

Distributed School Leadership



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***Scottish International Summer
School on school Leadership***

*Professor Alma Harris
Institute of Education, London*

What type of leadership transforms school and school systems?



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Defining Organizational Transformation

(Caldwell, 2007)



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Is significant, systematic and sustained change that secures organizational success.

Transforming Schools



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**Securing success
for *each* student
in *each* setting**



Research indicates that



**The quality of leadership is a key determinant
of highly effective and improving
organisations**

(Townsend, 2007)

Research suggests



Successful ‘turnaround’ always necessitates some change in leadership.

OECD Improving School Leadership (2008)

www.oecd.org/edu/schooleadership



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Leadership plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing *the motivations and capacities of teachers*, as well as the school climate and environment.

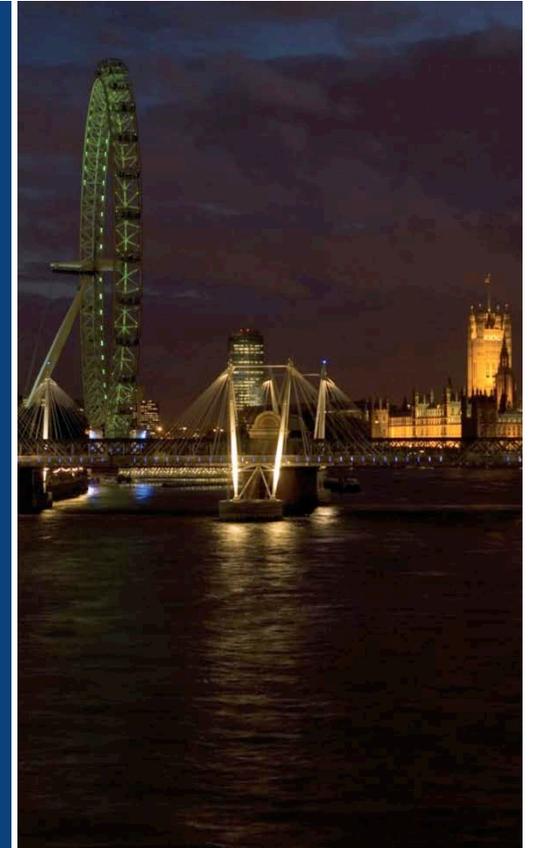
Impact of Leadership

(Leithwood and Seashore Louis, 2004)



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Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.



Disproportionate Effect

(Harris et al, 2006)



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The effects of successful leadership are considerably greater in schools that are in more difficult circumstances.

Current Research

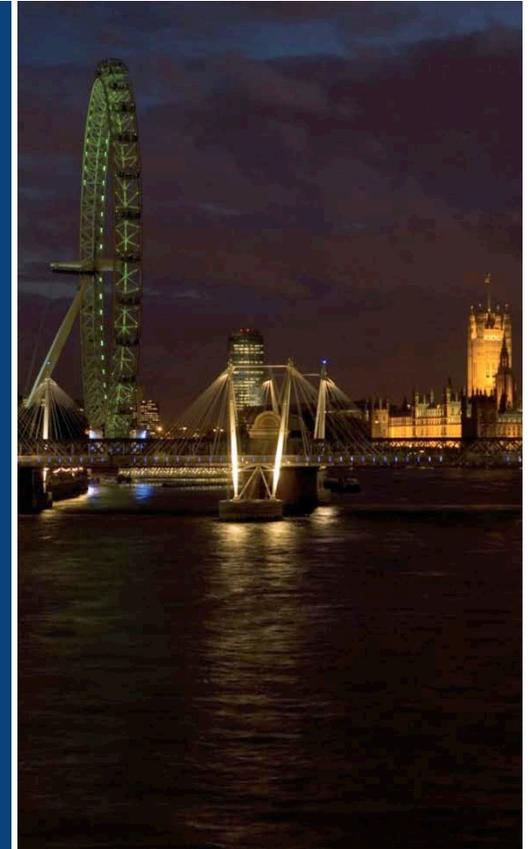
(Day, Sammons, Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins
2008)



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Distributed Leadership is a common denominator in schools that have sustained improvement over a five year period.

www.ioe.ac.uk



So School Leadership Matters



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But its not enough to know that
school leadership matters



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**We need to know what
form(s) of school
leadership transform
organisational and student
*learning?***



Individual Leadership?



