

Leadership Development for 21st Century School Leaders

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Context: Succession Management in Public Education

As Ontario's provincial School Boards struggle with the issue of an aging cohort of school and system administrators (Williams, 2001) the issue of succession management has become increasingly urgent (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). To date, significant focus has been given to the number of school leaders who will be retiring which creates a potential provincial vacuum of leadership (McIntyre, 1999). Shifting the focus away from those who are leaving to those who are entering the ranks of school administrators, we see a cohort of young leaders entering an educational context that is dramatically different from that which their predecessors entered. Leadership development of this new cohort is a significant aspect of succession management in the new provincial context.

The identification, training, and on-going support of new school leaders is a crucial issue for school districts across the province. Even if the ranks of retired principals and vice-principals are filled, new principals will be ill-equipped to handle the growing responsibilities of the role (Hargreaves et al, 2003). It is for this reason that in Ontario the context has moved succession management to the point of being an "impending demographic disaster of leadership" (p. 8, Hargreaves et al, 2003; Williams, 2001).

The 2001 Report from the Study Group (Institute on Rehabilitation Issues – University of Wisconsin) states that,

"Succession planning is not only finding the right person for the right job; it is a comprehensive workforce planning system, directly linked to the organization's strategic plan, concerned with the organization's human capital, identifying skill imbalances, and projecting future needs." (p.8)

Effective succession management is seen as the key to the ability of organizations to ensure that system leaders keep current with the developments of the organization itself. The report goes on to say that,

"An organization's strategic goals can only be achieved if an effective program

for leadership is in place. Succession planning is necessary to ensure that leadership growth keeps pace with organizational growth.” (p.9).

To address leadership succession issues in education one needs to consider the full scope of succession. This means that plans need to be developed that range from the initial identification of emerging leadership talent (Hartle & Thomas, 2003) through to the sustainability level where existing leaders foster the development of future leaders (Fullan 2005). Without developing specific succession plans there is a concern that school boards will have inadequately prepared administrators who have difficulty dealing with the demands of school leadership. According to White, Cooper, and Brayman (2006),

“To not have a policy in place that works smoothly could result in a growing number of schools with hastily and, perhaps, inadequately trained administrators or administrators who are new to the position and inexperienced in dealing with the complexities of administration.” (p.21)

The essence of succession management in public education is for school systems to have plans in place that can address the issue of a need for leadership that continuously cultivates future leaders who are skilled in the abilities to bring about continuous improvement. Fullan (2005) discusses leadership succession in terms of sustainability. He explains sustainability as,

“...the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose.” (p.ix)

For Fullan sustainable succession is found where there,

“...are leaders at all levels of the system who proactively and naturally take into account and interact with larger parts of the system as they bring about deeper reform and help produce other leaders...”. (p.51)

The Ontario provincial education context has changed over the last decade to focus increasingly on improving student achievement. Current literature stresses the need for school administrators to function as instructional leaders rather than as managers. Managerial leadership focuses on efficiently and effectively maintaining current organizational arrangements

(Cuban, 1988; Castle & Mitchell, 2001). Managerial leadership can be seen as the efficient completion of clearly specified tasks by leaders (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach, 1999). According to Kotter (1990), management is concerned with producing consistency and order in the workplace.

On the other hand, school leadership in an international age of accountability concerns itself with generating constructive change and has "...five core mind-action sets – moral purpose, understanding change processes, relationship building, knowledge building, and coherence building..." (p.xii, Fullan, 2005). It is leadership that is transformational in that it sets direction, develops people, redesigns the organization, and manages the instructional program (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al, 1999). This concept is reinforced and augmented by the work of Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) whose meta-analysis of the research literature articulated twenty-one leader "responsibilities", or behaviours, that highlight the instructional leadership aspects of the school leader role over that of the managerial. These research studies are not focused on 'clearly specified tasks' and they do not articulate the work of a manager but an instructional leader focused on improving student learning.

Knowing what it is that effective school leaders do is helpful in determining the type of professional learning – or leadership development – that is of value (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). The 'core competencies' of effective school leadership include four broad categories of practices (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstron, 2004). These categories are:

- Setting directions;
- Developing people;
- Redesigning the organization; and
- Managing the instructional program

This accountability policy context has shaped the education agenda in Ontario and globally. School improvement has become the expectation of schools across many western countries (Harris, 2002) and school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how well students learn (Leithwood and Reihl, 2003). Fullan (2003) explains that leaders are faced with sustaining learning under conditions described as complex, rapid change. According to Daresh and Capasso (2002), educators are "increasingly avoiding careers in

administration because they were fearful of taking on responsibilities that are filled with demands for accountability but with little support. One can only wonder why anyone would actively pursue a job with high stress and demands for effective performance with little organizational promise of assistance” (pp. 512-513). The role of school leader has become decreasingly popular as a potential career for many current educators (Cunat & Daresh, 2007; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). This assertion is supported by a province-wide survey published by the Ontario College of Teachers in the September 2005 edition of *Professionally Speaking*. In the survey 64% of teacher respondents indicated that they were not interested in pursuing a career as a school administrator while only 17% indicated an interest. The remaining 19% were undecided or uncertain.

