THE CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Culture of Leadership examines the place of educators and leaders within a rapidly developing global world. This course will provide learners with an understanding of the importance of developing a safe, collaborative and inclusive professional environment. Central to this aim, is the necessity for all educators and leaders to partake in lifelong learning and understand the importance of positive personal and professional values, including effective reflective practices.

This course is action-oriented and will engage learners through scholarly literature, real case studies, diverse narratives and global-focused readings. On completion of this course, educators and leaders will be equipped with the fundamental skills with which to adapt to change in both a confident and flexible manner.

COURSE GOALS

Upon completion of this course current and future educational leaders will be able to:

1. Understand the role and responsibilities of educators and leaders in a changing world.
2. Critically reflect on the role of personal and professional values, including the importance of lifelong learning.
3. Use critical and creative skills to identify ways to develop a safe, collaborative and inclusive professional environment.
4. Identify different management styles and recognise the importance of collaboration.
5. Utilise critical and ethical practices when undertaking action research projects.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is divided into four units:

- Unit 1: Educational Leadership in a Changing World.
  - Topic 1.2: The Role of Personal and Professional Values.
- Unit 2: The Professional Learning Environment
• Topic 2.1: Developing a Safe, Conducive and Collaborative Professional Environment.

• Topic 2.2 – Examining Your School Culture.

• Topic 2.3 – Changing Your School Culture.

• Unit 3: The Connected Educator.

  o Topic 3.1 – Leadership in Collaborative Workplaces.

  o Topic 3.2 – The Role of Professional Development.

  o Topic 3.3 – Creating Professional Connections.

• Unit 4: Leadership in Practice.

  o Topic 4.1 – Foundational Skills of Investigation.

  o Topic 4.2 – Unit Exercises.

**COURSE ASSESSMENT**

The weighting given to each of the course assignments is as follows:

<table>
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<th>Weighting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Action Spaces (exercises)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio (reflective)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit Exercises</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECT**

This course consists of a series of reflective activities and assignments, which serve to encourage continuous learning and test your understanding of key concepts. The major assignment in this course is found in Unit Four, where you will be asked to complete two (2) substantial exercises.
PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS
To capture the output from the reflective questions and activities, you are asked to keep a personal portfolio. At the end of the course the personal portfolio will be submitted to your instructor for feedback and grading.

ASSESSMENT PROJECTS
Assessment takes the form of responding to activities, as well as written assignments as determined from time to time by the institution. In cases where coursework assignments, fieldwork projects, and examinations are used in combination, a percentage rating for each component will be communicated to you at that appropriate time.

COURSE SCHEDULE
A course schedule with due dates and additional readings will be supplied to you by your institution.

REQUIRED READINGS
STUDENT SUPPORT

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

<Insert the following information if relevant>

- How to contract a tutor/facilitator (Phone number, email, office hours, etc.).
- Background information about the tutor/facilitator if he/she does not change regularly. Alternatively provide a separate letter with the package describing your tutor/facilitator’s background.
- Description of any resources that they may need to procure to complete the course (e.g. lab kits, etc.).
- How to access the library (either in person, by email or online).

HOW TO SUBMIT ASSIGNMENTS

<If the course requires that assignments be regularly graded, then insert a description of how and where to submit assignments. Also explain how the learners will receive feedback.>

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

<If the students must access content online or use email to submit assignments, then a technical support section is required. You need to include how to complete basic tasks and a phone number that they can call if they are having difficulty getting online>. 
UNIT ONE – EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING WORLD

Unit Introduction

In an article published in *The High School Journal* in 1919, Angus B. Cameron attempted to answer the question: What makes good teaching? Recognising the complexity of the question, Cameron (1919) began with a general statement before responding with what he perceived as four key characteristics. He noted:

*A good teacher makes good teaching...*

(1) *Certainly broad, full, well-rounded scholarship is one of the first essentials...he should have a large fund of general information, his teaching will be better, for upon this resource he may often draw for illustration and illumination.*

(2) *That somewhat vague and indefinable something called ‘personality’ is one of the most telling factors in good teaching...*

(3) *To be a good teacher, or to do good teaching, one must be a good leader...*

(4) *Again, he who would teach well must have a vision...So he who would teach well must look beyond the present and be able to see in children that come under his influence...the well-trained, well-rounded citizen of the future – the man and the woman that he would have them be.*

(pp. 240-241)

Almost a century later, we realise that while the world is rapidly changing, the fundamentals of the teaching profession – the core skills and values – remain unchanged. Teaching is still founded on the principles of discipline knowledge and guided by articulated professional and personal values. Leadership, especially among principals – but increasingly, dispersed among staff – remains an essential quality, invaluable in assuring schools adapt positively to changing demands.

Central to the need for strong leadership is the importance of a clear vision. A well stipulated vision informs the age-old questions: What is the school’s purpose? What values do we hold as educators (and as a collective school of educators)? Why do students attend school? What kind of informed citizens (global and local) do we wish to raise? Where will our school be in 10 (20, 30 or 100) years’ time?

Certainly, globalisation (our changing world) has impacted the nature and responsibilities of the teaching profession. Most evident has been the advancement and exposure to
technology and information, which has in turn altered the expectations and learning needs of students, and challenged the frame of mind of educators and the traditional methods of instruction. In short, the teaching profession has become more challenging. In 2009, the US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan (2009) noted:

*Today teachers are asked to achieve significant academic growth for all students at the same time that they instruct students with ever-more diverse needs. Teaching has never been more difficult, it has never been more important, and the desperate need for more student success has never been so urgent. Are we adequately preparing future teachers to win this critical battle?*

In his speech at the Teacher’s College at Columbia University, Duncan emphasised the need for better teacher preparation, greater emphasis on professional development and the acknowledgement of those educators adapting to new challenges.

Duncan correctly notes the complexity of the modern teaching profession. However, with all difficulties and challenges (resource, technology or otherwise) there exists the potential for rich rewards. At the core of teaching remains the unflinching goal of raising well-adjusted children; citizens that will join an increasingly global world. Turning again to Angus B. Cameron, we are reminded that technology facilitates the delivery of education – it is the means, not the substance. As Howard Gardner (2006) notes in his book *Five Minds for the Future,*

*Education is inherently and inevitably an issue of human goals and human values...One cannot even begin to develop an educational system unless one has in mind the knowledge and skills that one values, and the kind of individuals one hopes will emerge at the end of the day.*

(p. 13-14)

Unit One will explore the educator’s role in an increasingly changing world. The unit will examine the role of professional and personal values, focusing on the importance of lifelong learning and personal and professional reflection. A clear understanding of personal and professional values will allow educators to make considered judgements through periods of change; as well as prepare and adapt with flexibility and skill, to future developments in pedagogic instruction.
Reflection Space:


Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Have you witnessed technological or other changes within your professional environment? How has this impacted your professional learning path and instruction methods? Further, do you see these improvements as impediments or opportunities to excel? What makes good teaching?

UNIT OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit current and future educational leaders should be able to:

1. Understand the role and responsibilities of the teacher and leader in a changing world.

2. Understand the role of professional and personal values in the teaching profession and in the provision of effective leadership.

3. Identify ways to practice lifelong learning and personal and professional reflection.

UNIT READINGS


TOPIC 1.1: EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING WORLD.

INTRODUCTION

What is Lepidopterology? If you don’t immediately know the answer to this question, then your instinct might be to pick up your tablet, mobile device or turn to your laptop or PC. Typing the 15 letters into a search engine will provide you with an almost immediate answer – in a search engine such as Google, the request produces 43,200 results in 0.19 seconds. Lepidopterology is the study of butterflies and moths.

This simple exercise could easily be answered by most students, whether they be sitting at home, in the classroom, or leisurely in a tree (subject to Wi-Fi availability). Students wouldn’t even have to worry about the correct spelling of lepidopterology. Search engines such as Google encourage us not to worry about the little things, such as spelling, capital letters or punctuation – an inbuilt spellchecker automatically converts the word to the most common spelling.

The above example demonstrates both the increasing availability of information and the changing way in which people, including students, are accessing such information. The change is dynamic, multifaceted and monumental. This example is merely a small snapshot of broader economic and global changes, which have seen a shift from a predominantly industrial economy, to a service economy powered by information, knowledge, innovation and creativity (AACTE, 2010, p. 7).

Within the classroom context, the example demonstrates the changing relationship between student and teacher. As Sutch (2010) notes:

> Whilst the teacher will remain a focal point in the whole process of teaching and learning, a big change... will be away from the teacher as the dispenser of knowledge... Children will come to class more information rich; informal learning will become more important, and more pervasive; there will be a change to the relationship between learners and teachers. ‘Teacher’ itself could become a problematic word, as it covers many roles such as facilitator, enabler or coach...

(Not taking these changes) on board would mean a risk of teaching and schooling being seen as irrelevant. The implication is a big cultural shift in learner-teacher relations, especially from the existing teacher role in secondary schools.

(p. 4)

Of importance in this unit, is not so much the way in which we as educators envision the ‘new’ future, but rather how we examine and strengthen the core skills that will allow us to
adapt to uncertain change. It is from this focal point – from human goals and human values – that we can now examine the role of leadership.

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING WORLD

On the relationship between education and leadership, Michael Fullan (as cited in Pound, 2008) has noted:

*Any good leader takes advantage of the learning process and is in a constant position of teaching what needs to be learned within the organization. This is all the more important when change occurs at the pace it does today. An organization needs to be able to count on its leaders to determine what goals are established and to demonstrate the means that will be used to accomplish them.*

(p. 30)

It is evident that information technology is moving at a continually rapid pace; it remains one of the key drivers of economic growth. Accordingly, as Fullan notes, school leaders need to remain both well informed of advancements and flexible in adopting practices that aid instruction.

In the context of technological advancements within the classroom, leadership roles might include the pursuance and/or implementation of continuous professional development among staff – especially as it relates to newly qualified staff who may be more comfortable with technology, as opposed to long-standing staff who may be better versed at traditional forms of education delivery.

Focus might also be given to creatively introducing new technologies into classrooms so as to improve the quality of subject matter. As Sutch (2010) notes, “The new networking technologies could strengthen subject teaching by allowing teachers to draw in more experts online, and making more use of other people with accumulated knowledge, such as the retired” (p. 4). Importantly, Sutch (2010) notes that increased access to information alone does not equate to better subject knowledge; in this regard, effective leadership should focus on an appropriate blend of traditional and emerging pedagogic styles, with the emphasis placed upon developing staff confidence and depth of knowledge as a means to support future student learning (p. 4).
The progression of technology is indeed moving at a fast pace, reaching both developed and developing worlds. Take some time to read and reflect on the following extract from the UNESCO, *International Review of Education* (2013):

> “Thanks to the spread of mobile phones and the Internet, more people have access to information technology than ever before. In 1998, only 20 per cent of people in developed countries and about one per cent of those in the developing world had a mobile phone subscription (ITU 2010). By 2013, these shares had climbed to 128 and 89 per cent respectively (ITU 2013). There are now 6.8 billion mobile phone subscriptions in the world, almost one per person. Internet access and use have also grown dramatically. In developed countries, the number of internet users increased from 40 per cent of the population in 2003 to 77 per cent in 2013, and from about 3 to 31 per cent in developing countries (ibid.). Technology and information skills are becoming a key element of basic education. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education can increase access to learning opportunities. Moreover, their use is very likely to provide opportunities to improve and facilitate teaching as well as learning”.

(p. 315)

Moving away from technological advancements alone, effective leadership must accommodate broader social movements, such as the change in workplace dynamics within an increasingly diverse and connected world. The following chart, adapted from a publication titled ‘Developing the 21st Century Leader’ (2010), allows us to better examine such leadership changes:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>In the past, leaders:</th>
<th>Today, leaders:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong></td>
<td>Made mistakes due to over-confidence in their own knowledge and abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Society</strong></td>
<td>Neglected the health of the economy, society, and the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity</strong></td>
<td>Merely accepted the facts of a diverse workforce and global</td>
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</table>
While the above chart was designed to reflect modern leadership traits within a professional business environment, its application within a school environment remains valid. For instance, leaders within schools are increasingly encouraged to consider their environment within the broader local and global community, with an emphasis placed on applying a holistic view, driven by a sense of the greater good. To this end, Fullan (as cited in Zegarac, 2012) states:

If I’m a school principal... (I have the responsibility) not just for my own school, but also to contribute to the improvement of other schools in my district, and to the improvement of the district. If I’m a district leader, I have a responsibility to contribute to the improvement of the province as a whole. So this involves making the smaller picture better and at the same time, identifying with the larger picture and helping to make it better.

Modern and effective leadership within a school environment also includes the development of relationships between staff that are founded on trust, collaboration and the encouragement of new ideas. In his book, Cultivating Leadership in Schools, Gordon A. Donaldson Jr. (2001) notes:

(In schools) where egalitarian, professional values are the espoused norm and authority is distributed, leadership resides in the relationships among people. When the relationship among teachers, principals, staff, and others permits, it can mobilize them to share in actions, beliefs, and values. Leadership, then, requires not one person but at least two, and preferably many.
Donaldson Jr. (2001) also emphasises the role of leadership in inspiring and sustaining moral convictions or values within a school. He notes:

_The educator’s calling has a moral dimension: When all is said and done, he or she seeks to make individual lives and society in general better; teachers enlighten and empower their students...The model of leadership we pursue in schools must accommodate this fundamental reality. If the leadership relationship is to mobilize many, it must strike a chord with the deepest sense of calling._

(p. 43)

Reflection Space:

Take some time to reflect upon the above modern leadership chart. Examine the characteristics of ‘today’s leaders’ and determine whether or not your professional environment demonstrates these qualities (for instance, ask yourself: does my school leader and/or peers recognise and take steps to expand the limits of their knowledge and abilities?).

SUMMARY

The teaching profession does not stand aside from the currents of local and global change. An increasingly connected or globalised economy is challenging educators to reassess the nature of the classroom, traditional methods of instruction and notions of leadership.

The need to provide appropriate teacher education, which meets the needs of the present age, remains an important and steadfast requirement. As Kumar and Parveen (2013) note:

_Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. It is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein..._

_No nation develops beyond the quality of its education system, which is highly dependent on the quality of its teachers._

(p. 8)
Educators need to feel comfortable and confident in utilising both modern technology and traditional pedagogic styles to deliver the best possible education outcomes. This assuredness should be based on strong leadership – a clear, yet flexible figure (or figures) whose vision encompasses the reality of change, yet espouses the necessity of traditional skills and values; qualities that are intrinsically human and integral to the moral purpose of teaching.

**Exercise Space:**

“The challenge facing educational schools is not to do a better job at what they are already doing, but to do a fundamentally different job. They are now in the business of preparing educators for a new world” – Arthur Levine (as cited in AACTE, 2010, p. 14).

Write a short essay responding to the above statement (600-700 words). Consider the tone of the statement and its implications – do educational schools need to do a fundamentally different job? In your response, make reference to your own educational experience. Where possible, cite academic literature to strengthen your stance.

**Open Dialogue:**

Schools face many different internal and external challenges. Effective leadership by principals and peers ensures these difficulties are met with enthusiasm, collaboration and dedication. In Unit Two, we explore the role of leadership in promoting a safe, conducive and collaborative school culture.

In this instance, it serves well to provide a summary of several key leadership characteristics within the school environment. There is a wealth of literature on school leadership; if time permits, we encourage you to read the reference material cited throughout this course – the majority of the work is readily available online.

The following leadership characteristics are drawn from, ‘Growing Tomorrow’s Leaders Today’, a publication issued by the New York State Board of Regents and The New York State Education Department. The publication is noted for its clear and informative content.

**Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership**

1. Leaders know and understand what it means and what it takes to be a leader.
Leadership is the act of identifying important goals and then motivating and enabling others to devote themselves and all necessary resources to achievement. It includes summoning one’s self and others to learn and adapt to the new situation represented by the goal.

2. **Leaders have a vision for schools that they constantly share and promote.**

   Leaders have a vision of the ideal, can articulate this vision to any audience, and work diligently to make it a reality. Leaders also know how to build upon and sustain a vision that preceded them.

3. **Leaders communicate clearly and effectively.**

   Leaders possess effective writing and presentation skills. They express themselves clearly, and are confident and capable of responding to the hard questions in a public forum. They are also direct and precise questioners, always seeking understanding.

4. **Leaders collaborate and cooperate with others.**

   Leaders communicate high expectations and provide accurate information to foster understanding and to maintain trust and confidence. Leaders reach out to others for support and assistance, build partnerships, secure resources, and share credit for success and accomplishments. School leaders manage change through effective relationships with school boards.

5. **Leaders persevere and take the ‘long view’.**

   Leaders build institutions that endure. They ‘stay the course’, maintain focus, anticipate and work to overcome resistance. They create capacity within the organization to achieve and sustain its vision.

6. **Leaders support, develop and nurture staff.**

   Leaders set a standard for ethical behaviour. They seek diverse perspectives and alternative points-of-view. They encourage initiative, innovation, collaboration, and a strong work ethic. Leaders expect and provide opportunities for staff to engage in continuous personal and professional growth. They recognize individual talents and assign responsibility and authority for specific tasks. Leaders celebrate accomplishments. They identify recruit, mentor, and promote potential leaders.

