEAS program through engagement with four structural and process concepts, described in Crowther et al. (2002):

- *A research-based framework (RBF) for enhancing school outcomes*: this organisational framework provides teachers and principals with a conceptual model, based on a diagnostic review, for thinking collaboratively about their school and what they want it to become.
- *Parallel leadership*: this relatedness between principals and teachers has three distinct characteristics – mutualism, a sense of shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression (Crowther et al. 2009, p. 54).
- *Three-dimensional pedagogy*: this concept provides a framework that ‘enables teachers to dialogue … [so that] deeply embedded pedagogical practices are shared and new levels of pedagogical insight can be generated’ (Andrews and Crowther 2006, p. 537). It also encompasses a particular view of teacher leadership focused on the capacity for teacher leaders to influence, and exercise agency for their professional communities. These teacher leaders facilitate action by engaging with other members of their professional learning community in order to revitalise teaching and learning within the school, to confront barriers to improvement and to translate ideas into sustainable systems of action.
- *The ideas process*: this process of professional inquiry encompasses five conceptually linked phases – initiating, discovering, envisioning, actioning and sustaining. This process takes 2–3 years to work through and requires the establishment of an internal school-management team assisted by external (university) facilitators. Of central importance is the development of a distinctive school vision and associated SWP.

Having explained the basis of the IDEAS Project, two cases are used to highlight the role teachers’ leadership and learning play in its implementation.

Edmont College – Sally’s Story

Although Edmont College, a large Year 4–12 boys’ school in an Australian city, had proved relatively successful in respect of student achievement, the newly appointed principal decided to review the currency of the school’s teaching practice. He saw IDEAS as a way of enabling the whole staff to become engaged in a teacher-led renewal process. The principal selected two facilitators, one of whom was Sally. This is her story.

> After attending the IDEAS introductory workshop run by the USQ team, I was very encouraged—in fact enthusiastic about—what this process could offer the teaching community. The principal was very supportive and provided time for me to familiarise myself with the process. He sent Rod [the other nominated facilitator] and me to visit other IDEAS schools. On return, we spoke with the staff about our ‘fact-finding mission’ and set up a

voluntary IDEAS school management team [(ISMT] to manage the process on behalf of the staff. Fourteen members volunteered, and we met every fortnight for breakfast to work on the process.

We had a visit from the university team member who spoke with the ISMT about the ‘discovering process’ and the role of the ISMT. Rod and I also attended a workshop where we engaged in ‘learning how to run’ workshops with the staff. We have had lots of change in a staff that is not used to change, and a cultural audit completed late last year indicated many concerning internal issues. The ISMT organised the DI [Diagnostic Inventory] implementation, collated the results and arranged with the USQ team to run the ‘report writing’ workshop.

The workshop was great. Most staff participated positively (the principles of practice helped as did the rules for skilful discussion), and most believed they had been listened to and were prepared to work together to address issues raised in the DI. The tensions evident in some staff groups and the ‘big voices’ were managed through the conversation protocols and the presence of the external facilitator. The report from the community made it evident that the school did not have an inspirational vision, did not work together or have time to share successful practice. In fact, time for PD [professional development] was a major issue. If we were to have a process that engaged the whole staff, then we needed to have blocks of time, but where would this come from?

At the next ISMT meeting, we organised to get the ‘school report card’ written up and into the newsletter. We also talked about how we could get time to meet as a whole staff, especially in a school like ours, with so much extra-curricular activity. The best we could do was to take some of the staff meeting times. The principal then came up with a great suggestion. He was negotiating to have time at the end of the semester—a whole week—for PD, and IDEAS would be given priority. We got two days.

The ISMT linked in with the USQ team member and worked out an agenda for the PD days. We would do the envisioning activity and develop out SWP, but there was a lot of planning to be done. I believed we needed to involve the students at this stage, so set up an IDEAS student team as a sub-committee of the student council. The students became very active in the process, and through a series of activities Rod and I came up with … what emerged were some visioning statements that we would share with staff on the day as well as ‘successful teaching practices’. In fact, I will get the students to present to the staff!