Competency Standards

A focus on educational leadership (Marzano et al, 2005) coupled with a global context of accountability (Fullan 2005) has led many educational jurisdictions to articulate leadership competency standards that can be used in the leadership development for first-time administrators. Such administrator competency standards exist in countries such as New Zealand (First-Time Principals Programme), England (National Professional Qualification for Headship), Finland (Teaching Qualifications Act, 1999) and in various states of the United States (Cunat & Daresh, 2007; Gray, Fry, & O’Neill, 2007; Spiro, Mattis, & Mitgang, 2007). Each of these was designed to articulate the specific competencies of leadership in order to frame the training and leadership development of beginning and existing school leaders. As succinctly stated by Normore (2004),

“...school districts need to articulate and clarify their expectations from the outset – aligning leadership development activities with leadership expectations.”
(pp.119-120)

To respond to this environment, The Ontario Ministry of Education created the Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). The OLS contains, among other elements, a Common Provincial Framework that articulates the practices, attitudes, knowledge, and skills of “what good leadership looks like”. School boards have begun to create their own competency standards based on the direction of the Ontario Ministry of Education. In

early 2007 the Ontario Ministry of Education released on its website its Leader Competencies within a 'Leadership Development' framework.

The Ministry of Education and local Boards are using recent research (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach 1999; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty 2005; Fullan 2005, 2006) to reinforce the importance of developing school leadership and to inform the development of board level support structures for the professional learning of school leaders.

At a presentation to the delegates of the Ministry's Institute for Education Leadership on December 12, 2006, Professor Andy Hargreaves (Boston University) addressed the issue of leadership development as a key component in a sound succession management strategy. According to Hargreaves, effective succession management addresses the need for the recruitment, training, and on-going support of all school administrators. It ensures that first-time school administrators have adequate time to prepare for administrative roles, that the training support is linked to clearly defined leadership standards and competencies (Daresh 2004; Normore 2004; Ontario Ministry of Education 2007), and that strong professional communities are built that deepen the pools of leadership talent.

Professional Learning

Professional Learning for Building Capacity

Through several research studies and projects conducted over the past ten years, Mitchell and Sackney (2001) have developed a model that frames understanding about the building of leadership capacity within the education sector. The model consists of three pivotal capacities that need to be built to frame the professional learning of school leaders. These capacities are: personal capacity, interpersonal capacity, and organizational capacity.

Building personal capacity entails a deep and critical deconstruction and reconstruction of one's own professional knowledge. Interpersonal capacity addresses the development of collegial relations and collective practices whereby ongoing professional learning becomes a highly-valued norm within a professional group. Organizational capacity means building organizational structures and systems that support and value personal learning as well as facilitating and encouraging collective learning (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001).

Building personal capacity requires an individual to address the factors that impact on their professional practice. This is a necessary process because new knowledge is built on a

foundation of existing knowledge and belief systems. Deconstructing one's own professional knowledge and practice allows for the possibility of constructing new knowledge. Thus deconstruction is a necessary reflective process (Bandura, 1977, 2001) that leads naturally to the active phase of reconstruction (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). The processes of coaching and other personalized learning formats engage individuals in reflective process for developing and utilizing cognitive processes, internal resources, and states of mind (consciousness, craftsmanship, efficacy, flexibility, interdependence) as a means of building capacity to achieve goals and enhance self-directed learning (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

The building of interpersonal capacity is connected to a leader's need to build interpersonal relationships (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999) within the work setting. Interpersonal capacity requires that leaders attend to others within the school, purposefully build relationships (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999), and model collegiality, collective reflection, and collaboration (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001).

Organizational capacity addresses the need for educational organizations to be structured in such a way as to allow for the building of personal and interpersonal capacities. Structural arrangements need to bring individual educators into close professional contact with one another (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001) in order for professional learning to take place. Organizational capacity, then, is an enabling and flexible structure within which professional learning can readily occur.

Professional Learning for the 21st century

In a time when school leadership is seen as second only to classroom instruction as having impact on student learning (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), attention has increasingly focused on the role of school leaders. The importance of leadership development – or 'capacity building' - of school leaders is a key aspect of this increased attention. The practices of school leaders as articulated in competency standards (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007; NCSL, 2004; Ministry of Education – New Zealand, 2008) – and the learning, or capacity building, required to deliver on these practices - is being researched and written about extensively both in academic and school system literature. The prevalence of educational journals, books, websites, and conferences attest to this focus on leadership (Fullan, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004).

