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Background paper prepared for
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Leadership and education

A think-piece on leadership and education

This paper was commissioned by the Global Education Monitoring Report as background information to assist in drafting the 2024/5 GEM Report, Leadership and education. It has not been edited by the team. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to the Global Education Monitoring Report or to UNESCO. The papers can be cited with the following reference: “Paper commissioned for the 2024/5 Global Education Monitoring Report, Leadership and education”. For further information, please contact gemreport@unesco.org.

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2024/5



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1.Introduction

There is a growing belief that educational leadership is second only to the work of teachers in terms of impact on student learning of school-controlled factors (Leithwood, et al., 2004; 2010). This is an important belief. It gives importance to educational leadership. It also distinguishes between educational leadership and teaching.

Whilst educational leadership remains a contested term (e.g., Eacott, 2018, 2022), and there is blurring between teaching and leadership with the conceptualization and research around teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017), there is no doubt that the work of those in schools who are not focussed directly on teaching, impacts on student and school outcomes.

There is also no doubt that educational leadership has considerable complexity and that this is increasing. There is evidence that the demands on principals were becoming more diverse before the pandemic (Tintore, Cunha, Cabral & Alves, 2022) with this accelerating during the pandemic and beyond (Harris & Jones, 2022; Longmuir, 2021). Principals cannot lead schools alone and so there is continuing interest in forms of distributed leadership (Harris & Jones, 2017; Tian, Risku & Collin, 2016), there is a renewed focus on the work of school middle leader (Harris & Jones, 2017; Harris, et al., 2019; Lipscombe, et al. 2020), and the interest in teacher leaders continues to increase (Harris & Jones, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). System leadership, schools as part of social systems and the nexus between governance and educational leadership are attracting more interest (Harris, Jones & Hashim, 2021; Moos & Paulsen, 2014; Shaked & Schechter, 2017).

This report will consider some of this complexity through consideration of how leadership in education is conceptualized and enacted, how educational leaders are selected and supported, and consideration of the impact of other groups on the work of educational leaders. I will generally use the term educational leadership but with the clear understanding the focus of the report is on the school sector; much of the writing and research I will use will often be referring to school leadership. Whilst the focus is on schools, the observations will likely have wider applicability to the pre-school sector and to post-school settings that are closely linked to schools, such as vocational colleges and the like. The ideas about leadership work well in sectors that have similar organizational structures to schools and so the paper has relevance across the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels ISCED 0 to 5. This paper will not be relevant for tertiary sector organizations, like universities, covering ISCED 6 to 7.

The report has been enhanced through the generosity of several reviewers.

2.Conceptualising leadership in education

There are many ways to conceptualize leadership, including the many adjectival leadership views, process views, theoretical conceptions, and conceptual frameworks and models. The accumulated evidence points to several dominant views, with, in particular, research on transformational and instructional leadership having a 40-year history of substantial scholarship. In 1999, Leithwood and Duke published a review of research related to school

leadership and concluded that the most researched views of leadership, in order of importance, were instructional, transformation, moral, participative, managerial and contingent leadership. To the dominant instructional and transformational views can be added distributed leadership which emerged strongly from the later 90s (Gronn, 2003; Harris 2009; Spillane, 2006; Tian, Risku & Collin, 2016). These three views, transformational, instructional and distributed, remain the dominant views in educational leadership research (Arar & Oplatka, 2022; Day, Sammons & Grogan, 2020; Harris & Jones, 2017; Gumus, Belibas, Esen & Gumus, 2018) and are explored next.

2.1. Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership in education stemmed primarily from two sources external to education: Burns' (1978) exploration of political leadership leading to a distinction between transforming and transactional leadership; and, Bass and Avolio's interpretation of this to develop a transformational leadership view (Avolio & Bass 1993; Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999; Bass, 1995, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1994, 1997; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass and Avolio's model has had various conceptualizations, but the most complete view includes:

- Five transformational leadership dimensions: idealized behaviors, idealized attributes, inspirational motivation, intellectual consideration and individualized consideration. Often idealized attributes and idealized behaviors are collapsed into the earlier dimension of idealized influence.

- Three transactional dimensions: contingent reward and management-by-exception (active).

- Two passive/avoidant dimensions: management-by-exception (passive) and laissez-faire leadership.

- Three outcomes: extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) that underpins this view has become the most used research tool for transformational leadership studies, including those in education (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Bass, 1993; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Berkovich, 2016; Gurr, 2002; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005). Often idealized attributes and idealized behaviors are collapsed into the earlier dimension of idealized influence or charisma (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Bass and Avolio's view of transformational leadership is essentially an intrinsic motivational view of leadership (through the five transformational dimensions) which is combined with external motivation through using contingent reward science and monitoring of performance (through active and passive management by exception). This view of transformational leadership has been studied in many countries. For example, there is considerable research in the Chinese school context with use of Bass and Avolio's view (e.g., Liu, 2018, 2021) and modification of this to produce a Chinese transformational model comprised of four Dimensions: Moral Modelling, Visionary, Charisma, and Individualized Consideration (Li and Shi (2005, 2008). Liu (2018, p. 395) noted that of 233 China transformational leadership studies, "58.8% of the Chinese transformational leadership research used Bass's transformational leadership theory as a theoretical framework, and 33.3% of the research used Li and Shi transformational leadership theory."

In education, Leithwood is the main proponent of transformational leadership, and his many views all have connections with Bass and Avolio's work. Importantly, his more recent views have extended Bass and Avolio's motivational view of transformational leadership to include consideration of how to improve teaching and learning (which is the focus of instructional leadership discussed next). His most complete and most recent view is described below in Table 1.

Table 1: Leithwood's transformational leadership dimensions and leadership practices.

Leadership Dimensions	Practices	Practices identified as instructionally helpful
Setting Directions	<p>Developing a widely shared vision and goals for the school.</p> <p>Building consensus for the school's directions.</p> <p>Communicating the direction.</p> <p>Providing inspirational motivation.</p> <p>Holding high performance expectations.</p>	<p>Focusing the school on goals for student achievement.</p> <p>Focusing teachers' attention on goals and expectations for student achievement.</p> <p>Staying current.</p>
Developing People	<p>Providing individualized support and consideration and simulating the growth in the professional capacities of staff.</p> <p>Providing intellectual stimulation and challenging processes.</p> <p>Idealised influence through modelling appropriate values and practices and establishing trusting relationships within the school community.</p>	<p>Keeping track of teachers' professional development needs.</p> <p>Providing general support.</p> <p>Being easily accessible.</p> <p>Providing backup for teachers for discipline and with parents.</p> <p>Providing mentoring opportunities for teachers.</p>
Redesigning the organisation	<p>Strengthening school culture</p> <p>Building collaborative cultures.</p> <p>Modifying organizational structures to nurture collaboration and enable others to act; distribute leadership.</p> <p>Providing a community focus: building productive relations with families and communities and connecting the school to the wider community.</p> <p>Maintain a safe and healthy school environment.</p>	<p>Creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate.</p>
Improving the instructional program	<p>Focus on instructional development.</p> <p>Staffing the instructional program.</p> <p>Monitoring progress of students.</p> <p>Providing instructional support</p> <p>Aligning resources to school's vision and goals.</p>	<p>Monitoring teachers' work in the classroom.</p> <p>Providing instructional resources and materials.</p>

	Buffering staff from distractions to their work. Participate with teachers in their professional learning activities.	
Related practices	Contingent reward Management by exception (active, passive, total).	None described.

The first four leadership dimensions are those that are most commonly used by others, with the extrinsic motivational elements in ‘related practices’ often ignored. Table 1 is important for several reasons. The leadership dimensions have their origin in a review of successful school leadership literature by Leithwood and Riehl (2005) and in a major school leadership study in the United Kingdom and consequent papers that made several claims about successful school leadership (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008, 2020), including the claim that:

“Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices: set directions; build relationships and develop people; develop the organization to support desired practices; improve the instructional program.”

(Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008, 2020, the quotation is paraphrased from pages 7-8 of the 2020 publication).

Evidence for this claim can be found in international studies like the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP), which has over 300 cases from more than 20 countries. Analysis of cases in the ISSPP has shown that the leadership dimensions of Table 1 can be used to understand school leadership success in many contexts (e.g., Giles, Jacobson, Johnson & Ylimaki, 2007; Leithwood & Day, 2007a, b; Wasonga, 2014; Ylimaki, Gurr & Drysdale, 2011). Table 1 also provides an important focus on leadership practices – leadership ideas are of limited use if they are not reflected in practice. Leithwood’s transformational leadership view has elements of instructional leadership and the last column in Table 1 is from Leithwood (2012) where he identified this connection. This suggests that this view is better described as both transformational and instructional leadership (Gurr & Drysdale, 2021). It also conforms with contemporary views of the importance of exercising both transformational and instructional leadership (Day, Gu, Sammons, 2016; Gurr & Day, 2014; Hallinger, Gumus & Bellibas, 2020). The focus now turns to some key ideas about instructional leadership.