The members of the ISMT actively engaged in preparing for the PD days, and we invited the USQ team member to join in as a critical friend. We were feeling very confident at managing the process but felt it would be useful to have this support. Several ISMT prepared the ‘History Walk’ and several others toured the school to digitally capture images of ‘teaching at Edmont View College’. Others organised the logistics—school artefacts, pens, photo cards, butcher’s paper… we were ready.

The first day started with input from the ‘founding fathers group’, and this was followed by the History Walk. Wow, what a powerful session! It was great to follow our 70-year history and realise that we had undergone a lot of changes, high and low points, and a number (a lot less than we thought) of teachers who had been here for over 30 years. We now looked forward to the second day.

The day started with an input from the students, and we then ran several ‘visioning workshops’, coming up, at the end of the day, with a ‘proposed vision’ —*Achieving Excellence.* Again, staff were very engaged, and the ISMT were feeling that they had managed the process well and accomplished what they had planned. The next day was exploration into pedagogy. The USQ team member assisted the team in the organisation and facilitation. We shared the ‘teaching at Edmont’ video, and explored successful practices. Synthesis enabled us to tease out our emerging school-wide pedagogical principles. This would give the ISMT enough information from the staff to synthesise and feedback to them over the next semester.

The ISMT continued to meet every fortnight for breakfast, and I also met with the student ISMT. We had, by the end of the year, our vision—the students had modified it to

> *Achieving Today, Leading Tomorrow*, and the staff endorsed it (with enthusiasm!). We now worked on our school-wide pedagogical principles. Data were synthesised, sent to the university team for comment, discussed with heads of department and staff. We finally ended up with the '5C' school-wide pedagogy. The ISMT then designed a school promotional brochure—what an achievement!
>
> The new year presented us with another challenge. We attended the next IDEAS workshop, where we got to share with other schools what we had achieved. We were proud of our achievements and received good feedback from other schools in the cluster. Now we were faced with 'actioning our SWP'. We looked at the new workshop materials and decided this would take some planning in this semester to enable a major planning exercise to happen at our PD week at the end of the semester. The school had [before IDEAS] adopted a pedagogical framework [Bloom's taxonomy], and now the system has imposed a new curriculum framework and an authoritative pedagogical framework which we would have to respond to as a school. IDEAS should be able to act as an umbrella—or that is what we are told!
>
> It is now time for the ISMT—myself, Rod and the head of Academic Studies—to work together on a major project of embedding our vision and SWP into our professional conversations, curriculum planning and professional development. I had to keep reminding myself that the ISMT were there to manage the process. Through working across the school with HODs [heads of department] and HOY [heads of year], we developed a template for planning and a process that would be used by all departments.
>
> The PD days were run by the HODs and HOYs developing common units of work, which were then shared in a feedback session. What a great experience for all. Staff got to talk and work together as they had never done before: we had a common language and professional conversation protocols that sustained the richness of the conversation and enabled people to work together. This marked a significant point in which we had come to—a definite change of culture in the way we worked, took responsibility and became collectively accountable.
>
> The ISMT, Rod and I have continued to operate as an acknowledged working group—some members have left and others have joined. We have continued to work on planning, working with other committees to develop processes of pedagogical review, and promotion. The principal has also changed. The new principal is well informed of what we have achieved and our plans for the future.

Fairweather Place – Anne's Story

Fairweather Place, a primary school established in 1995 in a rapidly growing suburb of a major regional city, has 450 students. It considers itself a forward-thinking innovative school that promotes academic excellence while catering for a diverse range of students. The school entered the IDEAS project 4 years ago. Anne, a specialist teacher at the school, grew into the role of IDEAS facilitator. She relates, in her story, both her actions and her growing confidence as a leader of whole-school learning. Anne also recounts how her cross-school cluster leadership developed over time.