Questions are being raised about the effectiveness of existing leadership development processes for educators (Cole, 2004; Fullan, 2007). Indeed, in some circles current models of 'professional development' are actually seen as an impediment to the professional learning required for educators to improve their practice (Cole, 2004; Fullan 2007).

Leadership development for school administrators generally takes a functionalist approach. Through professional development programs, school leaders are expected to develop a set of skills and knowledge that 'experts' have decided they should have. Once the learning sessions are completed school leaders are sent back into schools to apply what they have learned (Zellner, Jinkins, Gideon, Doughty, & McNamara, 2002). Professional learning can take the form of workshops, seminars, conferences, courses, and related activities. Even professional learning that meets the highest standards of adult learning can be ineffective because it is not designed to engage participants in on-going, sustained learning in the setting where the actual work takes place (Fullan, 2007; Elmore, 2004; Guskey, 2000).

The literature informs us that neither a purely academic nor a purely practical form of professional learning is adequate to support school leaders in their roles (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1992; Royal Commission on Learning 1994; National Policy Board on Administrative Preparation, 1989). Current literature proposes a very different form of professional learning for school leaders in the current context. Professional learning is seen as a network of supports ranging from peer support through to professional learning experiences offered through a wide range of formats and by a broad range of providers (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a).

This range of supports is intended to provide school leaders with professional learning that is personalized (Hopkins, 2007; Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006; Creasy & Paterson, 2005), that promotes self-directed learning (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Joyce & Showers, 2003), that focuses on learning-centred professional dialogue (Creasy & Paterson, 2005; Healy, Ehrich, Hansford, & Stewart, 2001), and that is both continuous and daily (Fullan, 2007; Senge, 1999). The National Staff Development Council recommends that professional learning programs for school leaders should take place over the long-term rather than being episodic, be job-embedded rather than outside the realm of the school where the leader's work takes place, and be carefully planned with intention and purpose (Sparks and Hirsch, 2000).

Joyce and Showers (1996) claim that regular and on-going support for school leaders is needed after professional learning takes place in order for there to be a greater transfer of the

new learning into practice (Kirkham, 1995). Professional learning sessions can provide opportunities to gather new knowledge or skills but to transfer this learning into practice requires immediate and sustained practice within the workplace (Hopkins & Levin, 2000). This transfer of new learning into practice occurs through an approach where knowledge is constructed based on an individual's unique and personal experiences (Brown, Stroh, Fouts, & Baker, 2005). Professional learning then becomes an ongoing process of "resolving existing knowledge and new experiences through which each person generates his or her own mental models" (p. 20, Brown et al, 2005). This process can be stimulated and moderated by reflective thought which can be defined as active and careful consideration both while engaged in a task as well as when looking back on a completed task (Reeves, 2006; Schon, 1987; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990).

Based on actual experiences within the workplace (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Coffin, 1995; Browne-Ferrigno & Shoho, 2002) these reflective thinking processes are best situated within a context where the learning is not done in isolation but through social participation with the assistance of others (Hobson, 2003). Professional conversations that are well-led can serve as an effective professional learning structure that stimulates reflective conversations for the construction of new knowledge (Healy, Ehrich, Hansford, & Stewart, 2001; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001) based on daily (Fullan, 2007), authentic experiences (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Coffin, 1995) within the school (Elmore, 2004).

Many factors – educational policies, on-the-job leadership activities, mentoring experiences, and professional learning experiences, for example - affect a school leader's daily practices. However, the actual effects of these external experiences are mediated by the inner lives – the thoughts, feelings, values, and dispositions – of these leaders. The cognitive and affective antecedents of school leaders need to be considered relative to school leader professional learning (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). Formal training experiences are ultimately less powerful than other factors such as the leader's internal states, existing skills, beliefs, values, and dispositions. As stated by Leithwood & Levin (2007),

"Internal states constitute the perceptual filters and meaning-making 'tools' through which all other potential influences must pass if they are to change leaders' behaviours. In order to change leaders' behaviours, other types of influences must actually change some aspect of a leader's internal states". (p.14)

Put in simpler terms, what leaders do depends on what they think and how they feel

(Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood & Levin, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

Research findings indicate that formal school-leader professional learning makes a significant difference in leadership effectiveness (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Coffin, 1995). Within a context of an “impending demographic disaster of leadership” (p. 8, Hargreaves et al, 2003; Williams, 2001) such professional learning is necessary to support the influx of new leaders (Hargreaves et al, 2003). It is essential to re-examine current methods of professional learning for all school leaders – from emergent leadership through to those who are experienced. By not doing so, school leaders will continue to participate in 20th century professional learning while high expectations have been set for them to serve as leaders of 21st century schools.

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