2.2. Instructional leadership and leadership for learning

Tracing origins back to the formation of the effective schools movement after the publication of the Coleman report (Coleman, et al., 1966) and with calls for school reform in the later 70s and early 80s, (e.g. Edmonds, 1979), instructional leadership became a major focus for school principals (Hallinger, 2011). Although the term instruction is not sufficient to describe teaching and learning in the 2020s, instructional leadership has a substantial research

corpus which means the term will remain common for some time to come. There are various views of instructional leadership, but Hallinger and Murphy (1985) described a view of instructional leadership that has become the most researched view, especially in terms of the use of the associated Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger, 2009, 2011). This has three dimensions and associated instructional strategies:

- **defining the school mission:** framing and communicating clear school goals
- **managing the instructional program:** supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress
- **creating a positive school climate:** protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers and providing incentives for learning

This view focused on principals working to support the school instructional program through an emphasis on quality teaching and academic learning, supported by having clear schools goals and a supportive environment for high quality teaching and learning. When this view was developed, it was also clear that principals were struggling to be the instructional leader suggested by the research (Murphy, 1990). In the USA, decentralization and the development of school-based management were emphasizing instructional leadership, but principals were facing increased administrative tasks associated with these initiatives and unable to devote the time needed for instructional leadership (Murphy, 1994; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992). Two decades later, similar issues remain, with the ability of school leaders to devote time to leading improvement in teaching and learning a central issue (UNESCO, 2017; Zepeda, 2017), leading to views of shared practice like distributed leadership (see below) and learning community ideas (e.g. Bolam, et al., 2005; Drysdale, et al., 2021; DuFour, et al., 2006; Hord, 2009; Hord & Roy, 2013; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011).

Robinson (2007, 2011) has also articulated an instructional leadership view that, in order of impact on student learning, includes: ensuring an orderly and supportive environment (effect size = 0.27) ; strategic resourcing (0.34); establishing goals and expectations (0.35); planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum (0.42); and promoting and participating in teacher learning and development (0.84). Whilst similar to the view of Hallinger and Murphy (1985), it differentiates the impact of the strategies, and adds the additional strategy of school leaders being actively involved in teacher learning and development.

Instructional leadership has been studied in many countries, representing most of the continents (Hallinger, Gumus & Bellibas, 2020). Whilst the dominant producers of research have been from the USA (ten times more articles than the next placed country), the United Kingdom, Australia, Continental Europe and Canada, Hallinger, Gumus and Bellibas (2020) noted a rapid increase since 2005, in articles from authors in Asia, Africa and Latin America and noted, “despite the continuing influence of American scholarship, these trends highlight the increasing global relevance of instructional leadership.” (p. 1130). What is interesting is that despite the wide representation of research on instructional leadership across countries, in many countries the idea is not relevant or enacted because of lack of professional training and limited role expectations that mean principals are not involved in instructional issues and instead focus on administrative matters (UNESCO, 2017).

Despite the research dominance of Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) view and evidence of the far greater impact of instructional learning on student learning compared to transformational leadership (e.g., Robinson, et al., 2008; Kwan, 2020), many have suggested that principal instructional leadership was by itself not sufficient. Some argue for a combination of transformational and instructional leadership (e.g., Day, Gu, Sammons, 2016; Gurr & Day, 2014; Hallinger, Gumus & Bellibas, 2020), whilst others have expanded into leadership for learning views, which have a central concern to improve teaching and learning, but which incorporate a wider range of ideas about how to do this (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Hallinger, 2011, 2018; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring & Porter, 2007) and which includes a range of school leaders (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). In their review of instructional leadership research, Boyce and Bowers (2018) developed a model that showed how instructional leadership impacted on teacher satisfaction, commitment and retention (which they labelled as human resource management) and they argued that their model links instructional leadership with leadership for learning views.

One such leadership for learning view is from Hallinger, who built upon his earlier instructional leadership model (Hallinger, 2011, 2018). In this model, both principals and other school leaders could be the sources of leadership action, and they could have multiple foci in their work. The core elements of the model are vision and goals, academic structures and processes, and people capacity. Leadership influences these elements which in turn influences student outcomes. The leader brings to their work their own values and beliefs and knowledge and experience. Importantly, this work is contained within a complex environment that includes societal culture, an institutional system, staff and community characteristics and school organization.

Another view is from the Leadership for Learning Project (MacBeath, Frost, Swaffield & Waterhouse, 2003). Centered at Cambridge University, the project was an international multiple-university research initiative that produced a model is framed by democratic values, critical friendship and moral purpose, and, at the base of the model, has activity, leadership, learning and agency. These elements suggest that leadership for learning is enacted with a sense of moral purpose and leader agency. The middle of the model has tiers that represent foci on student, professional and organizational learning, and at the top are five principles: focusing on learning, sharing leadership, engaging in dialogue, sharing accountability, and creating favorable learning conditions (MacBeath, et al. (2018).

2.3.Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership focuses much more on leadership practices and the interactions of people in leadership activities. Using distributed cognition and activity theory research, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) developed a conceptual framework the involved simultaneous thinking about leaders, followers and situations, and how these interact. They argued that '[l]eadership practice (as both thinking and activity) emerges in the execution of leadership tasks in and through the interaction of leaders, followers, and situation' (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004, p. 27). This view shifted 'the unit of analysis from the individual actor or group of actors to the web of leaders, followers, and situation that give activity its form' (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004, p. 10). In regard to situation, they had a complex perspective on this and argued that the 'situation of leaders' practice—

material artifacts, tools, language, etc.—is not simply an appendage but, rather, a defining element of that practice’ (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004, p. 27).

Distributed leadership possibly has less clarity compared to transformational and instructional leadership, and this is partly because of its concern with processes, structures and collective activity, rather than the personal leadership styles that transformational and instructional leadership describe. Indeed, in a distributed leadership structure, it could well be that individuals are enacting leadership that could be described in different ways and include transformational and instructional leadership. Distributed leadership is related to other views that promote multiple leadership actors such as shared leadership (Arar & Oplatka, 2022).

Gronn (2003) described an additive view of distributed leadership in which leadership action occurs across a range of individuals but in a somewhat uncoordinated way and holistic views as shown in the work of Spillane. As noted above, Spillane (2005, p. 144) was focused on the interactions between leaders, followers and situations; the ‘interactions, rather than any particular action, are critical in understanding leadership practice.’ This has been described as a holistic perspective and is considered to be a more planned process (Leithwood, et al., 2007). Leithwood, et al. (2007) built upon Gronn’s (2003) work in defining holistic perspectives of distributed leadership, to describe patterns of distributed leadership that include planful alignment, spontaneous alignment, spontaneous misalignment, and anarchic misalignment – essentially moving from collaborative to individualistic environments and from more effective to less effective ways of enacting leadership. The review of distributed leadership research by Tian, Risku and Collin (2016) viewed distributed leadership both as an organizational resource and as personal agency.

Whilst evidence of organizational effectiveness is limited, the typical structures of schools and a concern to have more people in schools enacting leadership, means that research on distributed leadership is likely to remain popular and serve to reinforce it as a dominant view of leadership. It also fits well with continuing research interest in middle leaders (Lipscombe, et al, 2020) and the rapid rise in research on teacher leadership (Harris & Jones, 2017).

Distributed leadership views can also be related to ideas like learning communities (Drysdale, et al., 2021; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011), communities of practice (Bouchamma, April & Basque, 2018), and professional learning communities (e.g. Bolam, et al., 2005; DuFour, et al., 2006; Hord, 2009; Hord & Roy, 2013). These views switch the focus from individuals to communities of people, and how these communities work together to help all members learn and grow. For example, in writing about professional learning communities, Bolam, et al. (2005), described eight characteristics:

1. Shared values and vision
2. Collective responsibility for students’ learning
3. Collaborative focus on learning
4. Group as well as individual learning

5. Reflective professional enquiry
6. Openness, networks, and partnerships
7. Inclusive membership
8. Mutual trust, respect, and support

Reed (2021) used these ideas as the basis for successfully developing a new Catholic primary school in Melbourne, Australia (also see: Drysdale, et al., 2021; Gurr, Longmuir & Reed, 2021). The following quote captures some of this work, and also serves to illustrate distributed leadership and leadership for learning ideas.

“There is reciprocal influence between the school, families and the Parish (through consideration of faith and the partnerships in student learning), between leadership, teachers and students (teacher and student agency is promoted and supported, there are common foci/projects), and school culture and teaching and learning are aligned to support student learning. The continuation of a focus on learning in fertile ground can be seen with a movement towards yearly foci, such as the idea of dialogue leading to discovery. Ongoing dialogue was vital in bringing about and sustaining shared values and vision and an exploration of contemporary approaches to learning and teaching. As a contemporary Catholic PLC, dialogue at PSCPS is about the Catholic narrative and other worldviews to address Catholic identity and religious learning and teaching at present. The role of parents as partners in the learning community continues to be fostered, with many opportunities for parents to engage in learning conversations through learning studio (classroom) help or through discussions related to student’s learning documentation. Staff professional learning to build and enhance teacher capacity is also a key feature of the PLC. Time and opportunities are provided for staff to engage in professional reading and discussions to explore the nature of learning and teaching in a Catholic school at present.”

(Gurr, Longmuir & Reed, 2021, pp. 65-67)

2.4. Other leadership ideas

About from these three main leadership views, there are many other ideas about leadership in education. Davies (2005, 2009), in two edited books, had expert chapters that explored strategic, transformational, invitational, ethical, learning-centered, constructivist, poetical and political, entrepreneurial, sustainable, emotional and distributed leadership and a chapter on leadership development. Arar and Oplatka (2022) wrote about educational and non-educational leadership views and in addition to transformational, instructional and distributed leadership, included shared, responsible, community based, culturally relevant, servant, narcissistic, authentic, spiritual and positive leadership, and sections on leadership for social justice and women and leadership. To these lists, other ideas could be added, such as: system, transformative, crisis, culturally responsive, edupreneurial, future, relational (or a relational approach), subversive and bad leadership, and so forth; Bouchamma, Giguère and April (2019) provide a review of situational, transactional, transformational, pedagogical, ethical, shared and collaborative leadership areas.

There is also a robust critical commentary about educational leadership with many questioning the worth of continuing to explore leadership as a worthwhile concept (Eacott, 2018, 2022; Lakomski, Eacott & Evers, 2017). There is, for example, worthwhile criticism of adjectival views of educational leadership especially in terms of superiority assumptions and downplaying of relational issues (e.g., Eacott, 2019; 2022). Space does not permit a consideration of these counter-arguments, but it is worthwhile noting that there are scholars that would disagree with much of what I have written in this paper.

