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ABSTRACT

Using the image of a balance this paper first attempts to demonstrate the importance of major issues, paradoxes, dilemmas, tensions faced by school leaders. It puts the case for greater emphasis on continuity, independence, community and heterogeneity to balance what is seen as the current overemphasis on constant change, dependence, individualism, and homogeneity. Second, a key, our ability to understand, act on and value individual, group and organisational development, or learning, in educational organisations, is offered as a way overcome such imbalances and to better be able to know the crucial elements in leadership for democratic schools. To support the position taken recent research that examines leadership for organisational learning and improved student outcomes is summarised and its implications discussed. Third, and finally, the paper attempts to join together the various elements of balance, organisational learning and leadership in a single developmental model of school leadership.

INTRODUCTION

As I review the enormous literature in our field, and the myriad events, notions, concepts, plans, philosophies, policies and sheer political shenanigans that pass for educational leadership, I realise the true import of the conference theme 'Exploring new horizons in school leadership for democratic schools.' In order to cut through this literature, I've chosen two aids: a balance for weighing things and a key for opening doors.

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The balance is to enable us to compare rival approaches and see them for what they are. As for the key, later in this paper I hope we will be able to share that, the better to open the way to exploring the crucial elements in leadership for democratic schools.

THE BALANCE

First then, the balance.[1] In order to penetrate such a mass of ideas and language, much of it obfuscation and jargon, it is often good to step back and apply a naive, even a primitive, criterion to see how the concepts line up in basic human terms. Balance is just such a simple criterion.

Consider a balance: in the pan on our right we see piled the so-called 'modern' values of contracts, markets and competition; the instrumental skills of efficiency, accountability, planning; a focus on the short-term, the symbolic and expedient; having the answers; sameness; doing things right. It is fair then to ask whether in the pan on our left we have enough of the perhaps more 'old-fashioned' values of wisdom, trust, empathy, compassion, grace, honesty; the skills of collaboration and reciprocity; a focus on the long-term, the real and substantive; discretion and reserving judgement; character; doing the right thing. This is the balance that I encourage you to apply to leadership issues for democratic schools.

In this paper I will use this balance in relation to four important issues, paradoxes, dilemmas, and tensions that school leaders face. I will be putting the case for greater emphasis on continuity, independence, community and heterogeneity to balance what I see as the current overemphasis on constant change, dependence, individualism, and homogeneity.

Balance Between Continuity and Constant Change
In contrast to past continuity in its absurd, recent times, we have been more likely to witness constant change, a stream of new movements, new programs, and new directions. Unfortunately, some in education seem to be forever rushing to catch the next bandwagon that hits the scene. I say 'unfortunately' because there is increasing evidence that many a school and school system has been badly disillusioned by the galloping hoof beats of the itinerant peddlers

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[1]For a fuller account of this section which has been much abbreviated from the conference keynote see my CCEAM 2000 William Walker Oration (Mulford, 2002).

behind the new movements who ride in and out again extorting their latest elixir.

I believe the core paradox in a such a situation, a world of massive and constant change, is how to foster enough internal stability in people and the organisation in which they work in order to encourage the pursuit of change. Stability for change, moving ahead without losing our roots, is the challenge (Peters, 1987).

It is quite incorrect to assume that an educational organisation is effective only if it is undergoing change. Change may be in an inappropriate direction, for example, towards a facade of orderly purposefulness (Sergiovanni, 1990). Change may also involve the use of inappropriate measures of success, especially procedural illusions of effectiveness (Meyer & Rowan, 1978). The difficulty of providing output measures by which education's success can be measured has often led to the elevation in importance of 'approved' management processes. These processes include PPBS, SBM, Charters/ Partnership Agreements, strategic plans, and so on. They contribute an illusion of effectiveness and become desired outputs in themselves, thus deceiving outside observers and many participants as well. Such deception should have no place in education.

It might be more helpful to remember Noah's principle: one survives not by predicting rain but by building arks. Amid uncertain, continually changing conditions, many leading leaders are constructing arks comprising their collective capacity to learn, they are striving to become intelligent, or learning, organisations (Silins & Mulford, 2002).