7. **Leaders hold themselves and others responsible and accountable.**

   Leaders embrace and adhere to comprehensive planning that improves the organization. They use data to determine the present state of the organization, identify root cause problems, propose solutions, and validate accomplishments. Leaders respect responsibility and accountability and manage resources effectively and efficiently. They
require staff to establish and meet clear indicators of success. Leaders in education also know and understand good pedagogy and effective classroom practices and support sustained professional development. They recognize the importance of learning standards and significance of assessments.

8. **Leaders never stop learning and honing their skills.**

Leaders are introspective and reflective. Leaders ask questions and seek answers. Leaders in education are familiar with current research and best practice, not only in education, but also in other related fields. They maintain a personal plan for self-improvement and continuous learning, and balance their professional and personal lives, making time for other interests.

9. **Leaders have the courage to take informed risks.**

Leaders embrace informed, planned change and recognize that everyone may not support change. Leaders work to win support and are willing to take action in support of their vision even in the face of opposition.

**TOPIC 1.2 - THE ROLE OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL VALUES**

**INTRODUCTION**

It was David’s first teaching day at Joyhappy High School and he was a little nervous. In order to make David’s transition easier, the principal assigned an experienced teacher, Nathan, to be his first day mentor. “Nathan will show you around”, said the principal. “He has been here for 30 years. He knows everyone and everything. You shouldn’t have a problem”.

Nathan had an impeccable history; he had studied at the best university in the country; he had worked at Joyhappy High School first as a new teacher, and finally as Head of English. There was a rumour that he would soon be promoted to assistant principal.

David’s first day of instruction went well; the students seemed happy and engaged. “You look tired!” said Nathan. “I am,” replied David.

“If you want some free advice from a veteran teacher,” added Nathan, “I wouldn’t try so hard. You’ll be burnt out by the end of the first term. Most of these kids come from difficult homes; they bring all their problems into the classroom. They love to upset the teacher – it’s what they live for. Don’t try so hard. It isn’t worth it. Most of these students will drop out soon”.
David was very upset. However, he decided that it was probably best not to mention anything. He was only new; while Nathan had 30 years of experience. Perhaps, he thought, I should show less enthusiasm; maybe then I will fit in with my peers.

As an outsider, what are we to deduce from this fictional scenario? Is Nathan’s advice to David professionally sound? The answer, of course, is no. Nathan’s advice is unprofessional and without ethical moral; in this instance, it reflects not only an entrenched negative professional value, but perhaps, also a systemic dysfunction within the broader fictional school.

The personal and professional values held by peers, or leadership staff, within a school have a lasting and profound impact on both instruction and staff/student morale. Marjorie Brown (1964) defines values as:

A conception of the desirable held by an individual or group. As a conception of the desirable, value is a standard which influences (1) ends or goals of action, (2) means used in attempting to reach those ends or goals, and (3) modes or styles of action. Certain aspects of our value system are bound up in the nature of the thing we call a ‘profession’.

(p. 67)

While values may be implicit or explicit, they are ever-present within the classroom and alter the quality and character of instruction and class dynamics. Robert Thornberg (2008) adds:

Values are expressed in the ways teachers organise and manage classroom activity, in the way teachers’ present, value, and choose educational content, in what teachers choose to permit or encourage in the classroom, in their teacher style, disciplinary procedures, attitudes, treatment of and relations to the students, and in how they relate to school rules etc.

Specific values held by educators might include care, trust, respect and integrity. Values might underpin an educator’s decision to enter the profession, such as a commitment to justice, or welfare or to a local community. Values may also be culturally specific, or individual – such as the ethics espoused by a religious text, or a personal commitment to personal and professional improvement. Values may also be an explicit tenet of a school’s purpose or vision, binding students and teachers alike – for instance, the belief that all children have a right to education, or the pursuance of knowledge by staff and students.

Importantly, values are not fixed; they can be influenced or altered in both a negative and positive way. Kumar and Parveen (2013) note:

People come to teacher education with beliefs, values, commitments, personalities and moral codes from their upbringing and schooling which
affect who they are as teachers and what they are able to learn in teacher education and in teaching. Helping teacher candidates examine critically their beliefs and values as they relate to teaching, learning and subject matter and form a vision of good teaching to guide and inspire their learning and their work is a central task of teacher education.

(p. 9)

In this unit, we will focus on two values: the belief in the importance of (1) lifelong learning and (2) reflective practice. There are of course many other values that could be explored (such as resilience, inclusion, critical thinking and student-centred learning). We have chosen these two values because they reflect the importance of continuous learning or professional development and the necessity for all educators (and citizens alike) to continuously take stock of their actions, and critically explore the impetus that propels them onwards.

Reflection Space:

Most schools and educational organisations have clear guidelines relating to personal and professional values. These guidelines are usually published and are readily accessible, to be distributed to staff, parents and interested community members. These guidelines serve to clearly announce what is expected at the workplace, and what beliefs and practices staff, students and members firmly uphold.

As an example, we can look at the ‘Ontario College of Teachers: Foundations of Professional Practice’. You can access the publication freely by visiting: http://www.oct.ca/~/media/PDF/Foundations%20of%20Professional%20Practice/Foundations_e.ashx.

On page 18, under the title, ‘Professional Identity and the Standards’, the College in part states:

College members strive to be:

- Caring role models and mentors committed to student success and the love of learning.
- Ethical decision-makers who exercise responsible, informed professional judgment.
- Self-directed learners who recognize that their own learning directly influences student learning.
- Critical and creative thinkers who work towards improving and enhancing professional practice.
- Collaborative partners and leaders in learning communities.
• Reflective and knowledgeable practitioners who inquire into and continue to refine professional practice.
• Responsive pedagogical leaders who are respectful of equity and diversity within Ontario’s classrooms and School.

Take some time to reflect upon the College’s values. Note how they are written – clearly and concisely. Reflect upon your own professional environment and list some of the values upheld by your organisation or peers. Are they clear and concise? Are they easily accessible? Finally, briefly describe the relationship between personal and professional values and modern leadership? Do they impede or aid leadership?

LIFELONG LEARNING

Learning is not a vessel that can be filled. Although it is to be regularly savoured, the pursuit of knowledge should be ongoing throughout the career of all educators. In its simplest form, lifelong learning is an “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence” (Association of American Colleges and Universities).

The concept of lifelong learning is in itself not new. The American philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) noted the role of educational institutions in promoting democratic beliefs; schools, colleges and universities were organisations where students developed the necessary skills to adapt to a changing world. Dewey (as cited in Brodbelt, 1983) believed in the continuing nature of education stating, “There is nothing to which growth is relative save more growth, there is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education” (p. 73). In this respect, the education process – or the pursuit of knowledge – was lifelong and not bound by organisational structures (such as school years and university degrees) or age.

In the reports, ‘Learning to Be’ (UNESCO, 1972), ‘Learning: The Treasure Within’ (UNESCO, 1998) and the more recent publication, ‘International Review of Education’ (UNESCO, 2013), the concept of lifelong learning has gained both greater definition and substance. The first report states:

\[ \text{only an over-all, lifelong education can produce the kind of complete man the need for whom is increasing with the continually more stringent constraints tearing the individual asunder. We should no longer assiduously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life—‘learn to be’.} \]

(Edgar, 1972, p. 7)
The second report, seeks to redefine the notion of ‘lifelong education’ (a precursor to lifelong learning):

It seems to us that the concept of an education pursued throughout life, with all its advantages in terms of flexibility, diversity and availability at different times and in different places, should command wide support. There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education. Not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole human beings – their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and the ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community.

(UNESCO, 1998, p. 17)

The final report emphasises the connection between education and society, noting the many ways in which education can serve the local and global common good:

The concept and practice of lifelong learning are more important than ever. Lifelong learning, after all, is about embracing and responding to change. It is about fostering social inclusion, empowering women and men, correcting disadvantage, and promoting diverse modes of learning. It fosters not only employability, but also participation in society as a whole. It respects context, history, heritage and culture. Lifelong learning represents an opportunity to build inclusive and sustainable societies that open up learning opportunities to all. Lifelong learning benefits everyone: young and old, poor and rich, women and men; of all nationalities, cultures and languages. Through its potential to build human capacities at all levels and throughout life, it is a vital driver of human and socioeconomic development, and a means of turning current challenges into opportunities.

(UNESCO, 2013, p. 316)

Reading Space:

As mentioned, the concept of lifelong learning is in itself not new. Not only has it been raised as an important concept by philosophers, it also forms part of the traditional customs of many cultures.

Turn to the UNESCO publication, Integrating Lifelong Learning Perspectives. This informative publication looks at lifelong learning initiatives throughout varying
communities across the world. Choose a chapter that interests you and provide a brief summary, highlighting the key points.

Finally, reflect upon your experiences with lifelong learning. Are there any long-standing traditions within your own culture that are similar to this concept? What benefits can you see in adopting lifelong learning concepts within your professional environment and/or community?

**LIFELONG LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP**

The concept of lifelong learning clearly aligns with the modern leadership trait of ‘reflection’; specifically, ‘today, leaders recognise and take steps to expand the limits of their knowledge and abilities’. Once implemented effectively, lifelong learning strategies can have a positive effect on staff abilities and morale, student outcomes and the overall culture of a school. As stated, lifelong learning seeks to prepare individuals for change and has a strong focus on the ties between education and the broader common good.

At times, lifelong learning can seem like simply an abstract quality – something positive and preferable, yet not entirely implementable. To this end, the Association of American Colleges and Universities has devised the ‘Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning VALUE Rubric’. The Association (n.d) notes:

> The (VALUE) rubric is designed to assess the skills and dispositions involved in lifelong learning, which are curiosity, transfer, independence, initiative and reflection...The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment.

The rubric provides a clear and effective way for leaders to analyse, implement and evaluate lifelong learning strategies.

**Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning VALUE Rubric**
Reflection Space:

Reflect on the ‘Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning VALUE Rubric’. Choose a project you have undertaken in the past and examine it through the lens of the rubric. Go beyond simply evaluating the written material, but also examine the mind frame you adopted while completing the project (were you curious? Did you draw upon past knowledge?), what you learnt from the project and whether you conducted any follow-up exercises.

Finally, reflect on how the rubric could be used as a positive leadership tool within the professional environment.

Reflective Practice

Julie’s first day as principal at Cleverchildren Primary School was full of excitement and potential. She had spent many years as a classroom teacher and vice principal at a neighbouring local school before landing the prized position.
Julie was experienced and enthusiastic. Although she was a little nervous about the scope of the new role, she did not allow herself to show any outward signs of worry; a lack of confidence, she thought, would foster uncertainty in her fellow peers; mayhem would ensue: demoralised staff, disruptive students, and unhappy parents.

Julie’s conceptions of leadership were admirable. She had spent many hours devising a new school vision and a new list of important school values. Although she had yet to show them to other senior staff, she knew that they would instantly agree with the improved humanistic ideals and willingly adapt. Besides, it was early days; the school year had just started.

Things however did not go as Julie planned. As weeks passed Julie was burdened by administrative tasks requiring both considered time and effort. She increasingly became disconnected from staff and students. The presentation she had planned to give on the new school vision and value system remained unopened in her PC.

Julie didn’t understand how things had gone wrong. She had shown positivity and enthusiasm. “You need to take a step back and think about your actions”, suggested a fellow teacher. “It will help you see things with greater clarity”.

“Stop and think!” she replied. “If only I had the time! I’m expected to lead. Perhaps during the school break”.

The above fictional scenario demonstrates how a leader’s actions, although admirable, can be ultimately misguided and detrimental. The term leadership suggests that an individual – a leader – must always remain ahead of the pack, as a symbolic alpha-figure. In turn, staying ahead of the pack suggests a constant state of forward motion; a leader, in this regard, must continuously demonstrate sound judgement without recourse to reflection. This continuous state of motion is of course untenable and misguided in its individualistic – or silo – mind-frame. Leadership requires collaboration and constant reflection, including reflection on our failed efforts.

There are many varying definitions of reflective practice. In general, reflective practice refers to a process where practitioners:

- engage in a continuous cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation in order to understand their own actions and the reactions they promote in themselves and in learners... The goal is not necessarily to address a specific problem or question defined at the outset, as in practitioner research, but to observe and refine practice in general on an ongoing basis.

(Cunningham, 2011)
Reflection Space:

Throughout this unit you have been asked to reflect upon key concepts. Your responses have been noted in your reflection journal; in Course One, as in this course, they have formed part of your assessment.

Reflective journals are a good way to not only develop good critical reflection skills, but to ensure sound professional development. Your responses should be honest and detailed.

You are encouraged to think critically; critical thinking can be defined as, “the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action” (Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2013). In this instance, critical thinking should however not override your style! (It’s a journal, not an academic dissertation).

Thinking critically is not necessarily an instinctual trait; yet, it is an important skill that can be learned and developed. Critical thinking allows you to shift from being the passive receiver of information and experiences, to the role of active seeker. Accordingly, there is an important link or relationship between reflection and critical thinking – the former fostering the latter and vice versa, both being part of reflective practice as a whole.

Reflect upon the responses you have provided in your journal. Are they honest and detailed? Are your thoughts well considered? Do they show critical thinking?

As mentioned, there are many varying definitions of reflective practices. There are an equal number of theories demonstrating the practical implementation of reflective practice. Most of this theory is beyond the practical scope of this unit; however, we strongly encourage you to independently pursue this information.

In this instance, carry out some preliminary research on reflective practice and critical thinking. Provide two definitions of each concept. How do you perceive their relationship? What role do these concepts have in ensuring effective leadership?

Returning to our fictional scenario, as a leader Julie failed to dedicate time to self-observation and self-evaluation. Through reflective practice, both independently and collaboratively with her peers, she would have been able to observe and refine her practices. In examining the role of leadership and reflective practice within a changing world, Joseph A. Raelin (2002) notes, “In our turbulent global environment...we need managers who can inspire reflection to the extent of generating new ways of coping with
change. A reflective culture makes it possible for people to constantly challenge without fear of retaliation” (p. 68).

Raelin however notes that implementing effective reflective practices requires a shift in the perception of control – where ideas and critical thinking are encouraged and leading principles and viewpoints are challenged. The reward is a more collaborative environment and a better chance of collectively leading, with both flexibility and sound judgement, through change. In our fictional scenario, Julie would have greatly benefited by communicating with her peers. In an effective reflective environment, her admirable notions in regards to her school vision and values would have been well received; their worth and substance would have been aided by the ideas of her peers; in turn, the new school vision and values would have left her PC and the abstract world of ‘good ideas/theory’, and gained substance, practicality and a motivating spirit among staff, students and parents.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN ACTION
The importance of reflective practice within the education profession is well documented and long standing. Again, in his book, *How We Think*, John Dewey (as cited in McGraw Hill, n.d) noted the importance of reflective thinking as a way to guide learning, rather than simply being caught in the current of routine action:

> Thought affords the sole method of escape from purely impulsive or purely routine action. A being without capacity for thought is moved only by instincts and appetites, as these are called forth by outward conditions and the inner state of the organism. A being thus moved is, as it were, pushed from behind.

(p. 10)

In this regard, leadership without recourse to reflection, results in a lack of control. Without a clear path forward, one founded on reflection and sound judgement, a leader can grow lost – dumbfounded by the rapidity by which events have overcome his or her actions. In turn, such actions encourage mistakes; in order to stem such mistakes, non-reflective leaders will make rash decisions, further embedding bad practice. Reflection at this late stage involves wading through a myriad of errors – for instance, think of the many proliferating consequences that can occur after making bad financial decisions, employing inadequate instruction methods, or keeping poor staff relations.

Reflective practice is a vital skill, requiring continuous vigilance and development. The educator Donald Schön advocated the importance of reflection in the teaching profession. His concepts of ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-action’, were fundamental in establishing reflection as a practice. These two interrelated concepts can me respectively
described as reflecting while in the process of doing something, and reflecting after the action. Linda Finley (2008) describes both processes in further detail:

*In the case of reflection-on-action, professionals are understood consciously to review, describe, analyse and evaluate their past practice with a view to gaining insight to improve future practice. With reflection-in-action, professionals are seen as examining their experiences and responses as they occur. In both types of reflection, professionals aim to connect with their feelings and attend to relevant theory. They seek to build new understandings to shape their action in the unfolding situation.*

(p. 3)

The process of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action may be modelled: (see over)

(adapted from McGraw Hill, n.d, p. 10)

As the diagram above illustrates, the process of reflection is not quite circular, but rather should be conceived as something that is ‘enacted’ (from a ‘starting point’) and then continuously applied.

**Reflection Space:**

Reflective writing utilises a specific vocabulary. Consider the following template offered by Paul Surgenor (2011). What types of words are employed? Reflect on an event or a key concept that you participated in or learnt and use the template to form your reflective answer.
We now have an understanding of what constitutes reflective practice. We are able to see the importance of continuous reflection. But how do professional leaders – such as our fictional Julie – implement effective reflective practices? To this end, Joseph A. Raelin (2002) provides five practical suggestions. While Raelin’s focus is on reflective practices within a professional business organisation, his suggestions do resonate within the education profession:

**Suggestions for Fostering Reflective Practices**

(1) **Reflective actions**—just one person demonstrating the value of inquiry generates interest in reflection among members of a team or work unit. A team may be introduced to reflective activities and processes such as journals, post meeting e-mail minutes, reflective note taking, learning histories, and ‘stop and reflect’ or debriefing episodes held during or at the end of meetings.

