

# LEADERSHIP THAT TRANSFORMS SCHOOLS: A BREAKTHROUGH IN FRAMING THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORT

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We recently completed a five-year international research and development project at Educational Transformations that has led to new insights on strategies to turn around low performing schools as well as sustain high levels of performance in schools that have been outstandingly successful over many years. The outcome is a breakthrough in our understanding of leadership and governance and a framework for policy and practice that may well be the first to span East and West in a new global perspective on school reform.

## Key publications

Details of the breakthrough along with illustrations and guidelines for policy and practice are contained in three books that were published during the life of the project. I wrote the first at the mid-point when it became clear that new directions in leadership were being taken that had not yet been recognized in the mainstream literature. This was *Re-imagining Educational Leadership* published in 2006 (Caldwell, 2006). It was then time to connect these directions with work I had been doing with Jim Spinks over 25 years that led to our three books on self-managing schools: *The Self-Managing School* (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988), *Leading the Self-Managing School* (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992) and *Beyond the Self-Managing School* (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998). Jim had been working since 1998 in developing new approaches to allocating resources to schools and in research that explored the connection between resources and learning outcomes for students. We brought his experience together in our fourth co-authored book entitled *Raising the Stakes* published in 2008 (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008).

The next challenge was to test a framework that was emerging in different national settings where efforts were under way to achieve the transformation of schools, which we defined as significant, systematic and sustained change that secured success for all students in all settings. Jessica Harris who managed our research at Educational Transformations joined me to lead the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools funded by the Australian Government and the Welsh Assembly Government and conducted in Australia, China, England, Finland, United States and Wales. The findings and recommendations for practice were contained in *Why Not the Best Schools* published in 2008 along with six reports of findings in each of the six countries (Douglas & Harris, 2008 for Australia; Egan, 2008 for Wales; Goodfellow & Walton, 2008 for England; Saarivirta, 2008 for Finland; Zhao et al 2008a for China; and Zhao et al 2008b for the United States).

The purpose of this paper is to bring together the major themes of this work, describe how the ideas are being taken up, and draw implications for leadership and governance.

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## **By schools for schools**

I began this work at the end of two terms as dean of education at the University of Melbourne (1998-2004). I wanted to resume my engagement with policy for and practice in the self-managing school which to some extent had been set aside during this period. Educational Transformations Pty Ltd was created in 2004 as a vehicle for this re-engagement. Those familiar with our work will know that the earlier books arose from partnerships with leading practitioners such as Jim Spinks who had been a pioneer in self-management through his principalship of two schools in Tasmania.

An opportunity for re-engagement was presented in an invitation from the Specialist Schools Trust in England to serve as an associate director and help create a network of schools around the world that were committed to sharing their knowledge about transformation. It is now the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and the network involves more than 5,000 schools in about 30 countries in a project entitled International Networking for Educational Transformation (iNet). The main work of the Trust is the support of more than 3,000 secondary schools in England (95 percent of all secondary schools) that offer a specialization in their curriculum, as well as support for the new academy model of secondary schooling in England that addresses in particular the needs of students in highly disadvantaged settings. There are currently nearly 200 academies with a target of 300 by September 2010. The Trust has a guiding principle in how it goes about its work, namely, 'by schools for schools', and there was a natural synergy with our own predispositions and intentions for Educational Transformations.

The guiding principle is reflected in how we gathered the information for the three books. We conducted more than 70 seminars and workshops for about 4,000 school and school system leaders from 11 countries, gathering case studies from scores of schools in different national settings. We analyzed more than 10,000 responses to key questions that were posed to participants to secure accounts of how they went about their work, the challenges they faced as they sought to transform their schools, and recommendations for policy and practice in the years ahead.

### ***Re-imagining Educational Leadership***

A key theme that took shape in the first year was that we needed to come to terms with the idea that 'new enterprise logic' should drive reform in both public and private sectors. The concept was coined by Zuboff and Maxmin (2004) who proposed that the way an organization should work should be turned on its head so that the starting point of organizational form and function is the needs and aspirations of clients, customers and consumers or, in the case of schools, students and parents. This contrasts with the traditional approach where these actors are seen as the end points in a delivery chain, and operations from start to finish are configured accordingly.

Zuboff and Maxmin contend that individuals are now giving voice to their desire for 'self-determination' (Zuboff & Maxmin, 2004, p. 93), a phenomenon that is manifested in several ways in education, including personalising the learning experience: 'parents want their children to be recognized and treated as individuals' (Zuboff & Maxmin, 2004, p. 152). They suggest that the 'old enterprise logic' persists and that its rules are 'woefully inadequate when it comes to responding to the realities of life in the new society of individuals'. Moreover 'the old organizations have become sufficiently insulated and self-congratulatory to ignore the chasm that has formed between their practices, invented for a mass society, and the new society it has spawned. We conclude that the new individuals are being blamed for the problems of the old organizations, when the facts suggest the opposite. It is not the

new individuals who have failed the old organizations, but rather the old organizations that have failed the new individuals . . . When the old clothes no longer fit, make new ones (Zuboff & Maxmin, 2004, pp. 116-117).