Balance Between Dependence and Independence
A second fundamental issue relates to the balance between dependence and independence and what I believe to be the current imbalance favouring dependence. This situation is most easily seen in the over dependence of many of those in educational institutions on 'leaders,' often engendered by the overconfidence of 'leaders' in their own abilities or importance. There seem to be a lot of people around these days who want to tell those in schools what to do. This situation is unfortunate. It is unfortunate because many of those doing the telling do not seem to want to accept responsibility for their advice, are not around long enough to take responsibility for their directions and to may even seek to prevent fair and open assessment of the changes they promulgate.

We cannot avoid change: indeed we may wish to seek, embrace and even thrive on it. Education is an integral part of our society and must anticipate

change as being one of the constants it will face. Whether these changes result in Frankensteins, or gentle, functional, collaborative and sustainable butterflies, depends largely on the response of educators like ourselves. We can continue to be on the receiving end, to be dependent, or we can choose to make a stand together, to be empowered, to be leaders of democratic institutions.

Balance Between Individualism and Community

It may be unreasonable to expect the schools to pick up the slack when families fall apart, religious institutions no longer attract the young, children are malnourished, drug addiction is rampant, prime-time television programs are vacuous and educationally bankrupt, and gang members, athletes, and narcissistic celebrities are the admired adolescent role models (Goodlad, 1994).

However, if the home and school do not pick up the responsibility for our young then who will? Who will counter, for example, the pressure inherent in much of our 'modern' society to act alone rather than with, or for, the community? We need to be reminded that change for the sake of change, including technological change, is not necessarily good; it must be tempered with wisdom, compassion, and justice. At a time where the number of destructive computer 'hackers' and paedophiles using computers to spin their ghastly web to trap lonely computer children is on the increase, a skills crisis would indeed be bad enough but a values crisis would be devastating.

An elementary level of trust necessary is for community. You have to be able to trust that you neighbours aren't going to look into your mailbox, whether it's in front of your house or in your computer. Where is such trust established, if not in our homes and schools?

Surely turning back the tide of a 'virtual' existence with its stress on individualism and encouragement to dissociate oneself from an increasingly challenging world is vital for our future survival. For, as Scott Peck (1987) has reminded us, a community is a place where conflict can be resolved without physical or emotional bloodshed and with wisdom as well as grace. A community is a group that fights gracefully.

A generation that is unable to feel for one another is incapable of creating the social trust that is so essential to maintain culture. And, as it in the broader culture, so it is in schools. For example, it has been demonstrated that where teacher trust in principals is undermined by perceptions of principal co-option to top-down change initiatives which are unsupported by teachers, teacher alienation and disempowerment results, which then exacerbates their strategies of resistance (Bishop & Mulford, 1999).

Balance Between Homogeneity and Heterogeneity

If you look for common denominators in successful organisations, you will see that a strong one is to find a way to get some of the people to do a deviant thing, to take the initiative, to take risks. If a system is too tight for this there will be no search and no development.

One lesson here is that reductionist approaches in education, to the complexity that is the world of the teacher and the student, should not go unchallenged. Uniformity for education systems in aims, in standards, and in methods of assessment is a complexity-reducing mechanism. It is far tidier to have a single set of aims for all, a single curriculum for all, a single set of standards for all, and a single array of tests for all than to have locally developed approaches to school improvement.

Homogeneity of outcome for the future of our society is not necessarily the highest good, and may be impossible to achieve.

THE KEY

Drawing together these four balances (and 'leaning' toward the continuity, independence, community, and heterogeneity side of each) and emphases that have arisen in the discussion of each balance (for example, relationships, trust, knowing what you stand for, monitoring what you do, and taking initiatives and risks), I come to my promised 'key.' I believe that as we improve our ability to understand, act on and value individual, group and organisational development, or learning, in educational organisations, we will better be able to know the crucial elements in leadership for democratic schools.

There are a number of ways we could approach this task. For individuals we could use the literature on andragogy, career stages, or the steps through which people proceed when they try something new. For groups the stages of staff development or the stages of group development, and for organisations understanding organisational lifecycles or organisational learning, would all be helpful.

However, I only have space to look briefly at the results of some recent research that specifically examines leadership for organisational learning and improved student outcomes. Before I turn to the results of this research, I want to digress momentarily to make a plea that our deliberations only be informed by quality evidence.

Sorting the Wheat from the Chaff

How can schools and systems choose the genuine ideas offering long-term improvement from the superficial and short-term? How do they sort the wheat from the chaff? A robust evidence base is needed whose value will depend crucially on the quality of the evidence itself. We must no longer fall foul to the old computing phrase ''garbage in, garbage out.''

