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Thinking and Acting both Locally and Globally: New Issues for School Development

Planning

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Tony Townsend

Introduction

When educating school leaders towards School Development Planning, one simple way to open their eyes is to ask the question ‘What can a 15 year old do or experience today that you could not do when you were 15?’ Given a few minutes to think about this, they will come up with a series of responses such as ‘I-phones’, ‘facebook’ ‘laptop computers’ and so on. It is clear that school leaders recognise that there has been substantial change in the types of technology available to young people today, most of which we as adults feel less comfortable about than they do. However, when they are probed further, they come to recognise that it is not just technology that has changed, but pretty much everything else too, some of it on the back of technology, but other things not so.

So do your own test now and you will possibly think of changes in:

- the environment (e.g., global warming),
- employment (contract positions rather than life-long employment),
- relationships (try to define ‘family’ for instance),
- health (improved ability to replace human parts, but also the pandemic of aids),
- wealth (the rate of poverty in many parts of the world has decreased substantially over the past 30 years, but the Gini index, which analyses the spread of wealth across an individual country, shows that the rich continue to get richer and are widening the gap between themselves and everyone else),
- society (rapidly changing demography, population shifts from rural to urban communities),

- culture (the McDonaldisation and Coca-Colarisation of the world and what that means), and
- values (we seem to respect community less and individualisation more, and there seems to be a stronger link between your self-perception and the amount of money you have)

Three other questions that we should ask of school leaders are the following:

- What proportion of the students in your school right now will still be alive in the year 2100?
- What proportion of a person's lifetime will be spent in school? and
- What further change is likely to happen in that time, given what we know?

The answer to the first question is that 80% of students currently in school will still be alive in the year 2100, assuming the same level of improvement in health as we have had in the last hundred years (on average in 1900, people died at the age of 47); the answer to the second question is less than 2% (if a student spends 190 days per year in school for around 6 hours a day, that is 13% of the school year; if they stay in school for 13 years, that is around 13% of a lifetime of a 100 years); and the answer to the third question is, we have absolutely no idea, just as the people who invented the aeroplane (1903) and those that invented radio (1906) had absolutely no idea of what the world would become by 2000.

Of course all of these questions simply lead to the other bigger questions which are

- Does education today reach out to young people whose world is so different to what ours was (apart from the technology that is now available, how different is a classroom today from that of 1910)?
- What are we teaching to our students today that will help them survive and thrive for the rest of their lives (since school presumably exists to prepare young people for the future ...if not, then what IS school for)?

- If, as a school leader, the answers to these questions leave you somewhat disquieted, what can we do about it in terms of future planning for schools?

New Imperatives for School Development

I want to bring together two quotes to try and propose a way forward. First, Drucker (1993: 1) argued:

Every few hundred years in western history there occurs a sharp transformation. We cross... a divide. Within a few short decades society rearranges itself, its world view; its basic values; its social and political structure; its arts; its key institutions. Fifty years later, there appears a new world...we are currently living through such a transformation.

Drucker talks about societal transformation, the type that I have identified in the questions above. However, Drucker uses words like ‘every few hundred years’ and ‘fifty years later’ which suggest a sort of relaxed approach to change, where something that happens when I am a child permeates its way through society so that by the time that I am fifty, we have all come to accept it. Toffler (1971: 12), on the other hand, suggests that this relaxed approach to change has collapsed.

I coined the term ‘future shock’ to describe the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time.

He called it that feeling of ‘vague, continuous anxiety’, something that I am sure many people in education can relate to. The interesting thing about the Toffler statement is that forty years later, things are changing even more rapidly than in Toffler’s time. From email to facebook to youtube to text messaging to twitter can be measured in months, not years.

However, if we put these two statements together we gain an understanding that the world around us goes through substantial transformations, each of which makes us see the world differently, and that these transformations seem to be happening more and more frequently. In Townsend (2009), I argued that Drucker was talking about a principle similar to that first proposed by Rogers (1962)

...to describe the diffusion of innovations, where the S-curve described the number of people accepting an innovation over a period of time. New products or innovations were first accepted by a few 'early adopters', followed by the 'early majority', the 'late majority' and then the 'laggards'. Cumulatively, when graphed, the proportions of the population that have accepted the innovation over time form an S-curve.

(Townsend, 2009: 356)

Rogers' early work was later used by others (for instance, see Handy 1994, Phillips 2008) to describe how change progresses, and how new technologies replace others over time, but it is also a useful model for looking at how education has progressed over the course of history. Just as Drucker identified, over time, certain changes in our society have also changed the way in which we think about schooling. These changes, when documented on a global scale, can be likened to the sigmoid curve as first one community or society adopts the new way of thinking, then others follow over time. Hedley Beare (1997) also described these shifts by using what he called metaphors for education, and these are helpful in terms of identifying when the major shifts in thinking about schools came. From the dawn of time until the 1870s education might be described as the 'pre-industrial metaphor' where education was 'for the few and the privileged' (Beare, 1997: 4-5). From this time until the 1980s 'the industrial metaphor' where 'the factory-production metaphor [was] applied to schooling' Beare, (1997: 5-6) was the dominant way in which education was seen and managed by 'bureaucracies which characterised factory production'. Finally Beare (1997: 9-13).argued that in the late 1980s we entered a time of the 'post-industrial metaphor' where 'enterprise' became 'the

favoured way of explaining how education operates' and 'schools are being talked of as if they are private businesses or enterprises.'