The idea of 'new enterprise logic' explained what we were learning as we listened to leaders in schools that had been transformed. We identified the following elements in the new enterprise logic of schools:

1. The student is the most important unit of organization – not the classroom, not the school, and not the school system – and there are consequent changes in approaches to learning and teaching and the support of learning and teaching.
2. Schools cannot achieve expectations for transformation by acting alone or operating in a line of support from the centre of a school system to the level of the school, classroom or student. Horizontal approaches are more important than vertical approaches although the latter will continue to have an important role to play. The success of a school depends on its capacity to join networks or federations to share knowledge, address problems and pool resources.
3. Leadership is distributed across schools in networks and federations as well as within schools, across programs of learning and teaching and the support of learning and teaching.
4. Networks and federations involve a range of individuals, agencies, institutions and organizations across public and private sectors in educational and non-educational settings. Leaders and managers in these sectors and settings share a responsibility to identify and then effectively and efficiently deploy the kinds of support that are needed in schools. Synergies do not just happen of their own accord. Personnel and other resources are allocated to energize and sustain them.
5. New approaches to resource allocation are required under these conditions. A simple formula allocation to schools based on the size and nature of the school, with sub-allocations based on equity considerations, is not sufficient. New allocations take account of developments in the personalising of learning and the networking of expertise and support.

We demonstrated how school leaders whose practice reflected 'new enterprise logic' were exhilarated by the experience and that many factors that inhibited their enthusiasm were manifestations of 'old enterprise logic'. Policymakers need to abandon the latter if they wish to attract and retain the best people to the profession and to school leadership.

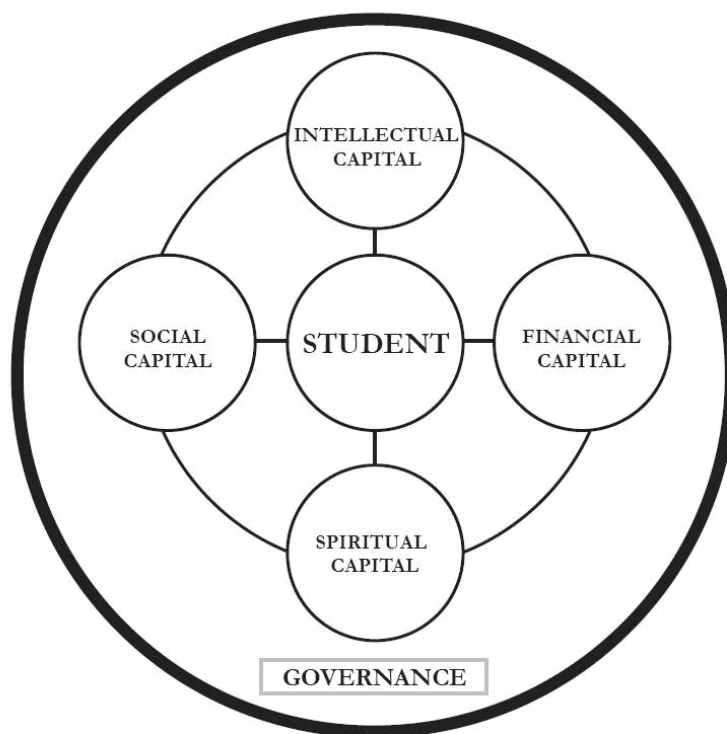
### ***Why Not the Best Schools***

The findings in *Re-imagining Educational Leadership* and *Raising the Stakes* suggested that schools which had been transformed or were on their way to doing so were adept at building strength in four domains or forms of capital (Figure 1). These represent the resources that are needed to achieve success: intellectual capital, social capital, spiritual capital and financial capital:

Intellectual capital refers to the level of knowledge and skill of those who work in or for the school. Social capital refers to the strength of formal and informal partnerships and networks involving the school and all individuals, agencies, organizations and institutions that have the potential to support and be supported by the school. Spiritual capital refers to the strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence among values, beliefs and attitudes about life and learning (for some schools, spiritual capital has a foundation in religion; in other schools, spiritual capital may

refer to ethics and values shared by members of the school and its community). Financial capital refers to the money available to support the school.

Building strength in each of these domains and aligning them to secure success for all students in all settings requires outstanding governance which in turn requires outstanding leadership. Our findings suggested that governance is best seen as the process through which the school builds its intellectual, social, financial and spiritual capital and aligns them to achieve its goals. This view of governance is a breakthrough because the practice is traditionally conceived in terms of roles, authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities. These are simple pre-conditions for effective governance. Effective leadership is a pre-requisite for effective governance.



