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## **Chapter Five:**

### **The School Leader Perspective: Integrating schools with the communities they serve**

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#### **Abstract**

This chapter considers the role of school leaders in building a culture of wellbeing. Wellbeing is a central issue in education where the concern is not only for the wellbeing of pupils but also other members of a school community. This chapter examines the work of school leaders in building a shared vision and set of values that support a culture of wellbeing across a school community. The chapter explores this work of school leaders from three perspectives: the task of community building; the emotional labour of leadership; and finally, establishing and sustaining the school culture.

#### **Introduction**

Leadership is a significant focus in educational policy largely because it is perceived as being critical in the enhancement of the culture and ethos of a school and, as a consequence, the wellbeing and learning of pupils. Based on the research literature, Leithwood et al. (2008, p. 27) make seven claims about school leadership, the first claim being that ‘school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning’. This is not a direct influence on pupil learning but one which is mediated through the organisation and culture of a school and through teacher behaviour and classroom practice. Day et al. (2016) propose that a combination of leadership approaches is important in bringing about improvement in pupil learning experiences and outcomes. Thus, ‘instructional leadership’ is focused more specifically on improving the quality of the learning experiences of pupils while ‘transformational leadership’ is focused on building engagement across a school community to bring about change – winning of ‘hearts and minds’. In the area of wellbeing, school leaders have two broad areas of concern and so exercise both forms of leadership. Firstly, school leaders have to exercise pedagogic leadership through leading and enhancing the curriculum and providing professional learning opportunities for teachers to ensure that the quality of curriculum provision enables pupils to develop their understandings, skills and attitudes in this area. Secondly, school leaders have to exercise transformational leadership to build and sustain a school community in order that the culture of the school promotes the wellbeing of all.

This chapter considers how school leaders exercise that influence to build a school community that enhances the wellbeing of all its members from three perspectives. The first perspective relates to the role of school leaders in community building. Sergiovanni (1994) highlights the importance of school leaders making connections between the school and the communities it serves. Roland-Martin’s (1992) notion of the ‘school-home’ also underlines the importance of the school in building the nurturing relationships for a significant proportion of learners in order to create those experiences provided historically in families. Increasingly schools are the centre of communities especially for disadvantaged communities and communities in crisis, where the school holds possibilities for regeneration. If the learning needs of all

learners are to be met it is vital that school leaders engage the staff and pupils in building a nurturing culture and reach out beyond the boundaries of the school to work with parents and carers, other schools, agencies and the wider community.

The second perspective is concerned with the emotional work of school leaders who play a critical role in managing the emotions of others. Schools are social organisations and so at their heart lie relationships: the quality of these relationships determines the quality of the learning experiences of pupils and shapes the motivation and commitment of staff. Crawford (2009) contends that 'leadership cannot operate without emotion' (p. 10) and part of the work of school leaders is to engage in, what Hochschild (2002) has termed, 'emotional labour' to create a culture where all feel engaged.

The third perspective follows on from the idea of emotional labour and considers the building of a school's culture. In a typology of school cultures, Hargreaves (1995) argues that a welfare culture and an academic culture can become polarized leading to the neglect of either academic achievement or pastoral care. There remains a tension between a focus on academic achievement and what Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) see as the rise of 'therapeutic education'. However, it is important not to see the two aspects of cognitive and affective development as mutually exclusive. The chapter examines ways in which school leaders can purposefully create a school culture that promotes wellbeing and engagement alongside learning and academic achievement.

## **Main Findings**

### **Building Community**

While it is now common to refer to the 'school community', there remains a lack of clarity about what we mean by this term: is the school community those who come to work and learn, that is, the pupils and staff; or does the school community include other groups notably parents, professionals such as youth support services and social workers who work with the school to support learners, local authority officers and school governors, all of whom can have a significant influence on the culture of the school? This lack of clarity is part of what school leaders have to grapple with. Increasingly the boundaries of a school are permeable with different groups contributing to the learning of the young people and exercising influence on the purposes and culture of a school. Therefore, while staff and pupils are the core of the school community, part of the task of school leaders is to recognise and value the contribution of different groups.

