The Principal and Pedagogic Leadership

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Abstract
This paper critiques instructional leadership and the notion of pedagogic leadership is proposed as an alternative conception of the principalship. Pedagogy concerns enabling the learning and intellectual growth of students in contrast to instruction that treats students as the object of curriculum implementation. Successful classroom pedagogy requires that teachers understand how students learn and have the autonomy to design, implement and assess educational activities that meet the needs of individual and all students. Pedagogic leadership is predicated on informed teacher practice and reflection. Teachers are empowered to exercise professional responsibility and discretion by principals who are pedagogical leaders. Their leadership demonstrates credible knowledge of learning and teaching in conjunction with knowledge of the processes for improving school-wide learning.
The Principalship and Pedagogic Leadership

The effectiveness of schools in educating students is highly dependent upon the presence and nature of multi-levelled pedagogic leadership within each individual school. While principals are formally required to lead of the school, leadership is not the sole province of the principalship. Indeed most schools are characterised by a combination of formal and informal leadership as evidenced by teachers assuming responsibility for particular tasks and programs. Although the leadership of schools is a complex phenomenon, the outcomes of successful school leadership are readily identifiable. These outcomes centre upon the quality of pedagogy provided by teachers and the engagement of students in learning. Pedagogic change is difficult (Planning & Evaluation Service, 2000) and as Stigler and Hiebert (1999, p.83) noted, teachers tend to replicate the culture and pedagogy of their personal experiences at school, as students.

The following discussion is a synthesis of literature and research into school leadership and changing teachers’ pedagogic practices. In particular, it identifies the key factors in bringing about change in teachers’ pedagogic practices.

Leadership in Schools
Leadership has a chameleon-like quality. Interest in the study of leadership burgeoned in the post-War period. Early research concentrated on what were thought to be the essential precursors to leadership—personality and physical traits (Owens, 1987). Weber’s (1947) separation of charismatic leadership from position-based leadership promoted the belief that leadership was more of a consequence of a set of human actions based on emotional power that engaged the support of others (Solomon, 2003, p.202). When Ciulla (2003) tracked variations in the definitions of leadership from the 1940s she noted that in the 1990s the support for the leader had become more an inter-dependent relationship between the leader and the led, which was significantly different from the earlier views of leadership. In education Sergiovanni (1984) identified multiple dimensions of leadership he termed leadership forces. These were technical, human, educational, symbolic, and cultural. Inclusion of the educational force was significant and typifies early differentiation between the leadership of schools and that of other organisations. Sergiovanni (1984, p.6) described the educational force as “expert knowledge about matters of education and schooling”. A current overview of the leadership trends that have influenced education can be seen in Goddard’s (2003) listing of 14 leadership styles, which shows the indebtedness of education to the business world in leadership theory.

Recent models of educational leadership emphasise the importance of school leaders being heavily involved in the school’s instructional program (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning, 2001; Hill, 2001, 2002; Schlechty, 2001). Murphy & Hallinger (1992) noted that in the 1980s, principals needed to become curriculum and instructional leaders if they were to coordinate local school improvement. This dimension of school leadership has been called instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 1998; Gupton, 2003; Lashway, 1995, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992; National Association of Elementary School Principals 2002).

Instructional Leadership
Instructional leadership is a concept that joins the two, key activities at the heart of the teaching act. A contemporary example of defining instructional leadership is that of Daresh and Playko (as cited in Gupton, 2003, p.32) who defined instructional leadership as: “...direct or indirect behaviors that significantly affect teacher instruction and, as a result, student learning.” A shortcoming of this definition is that a Washington politician’s direction to spend more money investigating indigenous American learning styles would be seen as instructional leadership, even if the act were driven solely for political gain. This definition also failed to signal that students’ learning should be improved, not simply affected.

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In an international sense, it is unfortunate that much of the current research on pedagogic change is associated with the concept of instructional leadership and is so deeply embedded in educational literature. The term instruction is problematic and the leadership aspect is often ignored or confused.

Firstly, while many writers use instruction as a synonym for teaching or pedagogy, instruction is a limiting, clinical term that relates to one part of the teaching and learning cycle. Instruction does not encompass the formative or summative assessment that effective teachers do as a matter of course. Instruction does not consider the affect of the teacher’s body language or discourse that helps create a learning environment that promotes academic risk taking. Instruction does not describe the influence of the class culture on students’ understanding of democratic decision-making.