(2) **Building communities**—individuals may be encouraged to network with fellow employees who, though not necessarily in the same work unit, may have a shared interest in a craft or job. Other small groups, even dyads, could form for mentoring or support purposes, for sharing and testing ideas, or merely for feedback and exchange on initiatives and performance.

(3) **Process improvement**—although quality improvement approaches, such as total quality management, may not critically probe to the deeper levels of reflection...they reinforce the value of learning from experience, whether before, during, or after the practice in question.

(4) **Learning teams**—whether constituted to support individuals working on their own projects, in the form of work or of self-discovery, or to support task teams working on meaningful action-learning projects, learning teams represent a vehicle to merge theory and practice. Participants, with assistance from their peers and qualified facilitators, use the learning team to help them make sense of their experiences in light of relevant theory. They discuss...
not only the practical dilemmas arising from actions in their work settings but also the application or misapplication of concepts and theories to these actions.

(5) **Culture of learning**—Reflective practice tends to flourish in learning and collaborative environments. Senior managers have a particularly important role in modelling a learning orientation, in particular, a culture that values continuous discovery and experimentation. Reflective practice can become a way of life when organizational members feel free to challenge the governing values of their practice and where structures and standards can change to accommodate new requirements.

(p. 69)

A central tenet throughout Raelin’s suggestions is the importance of collaboration. While reflection is often associated with introspection, the latter term denotes a completely cloistered process. The ideas of ‘building (reflective) communities’ or establishing a ‘culture of learning’ certainly has relevance within the education profession – in Unit Three we will examine the importance of professional learning networks and communities of practice.

**SUMMARY**

At times, it seems self-evident to assert that professional environments require clearly stipulated values – visions, goals and beliefs that are worth upholding. Everyday experiences show us otherwise; dysfunction exists within the best of institutions. Without a strong, clear value system or vision, a school will drift aimlessly, subject to the uncertain currents of negligence and apathy. Making values a priority is a choice, and it is a vital one.

With choice, comes the need for reflection. We would all like to think that our actions are purposeful and well considered. In reality, we make thousands (if not many more) tiny and large decisions each day. In the face of such magnitude, it is understandable that we do not stop and meditate deeply on each action. It is only when we are faced with a new challenge, one that has serious implications that we take the time to pause and think rigorously. However, even then, there is grounds to question the quality of our day-to-day critical thinking – it is inevitable that we will all make mistakes at some time, isn’t it?

But what permanency do values have in our rapidly changing world? And who has the time to think in this information-laden society, where thought is second to convenience? Values go beyond trends; they are steadfast human qualities that define who we are and how we wish to be regarded. We should all make time to think, to think critically.

Life will never be free of mistakes, but reflection will allow us to make sound judgements in the future. This is learning, lifelong learning. As educators we have the responsibility to do our best and to prepare students to become citizens of both a local and global community. If we are to lead, to teach, we need to have values; we need to think, and importantly, inspire thought.
Reading Space:

Turn to *Five Minds for the Future*. In the chapter titled, ‘The Disciplined Mind’ (pp.21-44), Gardner (2006) discusses the nature and importance of disciplinary understanding and how it differs from ‘subject matter’. He also discusses the way in which a disciplined mind encourages continuous learning. Provide responses to the following questions:

1. “A disciplined mind constitutes a distinctive way of thinking about the world. Scientists observe the world; come up with tentative classifications, concepts, and theories; design experiments in order to test these tentative theories; revise the theories in light of the findings; and then return newly informed to make further observations, redo classifications, and devise experiments” (Gardner, 2006, p. 27).

In your mind what characterises the discipline of education? Do educators, like scientists, have ‘thinking styles’ that characterise their profession?

2. “In the future, we need a less ritualistic, more deeply internalized form of discipline. Such a disciplined individual continues to learn, but not because she has been programmed to spend two hours a night hitting the books. Rather, she continues to learn, to develop her disciplinary understanding, for two other reasons: (1) she realizes that, given the accumulation of new data, knowledge, and methods, she must become a lifelong student; (2) she has come to enjoy – indeed, she has become passionate about – the process of learning about the world” (Gardner, 2006, p. 41).

Discuss your impetus to learn and teach? What drives you to continue developing as a professional, and as a citizen of your community and the broader global world? How would you convey the sense to peers and students that learning is enjoyable?

3. “I concern myself here (in the book) with the kinds of minds that people will need if they – if we – are to thrive in the world during the eras to come...But I cannot hide the fact that I am engaged as well in a ‘values enterprise’: the minds that I describe are also the ones that I believe we should develop in the future” (Gardner, 2006, p. 1).

In your opinion, what are the values and characteristics of mind that will serve educators best in order to face a rapidly changing world?

**REFERENCES**


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UNIT TWO: THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Unit Introduction

As members within a service-profession, educators play an important role. By demonstrating engaging, supportive and positive leadership, both in the classroom and in the broader professional environment, educators help equip individuals with the necessary skills to thrive in a changing world.

However, the responsibilities and dynamics of a workplace can often challenge even experienced educators. At times, the altruism which may have guided the initial career choice can collide with the realities of day-to-day duties; educators must not only complete instruction, but meet extracurricular requirements and personal development initiatives. In discussing the changing nature of the profession, Andy Hargraves (1992) notes, “teachers (are) expected to respond to greater pressures and to comply with multiplying innovations under conditions that are at best stable and at worst deteriorating” (p. 88).

How then do educators balance the desire to be committed to the profession, with the realities of the demands? Further, in the current age, can educators continue to hold inspiring, rewarding and long-standing careers? In a recent journal article titled ‘Sustainable Workplaces, Retainable Teachers’, Nathan Eklund (2009) suggests two approaches to improving schools and retaining gifted educators:

1. Schools must be supportive, healthy workplaces for adults as well as students.

2. Educators must be mindful daily of their own boundaries and limitations.

(p. 26)

Unit Two will explore what constitutes a supportive and healthy workplace. It will examine a broad range of literature on the topic, and demonstrate how you can discern whether your professional environment is optimal. Importantly, the unit will provide the necessary tools and guidelines you will need to create a better professional environment and ensure rewarding leadership.

Learning in Context:

“Are you happy at work?”

This simple statement appears to have a universal quality; everyone should be capable of reflecting upon their own situation and sentiments and responding, yes or no.
But when we ask a further question – “why are/aren’t you happy?” – we quickly realise that while happiness may be a universal sentiment, the many reasons for being happy are varied and culturally dependent.

On the topic of good management, a fundamental pillar of professional happiness, Richard H. Pfau (1991) has written:

*The nature of good management is culturally specific. A management technique that is effective in one nation or culture is not necessarily appropriate in another. Management is an activity that involves dealing with people as well as with non-human resources. Acceptable and workable ways of dealing with people vary, though, from one culture to another.*

(p. 1)

Though Pfau’s article is now twenty-two years old, and may not fare well in an increasingly globalised world, it successfully highlighted professional differences between citizens of Botswana, Lesotho (Basotho), Swaziland (Swati) and the U.S.A. (via U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers responses).

Pfau examined ‘Ideal Job Factors’ as well as the ‘Type of Manager Respondents Would Prefer to Work Under’. For instance, while Botswana respondents favoured a manager who accepted the majority viewpoint as the decision, respondents from the U.S.A favoured a manager who expected all to work loyally to implement a decision, whether or not it was in accordance with the advice given by co-workers (Pfau, 1991, p. 5).

The exercises in Unit Two encourage you to reflect upon the broad literature findings and place this information within your own context. Approaching the exercises with a critical and creative mind will ensure you get the most out of the course.

![Reflection Space:](image)

When meeting educators from varying schools, Nathan Eklund (2009, p. 26) asks three simple questions:

1. *What makes a good day at work for you?*
2. *What makes a bad day at work?*
3. *What can save a bad day?*

Take some time and respond to these questions. When writing your response, describe any cultural differences that inform your answer and whether your answer has changed throughout your professional life.
UNIT OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit current and future educational leaders should be able to:

1. Identify ways to develop a safe, collaborative and inclusive environment.
2. Develop a plan to implement student-centered learning practices.
3. Use critical and creative skills to implement change and provide effective leadership.

REQUIRED UNIT READINGS


TOPIC 2.1 – DEVELOPING A SAFE, CONDUCIVE AND COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION
What does it mean when an educator laments, “That is just how things are done at this school”? Does this statement reflect the educator’s teaching skills, experience or motivation? Or does it signify a broader organisational concern?

Over the years, significant attention has been given to the role of professional development, class management and curriculum expertise in developing successful schools. Less attention has been given to the importance of creating a healthy school culture (see Wagner, 2006).

School culture is difficult to define; yet its existence is ever-present, and its role in fostering healthy professional environments is vital. Roland Barth states, “A school’s culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have” (as cited in Charter Education Partnership, 2010, p. 2).

School culture encompasses the assumptions, beliefs and practices held by a school. In this regard it is both seen and unseen, heard and unheard, enacted or neglected. As Deal and Peterson note, “This invisible, taken-for-granted flow of beliefs and assumptions gives meaning to what people say and do. It shapes how they interpret hundreds of daily transactions. This deeper structure of life in organizations is reflected and transmitted through symbolic language and expressive action” (1999, p. 3). In a perceivable sense, school culture can encompass such things as school uniforms, the school’s statement of purpose, mottos or emblems; it can also include teacher relationships, stated hierarchies, and even architectural designs and welfare and recruitment policies.

A healthy school culture requires constant attention, collaboration among staff, students and parents, and a clear and unified vision. The rewards of this hard and continuous work include a more inclusive and happier environment, and an increased sense of collegiality and satisfaction. As Deal and Peterson (1998) state, characteristics of a healthy school culture include:

- A “shared sense of purpose, where (educators) pour their hearts into teaching”.
- Clear “underlying norms” of “collegiality, improvement, and hard work”.
- “Rituals and traditions (which) celebrate student accomplishment, teacher innovation, and parental commitment”.

Culture of Leadership
• An “informal network of storytellers, heroes, and heroines” who provide a “social web of information, support, and history”.

• A place “where success, joy and humour abound”.

(p. 29)

A professional learning environment with a healthy culture is abound with educators whose laments are replaced with exemplary pride, “That is just how things are done at this school”.

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL CULTURE

A child returns from school and complains of bullying; her parent’s complaints are never investigated. An educator welcomes you on your first day at work and offers to be your ‘teacher buddy’. A principal shrugs when asked to explain the school vision or motto. A classroom where children are challenged by an adaptive and rigorous curriculum and praised for their efforts. A school that fails to engage with parents and treats staff according to strict hierarchies. A workplace that values personal development and encourages new ideas.

All of these statements provide an understanding of healthy and toxic school cultures. They also serve to highlight the fact that culture is not necessarily immediately evident, but is often something that must be experienced to be understood.

School culture, like that of any organisation, is fluid and occurs over time. Maehr and Fyans (as cited in Renchler, 1992) describe the building of culture within professional environments as follows:

Groups tend to work out ways of getting along among themselves. They arrive at certain shared understandings regarding how, when, and where activities are to occur. Above all, they specify the meaning, the value, and the purpose of these activities. In particular, thoughts and perceptions about what is worth striving for are a critical feature of any culture.

(p. 3)

Building upon these concepts, Louise Stoll (as cited in Prosser, 1999) examines culture in the context of schools:

A school’s culture is shaped by its history, context and the people in it. The age of an organisation can impact cultural change...In early years of a new school dominant values emanate from its ‘founders’ and the school makes its culture explicit. It clarifies its values, finds and articulates a unique identity and shares these with newcomers, whether teachers, pupils or parents...
As time passes, the culture moves into a succession phase where differences occur between conservative and liberal forces and new people take leadership roles. In ‘midlife’, the school is well established but needs to continue on a path of growth and renewal...

The most important aspects of the culture are now embedded and taken for granted, and culture is increasingly implicit...Change becomes much more difficult because of less consciousness of the culture; it is harder to articulate and understand. ‘Maturity and/or stagnation and decline’ is most problematical from the cultural change perspective. This stage is reached if the school has ceased to grow and respond to its environment.

(pp. 33-34)

It is the longitudinal and multifaceted nature of school culture which makes it so difficult to define. However, it is the fact that it remains fluid or ongoing, playing out in day-to-day activities, and impacting working relationships and school success, which makes it such a vital concept to understand.

Reflection Space:

Reflect upon your professional experience and describe the different cultural aspects you have encountered. List the traits that have contributed to a positive and negative experience. In your mind, are there any characteristics which are universally positive?

PERCEIVING SCHOOL CULTURE

While school culture encompasses both perceivable and non-perceivable elements, it is possible to create a diagram which aids our understanding.

The Seven Steps to Perceiving School Culture (adapted from Starratt, 1993).
Let’s build upon the idea that school culture is something that needs to be experienced to be fully understood. Imagine yourself walking through the seven steps above. Each step represents an aspect of a school’s culture and can be examined in further detail.

**Step One – Operations**

‘Operations’ refers to the visible things you encounter when you first enter a school. Things to note include: the movement of children to and from class (do children linger together? Are they greeted by staff or encouraged to enter the classroom alone?), the location of staff offices (are they central and accessible, or are they remote and difficult to find?) and the adornment of walls (do you see any photographs, artworks or awards on the walls?). On this initial step, Maeh and Midgley (1996) also note dress codes for both students and staff:

> All schools have some norms for dress. They may be specific and explicit such as when dress codes are drawn up by school staff or school boards. They may be implicit and seldom noted, products of ‘youth culture’ and the media, sometimes subject to informal negotiation with parents and teachers.

(p. 57)
Step Two – Organisation

‘Organisation’ refers to the day-to-day structures that underpin the school. Things to note include: physical organisation (how are children seated in class? Are classrooms close to each other or distant? At recess, are children encouraged to intermingle, or do they have lunch in the classroom?), and teaching organisation. On this last note, Maeh and Midgley (1996) add:

We group students according to grade levels and within grades according to ability levels and sometimes, unfortunately, according to social and ethnic backgrounds. We also organize instruction into subject matter areas and route children to groups to ensure a designated level of exposure to the ‘true, right and beautiful’ ideals the school believes it has been established to promote.

(p. 59)

Step Three – Programs

‘Programs’ refers to both the components of the academic program and any other extracurricular activities. Things to consider include: curriculum content (does the school favour a particular field, for instance, maths or the arts? Are teachers involved in the design of the curriculum? Are new ideas encouraged?), and after school activities (is it mandatory for children to play sport? Does the school encourage children to play in the school yard after school finishes?).

Again, turning to Maeh and Midgley (1996), ‘programs’ can also include technology and work expectations:

One of the more obvious differences between schools is available technology, ranging from paper and pencil through textbooks to computers and state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and services...

(On the role of teachers) What are teachers and administrators asked to do? What are their jobs? And most important, what are the tasks given to students? How is the activity or process of learning defined?

(p. 59)
Step Four – Policies

‘Policies’ refer to the rules and guidelines that govern and enforce school behaviour. Questions to ask might include: does the school have a welfare policy? Are the expectations of staff clearly stipulated? Are there policies towards inclusion and professional development?

Step Five – Goals

‘Goals’ are best exemplified by the school’s mission statement or overarching purpose. A clear and unified goal among principals, educators, students and adults is fundamental in ensuring school success. Maeh and Midgley (1996) state:

(No belief) is more important and influential than the purpose of the school. Indeed, we would argue that the larger questions of purpose frame much of the believing, and consequently the doing, that may be called culture. There are many things we can talk about when discussing school culture, but none are more important for the motivation and learning of children than how the purpose of learning is defined in the cultures of schools.

(p. 64)

Step Six – Beliefs

‘Beliefs’ are the views and principles held and espoused by staff, students and adults. A shared belief system ensures a clear path to a common goal – the school’s purpose.

As Deal and Peterson (1999) state, “beliefs are powerful in schools because they represent the core understandings about student capacity (immutable or alterable), teacher responsibility for learning (little or a lot), expert sources of teacher knowledge (experience, research or intuition), and educational success (will never happen or is achievable)” (p. 27).

Beliefs vary among schools and are culturally dependent. Beliefs can be implicit or explicit and may form part of the schools governing norms. Positive norms, within any given school, might include: treating people with respect, seeing everyone as a potential source of valuable insights and expertise, being willing to take on responsibilities, speaking with pride about the school, and serving the student’s needs rather than personal wants (Deal and Peterson, 1999, p. 28).

Explicitly, beliefs may be purposefully given pride-of-place on the school walls, in the form of school mottos, photographs highlighting the school’s history, images celebrating diversity, and on boards noting exemplary achievements. Maeh and Midgley (1996) note:

Artifacts such as the slogans that appear on school walls or on bulletin boards (closed or enclosed) suggest something about how the school is run. The
prominent listing of an ‘honor roll’ in an elementary school or the posting of grades in high schools shows how learning is viewed as well as what is valued.

(p. 64)

**Step Seven – Myth**

‘Myth’ refers to the stories, traditions and rituals that are followed within a school and which help to provide a basis upon which beliefs, goals and the school’s guiding purpose are built. Activities that indicate a particular custom or myth include: the celebration of cultural or religious dates of importance, the organisation of after-school functions (such as school dances), the implementation of school funding programs (such as book sales) and the involvement of guest speakers from within the community.