However, the changes that Beare reported on did not stand still after the turn of the millennium. Using the same way of looking at the world, Townsend (2009: 356).extended Beare's arguments into the first decade of the 21st Century.

I would argue that we have had four S-curves in education's history and that we are now on the verge of a fifth. The first, in which the dominant drivers were individuals, lasted for more than four thousand years, the second saw the birth of local schools, and lasted for around 80 years, the third saw the intervention of national governments and lasted around 20 years, and we are in about the eighth or ninth year of the fourth S-curve, in which accountability systems and the market have become the dominant drivers of education. I will also argue that we are approaching the time when we need a new way of thinking about education, one that considers social justice issues at a global level.

Up until the 1870s most education was aligned to individuals and Townsend (2009: 356-7) called this thinking and acting individually, the first S-curve in education. Under these circumstances, very few people were educated to the level that we would demand today. Most people were not educated at all. But from as early as the 1870s in some parts of the world, and up until the 1890s in others, communities started to take responsibility for educating their people. This occurred differently in different places, as well as at different times, but could be associated with the move from an agrarian society to an industrialised one. So in some small countries a national system was instituted, in other places it was through a state system or districts, counties or provinces, with many of these systems still in existence today. Townsend (2009: 357) characterises this as thinking and acting locally, the second S-curve in education. Now most people were receiving some education and many people had education to a fairly high level.

However, by the 1980s the burgeoning Asian economies created great concern for the old western powers, typified by reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983) in the United States where education was first identified as being of economic value as well as being of social importance. We started to hear new terminology in the west, 'national goals', 'national curriculum', and 'national testing' which were designed to adopt a more standardised approach to education across diverse state or district systems. Federal governments (in the USA, the UK and Australia, for instance) started to make demands of the education system that all students be educated to the level required for 'the knowledge age'. With technological changes the opportunities to employ large numbers of people in factories diminished (the industrial age) and the need for a highly skilled workforce (the knowledge age) changed again the way in which we looked at education. Education was asked to think nationally and act locally, and the third S-curve had begun (Townsend 2009: 358).

These three S-curves align themselves fairly well to Beare's terminology, but since his chapter was more than a decade ago, we will have to forge on by ourselves. In the mid 1990s, before the national view of education had really much time to mature, the advent of TIMSS (then the *Third International Mathematics and Science Study* and now the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* started to create a new level of discussion. When this was joined by PISA, the OECD's *Program for International Student Assessment* which by 2009 will be testing in countries that make up 89% of the world's economy, the international comparisons that were made in these tests led to the fourth S-curve, thinking internationally and acting locally (Townsend 2009 358-9). Although international comparisons were being used and countries were now sharing knowledge about curriculum, pedagogy and the administration of schools, individual schools were still seen as the locus of change. However, despite virtually all people now getting some education, the goal of achieving high quality education for all continues to prove elusive.

During this fourth wave, the dominant metaphor (if we use Beare's terminology) could be identified as accountability and the mechanism by which many governments have instituted this is through the use of market terminology. Just as the rest of the world has accepted the idea of a global market, the education market has been constructed using the same underlying principles, that of privatization and choice. Whether tacitly or not, governments, especially those in the west, seem to have accepted that they cannot afford to educate everyone to high levels of skill (despite the rhetoric that this is what's needed) and have adopted the rather facile approach of supporting private enterprise practice as the means of achieving this goal. Put simply (perhaps crudely), western governments are saying 'If you don't like the school you are in, go to another one. If the government system can't provide for you, there is a private school that will.' This has allowed governments to keep education budgets within what they consider to be reasonable bounds, based on the other increasing demands for funding from a rapidly ageing and an increasingly overweight population of 'seniors' and those who will soon join them on the one hand, to the burgeoning budget for terrorism surveillance on the other, (although arguably this might be lessened just as easily by educating the world's population and giving them decent jobs as it is by trying to contain the 1% of the world's population that might support this form of radical change).

What we can say is that there is ample evidence that student achievement is hard to shift, even after all of the reforms that have occurred in recent times. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading test scores have been virtually unchanged despite over forty years of educational reform efforts. There is some evidence that the gap between the socially advantaged and the socially disadvantaged has closed somewhat, but this has been confined to the elementary years of school. By the time students reach high school the level of performance is the same as it was in the 1970s. Despite all of the resources and reform efforts that have occurred since the 1980s after the *Nation at Risk* report, overall achievement is much the same as it has always been.

