

Paper code

***Conceptualising principal leadership of school renewal***

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## **Abstract**

This paper reports the findings of an investigation into school renewal and leadership that was conducted in 2003. School renewal is a type of whole-school change that engages and excites the school community to promote, accept and embed the change leading to improved student learning. The paper concentrates on the study of leadership of school renewal with specific reference to some of the key influences in implementing a renewal agenda in schools. It provides an invaluable and reflective insight into renewal and change processes in schools.

This paper, based on a mixed methodology research format conducted in Western Australia, shows the critical role the principal plays in bringing about school-renewal. The paper concludes by presenting a conceptual framework of principal leadership and school renewal for consideration. In so doing it both challenges and confirms literature and research in the area of leadership and school change. The research has important implications for all school communities.

## **Introduction**

Effecting change in schools is both topical and problematic. There is worldwide pressure for improving schools, but this press is frustrated by teachers who have become resistant to change, particularly change that is politically driven or based on educational fads or fashions. Also, while the widespread failure of previous initiatives to improve education is providing the impetus for developing new initiatives, the lessons learned from the past failures are invariably ignored. So there is a need to reconsider the reform of education in terms of why schools need to change and how this change is to be effected. That is to examine alternative conceptions of educational change.

The failure of many large-scale educational innovations and reform is due to the absence of a coherent rationale for the change and a reliance on change implementation strategies that have been proven ineffective. Teachers are usually presented with multiple reasons for adopting innovations and these are often based on a mix of party-political agendas, economic rationalism, and assumptions about effective teaching and learning. Consequently, teachers are often unclear about what is expected of them and of how they might respond. This lack of a sense of individual purpose leads to a 'common' sense of purpose not existing in the collective minds of teachers. Further, most teachers have experienced many reform initiatives in their careers and scepticism towards new initiatives is exacerbated when the method of implementation is unchanged, particularly if it was previously unsuccessful. These criticisms of educational reform form the basis for considering educational change from the perspective of educational renewal.

School renewal is a change process that has an almost spiritual, and certainly an ethical appeal for the many teachers who see teaching as a calling to do good for others.- it has the power to re-excite their professional motivation. . School renewal elicits the positive connotations of a moralistic view of schooling and hence has the capacity to change forever people's beliefs about learning, teaching and schools.

## **Background**

### ***School renewal***

In its most simple form school renewal can be viewed as a process of change or reform. However, some writers see a fundamental difference between educational reform and school renewal. The renewal paradigm involves questioning and redefining values about social structure, democracy and freedom. Educational reform on the other hand, assumes compliance with prevailing values. The reform approach seeks to ensure that the functioning and outcomes of education are in accord with these prevailing values and it assumes that policies, structures and programs can be modified or realigned to realise this intention. Therefore, school renewal is a model of transformative change that brings about multi-levelled structural, social, pedagogic and educational changes through human agency (Glickman, 1993; Goodlad, 1996; Sirotnik, 1999).

Educational renewal is the product of an eclectic construction of knowledge and beliefs. The forms and forums in which this knowledge is produced and disseminated provide insight into the defining features of current leadership beliefs and values relating to school change. The final product of this knowledge becomes a powerful framing influence for the interpretation of any related learning and

teaching changes by stakeholders at all levels of interaction within the wider school community context. The contextual power of a cultural framework to create a reality for an educationally defined construct such as renewal lies within the lived experiences of both the framers and the framed. Research conducted by Silcox (2003) showed that, for the initiators of a renewal agenda, the knowledge and implementation processes they had devised and enacted were perceived to be moral, plausible and coherent and proven justified. School renewal causes teachers to reflect upon, and renew fundamental beliefs and values about teaching and learning. Teachers being enthusiastic towards their pedagogic role and gaining high satisfaction from the achievements of their students will show successful implementation of renewal.

### ***Leadership of school renewal***

Transforming schools, whether directed towards school reform or school renewal, is inextricably linked to the exercise of school leadership (Soder, 1999). Leadership of renewal is concerned with far-reaching and deep-seated change by shifting the underlying assumptions and beliefs of a school's culture (Smith, 1999; Sirotnik, 1999; Glickman, 1993). Achieving ongoing cultural change through renewal is the challenge of school leadership. The differentiation of school renewal from school reform is important since renewal is very much concerned with whole-school cultural change in comparison to changing organisational processes and structures. That is, changing the school's approach and attitudes towards the learning and teaching of children in contrast to managing organisational development.