Secondly, much of the research and literature on instructional leadership is characterised by the promotion of principal behaviours as distinct from the behaviours of other members of the school organisation or community. Instructional leadership is often seen as the sole domain of school principals. For example, National Association of Elementary School Principals (2002, pp. 6-7) defined instructional leadership by setting out six standards of what principals should know and be able to do. Scheerens and Bosker (1997, as cited by Hill, 2002, p.53) identified five dimensions of instructional leadership:
- Time devoted to educational versus administrative tasks.
- The head teacher as a metacontroller of classroom processes.
- The head teacher as a quality controller of classroom teachers.
- The head teacher as a facilitator of work-oriented teams.
- The head teacher as an initiator and facilitator of staff professionalization.

The Scheerens and Bosker model identified the constructs that comprise the principal led model of instructional leadership. A more realistic model of the instructional leadership needs to acknowledge that within schools there are multiple layers of instructional leadership, not just that ascribed to principals (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson & Hann, 2002; Gronn, 2003; Lashway, 2002; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001).

Thirdly, the word instruction is contaminated with pejorative connotations of power. The command, “If instruct you to do X,” leaves a second party in no doubt about the power relationship between the speaker and the person being spoken to. As a result, instructional leadership, too, can be perceived as a power based transaction. Wisconsin has a Department of Public Instruction- shades of 1984!

Fourthly, although some examples of secondary principals are quoted in the literature, instructional leadership remains an elementary school concept. Goddard (2003, p.15) noted the disdain of a high school physics teacher after the principal with a background in English described his lessons as boring. The degree of subject specialism in high schools effectively excludes other subject specialist from making more than general comments about other teacher’s lessons.

Fifthly, the term instructional leadership gives an unbalanced view of what principals actually do. The trend toward instructional leadership was an attempt to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools after principals were required to adopt managerial tendencies of the New Public Management trend. What we are witnessing are the extremes of the pendulum of change.

Sixthly, the term instructional leadership was based on the mythological hero principal who almost single handedly saved failing schools. A study of perceptions of leadership over time show that there has been considerable change in the definition of leadership and the cult of the hero leader has been assigned to history except in businesses and schools. The myth of

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the hero leader, particularly the male heroic leader, has been debunked by many writers (Gronn, 2003; Lashway, 2002; Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie, 2003) and Senge (2002) argued:

If the power of top management is in fact limited, why then do people in organizations continue to cling to the belief that only the top can drive change? As Argyris suggests, this belief allows us all to continue to hold the top responsible for whether or not change happens. While that view might be disempowering on one level, it provides a convenient strategy if our real goal is to preserve the status quo. Moreover, there are different types of change, some of which—like reorganizing or creating a new corporate strategy—can only be brought about by top management. Such top-driven changes are familiar to most of us—but they do not reduce fear and distrust, nor unleash imagination and creativity, nor enhance the quality of thinking in the organization. When people confuse top-driven change and profound change, it’s easy to hold an exaggerated view of the power of top management, a confusion that no doubt persists among some top managers as well. Finally, we simply have no strategy for escaping the cultural addiction to the myth of the hero-leader.

Seventhly, the real focus of education is student learning, not instruction! The starting point should be the question: “How do students learn best?”

Eighthly, while some argue that the use of the term instruction is broader in the U.S. than the rest of the world, understanding is guided by what can be called semantic determinism. The Inuit have 8 words for snow, which have day-to-day implications for understanding the weather. The same holds for instruction. The concept’s (particularly the verb form) denotations and connotations will prevail, and that remains a limiting factor.

This examination of conceptions of instructional leadership has drawn attention to the complex nature of school leadership and the to the tension between leadership of instructional and non-instructional aspects of schools.

Towards an Understanding of Pedagogic Leadership
While pedagogy is a contested concept, it covers a wider range of aspects of the teaching act than instruction. Pedagogy is derived from paidagogos (Greek) meaning, the teacher of children, the intentional use of the term pedagogy, instead of instruction or teaching, in modern times, can be conceptual, geographical and, or ideological. The term pedagogy was relatively uncommon in a decade ago but is currently being used more frequently in publications and teachers' discourse. There appear to be at least five, inter-related clusters of meaning of pedagogy in the literature:

1. Epistemological
   • Pedagogy as the transmission of knowledge (Lingard et al., 2003)
2. Socio-Ideological
   • Pedagogy as a political tool for the enculturation students (Freire, 1977; Morton & Zavarradeh, 1991; Smyth, 1985; van Manen, 1999);
   • Pedagogy– ideological practices of constructing subjectivities necessary for reproducing existing social organisations (Morton & Zavarradeh, 1991).
3. Social
   • Pedagogy as a relationship that produces knowledge (Britzman, 2003; van Manen, 1999);
   • Pedagogy as social practice (Daniels, 2001).
4. The pedagogic act
   The mechanical aspects of how knowledge is transmitted
   • Pedagogy as an inclusive view of all aspects teaching but not simply instruction (Mortimore, 1999; Newmann & Associates, 1996);
• Any conscious activity designed by one person to bring about learning in another (Ireson, Mortimore & Hallam).