> I came to the school just after the school had started IDEAS and was encouraged to join the ISMT during the visioning phase, as I could see the benefits of being part of the team. One of our ISMT facilitators left, and I felt that, as we were progressing further into the vision phase, I could contribute my artistic ability to the process. The jacaranda tree featured as our school emblem; we wanted to keep the image. I could see how we could use that image to capture what the staff wanted as their school vision—*Growing Together, Learning Forever*. I was also the music teacher and, as such, had contact across

the school with students, parents and staff. This enabled me to feed back to the ISMT a broad perspective and commentary. The principal began including me in more and more planning sessions, as I believe he valued my input, as I did not belong to any year-level group or faction.

When John, the lead ISMT facilitator was finding this job, along with his other commitments, too demanding, I volunteered to take on the co-facilitation role. We were a perfect team. He was an analytical thinker, great with IT [information technology], and had been a facilitator from the start, but was starting to have less and less time to devote to IDEAS as his IT-expert role in the school grew. I was a visual thinker who could pull threads together into pictures and was enthusiastic and eager to take on the challenge to move our school forward now that a picture of how was emerging in my mind. The ISMT actively engaged even the most disengaged in designing across-school activities that were seen to be ‘fun’.

The ISMT were keen to ensure that whatever we did should be integrated. We had, while engaging with IDEAS, completed an action research project on multi-literacies, and the celebration of what we had achieved to progress our pedagogical understandings as a collective was an invigorating and empowering experience for staff. Working on a school project such as this meshed in well with our exploration of pedagogy in IDEAS. The pieces of the puzzle were fitting together very nicely. My confidence as a leader was growing, and although a small number of teachers would still infer, ‘What would the music teacher know about our classroom issues?’, many teachers were coming to me with suggestions or concerns, knowing that I would follow through with these in some way or another.

The benefits of being part of a cluster of IDEAS schools really came into play as I grappled with having more and more of the responsibility of organising workshops and synthesising what came out of them. The principal was supportive. However, what other schools were doing, along with insights and advice from other ISMT school facilitators, gave me new ideas and spurred me on to progress the process in my school. I was more and more comfortable to ask for advice from USQ staff and the system’s IDEAS coordinator, who provided knowledge and inspiration.

The final formation of our vision—*Growing Together*—and SWP basically occurred at the same time due to the richness of the conversations that had occurred over a two-year period of working with multiliteracies, productive pedagogies and other external authoritative sources. The first application of the vision and values came out of the conversations that the ISMT were having with parents and staff around a concern for the socially unacceptable behaviour that was occurring more frequently within the school. The guidance officer and a team of teachers had been working on the creation of a social skills program that could be run as part of our curriculum delivery. The talk and planning had been going on for six months or so but not really progressing. There was a sense of urgency developing, though, that something needed to be done.

I was asked by my principal to lend a hand. His faith in my ability to move the process forward was an indicator of how far I had moved in my leadership abilities and the confidence with which I could face a new challenge. Very soon our Guidance for Life Programme, which later came to be called our Visions Programme, came into being, and I found myself running after-school arts in-service courses to upskill teachers, as the teacher survey had agreed that the arts would be a perfect vehicle by which to deliver the visions programme.

As my confidence and ability had grown, I began to present at IDEAS forums and assist other schools to move forward in their IDEAS journey. I participated in teleconferences and interstate IDEAS trips with the USQ IDEAS team. My insights from the practical-teacher, hands-on point of view were valued and this, in turn, prompted us to want to contribute more. I commenced study again for the first time in 25 years, as I felt that there were many things I needed to know more about.

As time has progressed, IDEAS has become our way of working. The school has brought in a new principal—perhaps fortunate that she came with an understanding of IDEAS. The

> word IDEAS has disappeared and been replaced by a way of working that adheres to the principles of practice and the use of professional conversation protocols. Systems of action have been embedded in planning, in our conversations and in our induction program for new staff and students. The school continues to respond to new challenges. Annual operational plans and school reviews are written in the Research Based Framework (RBF) format; the RBF is also used for review of school practices and planning by staff and students.