Whole-of-school cultural change is always difficult to initiate and achieve when existing behaviour and dispositions are based on deep-seated beliefs and assumptions about learning and teaching that may have been shaped over prolonged periods of time. The transformation of school culture essential for the renewal of schools requires highly efficacious school leaders with their efficacy deriving from moral and ethical beliefs and education and schooling (Silcox, Cavanagh & Dellar, 2003). Also, the professional integrity of these leaders gives them credibility in the eyes of staff and the local community. Teachers, parents and students have trust in their motives and in the methods they apply to lead the school.

### **Preliminary theoretical framework**

The leadership of school renewal was viewed as different from other forms of school leadership and these differences were thought to develop from the interaction between the individual attributes of the leader and contexts of the school and the wider environment. The divergence and convergence between personal dispositions and the context in which leadership is exercised causes the principal to behave in certain ways. It was assumed that these behaviours would characterise particular leadership 'approaches'. The approach towards leadership applied by the principal was considered to result from a combination of individual and contextual influences and the approach can be behaviourally defined. This situational view of school principal leadership is represented in Figure 1: *Framework of school principal leadership influences, behaviours and approaches*.

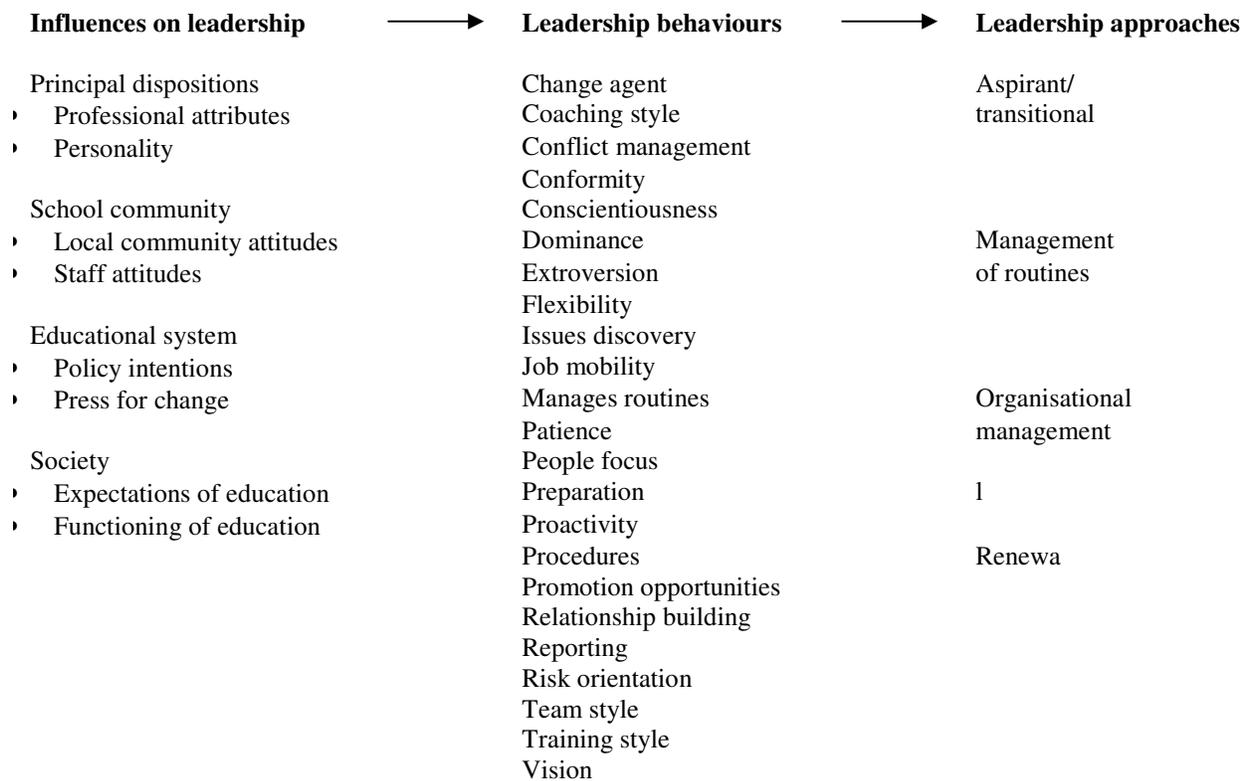


Figure 1: Framework of school principal leadership influences, behaviours and approaches

The leadership behaviours specified in the framework were identified from the literature on organisational change and educational leadership. As behaviours, they concern the actions of the principal rather than principal attitudes or values.

