
Leading School Successfully

Stories from the field

Edited by Christopher Day
and David Gurr

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Chapter 17

Thinking about leading schools

David Gurr and Christopher Day

The principals in this book can all be considered as leading successful schools. Some of the schools are amongst the highest performing in their countries (e.g. Trinity Grammar in Melbourne, Australia; Public Secondary School No. 50 'José Vasconcelos' in Monterrey, Mexico), others are performing at a level beyond expectations (e.g. David's school in England and Westminster Community Charter School in Buffalo, USA). There are many stories of dramatically improved performance, be that in terms of typical student learning outcome data (e.g. Juarez Elementary School in Southwestern Arizona, USA) or more fundamentally having the basic technical, human and educational features in place to allow for success (e.g. Kiptai Primary School, Kenya). In all cases, it is the exemplary work of the principals that have been central to the success of these schools.

A key attribute of principal leadership is sense making and so we see one of our roles as editors to help the reader to make sense of the many wonderful stories of success presented in this book. Here we present the key themes that arise as we consider the chapters in their entirety. We do not claim that a theme is evident in the work of every principal, but nevertheless, these themes are those that have sufficient representation to be worthy of attention. Our synthesis has been helped by the reflections of two graduate classes who read an early draft of the book.

High expectations

Having high expectations has been one of the key features identified in the effective schools research for many years. All the principals have high expectations of staff and students. However, they also have high expectations of parents and of themselves. It is high expectations mixed with a belief that the expectations can be achieved by the school community that helps define the work of these leaders as this commentary by Merchant *et al.* on the work of Ms Martinez suggests:

We believe that Ms. Martinez's success as a principal is rooted in a strong sense of self-efficacy that is nurtured by a supportive family, a passionate and unwavering commitment to her students, and a strong belief in the

importance of reaching out to community members to enlist their assistance in promoting high standards for their children.

In Chamuada's leadership of Kiptai Primary School, there are high expectations for the community, but tinged with a sense of reality that reflects the particularly challenging context of the community the school serves:

We have yet to take a student to a national school. However, my greatest hope is that the success in this school will outlive me. ... That many of the children I have here today will live better lives than their parents, and that this community will look back and be proud of what we have achieved together.

The expectations translate into a restlessness in the principals to always do better – for the school, for the people within the school, and for themselves as this comment from Villafuerte-Elizondo suggests:

I am not the kind of person that sits down and waits for things to happen. I go out looking for solutions, not problems. I don't sit on the side of the road crying. If the road doesn't lead to a solution I take another road.

The following quote from Villafuerte-Elizondo indicates that confidence she has to surmount obstacles, the high expectations she has for all in the school, and the supreme confidence she has in the teachers to achieve these expectations:

When obstacles don't stop you from where you want to be, when you are continually discovering and taking advantage of new roads and ways of doing things, that is the true meaning of success. Life will always be full of what seem to be obstacles. What is great is that you, me, anyone, everyone can find a new path, and new paths must always be explored, regardless of where one ends up at. I really believe that we can do anything we set our mind to if we have a positive outlook on what we do, on who is around us, on why we are doing what we do. Education is a noble profession and if all of us, all of us educators, were committed to make our children successful, our country would be a very different place. There is no doubt in my mind that teachers are the key to all, so half my job is done. The other half is simple: remind all my teachers, every day, that they are the key to all.

For David, in his second spell of principalship, his initial work in raising the historically low aspirations of staff, pupils and community was:

as much about changing perceptions as about changing actions. Much as my experiences had pushed me to develop distributed leadership styles, it was clear to me that I would need to place myself at the centre of change and

tie my own character and credibility into the process, allowing the staff to personify the Academy.