Maeh and Midgley (1996) add:

> It is through myths, rituals, and various symbols and artifacts that these expectations, meanings, and purpose are communicated, conveyed and reinforced. Similarly, in the day-to-day life of schools, the stories that are told, the pictures that are displayed, and the content and phrasing of the signs and posters are noteworthy.

(p. 61)

Of particular importance, is the role and nature of stories. The way in which staff communicate among themselves and with students and adults permeates the culture of the school. The recounting of positive educational experiences, be they student or educator achievements, serves to bolster the spirit within a school. The existence of gossip, long-standing acrimonious relationships, or persistent negative narratives, only serves to diminish school spirit.

Deal and Peterson (1999) note:

> Schools are filled with poignant stories of teachers who made a difference, students who turned around, and tough situations that were transformed into joyful events. When these stories become part of the shared lore, they come to life and reinforce cultural commitments and values. It’s not always the literal details of a story that generate power. It’s the figurative interpretation that carries the rich meaning of what school is really about.

(p. 55)

**SUMMARY**
Defining school culture is difficult. ‘The Seven Steps to Perceiving School Culture’ should only be used as a guiding example. In reality, the ‘steps’ are not as clearly defined; in some instances, the ‘steps’ would be better examined as linked characteristics – for instance, there is a strong relationship between goals, beliefs and myth.

Nevertheless, understanding school culture is important. A healthy school culture is vital in ensuring a successful school. In the next section we will explore how to differentiate a healthy from a toxic professional environment.

**Reflection Space:**

Reflect upon your professional experience and describe a time when you have made a difference to a student’s educational experience, or when you transformed a difficult situation into a positive event.

When describing your experience, think about how you could convey this positive message to your peers or students.

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**TOPIC 2.2 – EXAMINING YOUR SCHOOL CULTURE**

Nobody likes to feel isolated. Nobody enjoys feeling as if their efforts are futile, or as if their ideas are not welcomed. The professional environment should not simply be a place to ‘tick the boxes’, or meet the curriculum guidelines and then move on to ‘other and better things’ – your ‘real life’.

We all, to some degree, share these universal feelings. Workplaces should have a strong and positive culture, a clear and driving purpose and a collegial feeling. But how do we determine the current well-being of our own professional environment? Further, how can we set about changing things when we realise they are not well?

Let’s start with a simple question: What does a healthy professional environment feel like? On this topic, Wagner (2006) states:

> People in any healthy organization must have agreement on how to do things and what is worth doing. Staff ability and common goals permeate the school. Time is set aside for schoolwide recognition of all stakeholders. Common agreement on curricular and instructional components, as well as order and discipline, are established through consensus. Open and honest communication is encouraged and there is an abundance of humor and trust. Tangible support from leaders at the school and district levels is also present.
With an understanding of what a healthy professional environment should look like, we can then undertake a ‘School Culture Triage Survey’ (Wagner, 2006). The survey was developed and refined by Phillips, Wagner and Masden-Copas; when conducted, it can help you better understand the current state of your school’s culture.

Specifically, it focuses on three culture behaviours:

1. Professional collaboration: do staff work together to solve professional problems?
2. Affiliative and collegial relationships: do people enjoy working together and are their efforts appreciated?
3. Efficacy or self-determination: Do people enjoy working in the professional environment and do they show initiative to improve their skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL CULTURE TRIAGE SURVEY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scoring: 1= Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4= Often; 5 = Always or Almost Always.</td>
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</table>

**PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION**
1. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.
2. Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule.
3. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.
4. The student behaviour code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff.
5. The planning and organisational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than separate individuals.

**AFFILIATIVE COLLEGIALITY**
1. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school’s values.
2. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other’s company.
3. Our school reflects a true ‘sense’ of community.
4. Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff?
5. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school?
6. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events and recognition of goal attainment.

**SELF-DETERMINATION/EFFICACY**
1. When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair.
2. School members are interdependent and value each other.
3. Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done.
4. Members of our school community seek to define the problem/issue rather than blame others.
5. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.
6. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.

**Scoring the School Culture Triage Survey**

The lowest triage score is 17 and the highest score is 85.

- **17-40** – Critical and immediate attention necessary. Conduct a full-scale assessment of your school’s culture and invest all available resources in repairing and healing the culture.
- **41-59** – Modifications and improvements are necessary. Begin with a more intense assessment of your school’s culture to determine which area is in most need of improvement.
- **60-75** – Monitor and maintain making positive adjustments.
- **76-85** – Amazing! We have never had a score higher than 75!

When conducting the survey, it is important that you remember to:

- Distribute the survey to staff and administrators only.
- Explain to staff and administrators that it is an anonymous survey.
- Not include the scoring page when you distribute the survey, as it may skew results.

**Exercise Space:**

Take some time to conduct the ‘School Culture Triage Survey’ in your professional environment. After completing the survey, score the responses in accordance with the above table.

How does the school culture in your environment rate? Are there any areas that need
particular attention? Write down some preliminary ideas on how you could improve your school culture.

**TOPIC 2.3 – CHANGING YOUR SCHOOL CULTURE**

Let’s imagine a scenario: a principal receives regular complaints from staff, students and adults regarding a range of issues at her school. The principal believes that at the core of the problem is a prevalent negative school culture; she knows that something needs to change.

Her first step is to conduct a ‘School Culture Triage Survey’. The results are less than ideal; they highlight the fact that there is a critical need to address issues immediately. She eagerly shares these findings with staff and administrators at the next staff meeting. To her surprise, staff seem less than interested; in their minds, the survey was not necessary as the problems were evident – the principal is only reiterating what they already know (hasn’t she been listening to them?).

The principal is keen to invest resources into addressing the problems. However, she finds staunch resistance. The school is awash in bitterness and apathy. Even though everyone agrees change would be ‘nice’, the motivation or will to change is missing. Change remains a far distant ideal – besides, the educators say, who has time for change? We spend all of our time managing the students.

Bringing about positive change in any environment is a difficult process. Change, as Kotter (1995) notes, “by definition, requires creating a new system, which in turn always demands leadership” (p. 60). Effective leadership requires the ability to create a strong and clear vision, a sense of urgency among peers, and a willingness to work together for a common, positive future.

Positive leadership is especially important in schools, where educators face a multitude of competing responsibilities. Kotter (1995) adds, “Employees will not make sacrifices, even if they are unhappy with the status quo, unless they believe that useful change is possible. Without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured” (p. 63). In the context of schooling, Louise Stoll (as cited in Prosser, 1999) refers to change as a process of ‘reculturing’; citing Fullan, she adds: “(reculturing is the process of) developing new values, beliefs and norms. For systematic reform it involves building new conceptions about instruction…and new forms of professionalism for teachers” (p. 46). This, she adds, is not an easy task.

Returning to our scenario, what impetus do staff in our imaginary school have to endure the rigours of change? Are they not better placed to simply ‘get on with the job’, and in time, look for better opportunities elsewhere? Is the task faced by our principal too great?
While change may be arduous and painful (often resulting in the dismissal of staff), the benefits for educators, students and adults are real. Literature on effective schools highlights the strong link between a positive school culture and academic success. As Purkey and Smith (as cited in Renchler, 1992) note:

*The literature indicates that a student’s chance for success in learning cognitive skills is heavily influenced by the climate of the school...A school-level culture press in the direction of academic achievement helps shape the environment (and climate) in which the student learns. An academically effective school would be likely to have clear goals related to student achievement, teachers and parents with high expectations, and a structure designed to maximize opportunities for students to learn.*

(p. 4)

Change is almost always a long term endeavour (think of the word ‘reculturing’ and its implications), which requires a framework and commitment at many different professional levels and periods. Change equates to adopting a new way of thinking, acting and living; it is a reformation of personal and professional values; the rewards are only limited by one’s imagination, enthusiasm and commitment.

**CHANGE – A FRAMEWORK**

There is no definitive and universal framework for implementing change. Like many of the topics we have covered in this unit, the dynamics of a workplace and the process of change are culturally dependent. In addressing the topic, most authors chooses a ‘subject-matter’ approach; emphasising the issues that must be addressed (e.g. a clear vision and collaboration), rather than attempting to provide a clear framework.

In this instance, we have chosen to utilise the ‘Eight Steps to Transforming Your Organization’ model created by John P. Kotter (1995). The structure provided by Kotter, as well as his extensive knowledge on the process of change, are invaluable and can be adapted to incorporate the necessities within a school environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eight Steps to Transforming Your Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step One</strong> – Establishing a Sense of Urgency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Examine market and competitive realities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step Two</strong> – Forming a Powerful Guiding Coalition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assembling a group with enough power to lead the change effort.</td>
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</table>
• Encouraging the group to work together as a team.

**Step Three – Creating a Vision.**

• Creating a vision to help direct the change effort.
• Developing strategies for achieving that vision.

**Step Four – Communicating the Vision.**

• Using every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies.
• Teaching new behaviours by the example of the guiding coalition.

**Step Five – Empowering Others to Act on the Vision.**

• Getting rid of obstacles to change.
• Changing systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision.
• Encouraging risk taking and non-traditional ideas, activities, and actions.

**Step Six – Planning for and Creating Short-Term Wins.**

• Planning for visible performance improvements.
• Creating those improvements.
• Recognizing and rewarding employees involved in the improvements.

**Step Seven – Consolidating Improvements and Producing Still More Change.**

• Using increased credibility to change systems, structures and policies that don’t fit the vision.
• Hiring, promoting and developing employees who can implement the vision.
• Reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes and change agents.

**Step Eight – Institutionalizing New Approaches.**

• Articulating the connections between new behaviours and corporate success.

**Step One – Establishing a Sense of Urgency**

The momentum towards change should be governed by a sense of urgency. For instance, if the findings from the ‘School Culture Triage Survey’ suggest a need for immediate action, it is vital to communicate this need and demonstrate the consequences of not acting rapidly (this may include: a continued drop in student and staff morale, a decreasing staff retention rate, or continuing poor results among students).
Kotter (1995) states, “communicate this information (the urgent need for change) broadly and dramatically, especially with respect to crises, potential crises, or great opportunities that are very timely. This first step is essential because just getting a transformation program started requires the aggressive cooperation of many individuals. Without motivation, people won’t help and the effort goes nowhere” (p. 60).

The inspiration for individual and collective motivation is driven by strong leadership. To this end, the role of the principal is vital. Leithwood and Montgomery (as cited in Renchler, 1992) state, “Highly effective principals...seek out the opportunities to clarify goals with staff, students, parents and other relevant members of the school community. They strive towards consensus about these goals and actively encourage the use of such goals in departmental and divisional planning” (p. 5).

Creating a sense of urgency – a belief that school goals are both worthwhile and necessary – will motivate staff to accept the path towards change. To this end, Leithwood and Montgomery (as cited in Renchler, 1992) add,

*People are normally motivated to engage in behaviours which they believe will contribute to goal achievement. The strengths of one’s motivation to act depends on the importance attached to the goal in question and one’s judgement about its achievability; motivational strength also depends on one’s judgement about how successful a particular behaviour will be in moving towards goal achievement.*

(p. 5)

**Reflection Space:**

The following statements cover issues related to school pride, community, optimism and purpose. Reflect on the statements and assess whether your school shows exemplary practices or needs improvement. If it is the latter, reflect upon how you would convey a sense of urgency to staff in order to resolve this issue.

1. Our staff use positive reinforcement to help build pride and self-esteem.
2. Our students believe they can achieve a high level of excellence in school.
3. Positive relationships characterise the school.
4. Minority students feel a real sense of belonging at school.
5. Staff and students have a clear passion and purpose.

**Step Two – Forming a Powerful Guiding Coalition**
On this step, Kotter (1995) states, “Major renewal programs often start with just one or two people. In cases of successful transformation efforts, the leadership coalition grows and grows over time. But whenever some minimum mass is not achieved early in the effort, nothing much worthwhile happens” (p. 62).

Again, it is important to stress the role of the principal in enacting and leading the change process. Setting a clear vision, attainable goals, and forming a diverse and supportive team among peers, each striving towards a common end, is vital. On the role of the principal, Fullan (2000) notes, “I know of no improving school that doesn’t have a principal who is good at leading improvement”. In his studies on reform in Chicago schools, Bryk (as cited from Fullan, 2000) also notes:

(\textit{In schools which evidenced improvement over time...} principals worked together with a supportive base of parents, teachers, and community members to mobilize initiative. Their efforts broadly focused along two major dimensions: first, reaching out to parents and community to strengthen the ties between local school professionals and the clientele they are to serve; and second, working to expand the professional capacities of individual teachers, to promote the formation of a coherent professional community, and to direct resources toward enhancing the quality of instruction.\)

\begin{boxedtext}
\textbf{Reflection Space:}

The following statements cover issues related to leadership. Reflect on the statements and assess whether you agree or disagree with the comments. If it is the latter, reflect upon how you might work on this issue, and how you might then use this truth in creating teams and relationships during times of change.

1. Teachers in the school are candid with me.
2. I have confidence in the expertise of my teachers.
3. I have confidence in the commitment of my staff.
4. I openly share my thoughts and feelings with staff.
5. I feel proud of this school.

\end{boxedtext}

\textbf{Step Three – Creating a Vision}
By far, the predominant issue raised by authors on changing school culture is the importance of having a clear vision. Terrence and Deal (1999) note the importance of ‘School Leaders as Visionaries’ as one of the eight key roles of symbolic leaders. They state:

_Through a careful probe of past and present, they (school leaders) need to identify a clear sense of what the school can become, a picture of a positive future. Visionary leaders continually identify and communicate the hopes and dreams of the school, thus refocusing and refining the school’s purpose and mission..._

_Developing a shared vision for the school can motivate students, staff and community alike. It is not simply for the leader; it is for the common good. By seeking the more profound hopes of all stakeholders, school leaders can weave independent ideas into a collective vision._

(p. 89)

A clear and tangible vision provides the stable path through change. Kotter (1995) states, “Without a sensible vision, a transformation effort can easily dissolve into a list of confusing and incompatible projects that can take the organization in the wrong direction or nowhere at all” (p. 63).

A school vision can be built upon guiding norms. Norms are collective principles which clarify expectations and serve to help hold staff accountable; they are akin to a shared group of professional and personal values. Louise Stoll (as cited in Prosser, 1999) provides a snapshot of common norms used to improve schools:

1. Shared goals – ‘we know where we’re going’.
2. Responsibility for success – ‘we must succeed’.
3. Collegiality – ‘we’re working on this together’.
4. Continuous improvement – ‘we can get better’.
5. Lifelong learning – ‘learning is for everyone’.
6. Risk taking – ‘we learn by trying something new’.
7. Support – ‘there’s always someone there to help’.
8. Mutual respect – ‘everyone has something to offer’.
9. Openness – ‘we can discuss our differences’.
10. Celebration and humour – ‘we feel good about ourselves’.
Reflection Space:

Kotter (1995) states, “If you can’t communicate the vision to someone in five minutes or less and get a reaction that signifies both understanding and interest, you are not yet done with this phase of the transformation process” (p. 63).

Take some time to reflect upon the vision of your school or professional environment. Can you articulate the vision in a clear manner within five minutes? Reflect on ways you can improve the clarity of your vision.

Step Four – Communicating the Vision

Once you can clearly articulate your vision, you must be prepared to communicate it with enthusiasm to others. By demonstrating positivity and commitment, the vision statement moves away from the abstract realm, and into practical, practiced reality.

Reflection Space:

Return to the norms provided by Louise Stoll. Reflect upon what role the norms could play in enacting your vision statement. Be as detailed as possible in your answer. The aim is to move your vision into the practical, practiced realm.

Step Five – Empowering Others to Act on the Vision

On this step, Kotter (1995) notes, “To some degree, a guiding coalition empowers others to take action simply by successfully communicating the new direction. But communication is never sufficient by itself. Renewal also requires the removal of obstacles” (p. 64).

Obstacles impeding the road to change might include: a lack of commitment by staff, especially senior staff with authority; opposition from parents; ineffective leadership – leadership that is too rigid and does not encourage new ideas; a lack of resources; a vision statement that is too broad or ambitious – a vision that offers staff little hope of a successful conclusion.

Step Six – Planning for and Creating Short-Term Wins

As mentioned, change is almost always a long term endeavour. The process can involve ‘ups-and-downs’, periods in which perceived paths prove to be less than fruitful, where a
level of recalibration is needed. Accordingly, it is important to take into account the needs of staff, especially the endurance required to persist with a prolonged period of ‘reculturing’ or change.

Therefore, it is important to create short-term wins – positive improvements that are clearly measurable. Such wins serve to keep the flame of motivation alight. Kotter (1995) states, “Creating short-term wins is different from hoping for short-term wins. The latter is passive, the former active. In a successful transformation, managers actively look for ways to obtain clear performance improvements, establish goals in the yearly planning system, achieve the objectives, and reward the people involved with recognition” (p. 65).

The nature of the short-term wins will be dependent on the purpose of the school change. For instance, a goal to improve the sense of belonging in a school, especially as it relates to minority students, might include the development and implementation of a school course on diversity; this would be followed by a targeted survey, which should indicate a change in values and a greater sense of acceptance among staff and students.