The four leadership approaches in Figure 1 were empirically identified in a study of 49 school principals in Western Australia (Silcox, Cavanagh & Dellar, 2003). The *aspirant/transitional* leadership approach is motivated by the leader seeking organisational advancement by being skilled in meeting role expectations and being responsive to the expectations of others. This is characterised by the behaviours of job mobility, promotion, relationship building, conflict management and flexibility. The *management of routines* approach concerned the tendency to deal with routine tasks on a regular basis and was not shown by personal ambition or the desire to effect change. The *organisational management* approach focussed on compliance with organisational requirements as evidenced by reporting, procedures, training style and preparation behaviours. In contrast to the other three approaches, *school renewal* centred on leadership of change. This was characterised by the behaviours of change agent, coaching style, dominance, issues discovery, people focus, proactivity, risk-and taking, team style, and vision.

The subject of this report is the section of the framework comprising the influences and behaviours associated with principal leadership of school renewal.

## **Research objectives**

The study sought to explain the relationships between the contextual influences on leadership, the behavioural dispositions of school principals engaged in renewal, and the effects of renewal oriented leadership on schools. Specifically:

1. What motivates principals to engage in school renewal?
2. How is school renewal enacted?
3. How can the elements of school renewal and leadership of school renewal be organised within a model of school renewal leadership?

## **Research methods**

The research questions related to the investigation of the relationship between the leadership behaviour of school principals and school renewal, and, in particular, attempted to explain the type of leadership behaviours displayed by principals engaged in school renewal activities. Practical aspects of the study necessitated the use of a mixed method paradigm. As the study sought to examine attributes of school leadership and their influence on school renewal in a local education district data, therefore, needed to be collected from a sample of principals sufficiently large to be representative of the general population. In the first instance, this required application of quantitative data collection methods. On the other hand, investigating the influence of leadership on renewal was anticipated to require careful attention to the context of the individual school and of the interaction between the leader and other members of the school community. This necessitated qualitative data collection methods in a small number of schools to provide highly detailed and contextualized information. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were originally applied in a mixed-method investigation format. The two methods were invoked sequentially at different points in the study, hence maximising the strengths of both methods.

In respect to the research objectives presented data were collected through interviews with a purposive sample of principals in situ and identified through the quantitative phase of the study (Silcox, Cavanagh and Dellar, 2003). The design of the interview schedule was based upon the preliminary conceptual framework presented as Figure 1, and was developed taking cognisance of the findings of quantitative data (Silcox, 2003). A set of questions was developed within parameters established by the research objectives. The qualitative phase of the research sought to obtain information from a particular cohort of principals on their perception of a specific concept, school renewal, and specific leadership behavioural characteristics employed in bringing about renewal as a change paradigm in schools. Therefore, it was appropriate to use an interview survey technique.

## **Empirical findings**

### ***Introduction***

The renewal agenda was seen to involve primarily change with a strong pedagogic and school cultural focus with associated curriculum issues addressed. Such a position was evidenced by the remarks of the principal of Greenfields Primary School who stated:

*“The school’s learning and teaching culture I inherited was reminiscent of the 1950s. I had no choice but to initiate and implement a renewal program across the school, pedagogically focussed and driven using curriculum provision and student engagement as the desired outcomes. Curriculum and pedagogy issues drove my decision-making agenda in the school. For every change the question was asked – how will this decision or change improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school? In initiating a pedagogically focused whole of school change initiative at Greenfield I first determined the number of staff who had orientation to learning and teaching required. They were used to help develop the understanding of other staff.*

The study found that the school principal leadership disposition has a significant positive effect on school renewal intentions. The results indicate that for school renewal to be progressed successfully there is a need for strong, on-going leadership from the principal. The behaviour disposition of school leaders has long been recognised as being of strategic importance in school change (Smith, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan, 1993); and in this study the perceived importance of the pedagogical understandings and credibility of the principal, supported and driven by a set of values they held relating to how students learn best, were identified as key influences underpinning successful and informed school renewal attempts.

The study also found that pedagogical change underwrites school renewal. Other characteristics of leadership and renewal were identified including a principal’s credibility, valuing of morality and ethical disposition along with behaviours associated with their predisposition for change, commitment to collaboration and collegiality among staff, risk willingness, proactivity, visioning, creativity, insightfulness, team focus and the ability to identify and act upon critical issues as they arise.

The impact of the school context was evaluated, resulting in the incorporation of a number of situational constructs, on a principal’s leadership approach to renewal. These are explored in terms of the prevailing school culture and associated barriers to change.