There are always books appearing that consider the future of educational leadership (e.g., Netolicky, 2022; Nir, 2022), with these often suggestive of more values-based and inclusive forms of leadership. Unfortunately, books on futures are somewhat dependent on having a view of the progress of education and educational institutions broadly, and this is something that is often missing in discussions of future school leadership (Gurr, 2022a).

There is also scholarship on indigenous leadership views that seem to be gaining greater exposure and influence (e.g., Khalifa, Khalil, Marsh and Halloran, 2019; Ruth, 2020); the Indigenous, Decolonizing School Leadership (IDSL) framework that emerged from the review of Khalifa, et al. (2019) will be considered below.

All the ideas contribute understandings about the work of educational leaders, yet all offer only a partial account of this work. The complexity means that individuals need to construct a view of leadership that works for them at their career stage and in their work context – there is no view that provides sufficient guidance by itself.

2.5. Teacher leaders and middle leaders

Whilst principals, have been the focus of much research, with changes to school structures and expectations over the last 60 years and changes in societal expectations, such as the widespread adoption of school-based management, managerialism and more egalitarian workplaces (Bush, 2018a), there has been a concern over the last thirty years to explore the leadership work of others in schools. As described above, distributed leadership has been a focus. Exploring the work of teacher leaders and middle leaders are other important strands (Harris & Jones, 2017). Harris and Jones (2017) noted how teacher leadership and distributed leadership had overshadowed earlier research on middle leaders, and Gumus et al. (2018), in their review of the most researched leadership models, confirmed the previous assertion about the dominance of instructional, transformational and distributed leadership, and added teacher leadership as a more recent area of substantial interest.

However, recent reviews and new research now suggest that there is again a robust literature on middle leaders (e.g., DeNobile, 2021, Grootenboer, 2018; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Harris, Jones, Ismail, & Nguyen, 2019; Lipscombe, Tindall-Ford & Lamanna, 2021). Middle leaders are generally considered to be teachers who still have a substantial teaching allotment in addition to a substantial leadership role, such as the head of a curriculum area (e.g. Head of Mathematics) or student pastoral role (e.g. Head of Year 8) (Gurr, 2023). Gurr (2023) noted that reviews of middle leadership have shown that:

- Middle leaders can impact positively on teacher work and student outcomes. Indeed, they are an important source of leadership impact on student outcomes in many school contexts, and especially so when principals and middle leaders act together.
- The way middle leaders improve student outcomes is through establishing the conditions (e.g., area direction, resource acquisition and distribution, staff development, supportive culture) that lead to collective endeavor by a group of teachers to improve teaching and learning.
- High expectations and role clarity are important for these people to have a leadership focus rather than a managerial or administrative focus. High expectations come from both the middle leaders themselves in terms of their sense of agency, and from principals and senior leaders about what they want from the roles.
- Recruitment and professional development are important both in terms of the quantity and quality of middle leaders
- There are factors that diminish the effectiveness of middle leaders including a lack of understanding and organizational support by senior leaders, lack of professional preparation and leadership development, underdeveloped professional knowledge and capability, and a focus on administrative practices.

The research on teacher leadership is now considerable (e.g., Angelle & DeHart, 2016; Murphy, 2005; Schott, van Roekel & Tummers, 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), but much of this work overlaps with research on middle leaders because of conceptual opaqueness in which teacher leadership includes teachers with and without additional leadership responsibilities (e.g. DeNobile, 2021; Gurr, 2023), which means the research includes middle leaders. The most recent major review of teacher leadership, Schott, van Roekel & Tummers (2020), found that personal, school (principal and peer) and supra-school (educators, government and networks) antecedents influence the extent to which teachers were able to influence others to improve teaching and learning, with this influence shown to impact on teacher (e.g. satisfaction), school (e.g. curriculum and pedagogy improvement), supra-school (e.g. parent involvement, PLC development) and student engagement and achievement outcomes. Unfortunately, Schott, van Roekel and Tummers (2020) persisted in using the earlier teacher leadership definition of York-Barr and Duke (2004), which simply conceived of teacher leadership as a process in which teachers influence others in schools to improve teaching and learning. This is a straightforward and unremarkable leadership influence definition, which doesn't distinguish between teachers with no other major responsibilities and those that have an additional formal role, such as head of a learning area (the middle leaders as defined previously). This means that the review, and most of the research, on teacher leadership, overlaps with research on middle leaders.

What we do know from both research streams is that the views of leadership derived from principal research can be applied to others in schools if the expectations are suitably scaled, and that people in middle leadership roles can be supported to be leaders with appropriate support from senior leaders, support for professional growth and development, appropriate structural supports such as time release, and adjusted role expectations that include leadership and management (DeNobile, 2021, Grootenboer, 2018; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Lipscombe, Tindall-Ford & Lamanna, 2021). True teacher leaders, those that are in full-time teacher roles, can be similarly supported (e.g., Angelle & DeHart, 2016; Crowther Ferguson & Hann, 2009) with the proviso that leadership expectations without

any structural supports, like time release, may be seen as an unconscionable exploitation of teachers (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008). For those interested in further exploring teacher leadership there is a newly created international research project, the International Study of Teacher Leadership led by Charles Webber, that may be of interest: <https://sites.google.com/mtroyal.ca/istl/home>

2.6. The impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on education and educational leadership

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted education across the world and there is now a burgeoning literature that is documenting this. It seems that this disaster is causing a re-assessment of the work of educational leaders and so it would be remiss in this paper not to engage with some of the research about this.

During the second half of 2020, Gurr as the editor of the academic journal, *International Studies in Educational Administration*, produced four special issues devoted to exploration about educational responses to the pandemic. There were 58 papers from authors in 29 countries published across the four issues: volume 48, issues 1-3, and volume 49, issue 1. In a report to the Commonwealth Secretariat, and combined with eight seminars that collected further information from 1,400 participants in eight countries, Gurr (2022b, p. 14-15) described possible changes to educational leadership.

- “There is likely to be a greater focus on moral purpose and values-based leadership views (Argyropoulou, Syka & Papaioannou, 2021; Gurr & Drysdale, 2020; Fournier, Scott & Scott, 2020) with a greater emphasis on trust (Ahlström, et al., 2020).”
- “At the same time, there is likely to be a more future focussed, responsive, crisis ready and contextually sensitive orientation to leadership of change and improvement (Brelsford, et al., 2020; Caldwell, 2020; Dunn, 2020; Gurr & Drysdale, 2020; Marshall, Roache & Moody-Marshall, 2020).”
- “More collective, collaborative and dispersed work situations, which are likely to become more common, will need more fluid and responsive leadership (Brelsford, et al., 2020; Ho & Tay, 2020).”
- “With the adoption of learning technologies and new ways of working (Dunn, 2020; Pollock, 2020; Zhao, 2020), relationship structures will change and likely impact on the type of leadership needed (Burwell, 2021).”
- “There will likely be greater involvement of more people in leadership, such as middle leaders, teachers, students and parents (Brelsford, et al., 2020; Gurr & Drysdale, 2020; Ho & Tay, 2020; Hung, Huang & Tan, 2020; Kidson, Lipscombe & Tindall-Ford, 2020). However, senior leadership roles, such as principal, will remain important (Burwell, 2021; Hauseman, Darazsi & Kent, 2020; Kafa & Pashiardis, 2020; Kidson, Lipscombe & Tindall-Ford, 2020; Pollock, 2020).”
- “There will be more planned leadership development needed (Hung, Huang & Tan, 2020), as well as rapid professional learning support like that described in Singapore (Ho & Tay, 2020; Hung, Huang & Tan, 2020; Tran, Hardie & Cunningham, 2020) and the United Arab Emirates (Burwell, 2021). Some commented about the need to train current and future leaders to cope well with uncertainty and chaos.”
- “There may be new leadership models – more authentic, trusting, open, vulnerable, collaborative – but these are likely to build upon rather than replace existing models.”

Using the same four special issues of *International Studies in Educational Administration*, and other related research, Harris (2021) and Harris and Jones (2022) described core themes related to school leadership in the pandemic.

- The work of school leaders has intensified, become more complex and increased pressures are negatively impacting their health and wellbeing.
- School leaders are adapting their practices to better support their colleagues across technical, professional and personal dimensions, with this support taking an increasing amount of their time.
- Resilience, calmness in crisis, and bringing people together are personal characteristics that have been helpful.
- Inequities in schooling have been exposed and school leaders have been creative in their attempts to address educational disadvantage.
- Engagement of families and communities has been an important feature of the work of many leaders.
- A more distributed, digital and networked leadership which is dependent on technological infrastructure has emerged in many jurisdictions, and Harris and Jones (2022, p. 107) suggest that distributed leadership has become the “modus operandi of school leaders facing the multiple demands and unpredictable challenges of the pandemic”.

Many are noting the increased demands on school leaders during the pandemic, and the need for these leaders to have personal and professional support (e.g. Longmuir, 2021).

In reflecting on the research about the impact of the pandemic on schools and school leadership, it seems that many are hopeful for lasting change. This may mean a more collaborative style of leadership, focused on relationships and wellbeing, and more ready to adapt to new challenges. However, it may well be that as the world is coming out of the pandemic, we might, for a short period, need to revert to a more comfortable time (our pre-pandemic way of doing things) so we can recuperate before we begin major change. For example, whilst there seemed to be a focus on distributed leadership in education during the pandemic, there is no evidence that I am aware of that this has continued on a large scale as we come out of the pandemic. In non-education settings, greater use of directive leadership was noted during the early stages of the pandemic, and again, there is no evidence that this is continuing after the pandemic (Garrestan, Stoker, Soudis & Wendt, 2022).