However an interesting study by Alexander, Entwisle and Olson (2001, 2007) suggests that the focus that is placed on schools for student achievement might not be as fair as we would hope. Their study, which tested students of 20 elementary schools in the Baltimore area at the beginning and end of each year from grade 1 to grade 5 and then again in grade 9, led them (2007: 1) to conclude:

...cumulative achievement gains over the first nine years of children's schooling mainly reflect school-year learning, whereas the high SES–low SES achievement gap at 9th grade mainly traces to differential summer learning over the elementary years.

The indication is that poorer students, and especially those from the middle class, do better than their higher socioeconomic counterparts during the school year, but the overall performance of schools is mitigated by the months that students spend away from school. This suggests that perhaps schools may have been more effective than politicians have given them credit for, and their ability to outweigh the social disadvantages of poor students is not as high as governments would have us think, because they are only in school for a proportion of the school year and the other 50% of the time they are awake, the community influence overwhelms what schools and teachers have done.

However, it can be argued that we, as societies from various parts of the world, have not succeeded in our aspiration to ensure quality education for all, despite all of the reforms, money and effort. The PISA Report Executive Summary (PISA 2006: 48) makes the following statement:

It is now possible to track change in reading performance over a six-year period. The results suggest that, across the OECD area, reading performance has generally remained flat between PISA 2000 and PISA 2006. This needs to be seen in the context of significant rises in expenditure levels. Between 1995 and 2004 expenditure per

primary and secondary student increased by 39% in real terms, on average across OECD countries.

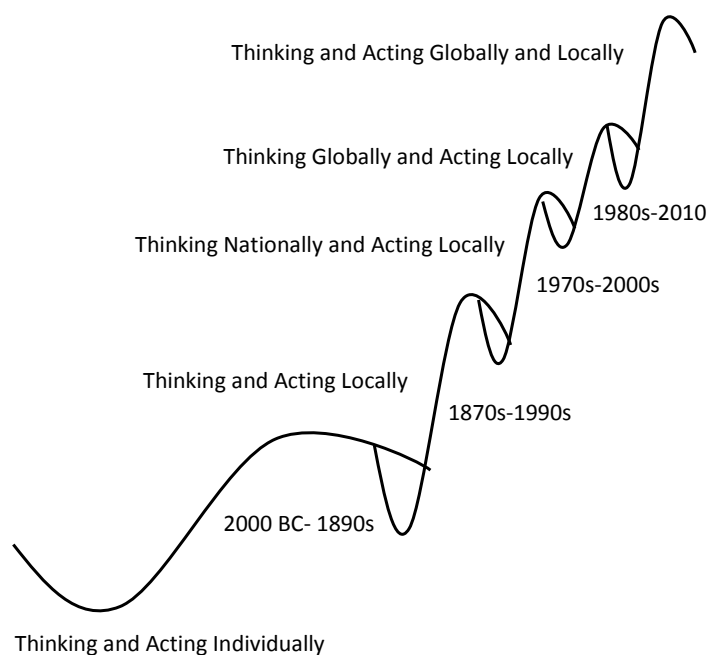
This would suggest that our efforts at reforming schools might not be seen as being cost effective, or perhaps not effective in any sense. We have moved from a time where we had individual teachers working with one or more students, through the development of classrooms, schools and school systems, to a time where national authorities have taken an interest in local school systems and where global comparisons have directed some of the policies promoted by those systems. We have moved through what Beare called the Pre-Industrial, the Industrial and the Post-Industrial metaphors of education and we are currently in what I call the Accountability metaphor of education, where the market and choice programs have been put in place as a means of promoting education for all. However, we are not yet there. (Townsend 1998: 248) argued:

We have conquered the challenge of moving from a quality education system for a few people to having a quality education system for most people. Our challenge now is to move from having a quality education system for most people to having a quality education system for all people.

Thirty years ago Minzey (1981) argued that previous educational reform had been similar to rearranging the toys in the toy box, when what we really needed was a whole new box. We now need to move to a new S-curve, where we close in on universal quality education, where every single student has a successful school experience. Townsend (2009: 363) argued this was the next S-curve, where we think and act both locally and globally and I believe that to do this the metaphor for education has to change again, from accountability, which clearly has not worked, to social justice, where we do what is necessary to deliver a quality education to the world's population. Here, the recognition is that for true education to occur, we cannot have education for the few who are rich and privileged (pre-industrial), we cannot see schools as factories (post-industrial) or businesses (enterprise), and we cannot expect the market to

solve our problems (accountability), but must see education as a global experience, where people work together for the betterment of themselves, each other, the local community and the planet as a whole. To do this the focus must become universal. All people must succeed.

If we trace the changes in education over time, it starts to look something like the graphic below.



Townsend (2009: 364) suggests that we have to do things in a different way.

...we have to move beyond accountability, which is simply a counting and sorting process, and seems to mostly have been designed to enable politicians to report things to communities in slick sound bites and with little or no analysis, and towards responsibility, where we need to respond to the needs and circumstances of the young people we serve and have an internal motivation to improve schools, not because it makes us look better, but because it is the right thing to do for the young people we interact with. Under these circumstances communities, and governments, accept that it is both their legal and moral responsibility to ensure that all people within their

communities are given the educational provision required to enable them to achieve their full potential as global citizens.