Determining who is part of the community of the school is one aspect but we need to probe deeper our understanding of the notion of 'community'. Fendler (2006) takes a critical stance in relation to the concept of community, arguing that in the literature this is a broad and sometimes vague idea. There is a tendency for community to be allied with notions of 'commonality' and so in her view: '[t]he problem with community is that its assumptions may serve to exclude others' (p. 304). Fendler identifies three different ideological stances, 'discursive strands' (p. 305) which help us to appreciate both the potential of regarding the school as a community and some of the issues school leaders need to address in order to build community for the wellbeing of all in the school. The first discursive strand relates to community-as-an-alternative to either to the large nation state or to a market driven society, the idea of community is about local autonomy which provides mutual support among its

members. The idea of self-governance might seem attractive but Fendler sees within this construction a strong impulse to normalisation. In such communities there is a danger that differences are not tolerated and those who are different might be deemed not to belong. Sergiovanni (1994) is similarly critical of a community that may appear to be inclusive but masks a tendency towards 'exclusion, censorship and normalization' (Fendler 2006, p. 309). Therefore, a key task for school leaders in developing wellbeing is to actively work to create and sustain a genuinely inclusive community.

The second discursive strand is that of community-as-solidarity and has its roots in trade unionism with the coming together of individuals to achieve a common cause. Again, community-as-solidarity has potential for the building the school as a community where there is a strong sense of a common purpose. However, there is a tension here between the recognition of difference and the demands of assimilation within a community. For Fendler, schools that are underpinned by a sense of community as solidarity, could serve only to reinforce existing inequalities. A key question is how far a particular community enables different individuals and groups to actively shape the purposes and the community within the school (Halsey et al., 1997). To create a context for the promotion of the wellbeing of all, school leaders have to build a common vision where different groups are fully engaged in shaping the community.

The final discursive strand is that of community-as-emotional-bonding where members of the community feel a particular affinity with one another. Here Fendler criticizes the idea of the affective discourse around community for a number of reasons. Firstly, aligning the idea of community with that of emotional bonding, in her view, reinforces the separation of emotion and reason, setting ideas of care, trust and safety as defining features of 'community', which she argues are culturally bound and happen in specific circumstances but not necessarily in all contexts. Therefore, in the building of trust, care and safety to foster a sense of affinity among members of the school community, school leaders need to also understand and manage conflict and tensions around difference that will arise within a school context. Further, school leaders have to be alert to the dangers of strong emotional bonds which can serve to distance those outside the community. Communities that have strong emotional bonds are often communities that have come together in terms of turmoil and crisis to combat a common enemy. Such an attitude can limit the regard held for others not part of the school community and intensify their sense of exclusion.

From Fendler's critique of the idea of community, there are three significant tensions that school leaders need to grapple with in order to build a school community founded on the promotion of the wellbeing of all. The first issue relates to how far community is seeking to ensure commonality rather than embrace and work with difference. This potentially can have a radical effect on a school community. In a hierarchical organisation, those with less power - pupils, different groups of staff - have less opportunity to contribute. Building participation requires a more open and democratic school. The second issue relates to the participation of minority groups or those such as pupils, who in hierarchical organisations have limited opportunities to contribute. The third issue relates to the attitude towards those not part of the community or who exist on the periphery of the community. Here school leaders must build a sense of respect and regard for those not within the immediate school community.

Engagement of different groups is central to the promotion of wellbeing. However, genuine engagement can only be fostered if there is the recognition of the importance of the circumstances of each pupil, and so part of the role of school leaders is to appreciate the differences in the young people's experiences, to recognise their needs without being overly judgmental, and to build these understandings across staff groups and indeed, across the full school community. Only in this way can a school create what Auerbach (2012a) calls 'authentic partnerships' (p. 5) for wellbeing. Auerbach (2012b) questions the purpose of many existing partnership strategies: if these are largely focused on raising attainment then such strategies can become very instrumental and 'do little to enfranchise marginalized groups and have instead solidified entrenched power' (p. 33). School leaders must remain conscious of wider issues of marginalisation, minority status and poverty and the ways in which such issues impact on wellbeing and achievement. Auerbach (2012b) sees leaders adopting one of four different strategies: leadership can (1) prevent partnerships, (2) adopt a tokenistic approach to partnership (3) build traditional partnerships where the inequalities of power and autonomy remain and (4) authentic relationships. Authentic relationships have to be based on respectful alliances, where all parties are regarded as having a positive contribution to make. These partnerships are about building relationships and sharing power across the partners and are essential to secure the wellbeing of all members of the community.