Post-heroic leadership

In the ISSPP we have in recent years been considering the extent to which our successful principals might be considered as displaying heroic leadership. Many of our principals are certainly heroic in the way they challenge the status quo, fight for the best opportunities for their students, and have a positive and empowering view of what is possible for a school community, whatever the circumstances. The use of the term heroic leadership itself has become a problematic concept. This is in part because it is often associated with earlier concepts of charismatic leadership (e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1988) in which a single person – the principal – drives change and improvement. The creation of such a dependency model does not build the capacity of others, does not promote succession planning and, so history tells us, the effects do not last much beyond the tenure of the particular ‘charismatic’ principal. Apart from these flaws, it does not fit well in countries which are committed to democratic ideals. Moreover, this kind of leadership is simply not practical in the complex worlds of today’s schools as they strive to respond to the changing demands of policy and the needs of young people. Yet it would be true to say, as evidenced by accounts in this book, that much of what these principals do is heroic, or as David, the English principal states, brave.

Leadership means not only having answers (to problems of the changing curriculum, staffing structures, building management, pastoral systems) but also having the courage to stand by them when they are questioned. It also means being prepared to hear these questions and change your mind if you need to, without losing the strength of those original convictions or confidence in yourself. It’s a fine line, like everything else in leadership. The brave leader must show a positive face, an unstinting outward belief that not only is the battle eminently winnable but that it is practically won.

These successful principals also emphasize that others can do what they do, given opportunity and support, and they repeatedly mention how much they rely on the good work of the many people in their schools. For these reasons we suggest that a better label may be post-heroic leadership. Thus, whilst there is an obligation on principals to exercise leadership, leading a school requires collaborative and aligned effort by all. Ragan, Villafuerte-Elizondo, Chamuada, David, Yaakov, Birger and Martinez are all principals that exhibit this type of post-heroic leadership; firm in their leadership but also engaging of the school community. The reader will recall that Wasonga in writing about the work of Chamuada, provided a framework for reflecting on this directive yet inclusive style of leadership. The framework consists of five elements: first, establishing a common purpose; second, developing conditions of work that provide a context

for co-creating with members of the community, students, and teachers; third, constructing the school's social architecture (the social networks, scheduling and communication systems created to enhance and sustain school improvement); fourth, constructing school processes that encourage collaborative decision-making and actions; and, fifth, developing personal dispositions that engage constituents, such as humility, patience, collaboration, resilience, active listening, cultural anthropology, trust, and subtlety.

Collaboration/collective effort/shared vision/ alignment

School improvement is a collective effort involving senior and middle-level leaders, teachers and other staff, students, parents and the wider community (including systemic support where relevant). In many cases the principal stories demonstrate how these leaders were the key story-tellers and sense makers for their school, and how they painted a compelling vision of what their schools should be like. However, they were careful to ensure that the vision was one that could be embraced by the whole school community, with this typically taking time and effort to develop and sustain. The reader will recall the story of Lute Ingalls who, with the help of parents and teachers, developed 'bottom lines' that emphasized academic success, good behaviour and staff collaboration. This was the vision that drove the improvement of Juarez Elementary, and Ingalls was the one that kept this vision at the forefront of all decisions, including the decision to adopt the literacy improvement program, *Success for All*. Martinez had a passion for improving schools that was conveyed in how she talked about her efforts at Grande Academy:

I had to create an environment. I had to create a culture; I had to somehow together come up with the rules, the expectations. I had to share with them the things I've done at my school and I said, 'I'm not willing nor will I stop at any measures not to be exemplary. We will be exemplary.'

Wasonga in describing the work of Chamuada used the term co-creating leadership to emphasize the need for collaboration and shared leadership. The 6E framework described by Wang and used to consider the principalship of Mdm Linda is a way of conceptualizing this empowered view of principal leadership. The 6Es include educate, envision, energize, engage, enable and embrace. Even though collaboration was emphasized, typically, the principals were the glue that bound the school community to the school visions. They were the champions of change, the gatekeepers and custodians of school direction, and were adept at ensuring the whole school community was aligned and in agreement as this quote from Minor-Ragan indicates:

Everyone must be kept abreast of the school's plans, and of its progress or lack thereof. When committees and groups are working together, I provide the 'glue' to keep everyone on track and aligned with our vision, goals and mission. Committee work and shared decision-making can easily become compartmentalised. My role is to assure that we all understand how each group's piece of the puzzle helps to create the larger picture.