This paper will now present some key findings from such a quality evidence base – the Australian Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes (LOLSO) research project. Its quality derives through having integrity and predictive validity as well as clearly defined variables. I believe it is able to capture complexities that more closely match the realities faced by schools than much of the previous research. It has been gathered from sources other than principals, who tend to overestimate the effectiveness of reforms compared with classroom teachers (Mulford, Kendall, Kendall, Bishop, & Hogan, 2000; Mulford, Kendall, Kendall, Lamb, & Hogan, 2001), and by those without a vested interest through having designed or implemented the reforms. It has predictive validity through being able to link leadership with organisational learning (OL) and, unusually, student outcomes.

The LOLSO Research Project[2]

LOLSO's research design required four phases of data collection and analysis conducted over four years and allowed for iterative cycles of theory development and testing, using multiple forms of evidence. The results of Phase 1 and 3 are summarised here. In Phase 1, surveys of 3,500 Year 10 students and 2,500 of their teachers and head teachers were conducted in half the secondary schools in South Australia and all the secondary schools in Tasmania (a total of 96 schools). In the third phase, South Australian Year 12 students, teachers and head teachers were resurveyed.

The key relationships established through LOLSO data are summarised in Figure 1.

In brief, the quantitative data from phases one and three of the LOLSO project show that the leadership that makes a difference is both position based (principal) and distributive (administrative team and teachers). But both are

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[2]For a more detailed presentation of the LOLSO project and its design, findings and implications see Silins, Mulford, Zarins, and Bishop (2000), Mulford and Silins (2001) and Silins and Mulford (2002).
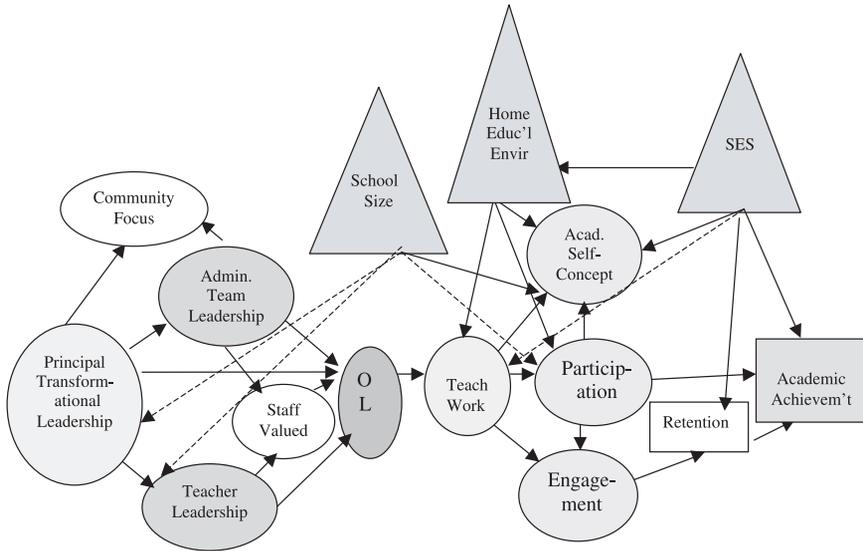
Fig. 1. Leadership for organisational learning and improved student outcomes.

only *indirectly* related to student outcomes. Organisational learning (OL), or a collective teacher efficacy, is the important intervening variable between leadership and teacher work and then student outcomes. That is, leadership contributes to OL, which in turn influences what happens in the core business of the school – the teaching and learning. It influences the way students perceive teachers organise and conduct their instruction, and their educational interactions with, and expectations for, their students. Pupils' positive perceptions of teachers' work directly promote participation in school, academic self-concept and engagement with school. Pupil participation is directly and pupil engagement indirectly (through retention) related to academic achievement (as measured by a five subject aggregate Tertiary Entrance Score at the end of Year 12).

The LOLSO research demonstrated clearly that the best leadership for OL and a range of improved student outcomes were a principal skilled in transformational leadership and administrators and teachers who are actively involved in the core work of the school (shared or distributive leadership). What is especially important is that staff are actively and collectively participating in the school and feel that their contributions are valued – that they are involved in a democracy if you like.