A key task for school leaders then, is to build a school community that is genuinely inclusive by building family and school partnerships. As part of this, school leaders have to seek to engage particularly those pupils and parents that are hard to reach. Lueder's (2011) description of a family/school partnership aligns with Auerbach's (2012b) authentic partnerships: 'A family/school partnership is a collaborative relationship between family and school designed primarily to produce positive educational and social effects on the child, while being mutually beneficial to all other parties involved' (Lueder 2011, p. 21). Lueder argues that many of the activities schools establish to foster home and school links can become dominated by confident and already advantaged, often middle class, parents who understand the school system. While their contribution is important, Lueder argues for that schools need to be concerned for what he calls 'the missing families' (p. 4) and puts forward 'The Self-Renewing Partnership Model' (p. 4) which has two dimensions, 'energy-in' activities and 'energy-out' activities. Energy-in strategies are based on activities to build pupil wellbeing through curricular programmes and pastoral activities in the school. The energy-out dimension consists of the use of four intervention strategies which can be utilised in the fostering of wellbeing:

- a connecting strategy used to help reduce the barriers between the school and families
- a communicating strategy to establish two-way communication flow
- a coordinating strategy to ensure that school and community resources go to needy families
- a coaching strategy to enhance the family's ability to play their parent partner role (p. 5).

These strategies are powerful but make significant demands on school leaders and their wider leadership team particularly in relation to their interpersonal abilities and the emotional demands of working closely with families, some of whom maybe in

severe crisis. This takes us onto the second perspective with regard to school leadership and the fostering of wellbeing, that of emotional leadership.

### **Emotional dimensions of schools and the role of the school leader**

The emotional dimensions of school leadership are a vital component of the promotion of wellbeing of learners as well as staff. The issue of teacher emotional wellbeing has become a policy concern particularly against the backdrop of significant numbers of teachers leaving the profession (Asia Society, 2011). Galton and MacBeath (2008), drawing from their series of UK studies on teacher work and from studies of teacher workload conducted in Canada, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand, report that that ‘across the globe research indicates that the lives of teachers are more stressful and that there is a growing imbalance between their work and personal lives’ (p. 21). From Galton and MacBeath’s studies, it is evident that teacher stress is an issue associated with increased accountability and bureaucracy across many educational systems. Increased expectations with regards to pupil attainment side by side with the increased diversity of learner needs has led to teachers feeling a loss of autonomy and an intensification of workload. In addition, the teachers reported that demands in two areas had increased significantly: dealing with parents and dealing with issues related to pupil behaviour. Collie et al. (2012) in a study of school climate and teacher stress found that teachers’ perceptions of pupil motivation and behaviour were critical in the level of stress they reported which in turn impacted on their job satisfaction. Experiences of intensification and loss of autonomy is having an impact not only on the levels of stress and burnout experienced by teachers but their remaining in the teaching profession. Leithwood et al. (1999) point up the consequences of staff burnout for the organisation and for the individual: ‘teachers who experience burnout are less sympathetic toward students, less committed to and involved in their jobs, have a lower tolerance for classroom disruption, less apt to prepare adequately for class and generally less productive’ (p. 85). The challenge facing school leaders is how create a context in which teachers remain engaged and enthusiastic about their role in order to promote the wellbeing and learning of pupils: ‘how can leaders work with the emotional experience of their institutions to create them as places where creativity and innovation are welcomed and where there is a passion for the work of educating young people’ (James, 2004, pp. 263-264). Thus, part of the role school leaders is to manage the emotional aspects of organisational life.