Whilst the principal tended to involve others, there was also a sense of responsibility to make decisions, and on some matters to be very directive. This was evident especially in the narratives of Ingalls, Frandsen, Anderson, and Birger.

All matters which are important for running the school are to be discussed at team level. At the same time, I, as the principal, can say that this is a matter we do not discuss. I decide, and there is no need for a discussion. If I involve you in a democratic process now when I already have made up my mind, that is deceitful, that is "pretend – democracy". I have decided in the matter, I am the principal at this school and have authority to do so, in matters that are completely meaningless to discuss.

(Birger)

Symbolic role

The role of story-teller and sense maker is an important part of the symbolic importance of the principals. It might be a simple message – we want to be the best school we can be – and it might influence the whole community. For example, Mr Chamuada had a simple message at Kiptai Primary School, 'We need to create this school together.' His vision of the school's future, his persistence in improving the school, his trustworthiness and integrity in an environment full of corruption, and the quiet way he engaged the whole school community led to remarkable success. He is the symbol of the efforts to create a viable and successful school in very challenging circumstances. He is a story teller of hope as this extract from the chapter describes:

He uses stories, analogies, and experiences in everyday life to help people connect the purpose of school to their lives. For example, at a meeting with parents, he explained how a new statute – all Members of Parliament would need to have a college education and all ministers must have a Bachelors Degree – would impact the community. He said, "the grumbles of a frog will not stop a cow from drinking water. If we continue this way, if our children cannot go to high school, we will never have a representative in parliament. Other communities will." A parent later told me that he could now figure out the purpose of school and its larger impact. He would encourage children to stay in school.

At River School, Olof emphasized to teachers that students were on a journey with the main part of their life ahead of them, and that it was the responsibility of the teachers and school to contribute positively to their lives and futures. In defining his role as Headmaster of Trinity Grammar, Tudor commented:

As Headmaster, I am the leader of the school community and that is the key thing, and people look to the Headmaster as being the leader of the community in all senses. In every word that you say, you are judged and you are reacted to and so on.

David used the metaphor of gardening to portray his work:

in the early stages the head gardener has to play a huge part in putting the vision onto the area, using the skills to decide what works where, what doesn't, to move things when they're needed and to really look at the whole landscaping and how it is. There's then a very frenetic bit where there's preparing the ground the moving the seeding the propagating all those kinds of things, when eventually you look at the garden and you say wow isn't this amazing, the actual gardener's hand should actually be disappearing and is not clear.

The emphasis placed on the symbolic role could mean that when these principals leave, there might be a mission/purpose gap that will be difficult to replace. Yet many of the principals sustained school success for many years and so even if this was an issue, having them lead a successful school for a decade or more must be worth it; generally they are not short-term principals. In some ISSPP cases, reported elsewhere (e.g. Drysdale *et al.*, 2011), there is evidence of sustained success once the principals have left. In the case of Mdm Linda, there was a sense of continuity of successful leadership at the school, with Mdm Linda acknowledging the work of the previous principals, and seeing herself as the custodian of the school at the moment, with a strong expectation that whoever succeeds her will continue the school's success. Whilst she was an important part of the journey of the school, the story of success was bigger than her, and there was an assumption that success would be sustained when she left.

Integrity, trust and transparency

A standout characteristic of the principals is the degree to which they were respected and trusted by their school communities. They acted with integrity, modelling good practice, being careful to ensure fairness in how they dealt with people, and enduring respect and trust through the integrity and transparency of their values and actions. In the case of the Cypriot principal, Johnson, the trust that she had was described in terms of Tschannen-Moran's (2003) trust dimensions of benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty and openness. In some contexts such as Indonesia and Kenya, without respect and trust the principals could not have

done their work. In Mulyono's school, there were many different ethnic groups involved (both amongst the students and teachers), and it was important to bring these groups together in a climate of open communication, respect and trust as indicated in the following quote:

I think being different from others is no problem as long as we communicate effectively. To me, I have no problem with it because I can accept [the differences] and I am a keen person to learn other cultures. There are many things good in here, like the concept "rumah betang", which literally means a long and big house. This is a philosophy of Dayak people who accept other people to live in the big house (a metaphor for area or province).