The transformational school principal was found to focus on:

- *Individual Support* – providing moral support, showing appreciation for the work of individual staff and taking account of their opinions.
- *Culture* – promoting an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff, setting the tone for respectful interaction with students, and demonstrating a willingness to change practices in the light of new understandings.
- *Structure* – establishing a school structure that promotes participative decision making, supporting delegation and distributive leadership, and encouraging teacher decision-making autonomy.
- *Vision and Goals* – working toward whole-staff consensus on school priorities and communicating these to students and staff to establish a strong sense of overall purpose.
- *Performance Expectation* – having high expectations for students and for teachers to be effective and innovative.
- *Intellectual Stimulation* – encouraging staff to reflect on what they are trying to achieve with students and how they are doing it; facilitates opportunities for staff to learn from each other and models continual learning in his or her own practice.

OL was found to involve a clear sequence of factors from establishing a trusting and collaborative climate, followed by having a shared and monitored mission, and then taking initiatives and risks within a context of on-going, relevant professional development. The higher the teachers' rate the school on these sequential dimensions defining OL, the more positively teachers' work is perceived in classrooms by their students which, I remind you, impacts on the outcomes of their schooling.

LOLSO also found that whether the principal was male or female and the teachers' years in education and their schooling, age and gender were not factors promoting leadership or OL. However, school size does: the larger metropolitan schools of over 900 students did not provide the environment most conducive for principal transformational and teacher distributive leadership or for student participation, although having a larger school was positively related to students' academic self-concept. Our results add weight to the research extolling advantages of smaller schools (Lee & Loeb, 2000). This issue has been recognised in some parts of USA with large schools now dividing themselves into smaller units in order to provide the web of support necessary for student and teacher involvement with the school and improved learning outcomes (Hodges, 2000).

Another important contextual factor was found to be the socio-economic status (SES) of the school. SES had its expected positive relationship with student academic achievement, retention and academic self-concept. Interestingly, SES had a negative relationship with student perceptions of teachers' work. On the other hand, the students' home educational environment (having a space and aids for study at home as well as having discussions and help with school work and conversations about world events) had a stronger relationship than SES to students' academic self-concept but also a strong positive relationship with students' participation in school and students' perceptions of teachers' work.

Having a community focus in a school, meaning that the teachers perceive the school as having productive relations with the community and that schools' administrators are sensitive to and work actively with it, was found to be another outcome of both transformational principal leadership and distributive administrative team and teacher leadership. However, no link was found between having a community focus and either OL or improved student outcomes. Some may find the lack of a direct link between a school having a community focus and either organisational learning or student outcomes to be potentially problematic. On the basis of our results, if a choice had to be made between working with and being sensitive to the community and improving home educational environments, the latter will have more direct and immediate 'payoff' for student outcomes. The success of the English Excellence in Cities education mentors program is a case in point (Radice, 2001). Of course, having a strong community focus may be important for other reasons, especially in a democracy. One important reason would be in the development of social capital in the community, especially in poor inner city and rural communities.

Finally, it is worth noting the perhaps controversial finding that students' academic self-concept was not related to their academic achievement. Even though we, along with others (Silins & Murray-Harvey, 2000) found that academic self-concept did not link to other student outcomes, including academic achievement, it does not follow that academic self-concept is not an important student outcome. For example, pupil self-concept has been shown to be related to later life successes such as employment and earnings (Feinstein, 2000).

SOME IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

There are many implications to be drawn from the LOLSO research. I will briefly mention five before concluding with an attempt to pull together all the

pieces of what I have been arguing. The five implications are a need for active and meaningful participation (democracy), rejection of the great man or woman theory of leadership, emphasis on transformational rather than transactional leadership, the importance of a changing context, and the need to broaden school success measures.

Some Implications

The LOLSO findings are consistent with other recent research identifying the crucial elements in leadership for democratic schools as well as successful school reform (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Heck, 2000; Maden, 2001; Marks et al., 2000; Mitchell & Sackney, 1998; OECD, 2001a, 2001b; Riley & Louis, 2000; Silins & Mulford, 2002). Success is more likely where people act rather than habitually react: they are empowered, involved in decision-making through a transparent and supportive structure, and are trusted and respected. The professional community should share certain norms – valuing diversity, the continuous enhancement of learning for all students, and breaking from individual professional isolation through collaboration and reflective dialogue. There should be a clear capacity for learning, exemplified through a positive professional development programme. Said another way, the balance needs to tip more towards continuity, independence, community, and heterogeneity, that is towards democracy. As Print, Ornstrom, and Nielsen (2002), among others', have pointed out, for democracies to be effective and to ensure their future they require the active and meaningful participation of their citizens.