**Figure 1: Leadership and governance as capital formation (Caldwell & Harris, 2008, p. 11)**

There were two stages in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools. The first derived from the earlier work and a further review of related literature yielded ten indicators of each form of capital and of governance. The second was to conduct case studies of schools that had been transformed in each of the six countries that we studied. The majority of the indicators were found in practice in all of these schools hence our confidence that we have a framework of concepts and indicators that transcend international boundaries. The particular strategies that have been implemented do of course vary from setting to setting. *Why Not the Best Schools* includes a school self-audit based on the 50 indicators as described below. The 10 indicators of intellectual capital in self-audit format are included in the Attachment.

## How the findings have been taken up

We have been busy in the 15 months since publication of *Why Not the Best Schools*. The self-audit has been used on many occasions in particular schools and in workshops of school leaders. We have developed ten indicators of personalising learning. Working with David Loader, we developed ten indicators to assist a school self-audit in the Futures Focused Schools Project of Teaching Australia (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)). This project has two parts. The first was a series of 18 workshops in every state and territory for more than 500 leaders from approximately 300 schools (all workshop resources are available online at [www.teachingaustralia.edu.au](http://www.teachingaustralia.edu.au)). The second is a book extending the themes in the national workshop series to be published by Teaching Australia under the title *Creating a Future for Your School* (Caldwell & Loader, 2010). A description of a futures focused school was prepared (drawing in part on insights in Beare, 2001; Caldwell & Harris, 2008; Davies, 2006; Loader, 2007 and Mintzberg, 1995). It included the following:

A futures- focused school 'sees ahead', but it also 'sees behind', honouring and extending its accomplishments in the past. It 'sees above' in the sense of understanding the policy context. It 'sees below', demonstrating a deep understanding of the needs, interests, motivations and aspirations of students and staff. It 'sees beside' by networking professional knowledge to take account of best practice in other schools in similar settings. It 'sees beyond' by seeking out best practice in other nations and in fields other than education. It is consistent and persistent; it 'sees it through'. The metaphor of 'sensing' is also helpful given that 'seeing' refers to what is already in place or is projected. A futures focused school is alert to signals in its internal and external environment that may influence what may occur in the future and that may subsequently be 'seen'. These signals may be strong or weak and a high level of sensitivity is required to distinguish among them (Caldwell & Loader, 2009).

Creating capacity of the kind described here is part and parcel of creating intellectual capital in school leaders

The framework in Figure 1 was used in our report of developments in Australia that formed part of an international project to assist the Obama administration in the United States determine a strategy to turn around low performing schools. Jessica Harris is employing the framework to study teacher education in Australia, China (Hong Kong) Korea, and Malaysia, reflecting the importance of teacher education in building the intellectual capital of the profession.

Significantly, we have participated in public debates on school reform in Australia. The final chapter of *Why Not the Best Schools* contains a ten-point ten-year strategy for an education revolution that affirms much of what the Rudd Government is endeavoring to achieve through 'new federalism' partnerships with states and territories. If there is an over-arching concern it is that 'new enterprise logic' has not taken hold to any great extent and Australia may be headed for more centralised and bureaucratized approaches to controlling schools when the focus should be on building the capacity of all schools to be more autonomous within a national framework, with the student being the most important unit of organization.

## **Breakthrough in understanding governance and leadership**

The findings in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools yielded a breakthrough in understanding governance which, in turn, provided the breakthrough in understanding leadership.

A review of recent literature reveals an increasing number of reports and recommendations on governance. Most suffer from a significant shortcoming in their preoccupation with structures, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. Questions addressed include 'How should parents be involved in the decision-making processes of the school?' or 'Should a school have a governing body that includes representatives of different stakeholders, and what should be the role of the principal in such an arrangement?' 'Should the governing body set policy and approve the budget for the school?' 'Which of the various arrangements are likely to have a direct or indirect effect on improving the learning outcomes of students?' 'How should meetings of the governing body be organized?' 'How are legal obligations to be met when the governing body has the powers of a board of directors?' Securing answers to such questions is necessary if governing arrangements are to work. While these may be necessary tasks they are far from sufficient. The breakthrough in governance is to adopt the broader view of governance as the process through which the school builds its intellectual, social, financial and spiritual capital and aligns them to achieve its goals.

The findings in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools suggest a breakthrough in leadership in similar fashion to what was described above in regard to governance. Good governance no matter how it is configured does not occur by itself. Good leadership is required. Conceptualizing leadership as capital formation complements and extends other conceptualizations and frameworks. Two illustrations are offered, based on the work of Sergiovanni (1984) and Bolman & Deal (2003).