As much as possible, principals were concerned to make decision making transparent and involving all others; the school becomes a place that is trusted because there is a culture of inclusion. When decision making is transparent and involving of many people it may enhance trust. Frandsen spoke of the need to promote democracy in schools, such as ensuring that teachers had involvement in most decisions, even those that required quick solutions:

You have to balance the fact that sometimes you as leader have decided upon something and you therefore can be action minded, and at the same time make sure that teachers feel they own things. This balance is very important in the everyday life of school and it is important for democracy in schools. It is important for each individual to be participating the whole way through.

Sometimes though, teachers cannot be involved, and the following quote from Minor-Ragan, illustrates how even when decisions cannot be made collaboratively, in a climate of transparency and trust there is little concern by staff:

In my role as leader, some situations must be solved with quick decision-making and do not allow for collaboration. My staff knows, understands and accepts that I reserve this right. There is no resistance to following top-down decisions when they occur, because we have been careful to build a foundation of trust and respect.

(Minor-Ragan)

People centred

The principals were focused on helping students to learn and develop.

I was so angry with what I saw in this community. I decided to channel my anger to work for these children who, I think, are paying for the sins of society. How could I turn my back on children?

(Chamuada)

They gain great satisfaction from the changes they see in students. They were also excellent in helping staff to learn and develop, and gained equally great satisfaction with this. Notman described Anderson's work with staff and students:

Jan has a strong personal commitment to the people of her school community. She feels keenly the interpersonal nature of the job and her capacity to influence other individual lives for better or for worse. She enjoys the intrinsic reward of seeing teachers and parents happy, and students achieving their individual potential, both inside and outside of school. Of all the aspects of the role she most likes, it is the connection with students.

The reader will recall that an important element in the work of Mulyano was his focus on developing staff, and to do so in a manner that was, whilst still aware of the need to improve the school, respectful of the person, both in terms of who they were as a professional and a person, as explained in this comment from a teacher:

some teachers said that the principal prioritises teachers from his ethnic background. But I think it is not true. He just wants to show that whoever is willing to work hard will get rewards, like to be given some other assignments. Like me, I am trusted by the principal to manage student organisations with other teachers. So, if you want to advance, you should go with him, but if you stay [where you are now] you will be left behind no matter what you are.

Without exception, the principals were people centred and genuinely enjoyed the engagement with the many people, students and adults that they meet daily. This is evident in a student's description of Tudor:

He's open, he's welcoming and he's nice. He's really friendly and always interesting to talk to. He's also a really honourable guy. He doesn't promote himself. He tries to cater for everybody not just purely academic or purely sport. He tries to get a range of things and interests. He's genuinely interested in like everything that goes on, and he's always looking for ways to make things better, and he gets the respect of everyone.

In some cases it seemed that this engagement with people is what gave them the energy to work the long and intense hours typical of a principal..

The power of 'AND': transformational AND instructional leadership

There has in recent times been a revival of the transformational/instructional leadership debate (e.g. Robinson *et al.*, 2008). Our principals were invariably both. They were concerned to motivate and support staff, but also concerned to

ensure that teaching and learning was happening in an appropriate way. Whilst they typically weren't the hands-on instructional leader wished for in the 1980s (Murphy, 1990; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992) and perhaps evident in the work of Lute, they were educational leaders, ensuring improvement in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment by most often working with other school leaders to influence teacher practice (e.g. Yaakov). One principal, Olof, deliberately distanced himself from the instructional leadership role, although he was a very visible leader nevertheless and emphasized the relationships he had with students and teachers. On reflection, Olof wished he had been more concerned with the quality of teacher's work in the classroom, a reflection that recognizes the need for instructional and transformational leadership (Moos *et al.*, 2011a). A counsellor at Kiptai Primary School spoke of the teaching and learning culture that the Chamuada had established:

Our teachers are empowered through constant conversations about teaching, learning, and the community around us. We all feel that we have enough information and knowledge about our school, students and parents. And even though sometimes we lack resources, we are happy that we do our best.