### ***Principal Leadership Disposition***

It was evident from the research findings obtained through the study that school principals were identified as having a particular disposition towards leadership behaviours. The principals engaged in school renewal consistently argued that their pedagogical role was their dominant consideration in leading the school: *“I was happy to work toward achieving these goals, but felt they were primarily administrative goals, so took the ‘high moral ground’ through focusing on kids learning and looking at pedagogy”* (Principal of Forrestvale).

The perception presented by the principals exhibiting such a behaviour disposition was that in building capacity for achieving effective implementation of a renewal agenda that was focused on learning and teaching improvement, and for dealing with the various contentious issues that arose from its implementation, they were required to approach change with a big picture and risk-willing disposition.

Principals who were determined to initiate renewal of the schools' learning and teaching program started the process by outlining both the direction and expectations for the changes proposed. Each of the principals indicated that he/she commenced the renewal agenda by getting staff to examine existing practice and asking them to defend it in terms of informed practice identified elsewhere. This very clear and strong pedagogic focus to the change agenda was evident from the responses obtained from all principals engaged in school renewal.

The principals saw their role as being leaders of the change agenda and, the most important and influential factor in achievement of organisation aims and goals associated with the implementation of the school's renewal. Their responses acknowledged the importance of having a personal vision for the renewal agenda proposed and recognised that they needed to have the personal confidence and efficacy to effectively communicate this sense of direction and purpose for the changes with stakeholders; particularly teachers, but also with students and the broader school community. The task of communicating a clear sense of purpose and direction for school renewal was a key consideration and leadership role identified in the responses of the principals. In articulating a vision for school renewal, the principals indicated that they provided a clear link between the aspirations of the school, the capabilities of staff, resources and the learning and teaching environments. Consistently, the principals indicated that their first task was to get the agenda for renewal out into the open, and then only by overcoming the culture of individualism that characterised interactions within the schools could they create the collaborative approaches desired.

Evidence was provided that in building a culture and ethos of school renewal the principals stressed the importance of experimentation, innovation, involvement (through symbolic action), collegiality and trust in their communication with stakeholders. The language and communication approaches used by leaders within the renewal context was identified by most as critical in developing the desired learning and teaching orientation in the school.

The principal's own behaviour disposition and personal attributes (proactivity and risk orientation) were identified further as influencing their attitude towards initiating and implementing change in the school. Certain behaviours were seen to impact directly on their proclivity to engage the school community in renewal. The combined influences of the school context, (including stakeholder dispositions) and principal behaviours and attributes, influenced whether or not the leader adopted an approach that led to initiating a renewal agenda or made a determined effort to stay with the status quo and maintain the existing school learning and teaching culture.

A major challenge facing principals' in articulating a shared vision within the school context was related to the issue of personal credibility. It also was recognised by the principals sampled that there were many contributing factors to their perceived credibility within the school community context. They indicated, for example, that their track record in delivering the message was extremely important in terms of both its strength and seeming relevance to the situation at hand, as was the content of the message itself. As a principal indicated, his credibility as an educational leader in the school evolved: *"... by establishing a clear vision of the school that centred on student learning and not resiling from making the hard decisions in relation to the school's learning and teaching practices. By getting into classes and teaching alongside staff. By being approachable to parents and letting them see that I was really interested in their children"*. Further he stated, *"Changes I initiate in the school all have their roots in curriculum and pedagogical thinking and informed successful learning and teaching practice"*.

The principals had initiated the school renewal agenda in their schools, and that collaborative cultures either evolved or developed through the process. It was indicated that they commenced the process by adopting an approach that had staff examine existing practice. Staff were encouraged then to defend these practices in terms of informed successful practice identified elsewhere. This pedagogical focus to the change agenda was consistently evident in each principal's renewal endeavour. It was evident from the study that collaborative cultures in those schools undergoing renewal evolved through principals adopting an approach that involved them initiating changes within the school environment that challenged the status quo, and as staff gained in confidence with the changes, the desired collaboration ensued.