Reflection Space:

Louise Stoll (as cited in Prosser, 1999) notes several characteristic goals of school improvement. They include:

- Enhance pupil outcomes.
- Focus on teaching and learning.
- Builds the capacity to take charge of change regardless of its source.
- Defines its own direction.
- Assesses its current culture and works to develop positive cultural norms.
- Has strategies to achieve its goals.
- Addresses the internal conditions that enhance change.
- Maintains momentum during periods of turbulence.
- Monitors and evaluates its process, progress, achievement and development.

(p. 32)

Reflect on these characteristics. Do any of the above statements align with your vision statement? Create short-term goals that align with each of the above statements.

For instance, in ‘Focus on teaching and learning’, your school might like to move towards a ‘student-centered’ approach to learning. A short-term win might be the development of a teaching structure, noting the differences between a ‘student-centered’ approach and a ‘teacher-led’ approach; a follow-up post-implementation review should show greater levels of student engagement and enthusiasm.
Step Seven – Consolidating Improvements and Producing Still More Change

On this step, Kotter (1995) states:

_Instead of declaring victory, leaders of successful efforts use the credibility afforded by short-term wins to tackle even bigger problems. They go after systems and structures that are not consistent with the transformation vision and have not been confronted before. They pay great attention to who is being promoted, who is hired, and how people are developed. They include new reengineering projects that are even bigger in scope than the initial ones._

(p. 66)

There are many ways in which the consolidation of improvements can occur within a school environment. As Kotter notes, this might include building upon initial projects, expanding their breadth and complexity; a project on improving the appreciation of diversity within the school, might expand to include the creation of ties within the broader community.

However, in this instance, we will focus on future-proofing the change process, specifically through the hiring process. Change, or reculturing, involves a great deal of effort. It follows that in order for change to work successfully over time, the new culture has to be supported by motivated and like-minded peers. In this regard, the hiring process should be carefully managed; prospective educators should be evaluated with respect to the tenets of the ongoing change process, and the vision statement.

Reflection Space:

The following statements represent a broad sample of typical questions asked to prospective educators:

1. Why do you want to teach? Can you explain your teaching philosophy?
2. Why do you want to work in our community?
3. Describe an ideal classroom? Can you describe your classroom management techniques?
4. What is your view on parent-teacher meetings? How do you try and include parents in the education process?
5. What can you tell us about our school vision or purpose?
6. How do you feel about inclusion within the classroom?
7. What motivates you? What does professionalism mean to you?
8. How do you inspire creativity in the classroom? How do you encourage critical thinking?
9. Do you value positive peer relations? What is your view on professional development?
10. What are your long-term goals? What do you hope to achieve this year?

Take a moment and read each question carefully. Imagine that you are a prospective educator; provide responses to each question (remember the context! It is an interview, so your answers have to be considered and fully formed).

Following this, consider the questions from the viewpoint of a school principal. How do the answers you provided align with your school vision? Describe what qualities you would look for in a prospective educator.

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**Step Eight – Institutionalising New Approaches**

The change process requires continued collective support. Over time, effective change will demonstrate itself as a cultural norm. Kotter (1995) notes, “Change sticks when it becomes ‘the way we do things around here,’ when it seeps into the bloodstream of the corporate body. Until new behaviours are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are subject to degradation as soon as the pressure for change is removed” (p. 67).

**SUMMARY**

There is no definitive framework for implementing change. Each school or professional environment will have varying and unique reasons for seeking change; the change management approach adopted by school leaders should reflect these internal and external realities.

In this instance, we have shown how the utilisation of John P. Kotter’s ‘Eight Steps to Transforming Your Organization’ model could be adapted by school leaders. Kotter’s model is founded on a wealth of personal experience and is notable for its clarity and emphasis on immediacy.

Change remains an important and challenging reality of an increasingly globalised world. Educators are certainly not exempt from this reality. Key to effective change management is the clear communication of ideals, a drive to inspire and motivate, and a capacity to work together towards a common good. These are indeed noble characteristics – governed by a sense of positivity and community spirit; indeed, these traits are worth cultivating in all professional environments.

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**Learning in Action:**
Fictional Scenario:

It did not take long for Ms. Gladsmile, the new principal at Happyview High School, to realise there was a serious problem at her school. Every afternoon she would receive numerous complaints from staff and students regarding bullying and classroom misbehaviour.

Happyview High School had a rich and diverse history. Over the years it had been known for its excellence in the Arts and Music. The neighbourhood was vibrant; filled with different cultures. Indeed, most of the students that attended the school were from different countries across the globe.

Why then were there so many problems? Why did the teachers and children seem so unhappy? The answer came from a young girl in the playground, “Everyone at this school is not considered equal. There is a lack of dignity and respect”.

Stepping into Action

Ms. Gladsmile conducted a ‘School Culture Triage Survey’. The findings were alarming and suggested the need for immediate action. Brimming with enthusiasm and positive ideals, Ms. Gladsmile stepped into action.

Happyview High School was not providing an inclusive environment for staff or students. “What is an ‘inclusive environment’ and why is it so important?” asks a staff member. Ms. Gladsmile then turns to you and says, “I’m glad you asked. We have a guest today who is here to talk to us about inclusion – what it is and why it is so important”.

Turn to your Unit Reading – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2009), Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education. With reference to the UNESCO report, provide answers to the following questions:

- What is inclusive education and why is it so important?
- What justifications are there to warrant the adoption of inclusive principles within the classroom and school?
- Is the implementation of inclusive principles financially costly?

Happyview Should be Happier

Judging by the silence, it appears that staff are not completely happy with your response. A staff member speaks up, “I don’t mean to be rude to our guest, but it all sounds great in theory. The reality though is that we do encourage diversity. We have a tough workload. This new theoretical initiative would overload us with more work”. A round of applause follows.
It is a direct and honest response. It is meant to dissuade your efforts. But you are not affected and neither is Ms. Gladsmile. You both know that although change seeks a positive end, the path can be arduous.

“The students that enter our classrooms today will be the adults of tomorrow,” states Ms. Gladsmile. “I ask you then, what are the principles that we stand for? We want our kids to be treated equally, to feel as if they belong, to walk the playground with pride and dignity, and to be recognised as individuals with unique needs. Happyview High School should be happier”.

Ms. Gladsmile has articulated the new vision for the first time. Having a firm understanding of the change process, you both realise there is a great deal of work to be done. The ‘reculturing’ process will have its hardships – some staff will adapt to the new changes, while others will be asked to leave; but there will also be great rewards – happy staff, happy children, a school that lives up to its name.

The Way Forward

After the meeting is finished, Ms. Gladsmile thanks you for your time. She then asks if you could provide a few ideas to her, drawing from your own professional experience, which would assist the school on its path towards inclusion. “We are at the very beginning of the journey,” she says, “I want your ideas to be innovative and ambitious. I like to encourage new ideas – even those that seem overly hopeful at first glance”.

Turn to your Unit Reading – Gardner, H. (2006). Five Minds for the Future. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press. ‘The Synthesizing Mind’ (pp. 45-76); ‘The Creating Mind’ (pp. 77-102). In both this unit and in your broader professional career you have covered a diverse range of information pertaining to the change process; now it is time to put all this information together in a critical and creative way.

Firstly, reflect upon the nature of the synthesizing and creating mind. What role do you see for the synthesizing mind in finding solutions to complex, broad-ranging issues such as inclusion? The creating mind – or the skill of being creative – seems far too ‘wild and disorderly’ for serious, complex and ‘real’ issues. Do you agree with this statement? What is creativity? Is there a role for creativity in the change process, and particularly in the articulation of clear visions?

Secondly, turn to your Unit Reading – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2009), Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education. Specifically, examine sections 11.2.1-11.2.3 (pp. 18-21). Reflect upon the attitudinal, curriculum and professional development changes that need to occur to ensure an inclusive environment. Are the areas of issue raised in the UNESCO report adequately addressed in your professional
environment? Are there any additional, country-specific issues that you think should be included?

Finally, with reference to the UNESCO report (Box 5, 6, and 7) prepare a brief report for Happyview High School, which provides examples/projects that would ensure all attitudinal, curriculum and professional development needs are met. When responding, remember to keep in mind the key characteristics of the synthesizing and creating mind – draw from your diverse experience and don’t be afraid to be creative.

Ms. Gladsmile wouldn’t want it any other way!

REFERENCES


UNIT THREE – THE CONNECTED EDUCATOR

UNIT INTRODUCTION

This year the senior students at Joyglee High School were reading Hamlet by William Shakespeare. David, the English teacher, knew that although the play held exciting themes, it would prove challenging for some students.

He couldn’t however have imagined the overwhelmingly negative reaction of his students. “This is boring”, said one student. “I thought this was English class”, said another. “What language is this Shakespeare guy speaking?”

By the second week of class, David was ready to give up. There appeared to be no way to convince students of the plays worth. David didn’t know who to talk to. He felt alone. Sitting in the staff common room didn’t help; staff didn’t mingle with each other; they sat quietly and quickly ate their lunches.


The next day, there were eight similar post-it notes on the wall; each offering David assistance. By the end of the week, the entire wall was covered in post-it notes. “Have you emphasised the blood?” read one note. “What about bringing a skull to class?” read another note.

The common room was suddenly a lively place. It appeared that at one time or another, everyone had read Hamlet. The geography and math teacher shared their favourite parts. The physical education teacher, who rarely spoke to anyone, recited his favourite lines.

Soon thereafter, David was using fellow staff as ‘guest speakers’. One teacher even came dressed as the ghost of King Hamlet.

The students were won over. Learning improved. Importantly, staff began to use the common room as a makeshift ‘think tank’. The walls remained plastered with post-it notes, spanning all areas of knowledge.

The division of knowledge into disciplines implies that subjects (such as maths and science) are clearly defined, marked by fortress-like walls impervious to those not versed in the subject matter. As the facilitators of learning, educators can often – knowingly or not – reflect these perceived divisions. To this end, schools become dissonant spaces, completely void of collaboration.

The term ‘silo mentality’ refers to a way of thinking characterised by a narrow field of perception, or extreme individualism. Teams within an organisation that demonstrate an
inability, or unwillingness to collaborate, who are driven to meet individualistic goals without recourse to past work (both achievements and failures) are said to operate as silos.

In our fictional scenario, David represents a worker who unwittingly broke free from the silo mentality. By making a simple statement – help – David shifted from holding an individualist perspective, to seeking a collective vision. The seeds of collaboration were sown. And what flourished was a cross-disciplinary response; each staff member had a response, reflecting a personal experience (positive or negative). In turn, this teamwork or collaborative moment allowed David to not repeat errors, but rather progress successfully forward. A win for everyone – David, the students and Shakespeare.

Learning does not happen in isolation. Nor should teaching. Knowledge is boundless; it knows no end and has no partition walls. If schools are to be considered as ‘learning communities’, places which foster lifelong learning from both students and staff, then they must demonstrate leadership that encourages collaboration and provides incentives for staff and students to share and learn.

In a rapidly changing world, educators must be connected leaders and learners. Unit Three examines the role of lifelong learning in the context of professional learning communities, communities of practice and personal learning networks. At the core of these varied practices is the recognition that continuous professional development is key to staff and school success. This can only occur through committed self-reflection and collaboration at a local and global scale.

Reflection Space:

In Five Minds for the Future, Howard Gardner (2006) states: “It is evident that organizations and communities work more effectively when the individuals within them seek to understand one another (despite their differences), to help one another, and to work together for common goals. Examples of positive leadership are crucial here, and clear penalties for disrespect – including ostracism or dismissal – are important as well” (p. 116-117).

Reflect upon the importance of collaboration within the professional environment. How can working together – despite the differences we may share (occupational or otherwise) – help foster a productive and happy environment? Discuss your experiences within the school environment. Can you identify any situations where peers or leaders demonstrated a ‘silo mentality’? How did you react to this management or work style?

UNIT OBJECTIVES
After completing this unit current and future educational leaders should be able to:

1. Identify and assess different management and work styles.
2. Understand the importance of collaboration and leadership within the professional environment.
3. Recognise the importance of lifelong learning in the context of a professional learning community, community of practice and a personal learning network.

**UNIT READINGS**


INTRODUCTION

Education institutions are dynamic places. School settings serve to meet the needs of a diverse community group – students that range in age, requirements, and abilities; educators that differ in experience and scholarly expertise. Effective collaboration remains a central tenet of positive leadership and serves to ensure the best possible outcomes for students, staff, parents and the broader community.

As noted in the fictional scenario, the entrenchment of a ‘silo mentality’ encourages negative consequences. In regards to this individualistic mode of management, Daniel J. McAllister (2011) states:

Silo thinking, characterised by narrow and inflexible views about employee job responsibilities, is a source of frustration for leaders in organisations that are large, small, growing and changing. Some organisations try to combat silo thinking by motivating employees to make contributions beyond the call of duty, or what researchers call Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.

(p. 16)

In a broad sense, ‘Organisational Citizenship Behaviour’ refers to qualities that are characterised by a sense of belonging or purpose, and in turn, a willingness to move beyond self-interest towards a common good. McAllister (2011) adds:

(An) effective approach to tackling the silo issue...is to broaden employee perspectives on their work. That is, rather than asking employees to do things that are outside their job scope, get employees to incorporate these desired contributions into their perceived job scope.

Importantly, this re-orienting shifts the drivers of behaviour from external controls (like how employees are treated) to self-direction (initiatives driven by employee mind-sets).

(p. 16)

Returning to our imaginary scenario, staff at Joyglee High School demonstrated the ability to think ‘outside their job scope’ and willingly contributed both time and shared-knowledge to help David. As a result of this seemingly simple action, the internal dynamics of the workplace changed: the staff common room became a place of collaboration, where perceived partitions were crumbled; this in turn encouraged a prevailing ‘citizen’ attitude – staff saw themselves not only as the teachers stipulated in their employment contracts, but as members within a teaching community.
While the effort may seem simple, the ability to transform this moment of collective
generosity from a ‘single act’ into a ‘positive cultural norm’ requires leadership. We can
easily imagine David encountering further instructional difficulties (Macbeth? King Lear?)
and again seeking help from peers. Without the understanding that collaboration should be
a positive norm, staff could easily question David’s competency. Again, the mind-frame
would revert to old individualistic habits; teachers might say, “I have to do my work and his
work?”

Educational leaders need to understand how to encourage and foster a collaborative and
connected environment. To this end, McAllister (2011) concludes:

*The pathway to transformation begins with nurturing a strong culture of
employee participation in the organisation. Workplaces become participatory
when employees have a clear understanding of, and care for, the
organisation and its goals. Organisations with a strong culture in these areas
are careful to select recruits who fit the organisation rather than the jobs;
they also invest heavily in employee training and ongoing communication
focused on core values.*

(p. 16)

It therefore follows that a participatory environment, founded on a strong school culture,
will encourage further positive developments, including the incentive for staff to participate
in lifelong learning. In this regard, collaboration can be seen as the core element of a
school’s livelihood. Without a self-driven willingness to share experiences and
responsibilities, staff will not fulfil the full implications of a long-term school goal. In the
worst instance, a school would suffer stagnation, low retention rates and subsequently, an
aimless educational system.

**Reflection Space:**

In Unit Two we looked at the ‘Seven Steps to Perceiving School Culture’. The first step
examined the idea of ‘Operations’. Briefly, ‘Operations’ refers to the visible things we
encounter when we first enter a school. This might include the physical structure of a
school – is it architecturally pleasing? Are the classrooms and staff spaces healthy
environments for both children and educators respectively?

In this instance, we will briefly examine the nature of personal interaction within the built
environment. Specifically, we will focus on the staff common room. In an article titled,
‘Who Moved My Cube?’, Anne-Laure Fayard and John Weeks (2011) discuss the importance
of peer interaction within the workplace. They focus on the three ‘P’s’- proximity, privacy
and permission:
Casual interactions among employees promote trust, cooperation, and innovation, and companies have devised open floor plans and common areas to encourage them. But such efforts can easily backfire. Spaces, whether physical or virtual, invite interaction only if they properly balance three factors...

(1) Proximity – Designs must drive traffic to shared spaces and give people reasons to remain. Centrally located areas containing shared resources such as photocopiers and coffee machines do this well...

(2) Privacy – People must feel confident that they can converse without being interrupted or overheard. They must also be able to avoid interacting when they want to. Alcoves lend privacy to public spaces...

(3) Permission – Company leadership and culture, as well as the space itself, must convey that casual conversation is encouraged. Comfortable furniture and obviously work-related machines such as photocopiers help send the signal...

(p. 105)

Take a moment to reflect on the common room in your professional environment. Do you often utilise this shared space? Do other staff use this space? What is your feeling when you enter this communal area? If applicable, discuss any cultural practices that govern the use of shared spaces in your work environment. Can you think of any ways in which this shared environment could be improved so as to foster collaboration among peers?

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Leadership does not stem from grand speeches orated from atop a soapbox. Leadership, so to speak, is messy work, which involves setting clear and achievable goals, and working hard – through success and failure – to meet these aims. Leadership is a process of acting and reflecting upon one’s actions. It involves engaging with staff, assessing their motivation and aims, reconciling differences, and constantly altering the path forward, without losing sight of the core sentiments.