3. The impact of educational leadership and the importance of context

In the 1960s and 1970s the impact of schools on student outcomes was questioned (Coleman, et al., 1966; Jencks, Smith, Acland, Bane, Cohen, Gintis, Heyns, & Michelson, 1972). It seemed that student outcomes were more related to non-school contextual elements like, family and student characteristics, than what schools did with students. The effective schools movement was created at this time and sought to counter this argument through studying schools that seemed to be more effective than other schools. As noted above, one outcome of this was the development of

instructional leadership. Despite an uncertain start, and acknowledging the continued importance of context and student/family circumstances, the research is now unequivocal that leadership is important in schools, and whilst the principal role is the one that has the most responsibility, expectation and opportunity to exercise leadership, the leadership work of many is now considered important for school success.

As the precursor to a major USA mixed-method study, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) conducted a literature review on how school leadership influences student learning. This was the report that first made the often-cited claim that:

“Of all the factors that contribute to what students learn at school, present evidence led us to the conclusion that leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction. Furthermore, effective leadership has the greatest impact in those circumstances (e.g., schools “in trouble”) in which it is most needed. This evidence supports the present widespread interest in improving leadership as a key to the successful implementation of large-scale reforms.”

(Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004, p.70)

Their paper conceived of leadership broadly. As part of this study, they produced a ten-element model that related school leadership indirectly to improved student learning. The study involved surveys and case studies across the USA and the final report reinforced the importance of school leadership:

“In developing a starting point for this six-year study, we claimed, based on a preliminary review of research, that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning. After six additional years of research, we are even more confident about this claim. To date we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership. Why is leadership crucial? One explanation is that leaders have the potential to unleash latent capacities in organizations. Put somewhat differently: most school variables, considered separately, have only small effects on student learning. To obtain large effects, educators need to create synergy across the relevant variables. Among all the parents, teachers, and policy makers who work hard to improve education, educators in leadership positions are uniquely well positioned to ensure the necessary synergy.”

(Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010, p. 9)

More recently, Grissom, Egalite and Lindsay (2021), building upon the review conducted by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004), provided a systematic synthesis of USA research since 2000 on the impact of principals on students and schools. They reviewed 219 USA principal focused studies from nearly 5,000 considered sources. They showed that the differences between a below average principal compared to an above-average principal can be as much as three-months of learning in mathematics and reading, with this being comparable in size to teacher effects on student learning. They also noted that effective principals impact on other outcomes such as: improved attendance, improved teacher satisfaction and working conditions, and reduced teacher turnover. They make the powerful observation that:

“Principals really matter. Indeed, given not just the magnitude but the scope of principal effects, which are felt across a potentially large student body and faculty in a school, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership.”

(Grissom, Egalite and Lindsay, 2021, p. 43)

Principal success was related to three primary skill areas (people, instruction and organization) and four domains of high leverage behaviors (engaging in instructionally focused interactions with teachers; building a productive climate; facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities; managing personnel and resources strategically). These high leverage behaviors are very similar to instructional leadership. They also emphasized the importance of leading with an equity lens to be culturally responsive. In essence, their view of leadership success combined aspects of transformational, instructional leadership and leadership for learning.

In terms of the major views of educational leadership, it should be no surprise that instructional leadership, with its focus on improving teaching and learning, has been shown to have the most impact on student learning. The review research of Robinson, et al. (2008) showed that the impact of instructional leadership was three to four times that of transformational leadership. They explained this succinctly:

“The reason for this is that transformational leadership is more focused on the relationship between leaders and followers than on the educational work of school leadership, and the quality of these relationships is not predictive of the quality of student outcomes”

(Robinson, et al., 2008, p. 665).

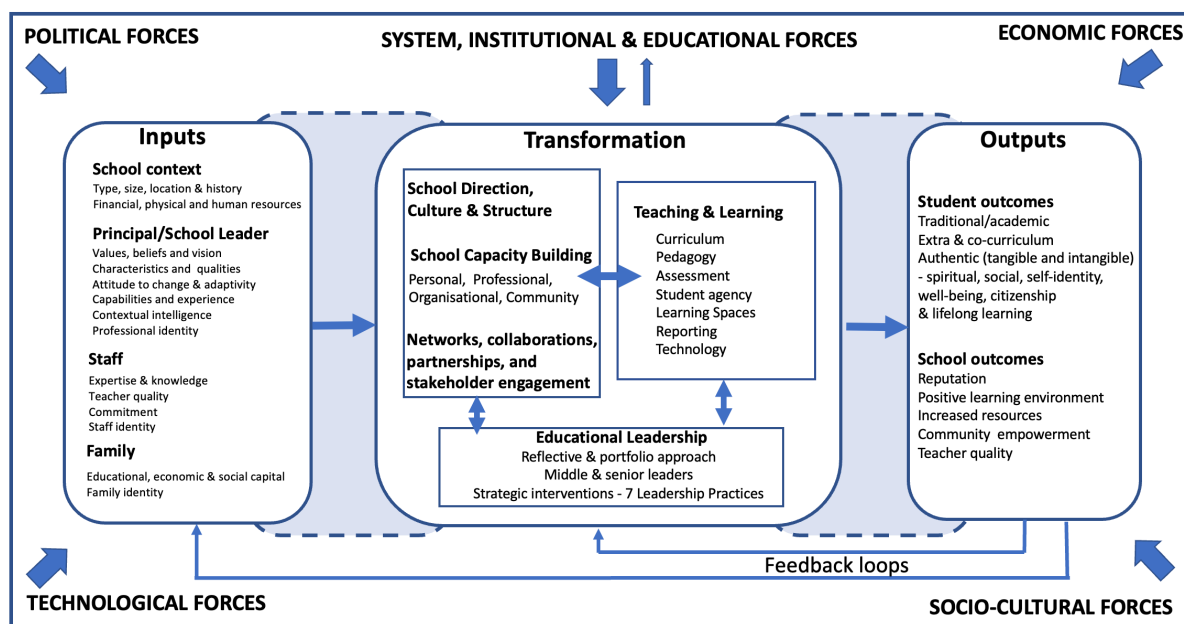
An important source of evidence of leadership impact over the past 20 years has come from research about successful school leadership (Gurr & Drysdale, 2021). Day, Sammons and Grogan (2020, p.6) provided a review of successful school leadership research and described ten key dimensions:

- defining the vision, values and direction
- improving conditions for teaching and learning
- redesigning the organization: aligning roles and responsibilities
- enhancing effective teaching and learning
- redesigning and enriching the curriculum
- enhancing teacher quality (including succession planning)
- building relationships inside the school community
- building relationships outside the school community
- defining and modelling common values
- ensuring students’ well-being and providing equitable access to support for all students.

One of the important projects within the successful school leadership area has been the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP). Having begun in 2002, it has produced more than 200 case studies and more than 300 publications and is currently in the process of conducting a substantial synthesis of the publication corpus

with this due for publication in 2023. To understand the findings from this project there have been several groups within the project that have sort to describe the work of successful principals in models. Countries explored have included Australia, Cyprus, Indonesia and Singapore, and these drew upon more than 50 case studies. Gurr, Drysdale and Goode (2022) reviewed 13 models from the ISSPP and constructed a model that captures some of the complexity of successful school leadership and which shows both the direct and indirect effects of leadership. It doesn't make a quantitative case for leadership impact but provides some insight into how successful leaders operate within their school and wider contexts to influence important student and school outcomes. The model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Successful School Leadership Model



Leadership action occurs in the transformation section and can include both principals and other leaders. The transformation section is not related to transformational leadership ideas, although school leaders may use these ideas. Principal and senior leadership work tends to be more involved in working with contextual elements (inputs and the various forces surrounding schools) and school direction, culture and structure, school capacity building and networks collaborations, partnerships and stakeholder engagement; more focused to the right of the transformation section. Work of middle leaders will typically be more focused on supporting teachers to improve teaching and learning; more to the left of the transformation section. An important feature of this model is the complexity in the student and school outcomes; the research on successful schools has always focused on broader outcomes than is typically found in school effectiveness research.

Another important feature of Figure 1 is the explicit connection with multiple contexts, external and internal. This supports recent renewed interest in understanding the relationships between context and leadership (Bush, 2018b; Hallinger, 2018) and the view of context and leadership in Figure 1 is more attuned to Eacott's (2018) reciprocal and interrelated view of context and leadership. It is also related to Oc's (2022) conceptualization of leadership and context that builds upon John's (2006) exploration of the impact of context on organizational behavior. Oc (2022) described context as consisting of John's (2006) omnibus (where, who and when foci) and discrete (task,

social/relationship, physical and temporal foci) context elements, with these impacting on leadership which consists of influencing process elements (leader characteristics such as leadership style and behaviors, follower characteristics like perceptions and attributions, and the leader-follower dyad) and outcomes (evidence or attribution in relation to leadership effectiveness, cognition, attitude and behavior). The ISSPP (Day & Gurr, 2014; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Leithwood & Day, 2007b; Moos, Johansson & Day, 2011; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011), and other international educational leadership project like the 7 System Leadership Study (Harris & Jones, 2015, 2018) and the International Study of Principal Preparation (Slater, et al., 2018), have highlighted the importance of understanding leadership in context.

This understanding about how leadership and context interact has become increasingly complex (Bush, 2018b; Gurr, et al., 2006; Hallinger, 2018) and includes temporal (Day et al., 2011; Eacott, 2018) and reciprocal impact (Doherty, 2008; Goode, 2017; Oc, 2022) considerations. Whilst research on educational equity has clearly shown that context matters in terms of student success (e.g. Teese & Polesel, 2003), the research on successful school leadership has shown that across many different countries and in different circumstances within these countries, school leaders can improve student outcomes beyond the expectations associated with school context (Gurr & Drysdale, 2021). They seem to be able to adapt, use and influence context to foster success. In the early stages of the ISSPP, Day (2005), p.581) noted that successful school leaders have the ability to

“... not be confined by the contexts in which they work. They do not comply, subvert, or overtly oppose. Rather they actively mediate and moderate within a set of core values and practices which transcend narrowly conceived improvement agendas.”