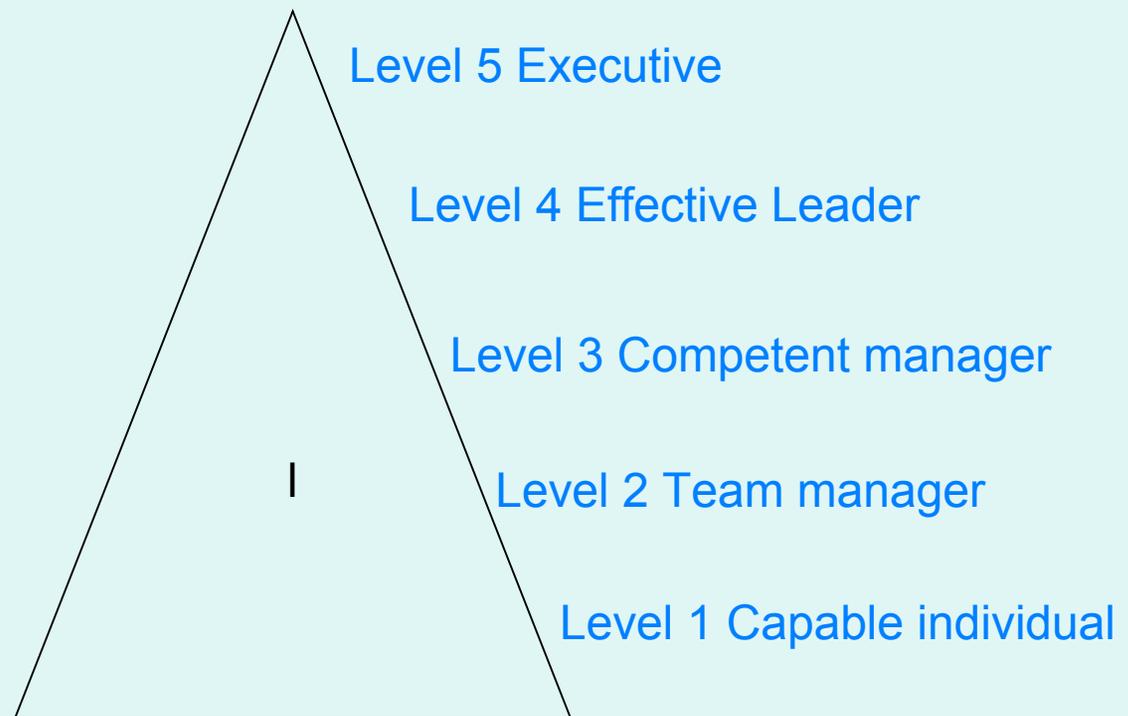
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Good to Great



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Level 5 Leaders



Channel ego needs away from themselves

Focus on larger goals

Are ambitious for their institution and not themselves

Level 5 Leadership

- **Leaders who developed other leaders, distributed leadership and shared power.**



A Caution: Labels for Leadership



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Transformational

Instructional

Distributed

Strategic

System

Passionate



Is there a common set of “basic” leadership practices used by successful leaders in most circumstances?



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Setting Directions

Developing People

Re-designing the Organisation

(Leithwood et al, 2004)



What else, beyond the basics, is required for successful leadership?

Understanding and responding to context:

- **Local/Community**
- **Student/Learner**
- **Policy/ Political**





The World Is Flat



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Technological Change

In five years, students will be using technologies which haven't been invented yet

Leadership for Transformation (Senge, 2006)



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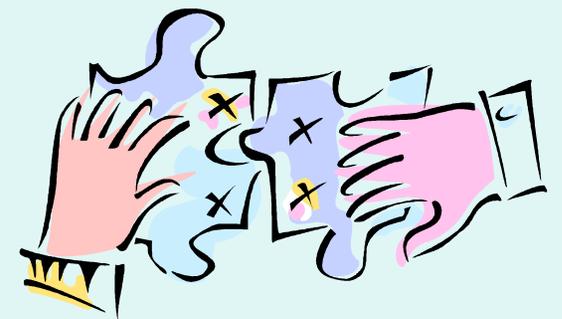
In a world of global networks, we face issues for which top down leadership is inherently inadequate