If the S-curves from the start of education’s history are progressively described then the progress of education over time can be documented in the following way. The next S-curve starts to become clear as seen in Table 1

Table 1: Thinking and Acting Across the Ages

| Period | Focus of delivery | Those effectively educated | Dominant Paradigm of the age |
|---------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Before 1890 | Individual | Few People | Thinking and acting individually |
| 1870s-1990 | Local | Some people | Thinking and acting locally |
| 1970s-2000 | National | Many People | Thinking nationally and acting locally |
| 1980s-2010 | International | Most People | Thinking globally and acting locally |
| 2010-onwards | Global | All people individually considered | Thinking and acting both locally and globally |

There are implications in moving towards thinking and acting both locally and globally at the policy level, for practice and for the training of both teachers and school leaders. These levels incorporate how we structure education at the system level, how leadership and classroom practices need to change in schools (which affects curriculum, pedagogy and assessment).

This leads to new understandings of how to educate both teachers and school leaders.

I wish to use the rest of this article to focus only on how thinking and acting both locally and globally will impact on school leaders and, especially, in their role as leader of school development planning efforts.

School Development Planning

The policies need to guide a new way of thinking about and structuring education, both leadership and classroom practices need to change which leads to the need for both curriculum and pedagogical changes. In turn, this will lead to the need for new ways of educating both teachers and school leaders. If we start with the big picture, the table below suggests some tentative changes at both the policy level and the way in which schools are run.

| Thinking Globally | Acting Locally | Thinking and Acting both Locally and Globally |
|--|---|---|
| For Education Policy | | |
| Recognition that the world has changed quite substantially since the development of schools. World's best practice needs to be conducted if education systems are to keep up with these changes. | Education systems use what they have learned from other systems, adapting what they have learned to the local circumstances. International comparative data are used to drive local school improvement. | There is a reassessment of the purpose and delivery of education in a rapidly changing world. There is recognition that education need not be a competitive process, but instead world's best practice should be freely shared for the benefit of all. The available technology is utilised to ensure that the available knowledge and skill is translated into practice. |
| For the School Level | | |
| Recognition that the level of success of an individual school is a complex mixture of the characteristics of the students, families and local community on the one hand and the skills, values and development of the teachers and school leaders. | Self-managing systems of education provide opportunities for the individual schools and their communities to respond in unique ways to the directives and guidelines laid down by the system. Schools compete for students. | Recognition that not all school communities are able to operate at the level required for universal student success. Systems establish mechanisms where highly capable schools and individuals provide support to those less capable as a means of improving the system as a whole. |

To establish this way of thinking we need to consider what I have called the Core-Plus Curriculum (Townsend, 1994, pp 119-123) which ensures that both:

The CORE areas, those areas identified by the state as being so important that every child should learn and know them, AND The PLUS areas, those areas identified by the school community as being important to their children, are given the time, attention and resources necessary for those skills, attitudes and knowledge to be planned for, learned and evaluated.

At the system level, this leads to an understanding that for us to be successful, we need to support all schools to be successful and, clearly, the market model does not subscribe to this understanding unless we adopt a new model of ‘market’ based on interest rather than financial ability to purchase ‘quality’. An analogy might be the move from a market where we have a Rolls Royce level of education competing against the Volkswagen beetle, where the buyer purchases based on financial ability and prestige to a ‘market’ model where we have General Motors, Ford and Toyota mid-level cars, where the buyer will spend the same amount of money, but purchase their car of choice based on the variety of extras that they wish to have for the price. All buyers get a similar quality, but the specific content that they receive will be based on their particular preference for that aspect. At the school level, rather than hoarding best practice and using it to compete for more, or better students, schools would share best practice to ensure that communities would receive the quality of education that they need. Rather than have government policies that suggest that if you don’t like the school you are in, go to another school, they will accept their legal and moral responsibility to deliver a quality education to every child. Under these conditions, parental choice is acceptable, when the best choice for any parent becomes to send their child to their local school.

As well as changes at the policy level, there also needs to be changes in what happens in the classroom, if we are to achieve our aim of universal success for all students. However, if young people’s learning is the end goal, we need to reconsider what this means in a rapidly changing, globalized world. As far back as Wang, M.C., Haertel, G.D. and Walberg, H.J. (1993/1994, *Educational Leadership*, pp 74-79) analyzed 179 chapters, conducted 91 research syntheses, interviewed 61 educational researchers, considered 11,000 findings related to student learning. Twenty eight specific characteristics of a learning oriented school are

grouped into 6 categories. The top five characteristics are listed in order of their importance to student learning:

1. Classroom Management
2. Metacognitive processes
3. Cognitive processes
4. Home Environment/Parental Support
5. Student/Teacher social interactions