### ***Prevailing School Culture***

Common among the responses provided by principals prior to initiating a change agenda in their schools were that didactic approaches to learning were a dominant feature of the schools teaching practice and often the prevailing school culture was seen as toxic in terms of relationships between stakeholders. However it was noted that the level of cultural toxicity varied from school to school. As the principal of Forrestvale Primary School remarked:

*"The culture could only be described as toxic with adult needs taking priority over kids' learning needs. The ethos of the school was divisive, excluding, and based on very traditional views of schooling."*

She clarified this position by indicating:

*"The school culture was characterized by distrust and fear. Parents had been kept at a distance from the school and their children's learning. Teachers were very private and afraid of being exposed as an under-performing practitioner in their work, and students were treated with little respect – even openly denigrated and ridiculed by some staff. Children's learning was a low priority; the curriculum was "dumbed down" with kids sitting silently in rows learning from a textbook or photocopied worksheet. "*

There were a number of references to school organisational changes evolving from staff altering pedagogic approaches. Appropriately one school principal indicated that he was engaged in both forms of change simultaneously; implementing system curriculum reforms on the one hand while using a school renewal approach to bring about a renewal in pedagogic practices at the classroom level on the other.

Collectively, the principals renewal identified certain aspects of the existing culture of the school environment that made proposed change difficult to implement. For example:

- The school was focused on negative values. *"Teaching was didactic...and reminiscent of a traditional classroom setting in the 1950's"*.
- The school was set up for staff, not students. *"Teachers had total power in their classrooms"*.
- The school community was fragmented and meaning was derived from subculture membership. This was evidenced in principal comments that a sense that individualism and, in the secondary context at least, balkanisation was evident among staff. For example the principal of Parkdale Senior High School noted that his school was *"... characterised by a balkanised silo mentality. Decisions about school priorities were faculty dictated with very little whole-of-school thinking evident"*.
- The school culture exclusively was destructive. Staff interactions were characterised by sniping and personal attacks. Success was not celebrated but in fact denigrated by colleagues. *"Those*

*who demonstrated the desired pedagogical orientation were often isolated in both a professional and personal context by more traditional less student oriented staff: professional jealousies were evident”.*

- Staff morale was generally not good and a victim mentality prevailed. There was not a common sense of purpose for the learning and teaching program evident in the school. *“Parents were angry toward some staff, and staff had developed a victim mentality. I frequently heard comments from staff such as: “ this is what they did to us and, we know what were doing, we have always done it this way, how dare they criticise us” .*

The reasons for the toxicity evident in the school scenarios sampled were varied, with responses including conservatism among the incumbent staff, and a general lack of understanding and unwillingness to accept the change imperatives proposed from the school’s learning and teaching program by others.

Overcoming the identified barriers and resistance to changes proposed required significant behaviours on the part of the principal, inclusive of effective communication, an ability to build coalitions and teams, visioning and a proclivity towards change agency.

Consistently, all principals identified the attitude and disposition of incumbent teaching staff as a significant impediment to initiating change in their schools. A continuum of resistance was identified from the more passive mindset of teachers in the way they thought about their work, to a more active oppositional and confrontational approach. As the principal of Bottlebrush indicated: *“Primarily they revolved around entrenched staff attitudes and behaviours towards learning and teaching. Factions on the staff, the disenfranchisement of many in previous decision making processes had created a very change resistant culture among staff”.*

The greatest resistance to renewal came from experienced teachers who were suspicious of change, and or who may have had negative experiences with change efforts in the past. Principals indicated that resistance to change appeared to emanate from a general lack of understanding of curriculum implementation processes and a lack of the pedagogical mind shift required by teachers at the classroom level. As the principal of Rubicon remarked, *“Lack of teacher knowledge about learning and teaching was a major barrier. Previously teachers had not reflected about and discussed their work with others”.*

It was evident from the analysis of responses that each principal believed in approaching the change agenda credibly and with a disposition that had the underlying aim of eventually establishing a climate of mutual trust and cooperation within the school. By way of example the principal of Parkdale indicated that this individualism and balkanization had *“effectively fragmented the professional relationships in the schools”*, making it hard for him initially to garner the support necessary for risk taking, experimentation and renewal desired. It was recognised by the principals that, ultimately, for the renewal agenda to be embodied as part of the school’s beliefs about learning and teaching, staff and community commitment and participation were pre-requisites. The principals indicated that as the desired culture of trust evolved, staff participation increased and resistance reduced. The principal of Greenfields commented that *“I realised early that the assumptions that the renewal of our approach to learning and teaching would result in improved student outcomes would require a great leap of faith on*

*the part of staff and to a lesser degree parents. Now some years down the track there is no turning back and staff resistance is confined to only one or two malcontents”.*

Principals recognised that by renewing the school with an emphasis on the development of a collaborative culture among teachers they could positively alter the dynamics of individualism and balkanisation that was in evidence in their schools. It was recognised in the responses obtained that the elements of a participative and collaborative teaching culture did not occur through simple decree by well-intentioned leadership or as a result of teachers’ mutual respect for one another. The analysis of responses indicated that there was a belief among the principals that such collaborative approaches required the direct involvement and intervention of the principal as an agent of change.