All our principals seem to exhibit transformational leadership qualities (Bass & Avolio, 1997; Avolio, 2011), such as motivating and supporting staff (e.g. Villafuerte-Elizondo), understanding them at a personal level (e.g. Tudor), and encouraging them to have a voice in decision making processes (e.g. Frandsen). There were also elements of the transactional element of transformational leadership. This is the aspect that uses learning theory to reward appropriate behaviour and to act upon concerns. The following quote from Villafuerte-Elizondo illustrates some of the transactional element based on a clear sense of what is expected, and ways of understanding when the expectations are met:

Each one of us has a particular role. Each can contribute in his or her own way to meet the school's goals. So what we need is a plan with clear goals known to all, so each one of us can know how we can contribute to achieve those goals. And a clear set of measures so that each one of us knows if we are contributing. Then each one simply does what s/he is willing to do and knows if s/he is contributing or not.

(Villafuerte-Elizondo)

Improving schools in challenging circumstances

Many of the chapters in this book tell stories of school turnaround. Some of our research groups, particularly those from the USA, England and Mexico, have focused on successful school leadership in challenging contexts, and so there are many examples of a principal being appointed to a school with low performance

and dramatically improving performance, sometimes over a relatively short time, but often taking several years for substantial and sustained success. For some principals it seems to be a calling to serve in schools in challenging circumstances, and examples include the stories of Ragan, David, Ingalls, Villafuerte-Elizondo, Chamuada, Birger, Olof, Martinez and Mulyono. Some of the stories describe how the principals have a history of being able to transform schools (Ragan, Villafuerte-Elizondo, Martinez) or have gone on to superintendent roles to use their knowledge to improve other schools (Ingalls, Olof). Consistent in the stories of those that have improved schools in challenging circumstances is an initial focus on ensuring that there is at least the basic requirements of an adequate school – it is emotionally and physically safe for all; there are adequate physical resources; the teachers and other staff are appropriately qualified and committed, and there is a structure to the curriculum. Once these are in place, then they attend to establishing an empowering direction, improving curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, supporting staff development, acquiring and using resources well, engaging the school community in a collaborative effort to improve the school, and so forth.

Developing as a leader

The development of successful leadership characteristics, dispositions and qualities takes time. When we came to study the principals in this book, they were mostly experienced educators who had taken many years to become successful principals. Some had early leadership opportunities, but their success as a principal was generally crafted through a blend of on-the-job learning, formal and informal professional learning, mentoring or sponsorship by significant others, and serendipity in the pathways to leadership (consider the story of Laura Martinez). Whilst formal graduate programs were not emphasized (although cases such as that of Martinez and Mulyono emphasize the importance of formal learning), nevertheless the principals demonstrated a capacity for life-long learning, were inquisitive and restless, and were always looking for new opportunities for their schools. Most importantly, all the principals seem to be concerned to develop themselves. For example, this could be by accepting a challenging position (e.g. Ingalls, Tudor, Olof, Martinez), engaging in formal or informal professional learning (e.g. Frandsen, Anderson), or by participating in research; some of the principals (Minor-Ragan and Tudor) have been involved in the bi-annual ISSPP Research and Practice Conferences (the first was held in Nottingham in 2009, the second in Boston in 2011 and the third in Umea in 2013). The mix of formal and informal learning evident in the ISSPP principals is further explored in the second and third volumes of the ISSPP books (Moos *et al.*, 2011b; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011).