What we see here is that the greatest determinants of student learning are the student and what happens in the classroom. It is what the student brings to the table, together with what the teacher brings to the table that makes the difference to student learning. These results were more recently confirmed by Hattie (2007) whose meta-analysis confirmed that around 50% of the variation in student achievement can be tracked back to the student (items 2, 3 and 4 above) and around 30% of the variation comes from what teachers do (items 1 and 5), with the most important single factor being the quality and consistency of feedback given by the teacher to the student. If we look at the top five elements above that contribute to student learning, it becomes obvious that it is what happens in the classroom, the home and the community that is critical to an individual student reaching his or her potential. The student's ability to learn, the way in which the classroom is organised and managed and the relationships between student, teacher and parent are the keys to learning. The past decade has seen massive changes at the state and school levels by various restructuring activities, but few that have tried to change what happens in classrooms.

Yet as Ashenden (1994: 13) argues:

The greatest single weakness in these reforms is that they stop at the classroom door.

The classroom is the student's workplace. It is, in essence, a 19th-century workplace -

much more humane and interesting but recognisably the same place. It is an inefficient and inequitable producer of the old basics and simply incompatible with the new.

If we are concerned about helping students to learn then, there are three major issues for educators. The first is having an appropriate curriculum for a rapidly changing world, the second is the pedagogy we use to engage every student in this curriculum and to enable them to build a positive relationship to learning, so that they can become a lifelong learner, and the third is the way in which we assess the level of success. The table below provides some indicators of where we are now and where we might want to be.

| Thinking Globally | Acting Locally | Thinking and Acting both Locally and Globally |
|--|--|--|
| For Curriculum | | |
| Recognition that in the international market, students need to have high levels of education in order to be successfully employed. All students should complete a full school program. | Strong focus on those elements of curriculum associated with preparing them for further education, including the basic skills and a set of socially acceptable values. | Recognition that not all students will go on to university and that other skills are necessary for those that will not. As well as the academic program, schools will cater for those who wish to go into the world of work or other types of activity. |
| For Pedagogy | | |
| Classroom effectiveness is more important than school effectiveness when it comes to student achievement. Better qualified and more committed teachers lead to higher levels of student achievement. | Strong focus on teaching to the test, especially for students who are struggling. Most teacher professional development focuses on basic skills and ‘proven techniques’ of imparting them. | Recognition that a recipe approach to teaching will not lead to success for all students. Teachers are given the skills to build strong relationships with students and making the curriculum relevant through a variety of different teaching techniques. |
| For Assessment | | |
| Recognition that being internationally competitive involves understanding how well students are learning in comparison to others, both locally and globally. | Strong focus on those elements of the curriculum that are easily measured and are likely to be part of an international testing program. This has led to a higher value being given to some subjects than to others. | Recognition that to be a fully functioning human being takes more than a particular score on a standardized test. As well as ‘valuing what we measure’ steps are taken to ensure that we learn to measure other human skills that are equally valued. |

It is outside the scope of this paper to discuss these in much detail, but some of the issues associated with these aspects can be found in Townsend (2009a) If we accept the premise that

to improve student achievement, changes must be made in curriculum, engagement and relationships, and measuring success, then perhaps the greatest task in the future is to manage the changes that are necessary in the hearts and minds of teachers, since it is here that true improvement in student learning lies. Thus we have implications for how teachers must adapt to promote positive learning for all students. We must move individual teachers past competence and into a position of capability. Cairns (1998: 1) argued *‘Modern Teachers need to be developed as capable which is seen as moving ‘beyond’ initial competencies. The Capable Teacher is what we should be seeking to develop, encourage and honor as the hallmark of our profession.’*

| Thinking Globally | Acting Locally | Thinking and Acting both Locally and Globally |
|--|---|---|
| For Teachers | | |
| Recognition that teachers are the most important factor in student learning, apart from the student themselves. An effective school has more effective classrooms and teachers than a school that is less effective. | Teachers face more and more pressure to achieve student outcomes. Strong focus on improving the quality of teaching through competency approaches. Teachers are expected to have specific measurable skills and to focus on those elements of the curriculum that are likely to boost student outcomes. | Recognition that a student that does not enjoy being at school and is afraid or unhappy in the classroom will not perform well and that in times of rapid changes teachers need skills for the future rather than those learned in the past. Teachers need to establish the capabilities required to have strong positive relationships and teach in ways that will build student confidence in themselves to be successful learners. |

This would mean that we need to consider new strategies for working with teachers in the field, to ensure that building relationships and focusing on a broader range of outcomes occurs in classroom. At the moment, the curriculum is almost entirely focused on those students who are likely to end up going on to higher education. However, in many societies there are increasing numbers of young people who are in Scotland, at least, called NEETS (which stands for ‘Not in Employment, Education or Training’.) If we are to make sure that all students in schools, both currently and in the future are given an optimum chance of finding their way in adult society, then current teachers need to adjust what they do. In turn,

the new ways of looking at teachers has implications for teacher education as well as for those currently in the field.