The continuing research of the ISSPP has not only reinforced this view, but, as can be seen in models like that shown in Figure 1, it is able to articulate with clarity how this happens.

Whilst the research reported above was mostly focused on principal impact, there is evidence that the work of others in schools is important for school success. For example, middle leaders have been shown to be impactful on student learning (Dinham, 2005, 2007; Highfield, 2012; Leithwood, 2016). In a qualitative study of 50 secondary middle leaders, Dinham (2007) noted the significant overlap between the strategies of middle leaders and principals, with the main difference being that middle leader work was, understandably more focused on their area responsibility than the wider school, albeit that some middle roles have a whole-school focus (e.g., student welfare). This research highlighted both how middle leaders contribute to teacher and student success, and the importance of the principals and other senior leaders in ‘providing the conditions where teachers can operate effectively and students can learn’ (Dinham, 2005, p. 355). In a quantitative study involving 41 secondary schools, Highfield (2012, p.155) concluded that “...middle leaders and the teachers in their departments can make a difference to student academic outcomes despite the socioeconomic status or ethnicity of students.” Leithwood (2016) concluded from his review of research on secondary department heads that,

“department and department-head effects on students are consistently positive, practically meaningful and larger than school effects” (p. 117), and “that secondary-school principals and department heads, acting in concert, may be

especially well-situated to provide both instructional and transformational leadership practices and, as a consequence, make powerful contributions to secondary-school improvement” (p. 136).

4. Describing the work of educational leaders: frameworks, standards, competencies and capabilities.

Across and within countries, education systems will likely have leadership frameworks or standards, and descriptions of leadership competencies and capabilities (Drysdale & Gurr, 2021). In this section, several examples from different countries with mature standards or leadership frameworks are provided – the USA, Australia and Ontario, Canada – followed by consideration of an Indigenous perspective and a discussion of leadership capabilities and behaviors associated with transformational and instructional leadership.

In the USA, Gates, Kaufman, Doan, Tuma and Kim (2020) reported that most districts have leader standards that describe what is expected of principals. Often these districts used both local and national standards. The Educational Leadership Policy Standards Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) (CCSSO, 2008) and the current form of these, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) have been important at the national level with 45 states having adopted them (Papa & Davidson, 2022). There are associated standards for leadership preparation - the National Educational Leadership Preparation standards (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2018). The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders has ten standards:

“The Standards embody a research- and practice-based understanding of the relationship between educational leadership and student learning. Improving student learning takes a holistic view of leadership. In all realms of their work, educational leaders must focus on how they are promoting the learning, achievement, development, and well-being of each student. The Standards reflect interdependent domains, qualities and values of leadership work that research and practice suggest are integral to student success:

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values
2. Ethics and Professional Norms
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
4. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
5. Community of Care and Support for Students
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
9. Operations and Management

10. School Improvement”

(National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p.3)

Each standard has between 6 to 12 descriptors of practice that help define the work of effective educational leaders.

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders is underpinned by a theory of action which shows how the standards influence professional associations, systems of supporting institutions (higher education, foundations, non-government organizations) and policy development for leadership preparation, certification, professional development and evaluation. These in turn influence leadership practice, resulting in a range of leadership outcomes. There is, importantly, a direct link between the standards and leadership practice in so far as the standards create expectations and set directions for the practice of educational leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p.5). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration note how the standards have been used to influence development of other context specific standards and accreditation programs, and how they should be regularly reviewed. The use of these standards is not without criticism, including the negative impact on the quality of leadership preparation programs, that they are not a panacea for the problems in education, and that they seek to control individuals (Papa & Davidson, 2022). Despite these criticisms, Murphy, Louis and Smylie (2017, p. 23) describe the standards as presenting

“an optimistic view of leadership, one that focuses on human potential, growth, and support in conjunction with a focus on educational rigor and accountability. Instead of relying on a deficit-based perspective, it emphasizes the strengths that individuals and communities bring to K-12 education.”

In Australia, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership has a comprehensive and detailed set of teaching standards that are used in all States and Territories for the certification of teachers, and which provide descriptions of action for graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead teacher levels (AITSL, 2011a). It also has a leadership standard for principals (AITSL, 2011b) that is slowly gaining traction as a common way of representing school leadership across Australia. The standard describes five professional practices that work across three leadership and management requirements to promote high quality learning, teaching and schooling as evidenced in producing successful learners, confident creative individuals and active informed citizens. The professional practices are:

- Leading teaching and learning
- Developing self and others
- Leading improvement, innovation and change
- Leading the management of the school
- Engaging and working with the community

The leadership requirements are:

- Vision and values
- Knowledge and understanding

- Personal, qualities, social and interpersonal skills

Through the combination of the lead teacher standards and the principal standard, schools and systems have a way of describing the work of teacher leaders, middle leaders and senior leaders in schools. The leadership requirement related to leadership qualities and skills

“...recognises the importance of emotional intelligence, empathy, resilience and personal wellbeing in the leadership and management of the school and its community. Principals regularly review their practice and implement change in their leadership and management approaches to suit the situation. They manage themselves well and use ethical practices and social skills to deal with conflict effectively. They are able to build trust across the school community and to create a positive learning atmosphere for students and staff and within the community in which they work.”

(AITSL, 2011b, p. 7).

In the State of Victoria, the 1,600-school government system has a leadership framework that has adopted the five AITSL professional practices and added adaptive leadership, leadership capabilities (using relevant knowledge, solving complex problems and building relational trust) and dispositions (open-mindedness, interpersonal courage, empathy and perseverance).

The Ontario Leadership Framework (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013) is a comprehensive leadership framework for English and Catholic schools, the various districts and the education systems in Ontario. It utilizes the transformational leadership view of Leithwood noted above, and has five core leadership capacities: setting goals, aligning resources with priorities, promoting collaborative learning cultures, using data, and engaging in courageous conversations. These are embedded into the professional learning and resources provided to school and system leaders. Rather than describe leadership capabilities, it uses the personal leadership resources framework described by Letihwood (2017):

- Cognitive resources: problem-solving expertise; knowledge about school classroom conditions with direct effects on student learning; systems thinking.
- Social resources: ability to perceive emotions, manage emotions and act in emotionally appropriate ways.
- Psychological resources: optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, proactivity.

Apart from system level leadership frameworks there are other ways to describe the practice of educational leaders.

There is growing interest, research and publications about Indigenous educational leadership perspectives. For example, drawing on understandings from diverse Indigenous perspectives, Khalifa, Khalil, Marsh and Halloran (2019, p. 573) described an Indigenous, Decolonizing School Leadership (IDSL) framework that has five strands:

“(1) the prioritization of self-knowledge and self-reflection, (2) the empowerment of community through self-determination, (3) the centering of community voices and values, (4) service based in altruism and spirituality, and (5) approaching collectivism through inclusive communication practices.”

The foci on personal understanding, development and service, and collectivist and community action are leadership actions that need to be considered in contemporary understanding of effective and successful educational leadership.

The examples from the USA, Australia, Ontario (Canada) and the Indigenous perspective of Khalifa, et al. (2019) give a sense of the complexity of describing the skills of effective educational leaders and developing leadership capabilities and standards. The Australian and Ontario leadership frameworks have many similarities and the Leithwood transformational leadership view is evident in both – setting direction, developing people, developing the school, and improving teaching and learning. There are also differences that suit the different contexts. For example, in Ontario the complex, public school situation with English and French medium systems, and non-denominational and Catholic schools, has to be accounted for in the publications and communications about the leadership framework. When considering the IDSL framework, the personal, collectivist and community dimensions could be added or reinforced.

Skills and capabilities can also be understood from views of educational leadership described above. For example, Table 1 provided a list of leadership practices associated with transformational leadership across five dimensions. Whilst the list described practices at a broad level, it would be relatively easy to expand these into more detailed statements. For example, if an important leadership practice is providing intellectual stimulation, what might that look like in a school? Examples include: providing a book on educational leadership to all teachers that is explored at regular meetings; ensuring all learning area meetings include time for questioning and wondering. In regard to instructional leadership, Robinson (2010) reviewed research that could link instructional leadership capabilities with student outcomes, and developed a model that had three interrelated leadership capabilities for effective instructional leadership: using deep leadership content knowledge to align school processes to learning outcomes; solving complex school-based problems; and, building relational trust with staff, parents and students. The reader will recall that the research by Grissom, Egalite and Lindsay (2021), which was classified in the paper as an example of both transformational and instructional leadership, described four leadership behaviors (engaging in instructionally focused interactions with teachers; building a productive climate; facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities; managing personnel and resources strategically) and three areas of skill: people (e.g. caring, communication, trust); instruction (e.g. classroom observation, pedagogical, curriculum and assessment expertise) and organization (e.g. data use, strategic thinking, resource allocation). Whilst lists of behaviors and skills are useful, Robinson (2010, p. 23) makes the astute cautionary observation,

“Learning to lead is not about mastering a long list of capabilities. It is about learning how to draw on and integrate appropriate cognitive and emotional resources in context-sensitive and goal-relevant ways.”

The standards and frameworks mentioned, and the competencies and capabilities described apply equally to school leaders in state and non-state schools. Indeed, all the leadership frameworks mentioned were readily available to all school leaders. The Ontario and Victorian frameworks were prescribed for this in government schools, but there were made publicly available Leadership frameworks or standards should be regularly reviewed to consider whether

they remain fit for purpose (Lamont, in press; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) and the competencies and capabilities required need to be contextualized (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017, 2021).