Central Argument

A shift from hierarchies and roles are the *dominant organisational architecture*

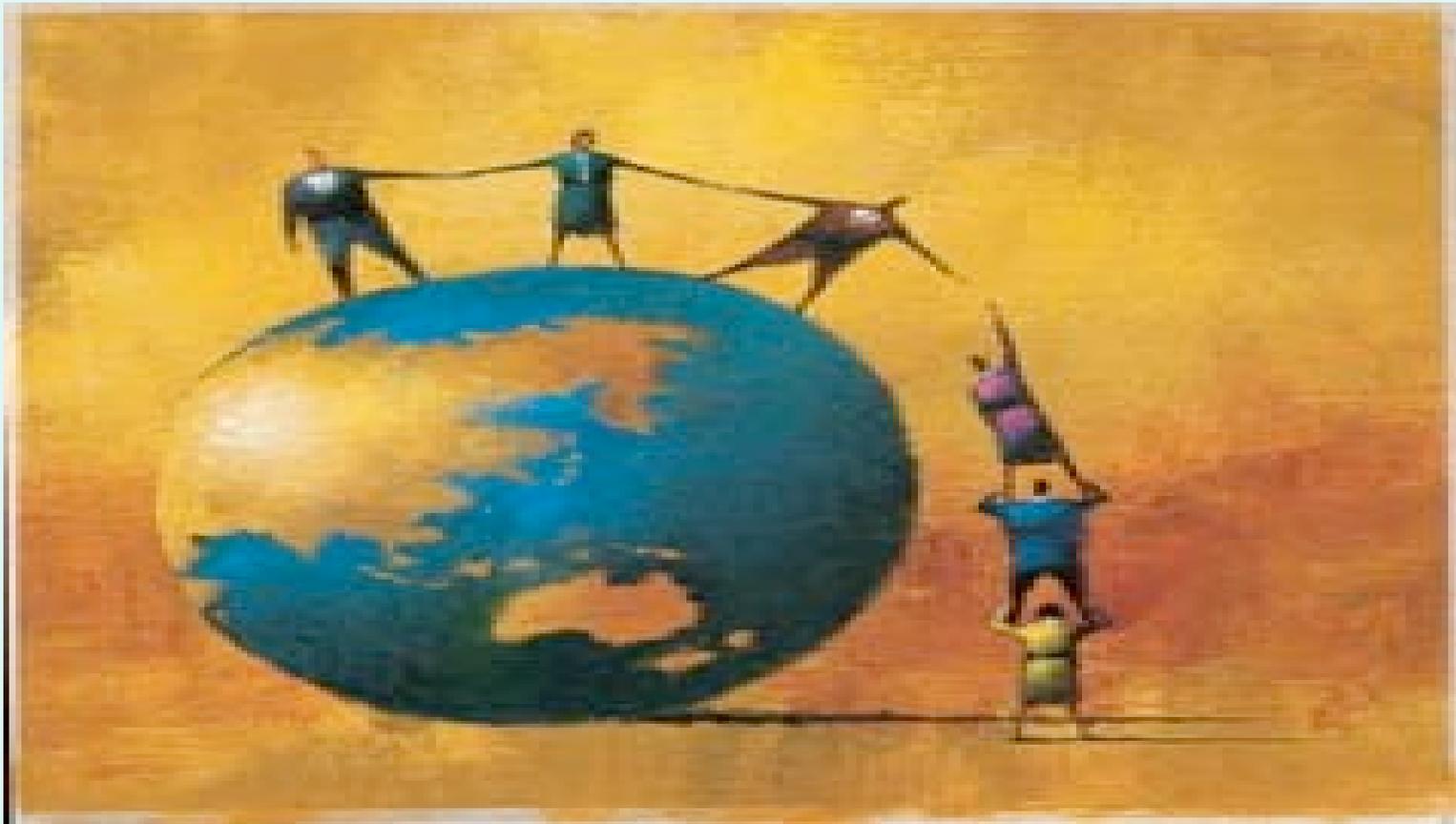
To *interactions* and leadership at all levels are the *drivers of change and transformation.*



Leadership for transformation is distributed and lateral



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SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

(Harris, Crossley, Corbyn and Allen, forthcoming)



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Internally generated not externally prescribed

Learning rather than target focused

Innovation rich and intervention poor

Leadership is widely and purposefully distributed



A definition of distributed leadership

(Harris 2008)



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Leadership extended within and between organisations:



Distributed Leadership

(Harris 2008)



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Doesn't mean everyone leads but that everyone has the potential to lead under the right conditions.