5. Student centred learning

• Pedagogy as student centred learning and teaching, which specifically excludes didactic teaching (Hamilton & McWilliam, 2001).

Pedagogy specifically recognises the cultural and societal aspects of what is learned and why it is learned. Pedagogy acknowledges aspects of learning that were previously described as the hidden curriculum. Pedagogy peels back the veneer of teaching methodology to expose the conscious and unconscious decisions made by school leaders as the communities’ agents of enculturation. Pedagogic leadership is therefore an act that motivates others, thus facilitating culturally aware learning in a second party.

The advantage of pedagogy is that it represents a fresh way of thinking about the learning-teaching act, in the English speaking world where it hasn’t received widespread acceptance.

School Leadership as Leadership of Change

A major shortcoming of leadership studies has been the failure to overtly acknowledge that leadership is always about addressing issues of change. Leaders attract followers by offering to change at least one aspect of the followers’ personal circumstances. Ciulla (2003) noted in her archetypal definition of leadership in the 1990s that there is a two-way relationship between the leader and the led. In a definitional sense it can be argued that change is an a priori part of leadership. Hodgkinson (1983, p.186) referred to the relationship between the megalomaniac poet-leader and the “followership,” and the tenuous nature of that co-dependency:

When and if he should lose his vision, or be frustrated in his superimposition of it upon the world, the form corrupts and madness can ensue. The vision lost he may only be left with the power of his office against the frustration and implacability of the realities. The followership may sense this and falter.

As a result the leadership of the likes of Hitler and Stalin descends into dictatorship. This situation is problematic for the led, for two reasons:

Firstly, the relationship between both parties loses its voluntary character; and

Secondly, the change process does not bring the promised rewards for those who follow.

In schools, as Hargreaves et al. (2001, p.175) noted, significant school-wide change is impossible without effective school leadership and the “… educational change literature consistently points to school administrators as vital agents for creating the conditions in which school reform can succeed.” This statement by Hargreaves and associates highlighted the multi-dimensional nature of leading change in schools. Hargreaves’s statement illustrated the role that principals play in establishing the infrastructure for change (the climate, funding etc.) but the main role is leading the change (content and process). The concept of leading, in this sense, is predicated on a belief about teaching. As van Manen (1993, p.9) noted, “It is possible to learn all of the techniques of instruction but remain pedagogically unfit as a teacher.” Pedagogic leadership takes into account the “Why?” “How?” and “When?” of learning, not just the “What?” Pedagogic leadership is based on dialogue, not monologue and the learners are essential participants in the discussion. Evans (1999, p.11) made the point that principals who are not guided by pedagogic choice “… resort to a thoroughly bureaucratized way of relating to teachers” and as a result teaching becomes an occupation defined by expectations. Fullan (2001) portrayed leadership as the development of a culture of change in which “… more good things happen and fewer bad things happen” (Fullan, 2001 p.4). :

Schools, because of their role in the enculturation of future generations, are necessarily involved in moral and ethical issues (Begley, 1999; Hodgkinson, 1978, 1983; Leonard, 1999). Fullan (2001, p.13) warned that the moral purpose takes into account both the means and ends

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of the change process, particularly in education, which is charged with the development of citizens in future society (Leonard, 1999). Fullan (2001, p.28) noted "... that moral purpose and the sustained performance of organizations are mutually dependent." It is, therefore, important for the moral purpose to be incorporated in all aspects of the strategic planning such as the shared vision (Senge 1995, Senge et al., 2000), which is designed to win commitment and effort from all of the stakeholders.

The literature recognises the need to change teachers’ teaching methods for a variety of economic and managerialist reasons (Glickman, 1998; Government of Western Australia, 1992; Robertson, 1998). The moral reason for facilitating better learning, that students have a right to learn (Darling-Hammond et al., 1997), has attracted less attention. Research underwriting the moral purpose of instruction has confirmed the thesis that better teaching results in increased student learning (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Newmann & Associates, 1996; Watkins & Mortimore, 1999) and student success has resulted in greater student motivation and engagement. In relation to instructional leadership, the moral purpose of improving student learning concerns attainment of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor educational outcomes. Enabling student learning and engagement is a moral imperative for school leaders.