Our findings reject "the great man or woman" theory of leadership, which might bring initial success but results eventually in mediocrity if not failure through the dependency relationship it creates. The emphasis on the "drive and the ability to take the role of leader, provide clear direction, and enthuse and motivate others" (e.g., Hay-McBer, undated) is far removed from that emerging from LOLSO and the other research on support, trust, participation, and whole staff consensus. As others have found (e.g., Barnett, McCormick, & Conners, 2001), a visionary head teacher can actually distract teachers from concentrating on teaching and learning, let alone have ownership of the vision.

The LOLSO research suggests we should place much less emphasis on organisational and managerial strategies, or transactional leadership, than has often been accepted wisdom. There is little evidence to link them either to OL or student outcomes. Earlier, as well as elsewhere, I discussed such 'transactional' leadership as too readily having the potential for 'facades of

orderly purposefulness,' 'doing things right rather than doing the right thing,' 'building in canvas,' or 'procedural illusions of effectiveness' (Bishop & Mulford, 1996, 1999; Mulford, 1998). Here we are talking about high visibility and the *impression* of decisiveness of action. To repeat, such goal displacement does, of course, raise important moral questions, especially if you believe, as I do, that deception has no place in education or its leadership.

A further implication of the LOLSO research is the importance of the context for leadership and school reform. Socio-economic background, home educational environment, and school size have a clear interactive effect on leadership, the school, and student outcomes. This suggests we should be wary of "one-right-way" leadership styles (see also Harris & Chapman, 2001; Reynolds, undated). The context will change both outside and within any individual school on its road to becoming more democratic. In other words, one needs to first get the personal/interpersonal, distributive leadership, collective teacher efficacy or trusting and collaborative climate 'right.' Once the personal/interpersonal is 'right' then it can be used to focus on the educational/instructional, including having a shared and monitored mission. Once the educational/instructional is 'right' and there is confidence in what the school is doing and why it is doing it, then the leaders and school can move to development/learning/change, including working with others schools in a 'nested' model. Development implies another important principle – one needs stability for change, one needs to constantly move ahead but without losing one's roots. Put another way, one needs a base or agreed position from which to develop; one needs to stand for something, to first be 'grounded.'

Finally our research adds weight to those expressing concerns about the sole reliance on academic achievement as the measure of a school's success (DfEE, 1999; OECD, 2001b). Highlighting this concern may be timely. International research (OECD, 2001b: 106–107) shows that "more than a quarter of students agree or strongly agree that school is a place where they do not want to go. In Belgium, Canada, France, Hungary, Italy and the United States, this proportion ranges, in order, from 35 to 42 percent . . . [while] this figure is less than 20 percent in Denmark, Mexico, Portugal and Sweden." National research from UK (Fielding, 1999: 286) is "beginning to encounter students expressing doubts about the genuineness of their school's interest in their progress and well-being as persons, as distinct from their contributions to their school's league table position. [The result is that] contract replaces community as the bond of human association." Another recent UK study (Cullingford, 2001: 7) found Year 10 and 11 student attitudes towards school

to be uniformly negative. Most worrying in this study, however, was that teachers were beginning to be seen by their students as only representing other people's wills as they seek out the best means to adapt to the requirements of academic achievement results and inspection – "every effort that a teacher makes to cajole the pupils into more work is interpreted as a sign of the teacher's selfish insecurity . . . all appears to be done for the sake of the external powers."

By way of contrast, in countries such as Denmark, there significant, sustained efforts made to implement means by which school students learn about democracy through active participation in democratic learning experiences in their schools and classrooms. It is reported (Print et al., 2002: 200) that students may even "influence both the content and teaching-learning strategies and have the right to evaluate the teaching within classrooms." The result is a great deal of student interest in school as well as high levels of civic knowledge and engagement (Print et al., 2002; Torney-Purta, Lehaman, & Whiteley, 1999).

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me try to piece together what I have been arguing (see Fig. 2).