Two fundamental Principles (Harris and Lambert, 2000)



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Broad based involvement

Agency to influence and change

Distributed Leadership in action

(Harris, 2006)



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- Leadership shifts according to need
- The leader role generally resides with the person who has expert authority for the designated task
- Collaborative teams formed for specific purposes and then dismantled
- Teams have fluid membership, which changes according to the task, the roles, and the requisite talent.



So



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**Who takes formal and informal
responsibility for leading in your
school?**

**Where is the untapped *leadership
potential*?**

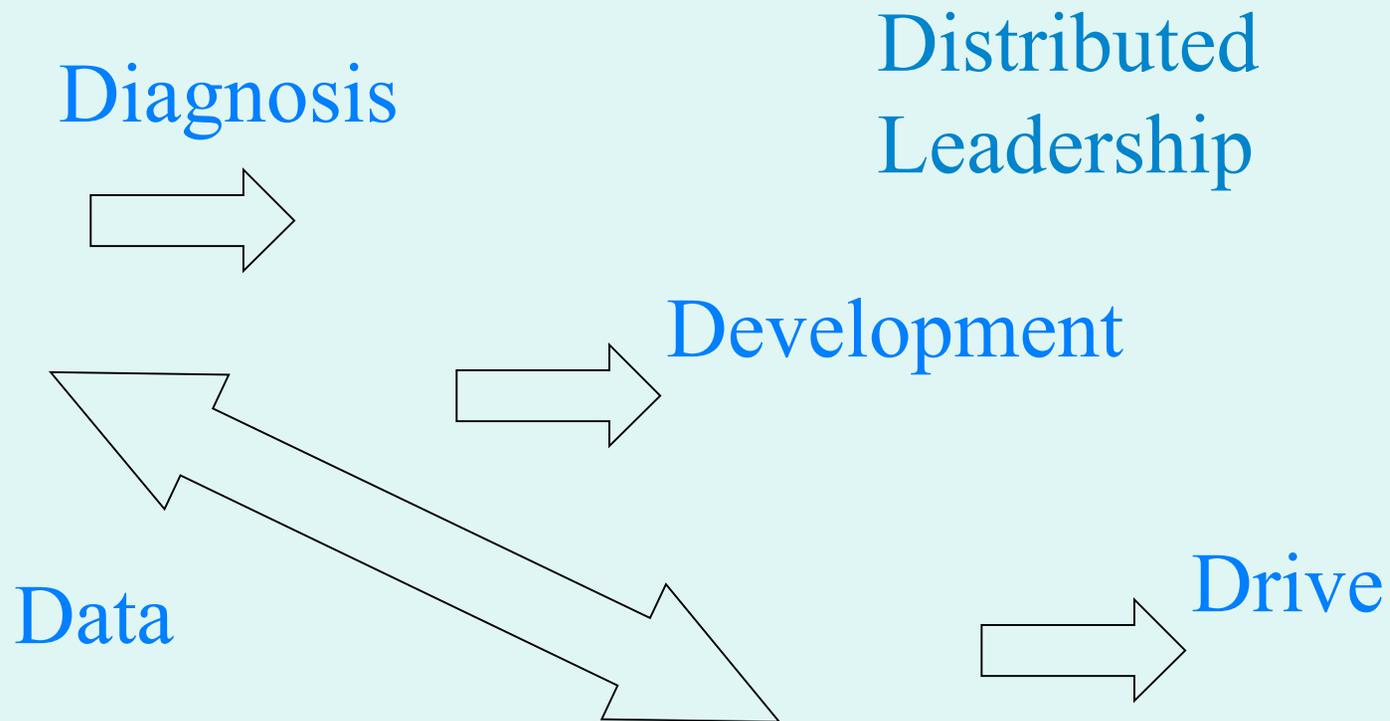
**What *leadership capacity* do you
currently have in our school?**



5 Ds of Improvement (Harris, 2002)



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Distributed Leadership: 3 Levels (Harris, 2008)