To this end, collaboration is an essential skill all present and aspiring leaders should practice and perfect. The benefits can be broad and significant. In the article, ‘Building a Collaborative Enterprise’, Adler, Heckscher, and Prusak (2011) describe the benefits of a collaborative community:

Collaborative communities encourage people to continually apply their unique talents to group projects – and to become motivated by a collective mission, not just personal gain or the intrinsic pleasures of autonomous creativity. By marrying a sense of common purpose to a supportive structure, these organizations are mobilizing knowledge workers’ talents and expertise.
in flexible, highly manageable group-work efforts. The approach fosters not only innovation and agility but efficiency and scalability.

(p. 96)

While an initial observation of schools and the role of educators may not suggest an environment conducive to ongoing group-work, it is important to take a deeper examination. It is true that educators spend a majority of their time working without sight of peers; for some, this autonomy is an important and valid characteristic of the profession. The need to reflect on their actions (as mentioned in Unit One) and the requirement to conduct post-work duties, such as marking student work, can further characterise the autonomous nature of the work.

However, these factors should not deter leaders from implementing collaborative measures. It is important to remember that prospective teachers come from varied backgrounds; while some teachers will progress from high school, to teaching colleges and into the workforce; others will have extensive experience within the professional field (for instance, from the public or private sector) before choosing to follow a career in education.

In this regard, leaders would be unwise to disregard the diverse personal and professional backgrounds of staff. The experiences that educators bring to the professional environment – both successes and failures – are the building-blocks for positive engagement practices. Through workshops and collaborative meetings, school environments can be reshaped into multi-faceted inclusive, connected and progressive workplaces.

Open Dialogue:

At this stage in the unit, it is important to remember that collaboration is not restricted to peer-to-peer relations. Collaboration is also a key factor of certain pedagogic styles, such as the student-centred approach. While this particular peer-student/student-student relation is largely beyond the scope of this unit, it may be briefly surmised.

Collins and O’Brien (as cited in Froyd and Simpson, n.d) define student-centred learning or instruction (SCI) as:

*an instructional approach in which students influence the content, activities, materials, and pace of learning. This learning model places the student (learner) in the center of the learning process. The instructor provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively.*

The SCI approach includes such techniques as substituting active learning experiences for lectures, assigning open-ended problems and problems requiring critical or creative
thinking that cannot be solved by following text examples, involving students in simulations and role plays, and using self-paced and/or cooperative (team-based) learning.

Properly implemented SCI can lead to increased motivation to learn, greater retention of knowledge, deeper understanding, and more positive attitudes towards the subject being taught.

The differences between collaborative and other forms of leadership can be modelled:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Command and Control</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational structure</strong></td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Matrix or small group</td>
<td>Dispersed, cross-organizational network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who has the relevant information?</strong></td>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>Formally designated members or representatives of the relevant geographies and disciplines</td>
<td>Employees at all levels and locations and a variety of external stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who has the authority to make final decisions?</strong></td>
<td>The people at the top of the organization have clear authority</td>
<td>All parties have equal authority</td>
<td>The people leading collaborations have clear authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the basis for accountability and control?</strong></td>
<td>Financial results against plan</td>
<td>Many performance indicators, by function or geography</td>
<td>Performance on achieving shared goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where does it work best?</strong></td>
<td>Works well within a defined hierarchy; works poorly for complex organizations and when innovation is important</td>
<td>Works in small teams; works poorly when speed is important</td>
<td>Works well for diverse groups and cross-unit and cross-company work, and when innovation and creativity are critical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While schools hold long-standing traditional hierarchies, their internal organisational structure is dispersed and includes a variety of ‘stakeholders’. In this regard, the school environment lends itself to a collaborative leadership approach.

It is important to note from the above chart that while collaboration suggests extensive communication and shared leadership, it emphatically does not mean a dilution of leadership; strong and designated leadership is required in order to avoid staff being caught in a state of indecisive inertia. Therefore, leaders must attain a peculiar balance between divesting leadership and assuring it. On this note, O’Leary, Blomgren and Choi (2007) state:

*While this is a new type of leadership (collaborative), it has its roots in the work of management guru Mary Parker Follett (1942), who wrote about “power with” rather than “power over.” There is not only differentiation of roles; managers need the skills to tolerate the paradoxes and the corresponding ambiguity. This practice requires artistry and tacit knowledge in the context of limited authority; managers need to inspire rather than impose.*

(p. 569)

It follows then that collaborative leadership necessitates a particular set of skills. Chrislip and Larson (as cited in Miller and Miller, n.d) provide six useful principles that define this leadership style:

1. **Inspire commitment and action.** Power and influence help, but they are not the distinguishing features of collaborative leaders. The distinguishing feature is that these leaders initiate a process that brings people together when nothing else is working. They are action oriented, but the action involves convincing people that something can be done, not telling them what to do nor doing the work for them.

2. **Lead as peer problem solver.** Collaborative leaders help groups create visions and solve problems. They do not solve the problems for the group or engage in command and control behaviour.

3. **Build broad-based involvement.** Collaborative leaders take responsibility for the diversity of the group and make a conscious and disciplined effort to identify and bring together all the relevant stakeholders.

4. **Sustain hope and participation.** Collaborative leaders convince participants that each person is valued, help set incremental and achievable goals, and encourage celebrations along the way.
(5) *Servant Leadership.* Collaborative leaders are servants of the group, helping stakeholders do their work and looking out to make sure those others’ needs are met and that they grow as persons.

(6) *Leadership as a process.* Motivation and inspiration happen through the belief in the credibility of the collaborative process and good working relationships with many people. Collaborative leaders are rarely dramatic or flashy, and the leadership function is often shared among several people. Their role is to facilitate the constructive interaction of the network, not to do the work for it.

Reflection Space:

Effective collaboration is dependent on the ability to unite staff towards pursuing a collective goal. As noted, change is often accompanied by resistance – even experienced staff may not be adequately motivated to alter the status quo. In order to sustain motivation, leaders must recognise the importance of continuously recognising efforts made, and celebrating success.

Turn to Chrislip and Larson’s six disciplines of collaborative leadership. Take some time to reflect on the fourth principle – ‘Sustain hope and participation’.

List some ideas on how you might ‘sustain hope’ and increase ‘participation’ in your professional environment. For instance, you might focus on the following areas:

- Providing feedback on how staff have performed to date,
- Encouraging areas in which staff might improve or develop their skills,
- Examining the current structure of roles and considering a redefinition of responsibilities, and/or
- Implementing a formal or informal reward system within the school.

*(Hint: there is a wealth of literature on the importance of staff recognition. As a starting point, you may want to look at the publication, ‘Recognition and Reward’, published by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in Queensland, Australia. It can be freely accessed at: http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/resources/pdfs/recognition-rewards.pdf.)*

**SUMMARY**
It is important that leaders adopt an informed and flexible approach so as to meet the changing needs of a rapidly developing world. Increased access to information technology has challenged the traditional methods of knowledge acquisition and teacher instruction. It follows that leaders must also examine current and future developments, and assess how best to lead staff through change and foster productive environments.

Collaborative leadership is one form of leadership that provides measurable benefits. Collaboration may be defined as, “the process of facilitating and operating in multi-organizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved or easily solved by single organizations. Collaborative means to co-labor, to achieve common goals, often working across boundaries and in multi-sector and multi-actor relationships. Collaboration typically is based on the value of reciprocity and can include the public” (O’Leary, Blomgren and Choi, 2007, p. 565).

Effective collaborative practices bolster staff morale and encourage lifelong learning. By drawing on the broad range of experiences held by staff, schools can benefit by not reproducing errors and so forge a collective, inclusive, connected and exciting path forward for peers, students and parents alike.
INTRODUCTION
Deborah was an outstanding student. After completing her Bachelor of Education, she went on to earn a Master of Education where she specialised in inclusive practices. Her peers said that she was a reservoir of knowledge; her academic grades and willingness to learn certainly attested to this fact.

Deborah had contemplated furthering her studies. Her professors were constantly encouraging her to enrol in the Doctor of Philosophy program within the Education faculty.

Instead, Deborah decided to take a position teaching History and Science at Smilealot High School. It wasn’t a decision anyone expected nor envied. Smilealot High School was an inner city school with a bad reputation. Student violence at the school had made the news several times; teachers never seemed to stay long; academically, students were failing in nearly every category.

These facts did not dissuade Deborah. She saw it as a way to implement the theory she had learnt; it was time to put academic hard work into practice.

It wasn’t long before Deborah realised how hard teaching could be. While she had served in many different placements throughout her degree, they had always been relatively short and largely observational. She had never encountered such persistent hardship.

It wasn’t that the students did not like History or Science, it was just that they didn’t seem to trust Deborah. The years of teachers coming and going, some good and some very bad, had taken its toll. To make matters worse, there was an entrenched level of indifference among staff. Even the principal, who was friendly enough, threw up his hands. “What am I to do?” he said to her. “I want to help them, but they don’t even want to help themselves”.

Yet, this was not enough to deter Deborah. She gathered her research on inclusive practices and informed staff (by way of a notice in the common room) that she would be giving a five-minute presentation on successful inclusion strategies. All were welcome.

When the day came, she set out chairs for 15 staff. Only two attended. After the presentation, the principal raised his hands and said, “I want to help them, but they don’t even want to help themselves”.

Deborah taught at Smilealot High School for six months. In the summer, she applied for postgraduate school and was accepted. Even though her dissertation plan was praised by academics for its scope and audacity, Deborah had lost her vigour. She didn’t know whether she would ever return to teaching.
One way of approaching this fictional scenario is to explore the relationship between resiliency and novice teachers. Much has been written on this particular value. Resiliency may be defined as the “human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity” (Tait, 2008, p. 58). There is little doubt that the shift from the theoretical field into the practical arena can be challenging for new teachers. On this topic, Melanie Tait (2008) emphasises the unique responsibilities faced by novice teachers:

> Teaching is one of the few professions in which beginners have as much responsibility as their experienced colleagues. New teachers carry full teaching loads and handle just as many other duties (supervision, extracurricular paper work, parent interviews, and report cards for example) as their higher paid co-workers. They often have more difficult subject combinations and more challenging students to manage...In addition, many novice teachers fear that if they ask for assistance, they will appear incompetent or poorly prepared.

(p. 58)

Certainly, Deborah may have experienced some of the feelings noted by Tait. In addition to this, she had to navigate her way through an indifferent work environment. In this regard, Deborah must be praised for her enthusiasm and effort, not berated for her lack of resiliency (a hard-line view would see her as simply ‘another failed educator’).

Teacher education does not seek to ‘weed-out’ students that lack resiliency or efficacy. Educators understand that resiliency is a skill that can be taught and importantly, nurtured in novice teachers. Strong leadership and collaboration ensures all educators are prepared for the many hardships of teaching. As Benard (as cited in Tait) notes:

> (Teachers) need resources, time, professional development opportunities, materials, caring collegial relationships, high expectations on the part of school leaders, and opportunities for shared decision-making and planning. New teachers enhance their resilience by fostering productive relationships with people who understand the trials and tribulations of teaching, who reinforce the value of what teachers do, and who offer insight into various options available for dealing with a variety of teaching situations.

(p. 58)

Let us then imagine a positive situation: Deborah prepares to present her ideas on successful inclusion strategies. She has set up 15 chairs, but within minutes the room is full of teachers. Word has got around the school that Deborah is young, bright and enthusiastic; everyone is keen to hear what she has to say; no one can remember the last time someone (especially a teacher) gave a presentation or felt motivated to contribute a new idea.
Staff listen intently. Her ideas on inclusion are audacious, but with effort, achievable. A five minute speech, results in one hour of follow-up questions. A rough plan is laid out. Staff will begin to meet more often, to collaborate, to help each other out. Deborah will develop a professional learning community, involving staff and parents, based on inclusive strategies. Staff are eager to share their own ideas and experiences. There is a lot of information to record. Somewhat dumbfounded, the principal says, “I’ll get a pen”.

Smilealot High School might just be turning a corner.

Reflection Space:
Reflect on your experiences as a novice teacher. How did you feel on the first day of instruction? Did these feelings change throughout the year? In your mind, what can leaders do to ensure novice teachers are provided with the best possible support?

The Importance of Professional Development
Schools can be seen as fluid and dynamic environments, as a melting-pot of cultural and societal traits, ever-changing according to prevailing trends or movements. In this sense, teachers must also remain flexible in their pedagogic approach, adapting to the diverse needs of their students and accommodating developments in technology and instruction. One would be hard pressed to find a school where neither the teachers nor the students were cognisant of the Internet. While some cultures choose to keep a polite distance from such technologies, awareness of these developments must necessarily influence – directly or indirectly – their instruction.

The need to adapt to changes, to build upon one’s professional skills, is a lifelong endeavour. Professional development can be defined as “activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics” (OECD, 2009, p. 49). The benefits of partaking in continuous professional development are self-evident. As Eleonora Villegas-Reimers (2003) notes:

*Good teaching methods have a significant positive impact on how and what students learn. Learning how to teach, and working to become an excellent teacher, is a long-term process that requires not only the development of a very practical and complex skills under the guidance and supervision of experts, but also the acquisition of specific knowledge and the promotion of certain ethical values and attitudes...in addition to ‘knowing what; and ‘knowing how’, teachers must also be competent in ‘knowing why’ and ‘knowing when’.*
Professional development can serve many different objectives. A recent report by UNESCO (2009) on the role of ongoing staff development notes six objectives:

1. to update individuals’ knowledge of a subject in light of recent advances in the area;
2. to update individuals’ skills, attitudes and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances and new educational research;
3. to enable individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice;
4. to enable schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice;
5. to exchange information and expertise among teachers and others, e.g. academics, industrialists; and
6. to help weaker teachers become more effective.

Reading Space:

Turn to the UNESCO publication, *Teacher Professional Development: An International Review of the Literature*. Read Chapter Two (pp. 31-66) regarding the teaching profession.

How would you define the term ‘teacher’? In your opinion, what constitutes the role of the teacher and the teaching profession? Have you witnessed any change in the way in which teachers are perceived? Refer to your own experiences and draw upon any cultural or societal practices.

**EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

While the fundamental purpose of professional development is common across schools, it is important to emphasise that each school will have its own path towards the successful implementation of learning programs. School leaders are best placed to evaluate individual and collective goals and expectations, resources and limitations, and student and staff capabilities and needs. Accordingly, professional development programs can take many guises and should be adapted as deemed fit.
The UNESCO publication, *Teacher Professional Development: An International Review of the Literature* (2003), provides a useful overview of potential courses:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational partnership models</th>
<th>Small group or individual models</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional-development schools</td>
<td>Supervision: traditional and clinical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other university-school partnership</td>
<td>Students’ performance assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other inter-institutional collaborations</td>
<td>Workshops, seminars, courses, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools’ networks</td>
<td>Case-based study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ networks</td>
<td>Self-directed development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance education</td>
<td>Co-operative or collegial development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation of excellent practice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers’ participation in new roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills-development model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reflective models</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Project-based models</td>
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<td>Portfolios</td>
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<td>Action research</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use of teacher’s narratives</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Generational or cascade model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coaching/mentoring</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(p. 70)

Let’s return briefly to the ‘alternative ending’ in our fictional scenario. The decision by staff at Smilealot High School to meet regularly to discuss inclusive strategies and to collaborate on issues, reflects a ‘schools’ network’ organisational partnership model. On this type of model, the UNESCO (2003) report states:

*Teacher’s networks bring teachers together to address the problems which they experience in their work, and thus promote their own professional*
development as individuals and as groups. These networks can be created either relatively informally, through regular meetings between teachers; or formally, by institutionalizing the relationships, communication and dialogue.

(p. 81)

Reflection Space:

Reflect on your professional development program experiences. Did you find them beneficial? Do you think that the program reflected the principles and needs of the school and staff? How did you implement the skills you learnt? Will you be engaging in further professional development? If so, what are your planned objectives?

It is possible that you have not undergone a professional development program. If so, describe the reason why you have not engaged in this practice. If the reason is due to a lack of interest from staff or a failure by school leaders to provide such an opportunity, describe your feelings and draft a brief list documenting the positive benefits staff could gain if such practices were adopted.

Note: As the UNESCO report states, professional development programs can be formal or informal. If your present school does not encourage lifelong learning opportunities, it may be beneficial to find a like-minded peer and engage in an informal learning network (remember a network need only have two people! It is the willingness to learn that counts). In this instance, we recommend you thoroughly read the UNESCO report and take from it suitable professional development ideas.

LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It should come as no surprise that the effective implementation of professional development programs are dependent on a healthy school culture. A professional environment that is characterised by apathy and acrimony will certainly not foster the willingness and collective commitment needed to engage in lifelong learning.

As such, leadership should focus firstly on ensuring the establishment of a conducive and collaborative school culture (refer to Unit Two). Importantly, leaders should then emphasise the benefits of lifelong learning and provide strong incentives to encourage collaboration, commitment and ongoing enthusiasm.

Turning again to the UNESCO report, Villegas-Reimers (2003) notes six factors that are necessary to ensure the development of productive professional development programs:
1. Develop norms of collegiality, openness and trust.

2. Create opportunities and time for disciplined inquiry.

3. Provide opportunities for teachers’ learning content in context.

4. Re-think the functions of leadership, and redefine leadership in schools to include teachers.

5. Create and support networks, collaborations and coalitions.

6. Prepare teachers to become leaders of their own professional networks.

(p. 120)

Reading Space:

As mentioned, professional development programs will vary across countries, cultures and institutions. The programs will vary not only in character, but in success.