| For Teacher Preparation | | |
|--|---|---|
| Recognition that teachers will teach in classrooms that will contain students from all over the world, or alternatively may be trained in one country and end up teaching in another country for most of their career. Teachers will be teaching for a future in which rapid and complex change continues. | Multiculturalism is taught in teacher education programmes, but the strong focus on having all students reach the identified state or national standards means that most of the time is spent on the basic skills. Teacher education programmes are largely competency based approaches to teacher development. | Recognition that it is all students need to be literate and numerate, but that will only happen if teachers can form strong relationships between students, teacher and the curriculum and each other. Teacher education programmes should encourage all students to have an international teaching experience and focus on expanding teacher capabilities for an unknown future. |

Again, this is outside the parameters of this paper, but more on this can be found in Townsend (2009b). However, making teachers more flexible, adaptable and professional becomes a challenge for school leaders as well. The model for developing capable teachers is a combination of three intertwined elements:

- Ability (describes both competence and capacity)
- Values (the ideals that govern the use of ability)
- Self-efficacy (the way people judge their capability to carry out actions effectively)

The challenge becomes clear. To improve teachers' abilities we need to focus our attention on their professional development, particularly in the areas identified above; to improve teachers' values we need to focus on developing and passing on a notion of values and teacher professionalism; and to improve teachers' self-efficacy we need to provide teachers with the ability to believe in themselves. Just as we need to change the beliefs and understandings of students if we want them to improve their level of learning, school leaders need to change the beliefs and understandings of teachers to manage this process. Essentially for every student to improve their level of achievement, then every teacher must believe that every student has the

capability to learn and must have the understanding of how best to promote that. It is one or the other of these two factors that seems to be missing for many teachers and is currently curtailing changes in student achievement. The leadership imperative of the future is to move towards a universal set of beliefs and understandings on the part of teachers that will lead to positive outcomes and relationships for every student.

School Leadership

If we are to be successful in our attempt to achieve universal student success, then we need to rethink the way in which school leaders do their business and work with those around them to ensure high levels of student attainment (Table 2).

Table 2: Thinking and Acting for Educational Leadership

| Thinking Globally | Acting Locally | Thinking and Acting both Locally and Globally |
|---|---|---|
| International recognition that the role of the school leader is becoming increasingly important in establishing the conditions of high levels of student learning. Leaders now have to respond to rapidly changing economic, social and environmental conditions. | Strong focus on those elements of management that promote instructional leadership, including the need to understand the law, finance, policy, data analysis and personnel development. | Recognition that an outstanding leader relies upon the people that he works with and that managing the school can only be successful if team leadership and relationship skills are also developed. Leaders think and act strategically to develop appropriate actions that support school, student and staff development |

The research is unequivocal that leaders can have a powerful, if indirect, influence on student achievement (Leithwood and Jantzi 2000) because of the strong influence that leaders have on the quality of teaching (Fullan 2001, Sergiovanni 2001). However, there are two components for school leaders to consider when we move towards Thinking and Acting both Locally and Globally. The first of these refers to the enormity of the current task and the need to share leadership within the school and the second is the way in which leaders need to think and behave if they are to move the school forward.

In terms of the first of these issues, it is simply no longer possible for a single person to be responsible for all the activities that are contained within the concept of an effective, modern school. In Florida, Townsend and Bogotch (2008: 225) report on the changing structure of the Florida Educational Leadership Examination (FELE), which all school leaders must pass to gain certification and thus directs the activities of leadership preparation programs.

Of the 91 specific skills identified as part of the new statewide FELE examination, 44 of them (48%) refer to a knowledge and understanding of state or federal legislature...It is telling that all of the skills under Vision focus more on communication of the vision than actually developing one, that the two skills under Diversity involve following the law and state communications and that only two skills under Decision-Making Strategies make any mention of leadership at all.

In Australia, the Australian Council for Educational Leaders have just released a draft Leadership Capability Framework (ACEL nd), with three major sets of imperatives for school leaders:

- Leads Self for Learning
- Leads Others for Learning
- Leads the Organisation for Learning

Within these three imperatives, there are 11 different capabilities and 34 separate indicators and school leaders are able to map their own level of performance within a rubric for each indicator that specifies a level of performance identified as:

- Influencing within and beyond classroom
- Influencing within and beyond team
- Influencing within and beyond school
- Influencing within and globally beyond school

It is interesting to note the differences between these two sets of expectations. Clearly in Florida, the state government's expectations are strongly focused on within state activity (the need to know laws and policies), whereas in Australia, the national professional association for school leaders sees the task of the leader as moving beyond the school and even beyond state and national borders.

There are many terms that have been used to describe the process whereby leadership within a school is spread from the school leader to others in the schools, including distributed leadership (Gronn 2000, 2002, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond 2001, 2004), shared leadership (Lambert, 2002), democratic leadership (Starratt 2001, Møller 2002) and team leadership or teacher leadership (Little 1990, Barth 1999). The critical leadership skill in the establishment of a broader leadership base is the way in which the school leader builds capacity for leadership in other people. In this way the first focus of thinking and acting both locally and globally from a leadership perspective is the building of capacity for leadership in others and establishing relationships that will allow this to develop. Again there is a substantial body of research in the literature that focuses on this topic (see Lambert 1998, Harris and Lambert 2001, Hopkins and Jackson 2001). But it is the central focus of the school leader, principal or headteacher, and the vision that they have that will be crucial to this exercise.