### *Frameworks*

Sergiovanni (1984) provided a view of leadership that has proved helpful over the years. It is selected for summary here because it has shaped policy and practice in Victoria, Australia, including programs for the preparation and professional development of school leaders.

Sergiovanni's pioneering publication was in some respects a response in the field of education to what Peters and Waterman (1982) had provided for the corporate sector in *In Search of Excellence* which attracted extraordinary attention in management circles at the time. Sergiovanni suggested that five leadership forces should be addressed, ordered in a form of hierarchy as technical, human, education, symbolic and cultural. Where technical and human leadership were evident but little more, a school may well avoid being ineffective. To be effective, educational leadership was required. However, to be an excellent school, both symbolic and cultural leadership had to be strong. This was a breakthrough at the time, for the leader in education had barely heard of let alone understood and developed practice in symbolic and cultural leadership. It was then and remains now, a helpful way to analyze the work of a leader and, to some extent, provides a framework for leadership development. Each form of capital is evident in its application.

Another helpful way of framing leadership was proposed by Bolman and Deal and, in its own way, this provided a further breakthrough. They proposed four frames or

lenses: structural, human, symbolic and political. They demonstrated how the same phenomenon could be understood in different ways, depending on what frame was employed, and proposed that leaders develop a capacity to frame and reframe a problem, drawing on the repertoire. The breakthrough here was the concept of reframing but also the inclusion of the political frame. This was novel for many leaders who were well aware of the internal and external politics in their school, but this was seen as dysfunctional or something to be avoided. Some scholars, notably Cheng (2005), combined the Sergiovanni and Bolman and Deal frameworks to good effect.

The model in Figure 1 with its four forms of capital, each created, strengthened, aligned and sustained through good governance and good leadership, is another frame or lens. Adoption does not constitute a rejection of others. Rather it complements, extends and in some respects enriches the others. Moreover, the dimensions in the Sergiovanni and Bolman and Deal frames may be required to address each of the strategies implied in the indicators identified in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools. For example, each has a technical requirement; most have a political dimension; and many, especially those concerned with spiritual capital, are concerned with symbolic or cultural leadership. It is better to frame or reframe in this way rather than try to fit new insights and understandings into a single frame.

#### *Conducting a leadership audit*

The five sets of indicators can form the basis of an audit of leadership in a school as well a more general audit across the school as described in a previous section. Assuming that leadership is widely distributed in a school, not all leaders will have responsibility for performing well on each of the 50 indicators. A prior first step is to establish roles and responsibilities among a team of leaders. After this is completed, an audit can be conducted, with three questions posed for each indicator: (1) importance of this indicator in the context of your role, (2) how well are you performing in this role, and (3) the priority you attach to further development.

#### **Conclusion**

Three of the six countries in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools were in the Asia Pacific region (Australia, China and the United States). Harris, Zhao & Caldwell (2009) focused on findings in China to illustrate the global perspective described in this paper. In an earlier stage of the five-year project, more than 100 participants in a workshop for school leaders in Malaysia had no difficulty seeing the four forms of capital at work in their schools, with several indicators of spiritual capital reflecting Islamic values and beliefs. Seeing governance and leadership as capital formation as suggested in the model in Figure 1 may be helpful in cross-cultural research and development and in framing policy and practice in the region.

#### **Acknowledgements**

The contributions of Dr Jessica Harris to the research underpinning this paper are acknowledged. She managed the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools and was co-author of *Why Not the Best Schools?* (Caldwell & Harris, 2008) that reported the findings.

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## CONDUCTING AN AUDIT OF YOUR SCHOOL

### INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

For each indicator, provide ratings of (1) importance in the context of your school, (2) how well your school is performing, and (3) the priority you attach to further development.

Indicator	Importance					Performance					Priority								
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5				
	Low					High	Low					High	Low					High	
1. The staff allocated to or selected by the school are at the forefront of knowledge and skill in required disciplines and pedagogies																			
2. The school identifies and implements outstanding practice observed in or reported by other schools																			
3. The school has built a substantial, systematic and sustained capacity for acquiring and sharing professional knowledge																			
4. Outstanding professional practice is recognised and rewarded																			
5. The school supports a comprehensive and coherent plan for the professional development of all staff that reflects its needs and priorities																			
6. When necessary, the school outsources to augment the professional talents of its staff																			
7. The school participates in networks with other schools and individuals, organisations, institutions and agencies, in education and other fields, to share knowledge, solve problems or pool resources																			
8. The school ensures that adequate funds are set aside in the budget to support the acquisition and dissemination of professional knowledge																			
9. The school provides opportunities for staff to innovate in their professional practice																			
10. The school supports a 'no-blame' culture which accepts that innovations often fail																			
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