Turn to the following three (3) publications:


Take some time to examine the relationship between the three different case studies. Then write a brief report (800-1000 words) which looks at all three cases and notes:

Country specific perspectives on professional development (what do the teachers, parents and principals think of this concept?).

The challenges faced by specific countries in adopting such programs.

The characteristics of each program (why does it work well for the specific country?).

Finally, include your observations on the varying programs and provide practices that are...
**Topic 3.3 – Creating Professional Connections**

**Introduction**

The title of this unit — The Connected Educator — is borrowed from Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach and Lani Ritter Hall’s book of the same name. Nussebaum-Beach and Ritter’s text is exemplary in its positing of professional learning communities, communities of practice and personal learning networks within the context of a modern, globalised and connected world. Central to the text is the coining of a new network, ‘connected learning communities’, which the authors define as:

\[
\text{This new model builds on the rich research and foundational concepts of traditional professional learning communities. What’s different is how it transforms the teacher’s traditional network by building community offline and online, leveraging emerging technologies in building personal learning networks and global communities of inquiry.}
\]

(Nussebaum-Beach and Ritter, 2012, p. 26)

In this topic we will explore the varying forms of communities and networks, examining their individual, local and global characteristics and scope.

There exists an inextricable relationship between professional development practices and professional networks and communities. Elmore (as cited in InPraxis Group, 2006), states:

\[
\text{Professional development, in the consensus view, should be designed to develop the capacity of teachers to work collectively on problems of practice, within their own schools and with practitioners in other settings, as much as to support the knowledge and skill development of individual educators.}
\]

\[
\text{This view derives from the assumption that learning is essentially a collaborative, rather than an individual activity...and that the essential purpose of professional development should be the improvement of schools and school systems, not just the improvement of the individuals who work in them.}
\]

\[
\text{The improvement of schools and school systems, likewise, has to engage the active support and collaboration of leaders, not just their tacit or implicit support, and this support should be manifested in decisions about the use of time and money.}
\]
When staff seek to pursue lifelong learning within the school environment in a collaborative way, towards a directed issue, they are said to form a learning community or network; the geographical scope of the peer collaboration (local or global) will determine the nature of the network or community.

**Open Dialogue:**

Defining and describing professional learning communities, personal learning networks and communities of practice can often be a difficult endeavour.

Nussebaum-Beach and Ritter (2012) point out the fact that, “many of the words and expressions used to describe learning in connected, open spaces are overused, used incorrectly, or used interchangeably. We believe it is important to arrive at a common language” (p. 29).

It is easy to see from where the confusion arises. There is no easily discernable linguistic difference between a ‘community’ and a ‘network’. Though, in this instance, the former refers to practices on a local scale, while the latter indicates practices on a global scale. The difference is only discerned in the usage of the terms within the professional setting.

**Professional Learning Communities**

Professional learning communities may be defined as “a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way” (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Agnes, and Thomas, 2006, p. 223). This group usually includes peer-to-peer relations, but may also extend to include students and parents. The collaborative effort in a professional learning community is characterised by its local focus; staff will explicitly form or engage in professional learning communities so as to address issues which will serve to empower staff, students and the broader community.

The specific behaviour within professional learning communities and their direct benefit may be tabled:

**Benefits of Activities in a Learning Community (InPraxis Group, 2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Community Activities</th>
<th>Direct Benefits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use shared planning to develop</td>
<td>Divides the labour, saves time because no one has to do it all, and increases the quantity and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>units, lessons and activities.</td>
<td>quality of ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn from one another by watching each other teach.</td>
<td>Provides concrete examples of effective practices, expands the observer’s repertoire of skills, and stimulates analytical thinking about teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collectively study student work to identify weaknesses and plan new ways to teach those weaknesses.</td>
<td>Increases the quantity and quality of insights into student performance, focuses efforts on the bottom line – student learning, and increases professionalism and self-esteem of learning community members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share articles and other professional resources for ideas and insights, conduct studies of books on teaching and learning.</td>
<td>Expands pool of ideas and resources available to members of the learning community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk with one another about what and how you teach and the results your teaching produces.</td>
<td>Decreases feelings of isolation, increases experimentation and analysis of teaching practices, increases confidence of teachers, and provides teachers with greater access to a range of teaching styles, models and philosophies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide moral support, comradeship and encouragement.</td>
<td>Enables teachers to stick with new practices through the rough early stages, decreases burnout and stress, increases team member’s willingness to try new methods and share ideas and concerns with other members of the learning community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jointly explore a problem, including data collection and analysis, conduct action research.</td>
<td>Improves quality of insights and solutions, increases professionalism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend training together and help each other implement the content of the training.</td>
<td>Helps learning community members get more out of training, enables them to go to one another with questions or for clarification about what was presented during training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in continual quality improvement activities.</td>
<td>Creates more efficient use of time, takes advantage of particular talents or interests of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use collective decision making to reach decisions that produce collective action.</td>
<td>Improves quality of instruction, student performance and school operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide support for help-seeking as well as help-giving.</td>
<td>Makes a strong statement of shared responsibility and commitment to one another’s learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share the responsibility for making and/or collecting materials.</td>
<td>Helps learning community members feel secure in asking for help and advice, enables the giving of assistance and advice without establishing one-up/one-down relationships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflection Space:

Reflect on the above table. Choose two of the ‘Learning Community Activities’ and analyse how you might be able to implement this collectively within your professional environment.

For instance, you might choose: “Learn from one another by watching each other teach”. How might you go about organising observational practices in your school? How would you collate the information you gathered from your observations? Finally, how would you put this information to a positive use?

PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORKS

Nussebaum-Beach and Ritter (2012) define personal learning networks as being about:

Individuals gathering information and sharing resources that enhance their personal and professional learning. The primary difference between personal learning networks and professional communities is that the work of professional learning communities is designed around the specific, identified needs of the school and its students while personal learning networks are something that educators design for themselves to further their short- and long-range goals for professional growth and personal learning.

(p. 31)

The fact that personal learning networks are self-guided endeavours also means that their geographic scope need not be local. Web-based technologies allow educators to find like-minded peers and mentors from across the globe.

Establishing a personal learning network may also involve creating a personal learning environment. The term personal learning environment describes:

the tools, communities, and services that constitute the individual educational platforms learners use to direct their own learning and pursue educational goals...A typical PLE, for example, might incorporate blogs where students comment on what they are learning, and their posts may reflect information drawn from across the web – on sites like YouTube or in RSS feeds from news agencies.

While most discussions of PLEs focus on online environments, the term encompasses the entire set of resources that a learner uses to answer questions, provide context and illustrate processes.

(Educause Learning Initiative, 2009)
Reflection Space:
Take a moment to perform a personal and professional ‘audit’ of the key web-based programs you regularly use to socialize, communicate with peers and organise your work. Reassess the purpose of these programs, ‘apps’ or software and see if you can identify new ways in which to use them in the context of a professional learning environment.

For instance, you may use YouTube to post videos of your travels or (mis)adventures. On reconsidering the purpose of this video-sharing website, you might think about uploading teaching lessons which peers or students can remotely access.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
Communities of practice may be defined as “groups of people who are informally brought together by their expertise with the objective of addressing issues that are important to the organization (or group) as a whole...Members share concerns and problems and, by coming together, increase their knowledge through their interaction” (Angelle, 2008, p. 54).

Communities of practice emphasise a collaborative approach with a geographical focus on the global community. Members of an online community may be located across the globe, and are bound together by their shared interest and commitment to the progression of learning in their given field. Nussebaum-Beach and Ritter (2012) state,

*Educators who commit to learning together over time within a community of practice become empowered, global citizens. The importance of communities of practice is in the depth of members’ reflection and inquiry and how they operationalize that co-created knowledge in their local, school-based learning community*.

(p. 35)

SUMMARY
The establishment of collaborative practices and emphasis on professional development within school environments is vital. However, the implementation of such practices requires strong leadership and often, significant cultural changes. This is especially the case in professional environments where senior staff hold rigid views, or where a pervasive sense of disinterest reigns.

While there is no doubt that students are entering modern classrooms as ‘informed learners’, they still require the best instruction possible. Teachers have a sizeable responsibility; to raise students that will have the skills to engage within a globalised world, while at the same time, to keep abreast of changes in information technology, education
theory and pedagogic instruction. In our modern age, lifelong learning is no longer a preference, but a necessity.

To this end, collaborative practices are key. Educational leaders who encourage communication between peers, tapping into distinctive experiences and acquired knowledge, will ensure rewarding benefits. The development of professional networks or communities also serves to encourage lifelong learning, and out-of-the box thinking – who is not to say that a problem you face today, has not been effectively resolved yesterday by a peer across the world?

Indeed, it is a global world, and we owe it to ourselves to search far and wide for the best this world has to offer. For only with a global awareness can we truly understand the beauty of our intimately local endeavours.

REFERENCES


UNIT INTRODUCTION

On the 9th of October 2012, in the Swat District of Pakistan’s north western Kyber Pakhtunkhwa province, an assailant stormed a local school bus and shot several young girls. Thinking that the girls were dead, the assailant then fled.

One of the girls had been shot in the head. Her name was Malala Yousafzai; she was 16 years old. Malala had been attacked because she had spoken in favour of girl’s education; her assailant was a Taliban member. Less than a year later, in an address to the United Nations, Malala (2013) stated,

* (The) Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead. They shot my friends too. They thought that the bullets would silence us. But they failed. And then, out of that silence came, thousands of voices. The terrorists thought that they would change our aims and stop our ambitions but nothing changed in my life except this: Weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born. I am the same Malala. My ambitions are the same. My hopes are the same. My dreams are the same.

In the months that followed the attack, Malala underwent major surgery. Since her recovery, she has been a proud advocate of educational rights – “I speak not for myself – but for all girls and boys...Those who have fought for their rights: Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity. Their right to be educated” (Yousafzai, 2013).

Through her actions, Malala has demonstrated extraordinary compassion, humility, bravery and leadership. She has remained a staunch advocate of women’s rights. In her speech at the United Nations, she added:

* Today I am focusing on women's rights and girls' education because they are suffering the most. There was a time when women social activists asked men to stand up for their rights. But, this time, we will do it by ourselves. I am not telling men to step away from speaking for women's rights rather I am focusing on women to be independent to fight for themselves.

(Yousafzai, 2013)

At times, the capabilities of fiction fall mute to the facts of reality. There is no imaginative case study we could have provided that would have conveyed with more clarity and power both the atrocity of this single act, and the subsequent capabilities of a resolute will and a passion for the greater good.
Malala’s story serves to highlight the plight of children within developing worlds. Her story demonstrates the multitude of cultural, social and economic barriers that hinder children – especially young girls – from receiving a good education. On the education of girls in Pakistan, Cornelia Vutz (2013) notes:

*Pakistan is the country with the second highest number of children out of school, according to UNESCO. Two-thirds (over 3 million) of these are girls. Compared to other lower middle income countries, Pakistan has a low primary enrolment rate. Only 54% of girls are enrolled in primary school, which drops to 30% for secondary school. The figures for girls from rural areas are even worse (50% primary enrolment, 24% secondary).*

In a broader context, girls in developing countries continue to have a disproportionately lesser chance of attending school. Writing on ‘Social Exclusion and Girl’s Education’, Lewis and Lockheed (2007) state:

*The countries lagging on girls’ education include both those that trail in educating all children and also countries in which women have historically been marginalized. But girls’ education lags that of boys in some countries for a third reason: the interaction between gender and culture. In such countries girls who belong to marginalized groups, such as the Hill Tribes in Southeast Asia, indigenous and Afro-descendent populations in Latin America, the lowest castes in India and Nepal, or the Roma in Eastern Europe, suffer disproportionately in education relative to the mainstream population and to boys in their own linguistic or ethnic group... (The authors) estimate that these excluded girls make up more than 70 percent of the millions of out-of-school girls in the developing world.*

(p. 3)

We began this course with a brief detour to 1919, where we asked the important question, ‘What makes good teaching?’ Almost a century later, educators at all levels are still asking the same fundamental question.

Malala’s story may provide us with a definitive answer. Good teaching is that which inspires children to act with confidence and commitment, to do their utmost as local and global citizens. Malala’s speech before the United Nations echoes these sentiments:

*So let us wage a global struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism and let us pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons.*

*One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world.*

*Education is the only solution. Education First.*
Throughout the course you have been required to make regular contributions in your reflection journal. These tasks have been largely inward focused. Unit Four has a deliberate outward focus; it is action-oriented and encourages you to think critically of your professional environment and devise considered and innovative solutions to real problems. The unit will provide you with an opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and action; as well as to make a personal and lasting contribution to your work environment.

As you progress with this unit, we would like you to keep Malala’s story in mind. As educators, we never do know what life stories the children before us will live to tell. In each face we see limitless potential, and we work hard to overcome any barriers that may impede that child from doing their best. There is nothing more valuable than an education, and no role more important than he or she who provides that gift.

**UNIT OBJECTIVES**

After completing this unit, learners should be able to:

1. Understand the role of action research in assessing, defining and addressing issues within their professional environment.

2. Understand the importance of critical thinking as a means to analyse complex issues within the professional environment

3. Identify appropriate literature on a given subject matter and prepare a scholarly literature review.

4. Understand the implications of approaching tasks with an ethical mind-frame.

5. Complete two (2) substantial exercises on a subject matter pertinent to their field.
UNIT READINGS


TOPIC 4.1 - FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS OF INVESTIGATION

INTRODUCTION

At the core of this unit is the requirement to complete two (2) substantial exercises on a subject matter pertinent to your field. In this instance, you will be provided with three (3) options, encompassing subject matter raised throughout this course. The connection between theory and practice will be clearly stipulated and you will be provided with an appropriate structure and sufficient guidance.

Specifically, the exercises which you may choose from will include:

1. Implementing inclusive practices within your professional environment;
2. Developing a professional learning network focused on increasing student-centered practices; and
3. Fostering effective leadership and empowerment practices within your professional environment.

Your decision as to which two (2) exercises you wish to complete should be based on either:

a) A personal and/or professional interest in the subject matter which you have gained either throughout the course or within your specific workplace.

b) A desire to extend your knowledge within a particular field of interest.

c) A desire to develop your professional knowledge in a particular subject matter that is relatively new to you.

Each option will have its specific objective, format and outcome. Common to all tasks will be the necessity to conduct a scholarly literature review.

As a course, ‘The Culture of Leadership’, has sought to expose you to a broad range of leadership characteristics, values and practices which are essential to ensuring a healthy professional environment. The unit exercises serve to reinforce these central concerns.

Before explaining in detail the nature of each exercise, we will examine four foundational principles which will help guide your preliminary thoughts and ensure your responses are critical and professional.
ACTION RESEARCH

The day-to-day responsibilities carried out by school leaders and educators can often leave little time for reflection. Often, staff may not find the occasion nor the stamina to reflect upon the efficacy of their practices. As reflective-practitioners, educators must make the effort to carefully critique the nature of their own actions, and the practices carried out by their peers.

To this end, action research can assist educators to assess ‘what is going right’ and ‘what is going wrong’ within their professional environment. Action research may be defined as:

*Insider research done by practitioners using their own site (classroom, institution, school district, community) as the focus of their study. It is a reflective process but is different from isolated, spontaneous reflection in that it is deliberately and systematically undertaken and generally requires that some form of evidence be presented to support assertions.*

(Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 2007, p. 3)

Action research can be conducted either individually as a self-reflective practice (for instance, by examining the impact of one’s teaching instruction), individually on a broader, school-based issue (such as when a principal chooses to examine the school disciplinary policy), or collaboratively as peers (for example, by examining how staff across grades implement school goals).

Action research is characterised by specific qualities which may be listed:

Descriptors of Action Research (adapted from Johnson, 2012, p. 17)

1. Action research is systematic; it involves planned, methodical observation.

2. Action research does not begin with a known answer; the aim of action research is to utilise site-specific knowledge and observational skills to assess a situation or issue and arrive at a conclusion.

3. An action research project does not have to be complicated or elaborate to be rigorous or effective. The focus of projects can vary greatly (from examining school visions, to assessing the cleanliness of high school lavatories). Accordingly, the research or observation should reflect the simplicity or complexity of the issue being examined.

4. Action research projects benefit from early preliminary research. It is best to have some understanding of the issue you will be examining. Preliminary research might include conducting basic academic research, or talking to a peer.
5. Action research projects may vary in length. Again, the duration of the project will reflect the nature of the issue being examined.

6. Observations should be regular, but they do not necessarily have to be long. If you are examining the interaction of students within a classroom setting, you needn’t observe all the classes in a school across any given week. It would be sufficient to attend one or two classes regularly.

7. Action research projects exist on a continuum from simple and informal to detailed and formal.

8. Action research is sometimes grounded in theory. Both the issue at hand and the research findings can be viewed in the context of broader scholarly literature. This action may help give an objective perspective to the project (although, the findings will be subjective).

9. Action research is not a ‘seek-to-find’ process, but rather a ‘seek-and-find’ process.

10. The results of an action research project are limited. The findings of the project reflect your observations at a specific period in time. On a different occasion, your observations might result in different findings. In this sense, unlike traditional research practices, action research doesn’t provide any broad-based, over-arching theories.