Crawford (2009) proposes that ‘the emotions of leadership is a key to long term sustainability and high functioning in headship’ (p. 10). Hochschild’s (2002) indicates that a key dimension of the emotional labour of leadership to ensure the members of the school community have positive experiences but this can often be at a cost to the school leader. In her in-depth study of the experiences of Canadian school leaders, Beatty (2004, p. 205) notes that:

In the educational setting, the freedom to communicate openly at work about their own emotions has all but been eliminated replaced by a repertoire of more emotionally managed techniques ... this was ultimately accepted by the participants as the way power and control is maintained in leadership.

The participants reported a range of both positive and negative emotions in their role and a significant finding was the degree to which the participants worked to control,

almost deny their emotions and the emotions of others. This was accepted as the way things were despite reporting 'emotional authenticity' that is recognising and being able to express genuine emotions, was a very positive experience. What comes out strongly from Beatty's study is not only the control of emotions to ensure a detachment and to depersonalize difficult situations but also the need to display only specific emotions such as trust and determination. Hochschild (2002) claims that sustaining such an approach where school leaders express sets of emotions, whether genuine or not, over a longer period can create a lost capacity of school leaders to listen to their own feelings and sometimes even to feel at all.

Two aspects are interlinked: part of the task of school leaders is to be self-aware and understand the role emotions play in their own leadership as well as to look to strategies to underpin their task of emotional labour particularly in their management of staff. One particularly important aspect is an awareness on the part of school leaders of the impact of their behaviours on staff. Evans (1999) argues that a headteacher can either 'fire teachers with enthusiasm for their job and enable them to fulfil their potential' or can make teachers 'dread going to work every Monday morning' (p. 18). Blasé and Blasé's (2002) study of the 'dark side of leadership' looking at teachers' perceptions of mistreatment, illustrates that while abusive behaviours can have devastating consequences for the individual teacher the impact is far wider: 'Over time principal's mistreatment resulted in far reaching, destructive effects on schools, particularly with regard to relationships between and among teachers, their instructional work in classrooms and collective decision making processes' (p. 245). While such cases might be seen as extreme circumstances, it is insufficient for school leaders simply not to engage in abusive behavior. Instead, school leaders, as Beatty (2004) argues, need to ensure support for staff and build their autonomy through 'distributed leadership and collaborative synergy' (p. 203). Part of this will be about the management of emotions but this is not about the suppression of these feelings. Instead, as Crawford argues (2009, p. 24), 'In an emotionally safe school, headteachers need to be able to call upon personal reserves in times of crisis and enable their staff to express their own feelings and emotions in a way that is helpful to them and to the school as a whole'.

Goleman (1996) in his work on emotional intelligence identifies a number of elements that link to the role of school leaders in promoting a culture of wellbeing: self-awareness, self-regulation of one's own emotions, strong commitment, empathy and constructive social skills. These elements are important in the way school leaders engage with different members of a school community. However, the idea of emotional intelligence and the particular aspects Goleman proposes have been much debated. Fineman's (2000) criticism is pertinent to this discussion of the role of school leaders in leading their school community to foster the wellbeing of all members. Fineman argues that emotional intelligence promotes a form of managerial behaviour and proposes instead that we need to look at the whole culture of the organisation and the values of its stakeholders. Therefore, while the behaviours of an individual school leader are deeply significant, Fineman argues that the idea of 'connectedness with others' in the organisational setting assumes great importance. Creating an inclusive culture for all members of the school community is a challenging task for school leaders and Hargreaves' (2008) construct of 'emotional geographies' helps us to explore the ways in which some members maybe become more or less distanced from the community.

Hargreaves (2008) also sees emotions embedded in relationships which are relations of power and uses the idea of emotional geographies to explore some of these relations of power. Emotional geographies are the patterns where distance or closeness in relationships in an organisation will shape our emotions and our experiences. Hargreaves identifies five key emotional geographies where school leaders can determine the sense of distance or closeness that individuals and groups feel in relation to the vision and core values of a school community. These emotional geographies can determine the sense of engagement or distance from a vision and values for wellbeing.