There are a number of possible views of what school leadership of the future, given these rapidly changing conditions, might encompass, especially if we are to focus on thinking and acting both locally and globally, which will involve everything from consideration of individual students right through to ways in which school leadership might contribute to the ongoing health of the planet itself. I wish to look at three different leadership possibilities discussed in the literature, which may be able to serve this purpose, deep leadership (Hargreaves 2006), sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink 2006), and regenerative leadership (Hardman 2009).

In the United Kingdom, iNet (International Networking for Educational Transformation), an initiative of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), has developed into a network of around 5000 schools in over 30 countries as a mechanism for the sharing of best practice and innovation on the future of education. Part of the underlying rationale and one of the key components of the network's initiatives is what they call personalising learning (Hargreaves 2009), where the argument is made that since students all have different learning styles and learning needs, to ensure that more students reach their potential than currently is the case, we need to make sure that learning is personalised. In the early stages, iNet identified nine gateways to personalised learning (Hargreaves 2009), which were later reconfigured into four 'learning deeps'; deep learning (learning to learn, assessment for learning and student voice), deep experience (curriculum and new technologies), deep support (mentoring and coaching and advice and guidance) and deep leadership (design and organisation and workforce reform). More detail of the first three sets of gateways can be found at <http://www.ssat-inet.net/whatwedo/personalisinglearning.aspx> but in this article I wish to comment only on Deep Leadership.

In order for the requirements of deep learning, deep experience and deep leadership to be fulfilled, Hargreaves (2006: 2) argues that

Deep leadership means redesigning education so that, through a culture of personalisation and co-construction with shared leadership, the school secures deep experience, deep support and deep learning for all its students.

Deep leadership establishes strategies for organising the staff and the school in ways that develop the capacity to achieve the transformation of full personalisation for students. It involves focusing all the efforts of the school on the task of learning and increasing the capabilities of the teachers and others involved in this effort, to do so. It could be argued that deep leadership is not a new theory of leadership or school management. It is more conceptual in nature requiring pioneering and transformational ideas to work for developing personalisation of learning for all in the school using the nine gateways in a process.

If deep leadership is seen as being conceptual, it also has implications for ongoing practice. The need to sustain such practice has also become a focus for study. Hargreaves and Fink (2007: 3) argued for the need to develop sustainable leadership in schools

Sustainable leadership matters, spreads and lasts. It is a shared responsibility, that does not unduly deplete human or financial resources, and that cares for and avoids exerting negative damage on the surrounding educational and community environment. Sustainable leadership has an activist engagement with the forces that affect it, and builds an educational environment of organizational diversity that promotes cross-fertilization of good ideas and successful practices in communities of shared learning and development.

In this instance, sustainability considers the preservation of good practice once it is established. The notion of sustainability can be seen to act on two different levels, both locally and globally. Locally, we must be concerned with how leadership can be sustained over time within a particular school and how the focus generated by that leadership can also be sustained once the leader moves on. But sustainability has also taken on a broader concept associated with sustaining the resources of the planet. Sustainability has been defined as...

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

(World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland) Report 1987)

The original focus on environmental sustainability quickly evolved into a much broader concept. Elkington's (1994) definition of the triple bottom-line argues we must consider the economic and the social environment as well as the natural environment for true sustainability to emerge. If we consider only the natural environment and the economic environment we will have viability but not sustainability, if we consider only the natural environment and the

social environment we will have bearability but not sustainability and if we consider only the social environment and the economic environment we will have equity but not sustainability. Only when all three are in balance can we have sustainability. If we look at the circumstances in schools at the moment, and ask ourselves these questions...

- Are schools equitable for all students?
- Are schools bearable for all students?
- Are all schools viable in the current climate?

...we might suggest that schools as they are currently constructed, managed and operated are not sustainable either. If so, then sustaining what we have now is not what we want.

Hardman (2009) suggests that sustainability is no longer enough. He considers that we are already in a position of 'overshoot'. If we look at the global environment, we could argue that the triple bottom line is not being met. It could be argued that where we are now, environmentally, economically and socially, is not sustainable. It might even be argued that the current situation is not bearable, viable or equitable either. In other words, sustaining the position we are in now is not going to lead to the type of world that we desire. Hardman (2009: 273) argues we can be

...no longer satisfied with fostering environmental, social, and economic sustainability as the ultimate objective in business, education, community, or any other form of human activity. The growing evidence of overshoot and collapse of natural and social systems indicated the need to adopt strategic approaches that went beyond sustainability.