5. School leader identification, preparation, selection and development

In reviewing school leadership development programs across eleven countries, Hallinger (2003) identified seven global issues:

- evolving from passive to active learning
- creating systemic solutions that connect training to practice
- crafting an appropriate role and tools for using performance standards
- creating effective transitions into the leadership role
- evaluating leadership preparation and development
- developing and validating an indigenous knowledge base across cultures
- creating a research and development role for universities

Gates, Kaufman, Doan, Tuma and Kim's (2020) survey of more than 10,000 USA school districts in regard to principal pipeline activities found that more than 80% had leader standards, processes to encourage teachers to be school leaders, gave aspiring principals professional development and support, and provided coaching for first-year principals, and nearly 80% used standards-aligned evaluations. About half used preparation programs and talent pool processes. Whilst these programs sound promising as a way of addressing some of Hallinger's (2003) concerns, Drysdale and Gurr (2021) argued that there was still much to do. Across the world there are competing patterns regarding selection and development of principals, and several examples of research evidence are presented next.

In the USA, which has hundreds of university level school leadership preparation programs, there has been extensive criticism of the quality and usefulness of these programs (e.g., Elmore, 2000; Levine, 2005). Davis (2016) described the issues of concern as including:

1. The quality of principal preparation programs was a concern for District leaders
2. Strong district partnerships were often absent
3. Preparation programs were not related to the real work of principals
4. University policies and practices were often a barrier
5. Many state authorities were ineffective in improving preparation programs

Despite these criticisms, Young and colleagues from the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) were able to show how quality programs were evolving (Cosner, et al., 2015; Jacobson, et al., 2015; Merchant & Garza, 2015; Young, 2015) with noteworthy features including strong program cohesion and focus, rigorous student recruitment and selection, a substantial number of faculty teaching in the program (including academic and clinical personnel), close partnership with districts, rigorous and high expectation curriculum linked to leadership standards,

active, evolving and collaborative pedagogy centered in practice, extensive and meaningful clinical practice, and evidence of program success that includes work placements, personal development, and a demonstrated impact on the learning outcomes of students.

The International Study of Principal Preparation was a six-year collaboration between researchers across many countries and including Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, East Timor, England, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Scotland, South Africa, Tanzania, Turkey and the United States. The project focused on the experience of new principals and how they were prepared and supported to be principals. The research noted more similarities than differences across contexts in terms of the issues new principals faced (administration demands, financial management issues, bureaucratic obligations, achieving work-life balance and staying well), and that few countries had formal preparation programs, and that some countries still selected principals through an exam process. Slater, et al. (2018) found that preparation programs failed to adequately consider the context in which leaders were training. They argued that leadership programs must understand the broader social, political and economic forces affecting students.

Harris and Jones (2015) led the 7 System Leadership Study which explored leadership preparation and development programs in Australia, England, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Russia. The findings from the study were reported in a special edition of the Asia Pacific Journal of Education (2015, Volume 35, issue 3). There was consistent acknowledgement of the importance of principal preparation, and the need to build the capacity of aspiring and current principals, with all countries having or developing national leadership qualifications or programs. Harris and Jones (2018) noted that a major difference across the countries was variability in implementation of leadership preparation and development policies. Three contrasting examples are provided. In Indonesia, whilst there were principal preparation and certification programs, too often principal appointment relied on political expediency through candidates having political connections, or the favor of the mayor of the local district (Sumintono, et al., 2015); something that is also seen in jurisdictions such as China which requires active membership of the Communist Party and Ghana where political affiliation, ethnicity, culture and religion can all influence principal selection (Bush, 2022). Even when a new centrally constructed and locally administered principal preparation program was introduced and completed by hundreds of teachers completed this, but few became principals (Sumintono, et al., 2015). In Russia, professional learning programs only happened for current principals and often focused on technical issues like education law, management and finance (Bysik, et al., 2015). In Australia, there were no mandatory certification processes and only an emerging alignment with leadership standards (see discussion below). Leadership preparation and development, at any level, was largely a self-managed process, but with some systems providing voluntary program support, universities offering post-graduate educational leadership courses, and various professional learning programs from other providers (Gurr & Drysdale, 2015). For those in faith-based systems or schools, at the principal appointment level there was usually a requirement to demonstrate active faith practice (Drysdale & Gurr, 2021).

Drysdale and Gurr (2021) reviewed programs in 12 countries (Australia, Brazil, England, Finland, Hong Kong, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, and three states of the USA) focused on the identification and assessment of leadership readiness. They concluded that:

- Aspiring principals tended to be teachers in schools or systems, sometimes with leadership roles and/or additional qualifications. A few jurisdictions permitted non-teachers or people outside of education to be considered.
- Aspirants were typically identified through self-selection or professional recommendation from a principal. Singapore had a sophisticated talent management system that identified leadership potential early in career and provided targeted leadership development as individuals progressed through curriculum and pastoral leadership positions, and then senior school leadership and school cluster superintendent positions.
- Most systems offered leadership programs and preparation programs to build aspirant leadership capacity. Brazil and Sweden only offered programs once aspirants had secured a principalship.
- Some systems had licensure or certification processes that were based on a set of competencies, principles or standards, whilst other systems did not have certification requirements or compulsory standards.
- Assessment methods varied considerably, from a one-off examination (e.g., Mexico), to completion of a formal licensure program that might include examination assignments and field work, practicum; written and oral exercises, and portfolios, or completion of post-graduate courses (e.g. USA).
- Many systems appeared to struggle to identify and support potential leaders early in their careers, especially in regard to supporting potential principals.

The most recent OECD education report (OECD, 2022) confirmed the currency of these observations. The OECD (2022) noted that 29 of the 35 countries and jurisdictions that responded required principals to be fully qualified teachers. Twelve jurisdictions had pathways for non-teachers to be principals, although this was not widely used. Selection processes varied greatly with some jurisdictions having no compulsory requirements, some relying on a non-prescribed application and interview process, some having a mixture of compulsory and non-compulsory evidence sources, and some using a competitive testing process, with Italy relying solely on testing.

Despite the criticisms, quality concerns and variability in selecting and supporting aspirant leaders, Bush (2018a, p.67) argued that leadership preparation and development has never been more important because of:

- the expansion of the role of school principal
- the devolution of powers to school level
- the increasing complexity of school contexts
- recognition that preparation is a moral obligation
- recognition that effective preparation and development make a difference

Bush (2018a, p. 69) developed a model of leadership preparation, induction and development, which is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Bush's Model of Leadership Preparation and Induction

Development phase	Purpose
Succession planning	Talent identification
Leadership preparation	To develop leadership understanding and skills
Recruitment and selection	Careful matching of qualified candidates with schools (avoid 'square pegs' in 'round holes')
Induction	An ongoing process focused on professional learning
In-service development	Leadership learning as a career-long process

Jurisdictions would do well to apply something like this to the support offered to teachers as they move into leadership roles, and, for some, into the principalship. For in-service professional learning there have been criticisms that the curriculum is too general and/or focused on technical issues, learning is not personalized sufficiently, programs are too removed from practice, and that contemporary collaborative learning practices are not used sufficiently (Murphy, 2020; Parylo & Zepeda, 2015; Shah, in press; Webster-Wright, 2009; Zhang, 2019). There is a strong sense that these programs need to be improved and need to incorporate many of the features of the exemplar preparation programs. In the USA context, for example, this would include high quality learning experiences through curriculum that blends theory and practice and relates to the work of principals, and which is supported through practices like mentoring, networking, study groups, collegial school visits, and peer coaching (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, La Pointe & Orr, 2010).

The most recent OECD education report (OECD, 2022) indicated that for about two thirds of the 36 countries surveyed, there was some requirement for principals to undertake professional learning. For example, Sweden has compulsory programs once someone begins as a principal. In the 14 countries that described professional learning requirements, the minimum time commitment varied from 12 hours to more than 64 hours per year. In all but one country, the professional learning was not tied strictly to school priorities. About half the countries had different requirements for those of teachers, and in some jurisdictions, there will be overlap in the requirements. For example, in Australia all States and Territories have teacher registration that requires demonstration of continuous professional development. As most principals in Australia, regardless of the type of school, will also be teachers, the principals also have this professional learning requirement to maintain their teacher registration, as well as any system requirements (government school, Catholic or other system) for professional learning.

The discussion of school leadership development and support applies equally to school leaders in state and non-state schools. Whilst those in state systems are likely to have frameworks and/or mandated programs, a model like that of Bush (2018a) describes a broad talent management framework useful for any school.

6. System leadership

This section considers leaders outside of the school that may impact on schools and the concept of system leadership frames the section.

Butler (2014, p. 96) described system leadership as “the ability to generate change across a system or nested system where this involves creating, utilizing or exploiting connections within the system.” This is a broad definition that could include school network leaders, regional directors, district leaders, chief executive officers, department secretaries and so forth – anyone who has leadership responsibility for a collection of schools. Some of these roles could be leading hundreds or thousands of schools in large systems; indeed, some roles may be leading all the schools in a country. It is also an inclusive definition in that many senior leaders within an educational system could be described as system leaders. It does distinguish the work from principals, who are typically focused on leading one school, but it doesn’t capture what Nir (2014a) refers to as the control/power mechanism, such as governance, fiscal and human resource management, direction setting and accountability processes. Butler (2014) also described how in many countries schools are being brought together through partnerships, locality-based cooperation and governance centered cooperation. The first two arrangements tend to leave schools as being autonomous partners, but the governance centered cooperation means that the leadership of the schools has changed. If there is an executive principal or head of a school that is leading several schools, then according to Butler’s definition these would be system leaders. In Northern America there has been substantial interest in the leadership of school districts (e.g. Leithwood, 2013; Sheppard, Brown & Dibbon, 2009), in the UK research on academies (e.g. Gunter, 2011), and across the world, there is research on the work of superintendents or similar roles (e.g. Nir, 2014b). Recently, Greany (2021) led two special issues of *School Leadership and Management* that focused on new forms of what has been called Multi-School Organizations with papers in the issues exploring Multi-Academy Trusts in England, Boards of Multiple Schools in the Netherlands and Charter Management Organizations in the USA. Leaders of these could be considered system leaders and, hopefully, enacting system leadership.