Personal qualities, beliefs and values

In addition to these themes there are some overriding features to the work of the principals. In this section we explore some of the personal qualities, and beliefs and values that seem to contribute to successful school leadership.

Personal acumen

Acumen is concerned with sharpness of mind, a quality that our principals seem to possess. This is shown powerfully when considering their problem solving abilities. Our principals seem to be expert problem solvers, both in terms of typical problems, and the swampy problems that sometimes emerge and challenge the best educational leaders (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995). Our principals do not typically see problems as unresolvable, but rather they see them as challenges that can be worked with and overcome.

I am not the kind of person that sits down and waits for things to happen. I go out looking for solutions, not problems. I don't sit on the side of the road crying. If the road doesn't lead to a solution I take another road.

(Villafuerte-Elizondo, p. 44)

They are good at listening to people, helping them to work through issues and problems and become better problem solvers.

Qualities and dispositions

In a summary of previous ISSPP cases, Moos *et al.* (2011a) described personal qualities of leadership that seemed to be key factors in success. These included personal commitment to making a difference, resilience, motivation to sustain their efforts over time, high self-efficacy, high expectations of themselves and others, emphasis on establishing excellent personal relationships with the school, and an emphasis on whole-child development and establishing a supportive school environment. Supporting these findings and the long history of trait theory in leadership, there are many features of the qualities and dispositions of the principals in this book that seem important for success including: optimism, persistence, trust (behaving in a way that promotes the attribution of trust in the leader by others, and also displaying trust in others), tolerance, empathy, alertness (shown through high levels of physical and mental energy), curiosity, resilience, benevolence, honesty, openness, respectful, and humbleness.

The principals worked hard. They did this for several reasons; the job demands it; it models appropriate behaviour to others; many had a belief that hard work will bring rewards. Related to this are some personal qualities such as courage, commitment and energy. Birger comments:

It is all about courage and commitment. I am completely clear and consistent in that matter. I have told people around me that the day you see that I lose my commitment you have to tell me because then I have nothing more to give.

Similarly Tudor comments on the need for sustaining energy:

As a principal, you need to keep renewing your energy, to be one step ahead, to be proactive never reactive, so you need mental energy and resilience, while you can do that, people are happy with you and will come with you, otherwise dissatisfaction will set in and the school will run down, relationships will run down.

As mentioned previously, they worked collaboratively. Whilst the principals displayed all the qualities of good educational leadership (such as setting direction, developing people, developing the school and managing and improving teaching and learning), they also knew they couldn't lead a school by themselves, and they genuinely valued the contribution of teachers, parent and students to the success of their schools. As Tudor states, 'through working with others, people achieve more and learn more effectively, and ... people grow by being of service to others.' Chamuada wanted to share the leadership of the school with parents and teachers and build their capacity so that, 'leadership will outlive me'.

The principals had self-belief and understanding. In regard to Anderson's leadership at Otago Girls' School, a teacher noted:

She does have, I think, a strong sense of self. She knows where she is coming from. She has a very good understanding of her own values and commitments and as they apply to what happens in the school.

Chamuada at Kiptai Primary School, knew that what he saw happening when he first went to the school was wrong, and he knew that he could change this even though there was no compelling reason to do so as his predecessors and many of the teachers he saw did not seem to care. Nevertheless, despite his young age of 28, he believed that he could work with this community to bring about significant and sustained change. He did this through developing a strategic plan and engaging the community in a collective process to improve the school.

Beliefs and values

In the research that led to the construction of the ISSPP, Day *et al.* (2000) proposed a values-led contingency model of leadership. This emphasized the importance of context to the enactment of leadership, and how personal and school values influenced the choices and decisions made. A values framework used by Leithwood and Steinbach (1991; cited in Leithwood *et al.*, 1994: 103) describes four categories:

- *Basic human values* (principles, terminal values referring to end states of existence)
- *General moral values* (those relevant to judging the ethical dimensions of decisions)
- *Professional values* (those relevant to guiding decisions at work)
- *Social and political values* (those that recognize the social nature of human action)

These will be used to consider the work of the principals in this book. The categories are not mutually exclusive but the discussion below follows broadly the sequence of categories as listed.