### ***Summary***

The preceding examples show commonality in how the principals viewed themselves as leaders and in how they viewed their school’s prevailing culture. The interaction between view of self as a leader (leadership orientation) and their perception of the school (prevailing school culture) appears to have motivated them to change the school. This issue is explored in the following section of the paper by proposal of a theoretical framework of school principal leadership of renewal.

## **Towards a conceptual framework of school principal leadership and renewal**

The leadership of school renewal was conceptualised to comprise three inter-related elements: the dispositions of the leader towards exercise of leadership; the prevailing school culture as perceived by the leader; and the resulting effect of the renewal process on the school. These three elements are the major components presented in Figure 2 - *A conceptual framework of school principal leadership and renewal*. The arrows show postulated relationships and connections between the respective components within the framework. For example, *Principal dispositions* is linked to *prevailing school culture* by a double arrow on the assumption that these two components are mutually influential and inter-active. The tension between the particular principal and school culture attributes as explicated are the driving force of renewal.

Principal perceptions of incongruity between their own values and those of the school staff/community provide the impetus and justification for the decision to lead the school into renewal. When this decision is made, resolution of the tension is effected by the principal building a new school culture and school organisation. This is shown by the second and single arrow that links *principal dispositions* and *prevailing school culture* to the *renewed school*. The renewal process is uni-directional since it produces a ‘new’ school as indicated by values and behaviours markedly different from those prior to renewal. This uni-directionality is also important in terms of the nature of the exercise of renewal leadership within the school - the renewal principal is an influential leader with a persuasive style that generates follower commitment. In addition, each of the three elements is portrayed in terms of sub-components that provide a more detailed representation of the respective components.