System leadership is an emerging leadership area, reflected in many countries policy discourses, yet struggling for sustained research interest (Harris, Jones & Hashim, 2021). Hopkins (2008) noted conceptual confusion and a lack of clarity about the practice of system leadership, which is not surprising given the previous discussion about the complexity in terms of identifying who might be a system leader. Harris, Jones and Hashim (2021) reviewed the 2010-2020 evidence base on system leaders and system leadership. They noted multiple role expectations. At the macro level, system leadership had a “systemic orientation where system leaders, whatever level they operate at, influence those beyond their immediate context and are deliberately deployed to bring about change” (Harris, Jones & Hashim, 2021, p. 395). Systems thinking and system change were the orientations expected. At the micro level, system leaders had roles and responsibilities for helping schools change. System leadership could be focused on helping other schools improve, working with networks of schools, and/or influencing whole systems. System leaders could be an integral part of system change, they could be leaders of system change, or they could be the products of system change. Harris, Jones and Hashim (2021, 401-402), provided four concluding observations:

“First, seniority or years of experience within education, should not be the main criterion for selecting system leaders. In some countries this has been the default case. The evidence suggests that the ability to lead others at different levels in the system is the most important characteristic of effective system leaders.

Secondly, leaders within a system are not automatically system leaders. The collective evidence suggests that system leaders need to be carefully selected to ensure they have the relevant skill set (e.g., facilitation, advocacy, mobilization, challenge) and expertise.

Thirdly, system leaders need to be thought leaders as well as practical leaders. They need to be able to push the boundaries of professional practice, so they must be knowledgeable of working at more than one level in the system. In this respect, system leaders need to have the status, recognition, and skills to positively influence others, at all levels, in the system. System leaders need to understand how change is successfully led and managed outside their own context or setting, so they can positively influence others.

Finally, system leaders need a clear theory of action to have a positive influence on others. They must have the ability to refine and extend the practice of others through modelling ‘next practice’ not simply sharing ‘existing or best practice’. They should be able to add value to the system by building the professional capacity, capital, and capability of others, in ways that are tangible and demonstrate a clear impact.”

Whilst there is uncertainty about the impact of system leadership on school and student outcomes, there are examples of system leadership that have been impactful on schools and students, such as the following example. The Regional Director of the Northern region of Melbourne, Australia, Craig led a 193-school system of government primary, secondary and special schools. Over a five-year period, he began the transformation of this system which was characterized as the lowest performing region in the State. To help he enlisted expert support to develop numeracy, literacy, pedagogy and wellbeing improvements and to develop a system leadership perspective (Hopkins, Munro & Craig, 2011). The booklet *Powerful Learning* (NMR, 2009) summarized the approach to the system improvement through a succession of circles of practice beginning at the center with the intention to develop students that are literate, numerous and curious. The next circle included three pre-conditions for school effectiveness: the high leverage learning improvement strategies of instructional leadership, high quality teaching and high expectation. The focus then was on the classroom by developing quality teaching and learning through pedagogic knowledge, curriculum frameworks and standards, assessment of teaching and student voice. School supports (organizational capacity) for improving teaching and learning then followed by focusing on professional learning communities, collection and use of data, school improvement teams, organizing for learning, prioritization and planning, and recruitment and workforce planning. The outer circle focused on the systemic context through considering big picture and external supports for schools such as system leadership, differential school improvement intervention and support, family and community partnership, and networking with other schools and disciplined, evidence-informed innovation. For system leadership, whilst there was no formal definition given, the system leadership initiatives described in this outer circle focused on getting principals to influence the improvement of many schools, and to support this work through system leaders. In exploring evidence of impact of the initiative, Fraser, Glover and Craig, (2011: 151) noted that:

“The overall conclusion to be drawn from the review of data in this chapter is that over the past four years there has been a quite dramatic shift in the metrics from a largely negative to a strikingly positive direction. In particular, literacy and numeracy measures for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are at or near state benchmarks with the data generally trending upwards.”

Craig showed evidence of system leadership and meeting all the concluding observations from Harris, Jones and Hashim (2021)

-Craig was selected for the role of Regional Director because he had been a successful school principal and had regularly contributed to change beyond his school.

-He was good at leading change, had excellent education knowledge, high expectations and highly developed people skills focused on developing and motivating people.

-Whilst his knowledge of education was excellent, he also knew that he needed experts to help with the system improvement agenda and so he recruited strategically to get expertise in system leadership, literacy, numeracy and wellbeing.

-The change program that was developed had explicit theories of action that could be easily understood and used at the school level. To implement that change, professional support for principals was provided, and resources provided to principals to support the development of their staff.

7. Governance, autonomy and accountability

Across the world, the degree to which principals are free to make decisions varies greatly and this has several elements impacting on this. Along with leadership of schools, there needs to be consideration as to how schools are governed (Gamage, 1996; Moos & Paulsen, 2014), the autonomy schools and school leaders have (Harris & Jones, 2018) and the increasing accountability demands placed on schools with the rise of neo-liberal and new public management views over several decades (Connell, Fawcett & Meagher, 2009; Savage, 2021).

Within government schools, there will be varying degrees of governance exerted on principals. Schools may have a council or board, and these may have responsibilities for policy and operations. Anderson (2006, p.4) described how across several countries the dominant image is that “members ‘sit’ at a ‘board’ presided over by a ‘chair’ . . . [and] establish policy to direct action. The predominant values are wisdom and leadership directed at ensuring quality activities and outcomes in an organization.” However, even within a country, the extent to which councils or boards exist, and what they are expected to do, can vary greatly. For example, in the Australian context, whilst some systems have 50-year histories of school councils with significant parent and student voice, there remain school systems without compulsory school councils (Gurr, Drysdale & Walkley, 2014). In Pakistan, schools are supervised by system managers within school districts, and principals have little control over their limited resources – financial, human and physical resources (Shah, 2023).

Non-state schools will likely have a board overseeing the work of the school, and generally focused on policy and direction more than operational matters (Anderson, 2006). Many of these non-state schools will be part of a system, which will vary in the extent to which they are involved in governance issues (UNESCO, 2021). Some, such as many Catholic and other religious school systems across the world, may be tightly defined and operate much like a small government systems or districts.

As noted previously, schools may be part of a larger system and this larger system can be divided into smaller systems (districts, regions, networks and so forth), which can have considerable influence on student and school outcomes through system leadership.

Related to governance, the degree of school autonomy is also important in terms of what school leaders can do. Harris and Jones (2018) noted how policy implementation is influenced by school autonomy and socio-cultural contexts. In their 7SLS study, hierarchical school systems in Malaysia, Indonesia and Russia meant that principals and teachers 'were far less willing to depart from rules and regulations or take risks with policy implementation', whilst those in more autonomous systems in Australia and England, 'felt far greater liberty to interpret policy broadly and to see it as a guide for action' (Harris & Jones, 2018, p. 202).

Heikkinen, Wilkinson and Bristol (2021) contrasted principal and school autonomy in Australia (Victoria), Finland and Jamaica, and brief descriptions of each country follow.

Victorian government schools have a forty-year history of school self-management, within a decentralized system which includes allowing schools to hire staff and make resource decisions, but which maintains some centralized control through funding allocation, curriculum frameworks and accountability systems. Public reporting of the performance of all schools, and both government and Catholic schools operating with similar four-year school review cycles, means there is considerable scrutiny of school performance. Operating in a school-choice environment, schools often have to compete with other schools (government, Catholic and independent) to secure enrolments. Keddie, et al. (2022, p. 118) noted how in Australia, the move to school autonomy has meant greater freedom for principals in terms of "decision-making over matters such as finance, resourcing and staffing" with the assumption that this "will lead to school and system improvement."

In Finland, teachers have considerable autonomy, and the education union is a strong voice, and so principals must work hard to implement system policy initiatives. There is little competition for enrolments as most schools are government schools and students attend their nearest government school. There are no school accountability systems and limited hierarchical controls such as having a national curriculum (but which can be interpreted locally).

Jamaican schools have limited autonomy and operate in a system that is centralized and bureaucratic. Whilst there are moves to more autonomy at and within schools, Heikkinen, Wilkinson and Bristol (2021, p. 12) suggested that the colonial history of the country meant that a strong overseeing culture, a history of policy borrowing and an emphasis on competitive examinations, stratification and streaming limits these moves: "As such, education reform is often a struggle between adherence to authority and aspirations for autonomous decision making in education as a part of the post-colonial agenda."

In many Western countries which have mature histories of school autonomy, it is now a permanent feature of the educational landscape for the foreseeable future and is described using terms like self-governing schools, school-base management, charter schools and academies. This is despite limited evidence of benefit (UNESCO, 2021) and major concerns about negative impacts, such as increasing educational inequality (Ball & Junemann, 2011; Bentley, 2018; Bonnor & Shepherd, 2016; Keddie et al. 2022; UNESCO, 2017). Some are now calling for a more nuanced approach to autonomy. Caldwell (2016) argued that school autonomy seems to have an advantage, provided that schools have the capacity to utilize this autonomy and that professional forms of accountability are in place to guide judgement on what to do. Caldwell made a distinction between structural autonomy through policies, regulations and procedures, and professional autonomy in which teachers have the 'capacity to make decisions that are likely to make a difference to outcomes for students, and this capacity is exercised in a significant, systemic and sustained fashion' (Caldwell 2016, p. 4). For school autonomy to make a difference to students, Caldwell (2018) argued that professional autonomy is required, and there needs to be alignment between the various systems that surround schools.