He (2009: 272) outlines his concept of regenerative leadership in the following way:

Whereas sustainability is defined colloquially...as "doing what you are doing so that you can keep on doing what you're doing," regenerative leadership can be

said to be about putting back more than we took out, and doing it in entirely new ways unconditioned by prior assumptions.

Hardman uses Wilber's (2001) Integral Theory framework, with four dimensions of human experience, the interior/subjective and the exterior/objective dimensions with regard to personal values on one hand and the interior/subjective and the exterior/objective dimensions with regard to collective values on the other. Hardman recognises that regenerative leadership is an ongoing process, represented by the infinity symbol and starts with the leader's personal value system incorporating sustainability values, developing behaviours based on these values, and then working with others to develop the sustainability mindset and establishing group behaviours based on these values. This process becomes an ongoing cycle of activity over time as both individually and collectively, the group moves towards more sustainable approaches, and eventually to the point where the overshoot issue starts to be addressed in a positive way.

If leaders truly are going to serve their school in the future, the current inequity, of services and outcomes, the current unbearability, for a substantial proportion of the school population, and the current unviability, of a system with too many expectations and too few resources, must change. To do this leaders will need to be courageous, will need to challenge authority and may need to be subversive (MacBeath 2008: 124). This can only happen by sharing the load, both locally, nationally and internationally.

One of the keys to doing this is for school leaders to adopt what Hamel and Prahalad (1989) call strategic intent, comprising three factors:

A sense of direction: In many organisations staff do not share a sense of purpose above and beyond the short-term unit performance, because most organisations are over-managed and under-led. Strategic intent provides clarity about ends, but is unspecific about means.

A sense of discovery: Strategic intent offers staff an enticing spectacle of a new destination. It is broad enough to leave room for considerable experimentation in how to reach the destination. It constrains the 'where' but not the 'how', so creativity is unbridled.

A sense of destiny: The goal must be worthwhile to command the respect and allegiance of all the staff. Strategic intent must stimulate the passion that the staff can make a real difference. It represents an ambition that stretches beyond current resources and capabilities.

(Hamel and Prahalad 1989, in Hargreaves 2006: 6)

The need to regenerate what is happening in schools leads to a more complex approach to school leadership than just 'managing' schools. Bogotch and Townsend (2008: 1) argue that true leadership is artistry and they characterise this as the place where the 'what' and the 'how' of school leadership come together. We have seen above that Florida seems to have spent most of its energy focusing on the what of school leadership, whereas Australia seems to have established concerns about developing the how as well, but perhaps have overshot what we can reasonably expect school leaders to be able to do.

However, the real challenge facing the providers of educational leadership programmes is how do we manage developing leaders who can be 'Influencing within and globally beyond school'(ACEL) but at the same time prepare managers who are increasingly expected to deliver on state initiated mandates and requirements (eg Florida). Perhaps Hardman's (2009) regenerative leadership model may help us here. In order to change the mindset and the behaviour of those we are working with, we first need to change the mindset and behaviour of ourselves. As a person who has worked in the two dominant civilizations (the UK and the USA) of the last two hundred years, it is clear that we need to start recognising what each might offer. With more than five years in the US, I was able to see that the research literature

and the leadership practices used by faculty in the US mostly emanated from the US. After a year in the UK, the same thing is obvious, UK faculty use mostly UK research and leadership practices. Yet each has much to share with the other, and so too the rest of the world has much to share with both. Although there have been strong movements in recent years to a more international approach to research, with organisations such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the University's Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) on the US side of the Atlantic and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the British Educational Leadership and Management and Administration Society (BELMAS) on the other, now reaching out to international researchers, there is still some way to go.

In many cases, it is individual researchers, who read what those from other countries write, who choose to visit other places for joint research or other educational opportunities, and who actively seek out a wider understanding of education with all its global complexities, who will lead the way. They know the benefits of such activity and must encourage others to be involved. However, if we accept the regenerative leadership of Hardman, then those who have adopted an international mindset and have developed international practices, must lead the way for others who still might look inwards rather than outwards for their knowledge.

The way forward is for those regenerative leaders in educational leadership departments to recognise the value of what using the world as a library might do and to show the value of this to those we work with and those we teach. As a simple first step, look at the reference list that is used in your leadership class. If more than 75% of the references are made up of people from your own country, start the process of broadening your, and your students' reading. A quick Google search will provide a plethora of websites that will document what is happening at ministerial level, department level, the research level, and in many cases school level, that could be used as a starting point for discussions about what is happening (and how to change it) in your country. Bogotch and Maslin-Ostrowski (in press) document an educational

leadership department's journey to move from a collection of individual researchers with some international interests to a department where thinking globally became the norm.

If we choose to revitalize educational leadership programmes, and through this revitalize the education of the school leaders of the future, we can't keep doing what we have always done in the past. We can hope for, but can't expect, our students to make the changes because they are so busy just trying to do what they do best, lead schools. Collectively it is the educational leadership professors that are the leaders of those that will be school leaders. It is our task to show them a world of possibilities and in doing so, we will generate much more than we take away.

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