Discussion

Our case studies from two countries demonstrate the benefits of teachers working with one another to deepen their classroom practices and illustrate what can happen when schools take responsibility for providing the organisational structures that allow this learning to happen. The studies show that leadership for learning is about teachers having conversations with one another about their concerns with practice – conversations that are focused, deliberate and not left to chance encounters. When time is put aside to converse, teachers who have learnt to value their colleagues as sources of learning are able to teach one another what they know about teaching, learning and leading. In this way, teachers maximise their collective strengths as they learn to support and grow with one another. At the same time, they develop leadership skills as they attend to the ways in which their colleagues and students are learning in their shared quests for improvements to pedagogy. Leadership therefore becomes a co-constructed activity that has particular meaning for teachers because they see it as directly linked to their core concern of raising student achievement.

The link between leadership and learning is evident in all four case studies. While some of the teachers in our case studies had held formal leadership roles, others demonstrated leadership activities without being formally recognised as leaders. That they did not necessarily see their work as leadership suggests that the teaching profession continues to equate leadership with a position distanced from the classroom rather than closely linked to classroom learning. In this regard it is interesting to note the tensions experienced in the SCT role between encouraging teacher learners to reveal their learning needs and school-management's desire to know the details of that learning. If leadership can be reframed to emphasise the work teachers do alongside one another as learners, then it has the potential to be viewed as an exciting prospect and the means by which to sustain and invigorate teachers as they continue their teaching careers.

The information provided by the case studies presented in this chapter aligns with the tenets of the leadership for learning (MacBeath and Dempster 2009) and teachers as leaders (Crowther et al. 2009, p. 3) frameworks that describe what teacher leaders do as leaders. First, the studies highlight different forms of leading learning, that is, leading professional learning communities and leading whole-school development. Second the cases highlight the need to rethink the roles and responsibilities of principals and teachers in today's schools. And, third, the studies show the need for changes to school-level organisational structures and cultures, so that teachers can emerge and be accepted as leaders of learning, and be valued in this role.

Organisational changes include providing time and space for teachers to meet with one another, to create a shared language arising out of disciplined dialogue about issues and concerns over practice and thereby link, in turn, leadership activities to learning. Cultures that value and enable leadership for learning are defined by processes that promote the distribution of leadership (leadership density) throughout the school community, as evidenced by the case study teachers who led and motivated one another in professional learning communities in order to critique and eventually transform their classroom learning practices. These cultures also have principals able to work with teacher leaders in trusting relationships that encourage the critique of practice, experimentation, and risk-taking in order to create alternative ways of responding effectively to the challenges within today's schools (Bryk and Schneider 2002).

Conclusion

Given that positional leadership within schools (particularly the principalship) tends to be seen today as an unattractive option by many because of its paperwork and compliance emphases, it is highly necessary that we reframe leadership in terms of the collective work teachers do alongside one another. If we can change our conception of leadership from that of a power relationship driven by accountability to one that is more collaborative, student-focused and distributed, then teachers will be more likely to find room for leadership activities. They will see that such activities provide them with the tools to constantly reflect on their own work as they work alongside others. It is collaborative rather than individualistic cultures that nurture teacher leaders. Existing senior leaders need to make room for teacher leaders and recognise the ways in which they, too, can support one another, which is why the concept of parallel leadership has appeal. However, for parallel leadership to impact on schools, closer attention is needed to 'awaken the sleeping giant' of teachers as leaders, for it is the teachers, close to the action in classrooms, who hold the keys for linking leadership with learning.

Note Ruby's story was told in Cameron (2009), published by NZCER Press, Wellington, New Zealand. The authors acknowledge the Press's permission to include her case study, with modifications, in this chapter.

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