In systems that have become more decentralized, and which provide some degree of school autonomy, accountability has become more evident and more important in terms of the work of school leaders. There are many ways to conceptualize accountability. At a general level,

“Accountability is a process aimed at helping individuals or institutions meet their responsibilities and reach their goals. Actors have an obligation, based on a legal, political, social or moral justification, to provide an account of how they met clearly defined responsibilities.”

UNESCO (2017, p. xii)

At the school level there are several more detailed ways to think about accountability. Anderson (2005) described how school accountability systems have been constructed to monitor compliance with regulations, adherence to professional norms and to improve results (most often student learning outcomes). Learmouth (2000) described school and school leader contractual, moral and professional accountability. Contractual accountability focuses on meeting system requirements, moral accountability on meeting the needs of parents and students, and professional accountability on meeting self-expectations and those of colleagues. Sinclair (1995) had a more complex view that considered five perspectives: political, public, managerial, professional and personal accountability. These perspectives move from the more external to internal, from the collective to personal, and from responsibility to many, to responsibility to self. In terms of using accountability to improve schools, whilst moral and professional accountabilities support the intrinsic motivation of school leaders for improvement, contractual, political and other accountabilities support more extrinsic motivational factors. In their project to explore educational relationships between authorities and schools in 20 jurisdictions spanning, European, Nordic, North American and Commonwealth countries, Ärlestig and Johansson (2020) assembled 21 chapters that described worldwide pressures to move from more centralized to decentralized systems, but usually with development of extrinsic accountability systems to monitor and influence the work of school leaders to improve schools. In many chapters, pressure from the impact of international student learning monitor programs, such as the OECD's Programme for

International Student Assessment, on politicians to demand system accountability were noted: Savage (2021) describes with clarity the impact that these international monitoring programs have on policy development in education. In reviewing the chapters, Johansson and Ärlestig (2020, p. 419) noted that several issues with the new accountability systems being developed:

“One of the most common techniques for governing in the latest decades has been New Public Management. The basis of that form of governance, is that agents at different levels must be responsible for their actions and their part of the governing chain. An often-used concept is accountability, which points at looking for deficits connected to a function, person or a specific issue. This is a perspective that fails to acknowledge the impact of a broader system. Instead, external actors try to solve a specific problem on what is often a lower hierarchical level than the one where they have identified insufficient result.”

School leaders in many countries deal with multiple accountabilities on a regular basis, and it is likely that this will be more evident over time in most systems because it is an easy way to not only monitor progress on important responsibilities and goals, but also to defray responsibility away from government to the school level (UNESCO, 2017). In earlier versions of Leithwood’s transformational leadership view (see Table 1), addressing accountability was a prominent feature (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Whilst there is not space to go further into the literature on accountability and school leadership, it is another complexity that school leaders are having to deal with.

8. Reflection

This paper has reviewed the conceptualisation of educational leadership noting that there are some main views, but considerable complexity also. Key ideas for individual leadership included transformational and instructional leadership (and its leadership for learning derivative). Recognition that the focus cannot remain on individuals has meant that relational and process views like distributed leadership have developed, and there is increasing focus on the work of teacher leaders and middle leaders. Moving from an internal school focus, system leadership, school autonomy, the nexus between leadership and governance and the relationships between context and leadership add complexity to how schools are led successfully. Educational leadership is not immune to wider impacts and the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that more collaborative, relational and adaptive leadership styles focused on both learning and wellbeing may become more widespread and important.

That leadership matters, is no longer in dispute, and the leadership of principals and others in schools has been shown to be significant, especially when principals and middle/teacher leaders work in concert to improve schools. There are many ways to conceptualize and understand how leadership impacts on student and school outcomes, and the research on successful school leadership has been especially important.

The work of educational is well understood with many frameworks and descriptions of practice available. Whilst leadership standards are proffered there is not a view that works across all school contexts and so contextualization of these views across and within countries/systems is important.

The identification, preparation, selection and development of educational leaders varies greatly across and within countries and there is not consensus on how to do this, but there is consensus it can be done better across all education career levels – teacher leaders, middle leaders, senior leaders and principals.

From this review, and to conclude the chapter, it is possible to make some statements about leadership and education.

1. There is not one leadership view

There is not a single leadership view that is sufficient to describe the work of educational leaders. Whilst transformational, instructional, leadership for learning, and distributed leadership, have been noted in this review, views that combine these and other elements are probably a better representation of the complexity of leadership work. Leadership views that better account for complexity and crisis are emerging and there is mounting interest in understanding and incorporating Indigenous perspectives.

2. But, there are leadership views that work in many contexts

There are some ideas that seem to be applicable widely and the framework of setting direction, developing people, developing the organization and improving teaching and learning, seems to be particularly helpful in understanding leadership actions in a wide variety of contexts.

3. Leadership from many is needed

Leading schools successfully is increasingly complex and leadership from many is needed. At the school level this means including teachers and middle leaders as well as senior leaders and principals. Depending on context, it can also include school boards/councils and system leaders. Student, parent and community leadership are emerging areas for consideration.

4. Leadership matters

Leadership can impact substantially on student and school outcomes; indeed, there is recent evidence that impact is higher than previously believed. Deliberately leveraging leadership is important – leadership that makes a difference becomes an expectation, obligation and opportunity.

5. Leadership practices matters

All the ideas about educational leadership mean nothing if they are not evident in practice. Much is known about this, as is evident in the various leadership frameworks and standards, and listings of leadership competencies and capabilities. We can also learn from successful school leaders. For example, better understanding the cognitive, social and psychological resources that successful leaders draw upon to guide their practice is important. Through understanding and describing good practice, we can support leaders to adopt practices that are known to be helpful.

6. Leadership preparation and development matters

Whilst we know the features of good leadership preparation and development programs, helping schools and school systems identify and support people to be educational leaders needs improvement. The support needs to be more often, consistent, individualized, based on trustworthy ideas and connected to practice. Although quality preparation and development is resource intensive, it also should be seen as a right (for the individual), obligation (on the part of schools and systems) and a necessity (to foster quality education).

7. Context matters

Educational leaders work in environment that have many contexts. External to a school are various forces that impact to varying degrees and include system, institutional, educational, political, economic, technological and socio-cultural forces. Internally, there are multiple contexts to do with the nature of the school, the staff and the families. All of these influence schools and interact with the work of school leaders. Between and within countries there will be different demands on schools. This complex contextual landscape means that whilst there are similarities between schools, each school will also be somewhat unique and likely require contextually relevant and sensitive leadership.

9. Research Recommendations

There are several recommendations on potential research areas to commission research.

9.1. Leadership practice

There are four recommendations focussed on what leaders do.

1. Exploration of a general set of practices that has wide applicability.

Exploring the applicability of the generalized educational leadership claim) that, “almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices:

- setting directions
- building relationships and develop people
- developing the organization to support desired practices
- improving the instructional program”

(Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020, 7-8)

Whilst there is evidence to modestly support this claim, engaging in an international project is needed to fully support it and/or to suggest variations.

- ### 2. Exploration of what successful educational leadership behavior looks like in situ, and how it is supported by the cognitive, social and psychological resources individuals bring to their leadership work.
- ### 3. Engaging in research that can better captures the complex nature of contemporary schools and the work of school leaders. This might involve holistic research that has a practice focus through research methods like the interaction perspective of distributed leadership researchers (e.g., Spillane & Zuberi, 2009) or the practice

architecture approach of middle leader researchers (e.g. Grootenboer, 2018). This will likely require innovative research strategies that can, in unobtrusive ways, collect rich practice data. The multiple perspective and mixed method research used by the ISSPP is another example of intensive research, and this method conducted over time could be a worthwhile approach.

4. Exploration of programs across the world for the identification, recruitment and development of educational leadership in middle and senior leadership roles in schools, and at the system level.

9.2.Complexity

There are three recommendations related to exploring the complexity of educational leadership.

1. Exploration of the ideas of distributed leadership and the work of teacher leaders and middle leaders, to see how widely these ways of organizing leadership work are evident across the world.
2. Exploring the nexus between educational leadership and governance. The literature on educational leadership is abundant, whilst that on governance is modest, and there is little overlap between the research areas. Deliberately researching both leadership and governance may lead to new insights about educational leadership.
3. Extending the previous point, there is a need for research that uses system and complexity perspectives to better show the connections within a school and with the world beyond the school.

9.3.Educational leadership across the world

There are two recommendations related to international research projects

- 1.Continuing the documentation and consideration of educational leadership across the world. It is particularly important to develop ways of sharing understandings using the primary language of different jurisdictions and to understand how culture and history influence views of educational leadership.
- 2.Sponsoring of international projects focused on educational leadership. Whilst there are several projects that currently exist, sponsoring the creation of new projects would be useful as these could be targeted to address many of the questions described in this section. Existing projects worth exploring include:

-The International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP):

<https://www.uv.uio.no/ils/english/research/projects/isspp/>

-THE International School Leadership Development Network (ISLDN): <https://isldn.weebly.com>

-World School Leadership Study (WSLS): <http://wsls.edulead.net>

-International Study of Teacher Leadership (ISTL): <https://sites.google.com/mtroyal.ca/istl/home>

9.4.Educational leadership in the future

There are three recommendations related to understanding how educational leadership may change.

- 1.Exploration of the enduring changes to schools and school leadership after the pandemic. The focus on after the pandemic is important. There is a lot of research already published and emerging about the pandemic, but research that focuses on how this is impacting in the longer term is needed.
- 2.Exploration of other contextual impacts on schools. The impact of technology development is an obvious source of research, but less obvious are changes in society and views about the purposes of education. Exploration of contextual impacts will be an important part of the last recommendation.
- 3.To consider the future of educational leadership, it is first important that preferred school futures are articulated. The scenario work of the OECD (2001) is an example of this, but it is timely to consider this again and to do so on world scale. Once this is done, future educational leadership views can be developed.

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