The 'Trusting and Collaborative Climate' subscale of organisational learning has as its underlying theme community rather than individualism. Another way to think about this is to consider the first elements in leadership for democratic schools as distributive leadership and the transformational leadership factors of individual support, culture and structure. These factors are, in turn related to communication and then decision-making. In short, 'forming.' Losing time to gain time in order to achieve effective staff functioning is a prerequisite to effective implementation, let alone future change. The 'Shared and Monitored Mission' subscale relates to my emphasis on continuity (in the sense of standing for something, moving ahead without losing one's roots) and independence rather than constant change and dependence. Another way to think about this is to consider the next element in leadership for democratic schools as distributive leadership and the transformational leadership factors of vision/goals and performance expectations. These factors are, in turn, related to implementation. In short, 'performing.' The 'Taking Initiatives and Risks' subscale matches my argument for heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. Another way to think about this is to consider the final element in leadership for democratic schools as distributive leadership and the transformational factor of intellectual stimulation. This factor is, in turn related to change. In short, 'transforming.'
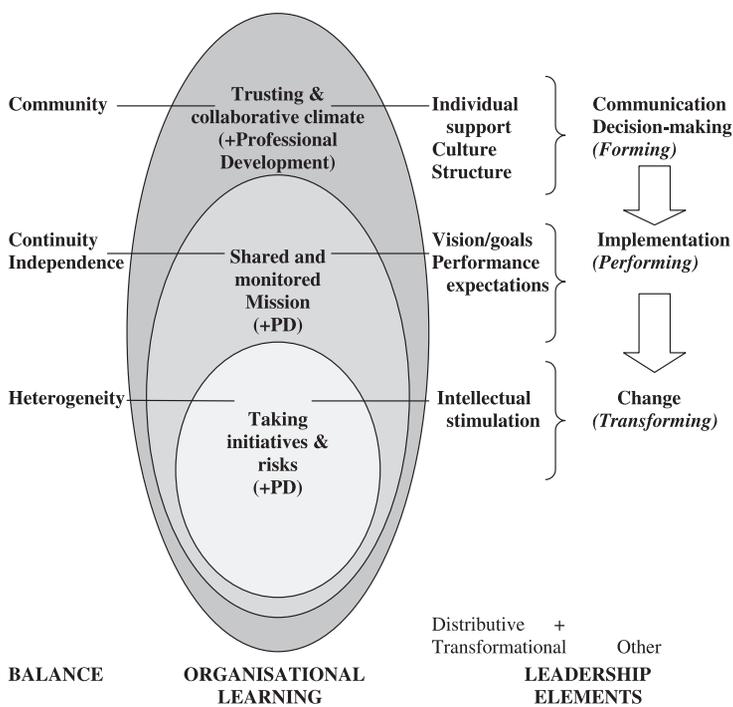
Fig. 2. Balance, development/learning and the crucial elements in leadership.

Such a developmental model help us understand better the intricacies involved in moving any organisation such as a school, or part of a school, from where it is now to becoming truly democratic and truly effective at learning. The model should help target appropriate interventions to ensure more effective progression through the stages as well as achieving the ultimate goal of being a democratic and learning school.

In targeting interventions recognition needs to be given to the fact that actions at one stage may be inappropriate, or even counterproductive, at another stage. For example, one of the preliminary but controversial findings from my organisational learning research is that the only hint of a direct relationship between the school principal's leadership and student outcomes, specifically student engagement in school, is a negative one. One interpretation of this finding is that the greater the student engagement in school the less the need for leadership ('when the best leader's work is done, the people say, we did it ourselves'). Another interpretation is that the relationship is curvilinear, that is,

beyond some as yet undefined point the principal's attempts to work directly with students rather than indirectly through teachers starts to have negative effects on teacher and student outcomes.

Achieving balanced learning/development may, in fact, mean that a school and its leaders recognise and understand such stages and can take the appropriate action without being 'bowled over' by the change that surrounds them. It may mean understanding that you will need to be evaluated differently depending on the stage the school has reached. It may mean understanding the importance of the need to achieve greater self-determined balances among competing pressures.

As Print et al. (2002: 193) point out:

> In the broadest sense, September 11th signified the importance of promoting democracy and mutual understanding amongst people, as have the events in Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Middle East . . . . To achieve this the school . . . must play a central position in teaching democracy . . . . Yet attempts to encourage 'democratic schools' have been limited and largely unsuccessful.

But do we have a choice? Times such as the present, of great turbulence, are also ones of great opportunity for those who can understand, accept, and exploit the new realities. I have argued that the crucial elements in leadership for democratic schools require us to seek balance and to use the key of development/learning. With these elements now clearer it is, above all, a time of opportunity for people such as ourselves – professional educators (Drucker, 1989). Become an independent rather than a dependent variable. Make your presence felt. Leave your mark – and have some fun – while this window of opportunity is admitting fresh breezes (Barth, 1991).

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