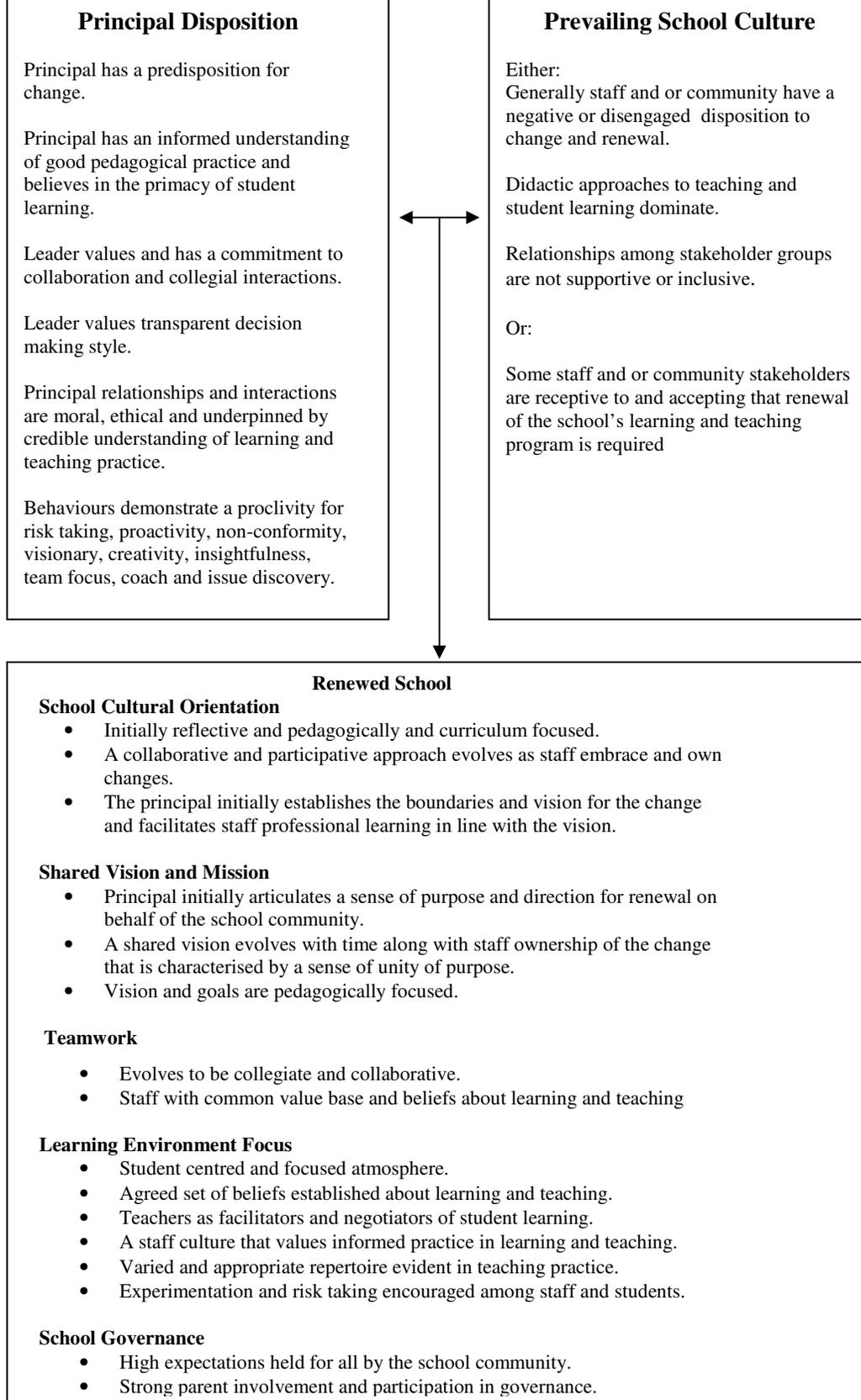


Figure 2: Framework of principal leadership and school renewal

The explanation of the framework that follows Figure 2 is organised according to the three-component structure and the interaction between these components.

Behaviours demonstrate a proclivity for risk taking, proactivity, non-conformity, visionary, creativity, insightfulness, team focus, coach and issue discovery” might be better expressed in non-behavioural terms (behaviours were addressed in your first paper). Leader values risk taking, proactivity, non-conformity, visioning, creativity, insightfulness, teamwork, coaching staff and discovering issues.

The first component in the framework is *principal dispositions* – the attitudes and values of the principal that shape behaviour as a leader of school renewal. The renewal process concerns change and the principal needs to be highly positively disposed towards causing change within the school. Enabling effective and sustained change requires utilisation of a change management process based upon assumptions about collaborative and collegiate relationships. The rationale for change centres on understanding and applying knowledge of pedagogy and pedagogical practise. The decision-making style of the leader and the reasons for particular decisions should be obvious to staff and the school community. This also entails the principal demonstrating credibility through a moral and ethical stance towards the education of children. Leadership of educational renewal can at times involve uncertainty and this requires questioning of issues and processes by both the leader and the staff.

A process perspective on leadership suggests that the leader of renewal needs first to reflect on assumptions about what is implied in the changes proposed, particularly in terms of attitudes and beliefs about learning and teaching and whether resistance is likely to occur and why. Identifying the resisters and what specifically was causing the resistance will influence both the leadership approach and strategies that are eventually adopted. The rate at which changes proposed could be introduced was determined, by and large, by the disposition of the school staff and wider community towards what was being proposed.

A perceived danger is that the principal, in articulating a vision for school renewal, will focus on doing what is already being done in terms of learning and teaching practice, although perhaps with an eye to fine-tuning and continuous improvement of what already exists. Building capacity for achieving effective implementation of a school renewal agenda, for dealing with contentious issues and for achieving desired change, however, might require that principals do some quite different things equally as well, particularly in terms of introducing changes in the way to make staff think about their teaching, and build shared ownership in the process.

Leadership of school renewal, with its focus on major change, necessarily involves risk and threat. Leadership also implies a need to deal with emotional factors – including the fear of one’s own response to the reactions of others. The leader’s personal sense of efficacy is identified as an important consideration in this regard. This view was supported in the study which found that leaders who have a strong belief in their personal and professional capabilities think, feel and behave differently from those who have doubts about their capabilities. Those who doubt their capabilities shy away from difficult tasks and problems and have low aspirations and weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue.

The second component in the framework is *prevailing school culture* – the attitudes and values and values of the school staff and community prior to renewal. School community factors, in particular, staff and or community disposition towards change, are seen to affect the rate of adoption of change. The evidence derived from the study confirmed this influence. Consequently, the orientation of the wider

school environment has a direct impact on the leadership approach adopted by the principal (As represented by the arrows in the framework).

The prevailing cultural influences relating to the school environment frame the context for change and are identified in the study as having a significant and important role in influencing the rate of adoption of changes associated with renewal. The evidence indicated that where the attitude of staff and community was less than receptive to the renewal agenda its implementation was slowed and, vice versa, if there were a willing disposition, the agenda could be fast tracked by the principal. It also was recognised in the findings that the broader community and staff disposition towards change impacts on the leadership approach to renewal adopted by principals in their schools.