- political leadership where different degrees of power are held by different groups and individuals in a school
- cultural geographies where emotions are culturally inscribed and pupils and parents from different cultures may express emotions differently
- professional geographies which can act as a barrier to openness and transparency and so distance relationships
- physical geographies are the organisational decisions about timetable, the allocation of teachers and pupils to classrooms, the position and composition of staff rooms, all of which shape the day-to-day experiences of the school community
- moral geographies which highlights the importance of the core purposes of the school.

James (2004, p. 265) argues that, in addition to the emotional geographies pointed up by Hargreaves, we need 'to take into account the unconscious'. James's premise is that schools, for a variety of reasons associated with their purpose, are educational institutions where change, risk and relationships are fundamental, and so are places of high levels of anxiety and emotion. In such circumstances we work to protect ourselves, we use 'social defenses' (p. 267) such as 'resistance, repression, regression, covert coalitions, identifications, reaction formation, denial, organizational rituals, splitting and protection' (p. 270). These different forms of emotional geographies can serve to either foster the engagement of different groups and individuals in a school community or distance them from the core purposes of the school. Therefore, school leaders need to create a secure framework within which the work of the school can take place, and so among the strategies James (2004, p. 271) proposes are:

- continual exploration and explanation of what might lying behind the behaviours and responses of different individual and groups
- modelling
- learning to identify defensive behavior
- talking to people about their experiences not their defenses
- facing up to and resolving conflict
- checking out that their new feelings are theirs and not introjected of others.

Building feelings of belonging is crucial in the school leader's management of emotion. Crawford (2009, p. 79) argues that:



every member of a school whether pupil or teacher needs to feel he or she belongs to at least one sentient group or a group of people working together who are able to respond to each other emotionally as well as intellectually.

However, this is not a straightforward process because how individuals and groups experience school life can be very different. As schools become larger and more complex these differences can become significant. Therefore, a critical task for school leaders is to build and sustain a culture in which all members have a sense of belonging. This raises the question of what we mean by culture.

### **Building a Culture of Wellbeing**

Das (2008, p. 33) proposes that culture can be organised into three different groups of factors we need to consider:

- Historical factors including the history, traditions, beliefs, ceremonies of the school, this latter covering the symbols, rituals stories and myths that are reiterated within the practices of a school
- Behaviour factors including the norms and values, expectations and attitudes the goal and purpose, code of conduct, sense of identity
- Organisational group dynamics, structures that divide work and define relationships, systems of communication.

In essence then, a school culture relates to the values, traditions, social roles and norms and behaviours of members of that specific school community. A school's culture is complex because it 'has very unique and idiosyncratic ways of working' (McNeill et al. 2009, p. 74) but it can be actively managed through creating a clear sense of purpose and direction. However, as Peterson and Deal (1998, p. 28) note, there are some schools which over time have 'become unproductive and toxic'. These are schools where staff groups 'are extremely fragmented, where the purpose of serving students has been lost to the goal of serving the adults, where negative values and hopelessness reign' (p. 28). However, though we talk of the school culture as if there was only one culture within a school, Day (2016) reminds us that 'how school culture influences the health and well-being of its staff and pupils is mediated through a rich and complex series of social interactions between its component subcultures' (p. 207). Day identifies three broad subcultures: teacher cultures, leadership cultures and pupil cultures. In toxic cultures, pupil wellbeing is often set in opposition to teacher wellbeing. However as Roffey (2012, p. 11) suggests, 'What is in students' best interests is also likely to be in the interests of teacher wellbeing'. Therefore, as Sergiovanni (1994) argues, we need to move beyond seeing a school as simply an organisation and instead proposes that there is a need to build purposeful communities which are defined as schools where there are clear bonds among the different members of the community, a shared ideology and unified action to achieve a shared purpose.