An ethic of care was evident in all the stories, and this extended to all in the school community. Related to this was a sense of social justice. These qualities transcended contexts and were, for example, as evident in the work of Tudor and Anderson in more privileged contexts, as they were in the challenging contexts experienced by principals such as Chamuada and Minor-Ragan. The principals displayed a genuine empathy for others. By this we mean that there was a genuine desire to understand people so as to best help them. It was not related to external demands (such as test scores) but a genuine desire to want the best for all of those in the school community, be they students, parents or teachers. The principals valued individuality and exhibited the transformational leadership quality of individual consideration. A belief in freedom and democracy pervaded many of the stories (e.g. Frandsen, Mulyono). There was a strong and persisting sense of responsibility to provide an educational environment that will set students well on their life paths (e.g. David, Olof, Birger), with many principals seeming to have a passion for working in challenging contexts to help those most in need (Minor-Ragan, Ingalls, Chamuada, Villafuerte-Elizondo, Yaakov, Martinez, Mulyono). Even in more privileged contexts, a strong sense of working for those in need was evident, with, for example, Tudor working extensively at a personal and school level with Aboriginal communities in challenging contexts. Personal qualities mentioned above such as integrity, compassion, honesty, respect for others, optimism and curiosity helped them manifest these values and beliefs.

To help them navigate the ethical dimensions of decisions the principals seem to rely on some key values. In challenging what he saw and to help guide school improvement decisions, Chamuada would often ask himself, 'Is this what I would want for my own children?' By using this standard, he constantly sought improvement at Kiptai Primary School, and used this as a tool to challenge others; 'To do to the children in this school as they would want others to do for their children.' The reader may recall the hopeful story used by Chamuada to provide a compelling reason for children to be educated, so that the community might one day have a representative in parliament. Anderson spoke of having the courage to do what is right. This might, for example, come from a spiritual or social justice base, or more simply from an understanding of what is possible in education. Balancing individual versus collective care, and considering the unwarranted

harm that might arise from decisions that are made, are further elements of how the courage to do what is right might be developed. For Anderson, one of the drivers for improving the Otago Girls' High School was for the school to 'never be like it was in past days' before she became principal, and 'to pull it back to a classy girls' school.' So, for Anderson high expectations of what the school could be gave her 'the courage to do what is right'.

Aspects that have been highlighted in the themes such as high expectations of all, the importance of developing staff capacity, use of collective capacity to achieve more, a sense of the positive impact of the work of school leaders and teachers, a sense that hard work is needed for success, and focusing on developing core areas whilst fostering a well-rounded education are examples of professional values that help to guide work-based decisions.

Leadership is of course a social activity and so social and political values are important with examples already mentioned including: sharing, participation and fostering collaborative cultures, emphasizing the centrality of people, sharing the responsibility for student learning with the whole school community, appealing to moral purpose to drive decisions, developing frameworks to guide change (e.g. the 'bottom lines' of Ingalls, or the emotional thermometer of Tudor), and engaging the wider community.

Concluding thoughts

In the opening story, Steve Jacobson asked, 'Is this your right mountain?' It is a suitable point to end this book. The stories in this book tell of people who seem to have found their right mountain. There is much that is given to be on the mountain, and much that is given back as the ascent is completed. Leading schools is about the art of leadership as much as it is about developing the knowledge dispositions and competencies of successful principal leadership that the ISSPP has documented so well. It is about adaptability and passion, knowledge and compassion, about looking after yourself as well as others, about finding your own right mountain where you can make a genuine difference to those in schools. It is our hope, in creating this selection of stories of successful principals that they will provide points of connection for your own work as educators or researchers, that they provide inspiration for continuing this work, and a celebration of what is perhaps one of the most rewarding and important jobs in our society.

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