It is important to briefly emphasise this last point. Due to its self-led nature, action research may be regarded by some as a dubious task (as second-rate research) and/or as a political enterprise. As Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (2007) state:

*Any research that makes knowledge claims is necessarily political, but action research is political in a double sense. It is political in the obvious sense that asking critical questions about one’s practice, classroom, and school can offend those with a stake in maintaining the status quo. But it is also political in the sense that practitioners creating knowledge about their own practice challenge those who view practitioners as passive recipients of knowledge created in universities.*

(p. 5)

Action research certainly has its function and purpose, encouraging reflection and critical thinking. In this sense, it can be seen as a positive contribution towards an educator’s professional development. For instance, a school principal seeking to use action research techniques to assess the effectiveness of disciplinary measures, might begin by observing the school’s current practices (attending after school detention classes; reading the school’s
official guidelines; comparing these guidelines against older policies, etc.). She might then record the effect of such policies (do the same students continue to misbehave? Is there a sense among staff that the guidelines work?).

She could also compare the school’s policies to other schools, both locally and globally (assess if a best-practice approach exists; examine cultural and/or societal influencing factors). Finally, she could survey staff to gauge how they interpret current policies (do all staff share the same understanding of what constitutes misbehaviour? Do staff implement disciplinary measures ethically?).

On gathering the findings from her action research project, the principal might then deduce that there is a necessity to rework or improve current practices (staff surveys might demonstrate a general misinterpretation of the current guidelines; observations of the after-school detention might demonstrate equally unruly students; or punishments might be too severe causing a slip in student morale). Having conducted a literature review as part of her project, the principal would then be able to place her findings within the context of local and international primary and secondary sources (scholarly books, journal articles, international qualitative surveys, etc.).

Finally, the principal could then create a report detailing the findings and implement an action plan (a meeting with senior staff to discuss new guidelines; an open forum among peers and parents on discipline; a new merit system among students, etc.). She could then distribute the action plan to school staff, who could subsequently offer their own feedback based on their own experiences.

In the book Action Research, Mertler gives particular attention to this last step. Staff often have a reluctance to incorporate scholarly theory into their practices; to some, theory may be perceived as being too far removed from the practice of teaching. Distributing the findings of an action research project provides a link between the theory and the practice, namely because it carries legitimacy, stemming as it does from the educator-researcher. Mertler (2009) notes:

> Sharing the results – either formally or informally – is the real activity that helps bridge the divide between research and application. Communicating your results lends credibility to the process of conducting action research because teachers and others in the education profession tend to see this process as one that gives teachers a voice. Suddenly, research is not far removed from the classroom; they have, in a way, become one. (p. 193)

In this example, the principal has examined a single issue in great depth. She has partaken in additional learning, and by sharing her information, encouraged others to learn also. To this end, James, Milenkiewicz, and Buckman (2008) state: “(action research) is a relevant
form of professional development for educators and community members because it considers both the context and the content of the issues being studied. While other forms of research set up controlled studies to focus their studies, (action research) projects focus on phenomena within the community and school context in which they occur” (p. 11).

The action research example detailed above can also be modelled. We encourage you to examine the ‘Planning for Action Research’ model and to consider the requirements at each box:

**Planning for Action Research (Mertler, 2009, p. 45)**
CRITICAL THINKING
In Unit One we touched briefly on the importance of critical thinking. In this unit, we will examine the practice in further detail, highlighting various key elements which are important to perfect.

Critical thinking may be defined as, “the process of figuring out what to believe or not about a situation, phenomenon, problem or controversy for which no single definitive answer or solution exists. The term implies a diligent, open-minded search for understanding, rather than for discovery of a necessary conclusion” (Mumm and Kersting, 1997, p. 75).

Critical thinking is not a passive act; though definitions on the practice vary, most encompass active application terms, such as: conceptualising, analysing, synthesising and reflecting. Critical thinking may also be defined as “judicious reasoning”, where ones action, or reasoning, is both “deliberate and thorough” (Tittle, 2010, p. 4).

At times, critical thinking can be perceived by some as a negative practice. In this regard, a common phrase used is: “you’re being too critical”. Such a phrase does not reflect the nature of the practice, but rather the intention of the person undertaking the practice. That is, the purpose of critical thinking is to allow one to reflect on an issue with disciplined rigour, so that future judgements can be made from a sound platform. The phrase then may refer to someone who is not analysing a situation correctly, but rather applying old habits and practices to a given problem.

When appropriately applied, critical thinking can help one be a better informed researcher and citizen. Oliver and Utermohlen (as cited in Adsit, n.d) state, “(students need to) develop and effectively apply critical thinking skills to their academic studies, to the complex problems that they will face, and to the critical choices they will be forced to make as a result of the information explosion and other rapid technological changes”. In a practical sense, an educator who is offered five varying software programs which she is told will ‘revolutionise’ her instruction methods, is best to apply critical thought to each program – analysing each positive and negative quality, placing it in the context of her own needs, and developing her own reasons for supporting or rejecting the software. An absence of such thought could lead to student confusion and/or poor instruction. Fundamentally, there is no use being seen as the educator who uses the best tools, but is the worst instructor.

The elements underpinning critical thought can be tabled. In this instance, we are making reference to Peg Tittle’s (2010) book, Critical Thinking: An Appeal to Reason, which is noted for its clarity and rigour:
The Elements of Critical Thought

Cognitive strategies – micro-skills

- Comparing and contrasting ideals with actual practice.
- Thinking precisely about thinking: using critical vocabulary.
- Noting significant similarities and differences.
- Examining or evaluating assumptions.
- Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts.
- Making plausible inferences, predictions, or interpretations.
- Giving reasons and evaluating evidence and alleged facts.
- Recognizing contradictions.
- Exploring implications and consequences.

Cognitive strategies – macro-skills:

- Refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications.
- Comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts.
- Developing one’s perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories.
- Clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs.
- Developing criteria for evaluation: clarifying values and standards.
- Evaluating the credibility of sources of information.
- Questioning deeply: raising and pursuing root or significant questions.
- Analysing or evaluating arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or theories.
- Generating or assessing solutions.
- Analysing or evaluating actions or policies.
- Reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts.
• Listening critically: the art of silent dialogue.
• Making interdisciplinary connections.
• Practicing Socratic discussion: clarifying and questioning beliefs, theories, or perspectives.
• Reasoning dialogically: comparing perspectives, interpretations, or theories.
• Reasoning dialectically: evaluating perspectives, interpretations, or theories.

(p. 4)

Critical thinking is a deliberate practice. It is different to everyday decision making; in our day-to-day life, there is no real necessity nor time to apply rigorous critical thought to every action we make. To this end, Peg Tittle (2010) provides a useful critical thinking template that can be used and modified to meet your own critical endeavours:

**Template for Critical Analysis of Arguments**

1. What’s the point (claim/opinion/conclusion)?
   • Look for subconclusions as well.

2. What are the reasons/what is the evidence?
   • Articulate all unstated premises.
   • Articulate connections.

3. What exactly is meant by…?
   • Define terms.
   • Clarify all imprecise language.
   • Eliminate or replace ‘loaded’ language and other manipulations.

4. Assess the reasoning/evidence:
   • If deductive, check for truth/acceptability and validity.
   • If inductive, check for truth/acceptability, relevance, and sufficiency.

5. How could the argument be strengthened?
   • Provide additional reasons/evidence.
   • Anticipate objections – are there adequate responses?
6. How could the argument be weakened?

- Consider and assess counterexamples, counterevidence, and counterarguments.
- Should the argument be modified or rejected because of the counterarguments?

7. If you suspend judgement (rather than accepting or rejecting the argument), identify further information required.

(p. 17)

Reflection Space:

Take some time to reflect on the two important skills that we have covered thus far – action research and critical thinking. Can you clearly identify their interrelationship? Begin to consider how you might apply these practices within your own professional environment.

CONDUCTING A LITERATURE REVIEW

Pursuing postgraduate studies is a challenging and exciting decision. The opportunity to conduct your own independent research within a field of interest is a particular highlight. Every postgraduate student has their own ambitions, knowledge base and writing style (yes, you hold these skills too!).

Brimming with ambition and ideas, postgraduate students often embark on a research project with unstructured gusto. Unfortunately, the result is always personally and academically disappointing; a good research project requires a great deal of forethought and a thorough examination of related literature.

An effective literature review forms part of this essential process. Hart (as cited in Ridley, 2008) defines a literature review as,

> the selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contain information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed.

(p. 3)
Put simply, a literature review can be seen as a way for you to converse with authors (albeit in print form) who have engaged in like-minded projects. Put in this way, a literature review embodies the same skills required in a normal conversation – you must be a good listener and you must actively seek to engage. Of course, the difference between the two practices is that a literature review requires strong levels of critical thinking and a sound organisational structure.

On this topic, Diana Ridley (2008) notes:

*The literature review...is where connections are made between source texts that you draw on and where you position yourself and your research among these sources. It is your opportunity to engage in a written dialogue with researchers in your area while at the same time showing that you have engage with, understood and responded to the relevant body of knowledge underpinning your research. The literature review is where you identify the theories and previous research which have influenced your choice of research topic and the methodology you are choosing to adopt. You can use literature to support your identification of a problem to research and to illustrate that there is a gap in previous research which needs to be filled. The literature review, therefore, serves as the driving force and jumping-off point for your own research investigation.*

(p. 2)

A well-crafted literature review demonstrates that you have shown critical thinking skills, thought beyond your knowledge base, considered arguments aligned and in opposition to your views, examined the historical context of your aims and importantly, are committed to pursue your research project diligently.

A good literature review begins with an exhaustive literature search. A literature search may be defined as, “a systematic and thorough search of all types of published literature in order to identify as many items as possible that are relevant to a particular topic” (Ridley, 2008, p. 29). As appropriate, this might involve accessing online databases and visiting local libraries (some researchers travel abroad to visit specific institutions). The aim is to achieve a professional level of thoroughness and to show that you not only know your field, but that your project aims are relevant and achievable.

Unfortunately there are times when our ‘new ideas’ prove, on further research, to be simply reiterations of past scholarship. This ‘discovery’ can initially be quite disappointing. However, it should not dissuade your efforts. A good literature review forces you to continually assess your project aims; it is therefore important to adopt a flexible and stoic mind-frame.
An effective literature review may be presented in many different ways. In this instance, we encourage you to structure the review as you would a typical academic essay: with an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. It is important that you demonstrate scholarly engagement with the texts: can you identify the author’s aims? Can you compare and contrast different viewpoints and theories? Can you develop your own position in relation to the literature by agreeing or disagreeing and subsequently substantiating your position?

You have a good research idea. You have excelled and worked hard to get this far. It is important that you put in this early effort so as to ensure continued success.

Reflection Space:

The best way to understand what a literature review should look like, is by examining several examples. We have included two examples as guidance. Both resources demonstrate different skills:


AN ETHICAL MIND

Malala Yousafzai story is remarkable. She not only demonstrated unflinching courage in the face of adversity, but also showed a committed and exemplary ethical mind. The ability to see beyond her own predicament – in this case, a shocking one – and focus her efforts on the broader good is testament to her unique character.

On the concept of adopting an ethical mind, Peter Singer (as cited in Gardner, 2006) states:

If we are looking for a purpose broader than our interests, something that will allow us to see our lives as possessing significance beyond the narrow confines of our conscious states, one obvious solution is to take up the ethical point of view. The ethical point of view does...require us to go beyond a personal point of view to the standpoint of an impartial spectator. Thus looking at things ethically is a way of transcending our inward looking concerns and identifying ourselves with the most objective point of view possible – with, as Sidgwick puts it, ‘the point of view of the universe’.

(p. 144)
The ethical mind forms the last of the four fundamental skills raised in this unit. In many senses, it is perhaps the most important skill a leader or educator should master. Without an ethical mind-frame – a clear understanding of what is right and wrong, and what best serves our broader community – one’s efforts in engaging in action research, critical thinking or even, conducting a literature review will be devoid of true potential.

In this instance, we take ‘true potential’ to mean the rich possibilities enacted by pursuing selfless deeds, or at least, activities with a scope beyond our self-interest. What would an action research project on inclusive practices be if we chose not to broaden our conception of a teacher’s responsibilities? What would a literature review on school diversity be if we chose only to include those authors in favour of racial separatism?


*Teachers serve as crucial models. They introduce young persons to a vital (if often underappreciated) profession. Children observe the behaviour of teachers; their attitudes toward their jobs; their mode of interaction with their supervisors, peers, and aides; their treatment of students; and most important, their reactions to the questions, answers, and work products of their students...*

*Educators can smooth the road to an ethical mind by drawing attention to the other connotations of goodness. Students need to understand why they are learning what they are learning and how this knowledge can be put to constructive uses. As disciplined learners, it is our job to understand the world. But if we are to be ethical human beings, it is equally our job to use that understanding to improve the quality of life and living and to bear witness when that understanding (or misunderstanding) is being used in destructive ways.*

(p. 141-142)

Reflection Space:

There is a wealth of literature on the role of an ethical mind within the education profession. The practical application of such methods is beyond the scope or interests of this unit.

It is our belief that an ethical mind comes firstly through self-reflection. Without taking the time to question one’s own belief system, any form of practical application will prove pointless. It follows that a commitment to an ethical mind will encourage one to act...
ethically by nature, to which the many varied practical applications could serve as educative scaffolding.

**TOPIC 4.2 - UNIT EXERCISES**

**INTRODUCTION**

As part of the assessment of this unit, you are required to complete two (2) substantial exercises on a subject matter pertinent to your field. You will be provided with three (3) options from which to choose. The choices reflect subject matter raised throughout this course.

It is worth reiterating the fact that your decision as to which two (2) exercises you wish to complete should be based on either:

a) A personal and/or professional interest in the subject matter which you have gained either throughout the course or within your specific workplace.

b) A desire to extend your knowledge within a particular field of interest.

c) A desire to develop your professional knowledge in a particular subject matter that is relatively new to you.

Each option has its specific objective, format and outcome. Common to all tasks is the necessity to conduct a scholarly literature review. The length of each task will vary. Tasks will be graded according to the rigour of academic thought, rather than the length of one’s response.

We strongly encourage you to consider and keep in mind the foundational skills covered in this unit. We also hope that you will keep in mind the extraordinary principles demonstrated in Malala Yousafzai’s story. While our instruction serves as a good way to facilitate knowledge, we remain humbled by the true power of demonstrative action.

**EXERCISES**

Please choose and complete **two (2)** of the following substantial exercises:

1. Implementing effective inclusive practices remains one of the most important challenges within the school classroom and the broader school community.

   a) What is your opinion on the role of inclusive practice?
b) Conduct a literature review on the key characteristics of inclusive practice.

c) In your opinion, are inclusive practices effectively implemented in your professional environment?

d) Conduct an action research project that examines the practice of inclusive strategies within your workplace.

And/or,

2. Educators increasingly agree that learning is not simply teacher driven; teachers and students must collaborate as partners to achieve the best possible outcomes.

   a) In your opinion, how important is effective collaboration within schools?

   b) What do you perceive the role and responsibilities of a teacher to be?

   c) Student-centered learning is one way in which teachers and students can collaborate. Conduct a literature review on the key characteristics of this pedagogic style.

   d) Utilising the findings from your review, construct a detailed ‘action plan’ which highlights the benefits of student-centered learning and how you might engage like-minded peers within a professional learning community.

And/or,

3. ‘There are too many cooks in the kitchen’ is a common phrase used to describe a lack of clear leadership. Effective organisations require one strong leader who is not afraid to get things done – even if that means upsetting others.

   a) With specific reference to the above statement, what is your view on leadership within the professional environment?

   b) In your opinion, what are the key characteristics of an effective and empowering leader?

   c) Conduct a literature review on the key characteristics of effective leadership.

   d) Utilising the findings from your review, prepare a 15 minute presentation on the nature, role and responsibilities of a good leader.
In addition, draft a list of 10 possible questions audience members might ask at the conclusion of your presentation. Include your answers to these questions.
REFERENCES


COURSE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

The rapid development of information technology has challenged the traditional conceptions of education. Increasingly, students are arriving at school as ‘informed learners’. Such advancements have also served to question the role of educators and leaders.

Schools remain dynamic institutions. Accordingly, educators and leaders must adopt a flexible and informed approach towards the facilitation of instruction, the role of continuous learning and leadership practices. Central to these decisions is the need to establish a healthy professional environment founded on positive human values and skills. Leaders must foster a sense of collaboration and empowerment, centered on a collective vision, and guided by informed ethical practices.

While advancements in information technology have brought about many dramatic changes, the central tenets of the education profession remain largely unchanged. As educators and leaders we continue to ask the same questions: what kind of educator and leader am I? What kind of student do I want to raise? What kind of society do I want to help create?

Undoubtedly, all of these concerns warrant significant attention and critical thought. However, it is perhaps the last question that is of greatest interest. Educators play a fundamental role in shaping society. When faced with the unseen dilemmas of the future, the children of tomorrow will in part turn to the fundamental skills instilled into them at school.

Teachers must be forward-thinking educators; leaders; inspirational visionaries. Some will argue that this is a far too heavy burden to carry; that the whims of today will be reversed by the whims of tomorrow.

The choice is ultimately left to educators and leaders such as yourself. Take a moment to think about your options; grab an old-fashioned piece of chalk and write your arguments on a school board. Then think once and then twice before you bring a duster across your words.