### **Conclusion: Purposes and Values**

The significance of a shared purpose is illustrated by McNeill et al. (2009, p. 74)

When an organisation has a clear understanding of its purpose, why it exists and what it must do and who it should serve the culture will ensure that things work well. When the complex patterns of beliefs, values, attitudes, expectations, ideas and behaviours in an organization are inappropriate or incongruent the culture will ensure that things work badly.

Part of what school leaders have to grapple with relate to the need to reify the educational dimensions of the vision of the school where the central focus is on the learning of all pupils. However, we need to consider what we mean by ‘learning’, a much contested idea. There is considerable discussion about the improvement of student learning outcomes but what outcomes should we seek to develop? The Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD) exerts considerable influence on educational policy in its member states, including the United Kingdom (UK) and is driving the idea of a knowledge economy. From this perspective, schools should develop the high cognitive skills, technological and information skills and personal abilities (Asia Society, 2011) to enable young people to enter the workforce of a knowledge intensive economy. Is learning in a school predominantly about enabling each learner to develop sufficient knowledge, skills and attributes to be able to make an economic contribution to society? This economic driver is a critical aspect of educational policy but is only one dimension of learning. With increased globalisation and migration on an unprecedented scale, there are concerns about social conflict, fragmentation and exclusion. Is learning in a school predominantly about each learner developing the knowledge, understandings, skills and attitudes to contribute constructively to the development of a more cohesive and equal society? These two imperatives of economic development and social cohesion might seem competing purposes in education but they co-exist in educational policy in the UK (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). A third area is becoming increasingly more significant when we look at policy drivers in education, that of education to build sustainability in the context of climate instability and environmental change (Masilla & Jackson, 2011). The outcome of these three policy drivers is to produce young people who can exercise ‘global competence’:

The growing global interdependence that characterizes our time calls for a generation of individuals who can engage in effective global problem solving and participate simultaneously in local, national, and global civic life. Put simply, preparing our students to participate fully in today’s and tomorrow’s world demands that we nurture their *global competence* (Masilla and Jackson, 2011, p. xiii, italics in the original).

In the development of global competences a culture of wellbeing in a school will make a considerable contribution. In such ideas about the wider purposes of education a focus on the holistic development of young people including their psychological and physical wellbeing can sit well. However, as ‘success’ - of a school and of an individual learner is still related to performance in examinations there is a danger that such imperatives get reduced to attainment and targets set externally to the school and for which schools and school leaders are held to account. Sergiovanni (1994) argues that one of the critical first steps in building a purposeful community is ‘to identify and commit to a set of core values’ (p. 72). Therefore, part of what school leaders have to grapple with relates to the need to reify the educational dimensions of the vision of the school where the core values of the school focus on these expansive understandings of the learning of all pupils.

Thus, a primary concern of school leaders is to build a school community founded on a core set of values through which wellbeing is nurtured. However, this demands change on the part of all members of the school community. ‘Building community in schools is about a shared quest to do things differently to develop new kinds of relationships, to create new ties, to make commitments’ (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 153).

In a study of Flemish primary schools exploring the capacity of schools to develop and implement policy on wellbeing, Van Gasse et al. (2016, p. 353) report that while attributes among the staff team such as ‘openness, collaboration, loyalty, involvement and motivation of the team members’ are important, teachers reported that it was school cultures that were adaptive and flexible that could better address issues related to pupils’ wellbeing. This flexibility and adaptability demands of school leaders and teachers a responsiveness to individual pupils. Roffey (2012), in her exploration of the relationship between pupil and teacher wellbeing, found that how school leaders treated staff then influenced how staff treated each other and in turn how they treated pupils ‘in practice the relational values of respect, acceptance and care had to extend both from and to all staff. Everyone needed to feel positive about being in the school and this was everyone’s responsibility’ (p. 11).