The beliefs underpinning a culture of renewal can be identified through an understanding of the basis upon which the perceptions of all stakeholders are formed, the actions and reactions of individuals within the school as a community to the proposed change agenda, and how these orientations are justified in the wider context. These beliefs will be recognisable indirectly through discourse, praxis and by the decision-making processes within a school culture; all of which govern the interactive expectations of individuals. These beliefs provide the framework within which the roles and expertise of both school leaders and followers will be delineated and, together, establish the boundaries and guide action in respect to school renewal.

It was evident that the combined impact of the identified framing influences on renewal can result in the creation of new versions of established perceptions towards change in schools.

The third component in the framework is the *renewed school* – the attributes of a school and its staff that have undergone renewal.

The renewed school in the framework is the result of the interplay of dimensions pertaining to the principal's leadership disposition and the prevailing school culture. The notion of a renewed school culture that is a unifying construct that embraces the conception of an effective school is a proposed outcome of the renewal agenda. In such a scenario there is a community awareness that the locus of control for the quality of the school's learning and teaching resides within the school community itself.

The renewed school is characterized by learning and teaching processes that are pedagogically and curriculum focused with an emphasis on informed successful (best) practice. Teachers see themselves as facilitators of the learning programs in their classrooms. The school's principal and teachers have a strong sense of efficacy towards their teaching and hold high aspirations and expectations for student performance outcomes. A mix of explicit teaching and cooperative learning in teams that engages students in their learning is evident in the school with teachers working collaboratively to achieve the desired learning ethos.

The vision articulated for the school has been built with stakeholders by securing their commitment and alignment to it in a way that it has become institutionalized and shapes the everyday activities in the school. The school's vision provides a sense of direction and purpose for the school community inspiring individuals to keep moving in the desired direction.

The school community has a greater sense of ownership and involvement in the school encouraged through shared governance processes that involve all stakeholder groups and which incorporate

democratic decision making processes underpinned by agreed accountability and responsibility requirements. School governance is inclusive and features a broad representation drawn from stakeholder groups.

The resulting school culture is one of inclusion, based on caring and professional relationships. The school is change adept and an experimentation and risk taking orientation is fostered.

## **Conclusion**

It is acknowledged that leadership within a renewal context is concerned with deep-reaching change, particularly when shifts in underlying assumptions and beliefs are required. Achieving ongoing cultural change through organisational renewal is a challenge of school leadership identified in the current study. The differentiation of school renewal from school reform was important in this respect as renewal is very much concerned with whole-school cultural change, particularly in terms of the school's approach and attitudes towards the learning and teaching function school renewal is effected when the school-based change has staff reflecting upon, and where appropriate, renewing their fundamental beliefs and enthusiasm about teaching and learning.

Whole-of-school cultural change is always difficult to initiate and achieve, particularly in cases as described by renewal where existing behaviour and dispositions are based on a staff and community's deep seated beliefs and assumptions about learning and teaching that may have been shaped over prolonged periods of time.

The conceptual framework of principal leadership and school renewal that has evolved in this study recognises that, within a renewal context, the emphasis is on the individual leader's role in initially defining and articulating a compelling vision for the future, engaging and inspiring staff towards the desired direction, and building alignment of people, structures and systems to support the renewal agenda proposed. The leader's roles as coach, facilitator and supporter of people are emphasised, as are contemporary professional values such as integrity, morality and ethical behaviours.

The leadership challenge in a renewal context implies such aspects as working with people to assist them to become more self-aware about how students learn, to clarify and to challenge if necessary their assumptions about learning and teaching, and to identify realistic strategies for moving forward in a collaborative and collegial way in the school. A principal's role in renewal at this level is about creating and facilitating the conditions under which the staff and community can reflect upon existing learning and teaching practices with an eye to improvement. Their knowledge of pedagogy and curriculum are essential ingredients in this respect.

It is clear therefore, that in performing their role of leader, the principal becomes the context setter for school renewal and the designer of learning experiences for the school community. The connections between principal behaviours and leadership orientation towards renewal within the framework that is presented capture this relationship.

The complex nature of school renewal was revealed through investigating the leadership approach of principals' who set and articulated a visioning process focussed on student learning, student engagement, and teacher pedagogic practise. A conceptual framework was advanced to provide a simple

explanation of this complexity in terms of leadership attributes, prevailing school culture and the features of a school that has been renewed.

The findings have provided a valuable insight into school renewal as a change process in schools and the key role that a principal has in leading this process.

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