Fullan’s (2001) second dimension of leadership is that leaders must understand the change process. At the school level change is complex and non-linear. Fullan (2001, p.5) advised that "... leaders who combine a commitment to moral purpose with a healthy respect for the complexities of the change process not only will be more successful but also will unearth deeper moral purpose." To embed the change, there is a need to re-culture the school and change prevailing beliefs, values and attitudes of teachers, students and parents (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001; Dalin, Rolff and Kleekamp, 1993; Fullan, 1993)

In complex reculturing the establishment of a shared vision and purpose, that describe the development of the change and the change processes, is critical (Cavanagh & MacNeill, 2002; MacNeill & Lander, 2003; MacNeill & Silcox, 2000; NAESP, 2002; Senge, 1995, Senge, 2000). While the principal may have a key role in the development of the shared vision, the shared vision advises all stakeholders of the agreed direction and content of change. In relation to instruction, the shared vision, purpose and agreed values guide teachers’ choices of appropriate instruction. In the translation of the vision, purpose, and values into action through school planning there is agreement and understanding of how the change will evolve.

In schools, there has been a surfeit of change and innovation that Fullan (2001, p.109) described as problematic because of the nature of the “disconnected, episodic, piecemeal and superficially adorned projects”. Despite the potential dissonance, schools cannot opt out of change. The leaders’ task is to lead the school community through the potential problems by creating an agreed sense of direction through a vision. However, while there may be agreement about a sense of direction, what leaders do often is not scripted and as Heifetz and Linsky (2002) observed, leadership is an improvisational art. Amidst the uncertainty of change, Fullan (2001, p.118) identified three coherence-making features:

- lateral accountability that engages peers at all levels of the organisation;
- sorting which is applied against the tests of utility and fitting the organisational vision; and,
- shared commitment, in which people inspire and stimulate each other.

The school must establish, implement, and achieve agreed academic standards for students (McEwan, 2003) and confirm expectations and standards for staff (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Miller, 2001; McEwan, 2003; NAESP, 2002).
Fullan (2001) made the point that in people-based organisations (such as schools) relationships are the key to successful change. Fullan stated "... we have found that the single factor common to every successful change initiative is that relationships improve (Fullan, 2001, p.5). Relationships are important parts of the determinants of success but are also a consequence of success. Leaders are charged with constantly fostering purposeful interactions and problem solving (Fullan, 2001, p.5). Fullan saw the sense of community as one extension of positive relationships within a school. Relationship building is dependent on many interpersonal skills (McEwan, 2003). While the literature on instructional leadership emphasises cultural change (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987), the interpersonal relationships between staff are a key factor in effecting the cultural change (Crowther et al., 2002; McEwan, 2003; Sullivan & McCabe, 1988; Fink & Resnick, 2001; McEwan, 2003). Relationships in a school context are to do with learning and much of the literature on instructional leadership emphasises the principal’s role in developing relationships with teachers by visiting classrooms (Fink & Resnick, 2001), commenting on teachers’ practices (Fink & Resnick, 2001) and encouraging them to be innovative and take risks (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001).

It is ironic that whilst school exist to educate children, the principles and processes of learning are rarely applied to organisational learning and the professional learning of teachers (Hargreaves, 1995; O’Neil, 1995). Fullan (2001, p.92) observed that “... schools are in the business of teaching and learning, yet they are terrible at learning from each other.” The research on instructional leadership emphasises the role of the principal in knowledge creation and sharing. At the dyadic (collaborative pairs), and whole staff level the literature on instructional leadership emphasises the principal directly interacting, in a hierarchical sense, with teachers to improve their performance (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; McEwan, 2003; Petersen, 1999; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). The shortcoming in this model is that knowledge creation and development is dependent on one person. There is a need to widen the base of knowledge finding and sharing throughout the school by teachers assuming responsibility for their own learning and that of colleagues (King, 2002; McEwan, 2003; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001).

Preliminary Theoretical Framework
Improvement of student learning is a crucial aspect of school leadership. Pedagogic leadership can be viewed as just one component of school leadership or alternatively as a distinct style of school leadership. Irrespective of which view is adopted, the effective leadership of teaching and learning is characterised by specific attributes of the principal, staff and operations of the school. These attributes of pedagogic leadership will constitute the preliminary conceptual framework for the study of pedagogic leadership and will be applied in the design of an empirical investigation to meet the objectives of the research. The attributes are:

- teachers’ and principals’ expert knowledge about pedagogy and schooling;
- multiple and collaborative leadership;
- school leaders balancing administrative roles with pedagogic roles;
- facilitating the engagement and empowerment of staff;
- leadership of change;
- discharge of moral obligations to students and society;
- a re-culturing approach to school improvement;
- development of a shared vision and sense of mission;
- gaining commitment by expecting high standards from staff and students;
- developing relationships and a sense of community; and
- creating and sharing knowledge throughout the school.
References


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