A central ideal underpinning work on nurturing a culture of wellbeing is that of care. The educational philosopher Nel Noddings (1984) explores the idea of an ethic of care as the foundation of a genuinely inclusive school community. Noddings (1984) argues that the core purpose of education is to produce ethical individuals and the school community is the medium to achieve this. Noddings (2010, p. 267) notes that the notion of community has both positive as well as negative dimensions and argues that ‘Students need not only to belong to a community; even more, they need to know what it means and can mean to belong to a community’. Therefore, the community of the school needs to be based on core values around relational ethics, ‘an ethic of care’ (Noddings 1984). The implications of adopting an ethic of caring for education are profound, helping us to explore the exercise of school leadership with regard to values, ethos and relationships within a school community and practices, the core of which is building relationships. In a caring relationship there are two roles, the carer, that is the ‘one-caring’ and the one who receives the care ‘the one cared-for’. While teachers play a key role as the ‘one caring’, Noddings argues that part of the task of education is to enable pupils not only to receive care but also to be able to enter into caring relationships with peers and ultimately with all other members of the school community where they become the one caring for another. Sergiovanni (1994), drawing from Noddings (1984), argues that caring in a relationship is about:

- Receiving the perspective of the other person
- Responding to the awareness that comes from receiving
- Remaining in the caring relationship for a length of time.

Thus to build a culture of wellbeing, a key element of the role of school leaders is to build an inclusive community and this is a community based on an ethic of care and where the core of the educational process is to foster care.

### **Future directions**

In this discussion three aspects of community, emotions and culture have been identified as being critical to the task of school leaders in building a nurturing school where the wellbeing of all central to the purposes and values of the school. There is a substantial literature on stress and burnout both on the part of teachers and school leaders and increasingly the impact of mental ill-health on the development and learning of young people. While these are major concerns that need to be grappled with, part of the discussion in this chapter has been to suggest a wider understanding of wellbeing. One of the barriers to placing wellbeing at the core of a school community is the result of a historical separation of the curriculum and pastoral support. Wellbeing has to be viewed as the foundation for effective learning in a

school. A question to be explored then is what would be the features of a culture of wellbeing in a school? Further, how do school leaders engage with staff to create a culture of wellbeing within each classroom?

One of the keynotes of Auerbach's (2012b) discussion of building partnerships is that of 'authenticity'. A question then to be pursued is how do we build authentic partnerships within a school. In this chapter it is argued that the idea of community is very powerful and offers much in viewing the school as an inclusive place but at the same time, there are dangers particularly exclusion, the pressure towards normalisation and conformity as well as the possibility of creating negative attitudes towards those not part of a school community. Noddings (2010) is alert to some of these tensions and in advocating relational ethics, that is an ethic of caring as the basis for the purpose and values of a school, provide us with the means to address some of these challenges. However, in this Nodding poses a challenge about how we can systematically build the ethic of caring across staff groups and pupils. Again, this raises a number of questions that might be considered: in what ways would expectations on staff change and how might this redefine our understandings of teacher professionalism. Further, how can school leaders enable staff to go about the task of building development opportunities systematically in order that pupils acquire the skills and habits of caring as well as being cared for.

### **Summary of key findings**

- Wellbeing is a key concern for school leaders and has to be an integral part of the role of school leaders in building a culture for learning.
- A critical element of promoting wellbeing is building a sense of belonging among teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Wellbeing can only be promoted through authentic partnerships with parents and the school's community.
- The emotional aspects of school life have to be engaged in constructively in order that school leaders can promote wellbeing across the school community.
- Wellbeing is critical dimension of the common purpose and shared set of values of a school and is based on an ethic of care.

### **Reflective tasks**

Think about your own school or a school you have recently been involved in.

- How would you define the community of the school? Who are members of this school's community?
- To what degree are the different members engaged in the life of the school?
- Are there significant groups who are on the periphery of the school's life?
- What is the impact of being on the periphery on these groups and on the learning of pupils?
- How might these often hard-to-reach groups be engaged?

Identify two schools you are familiar with and consider the cultures of each.

- In what ways are these cultures similar and in what ways do they contrast?
- Which school promotes better a culture of wellbeing and what do you base this judgement on?

Think about the ethic of care proposed by Noddings.

- What is your response to this concept of ‘an ethic of care’?
- What demands would this make on you as a teacher?
- How might you construct learning opportunities through which pupils can develop the skills and habits of care?

### Further readings

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