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- **Superficial level – delegation**
- **Subterranean level-new teams, new roles and responsibilities**
- **Deep level- cultural- the way of working around here**

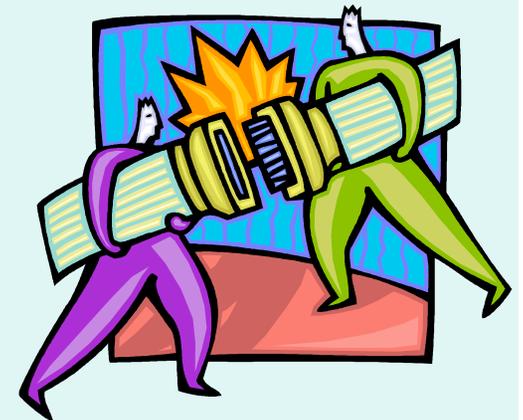
Distributed Leadership

(Harris, 2007)



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Is fundamentally about rethinking organisational design to generate greater leadership capacity.



How does it get distributed?

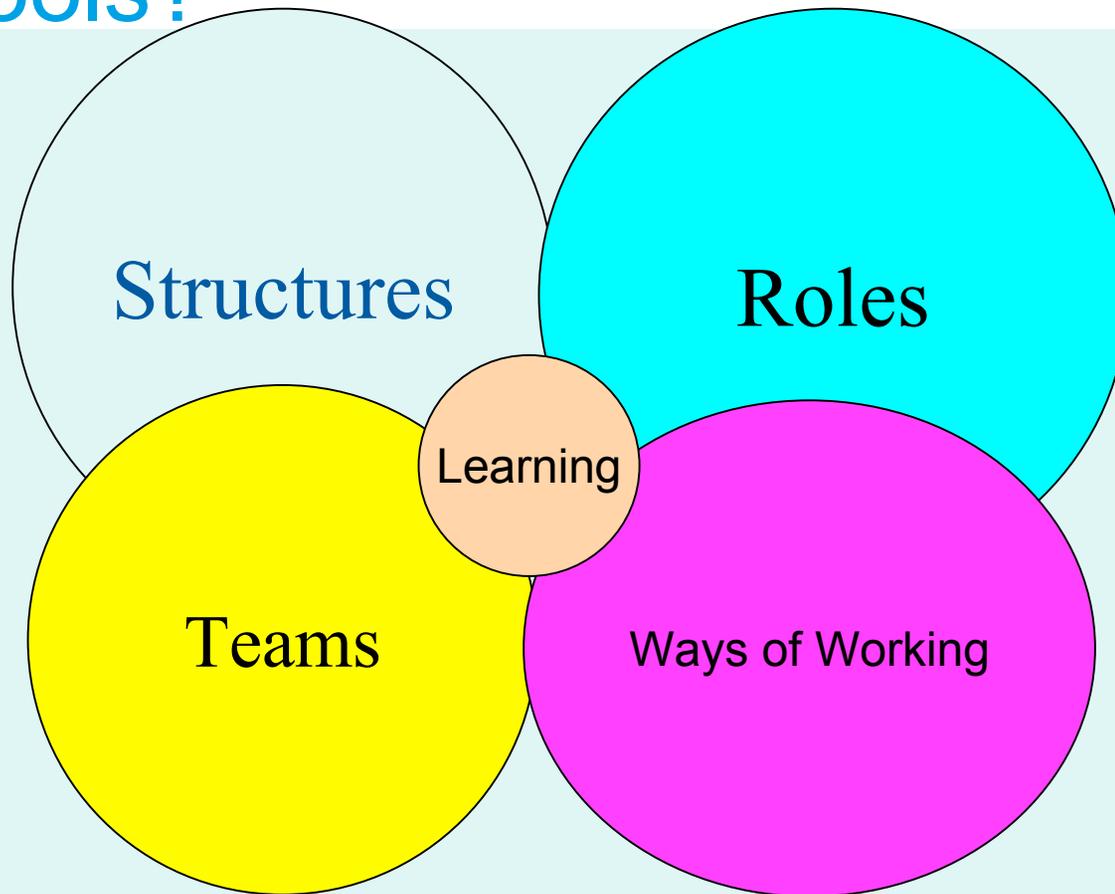
Design
Default
Demand



What does it look like in schools?



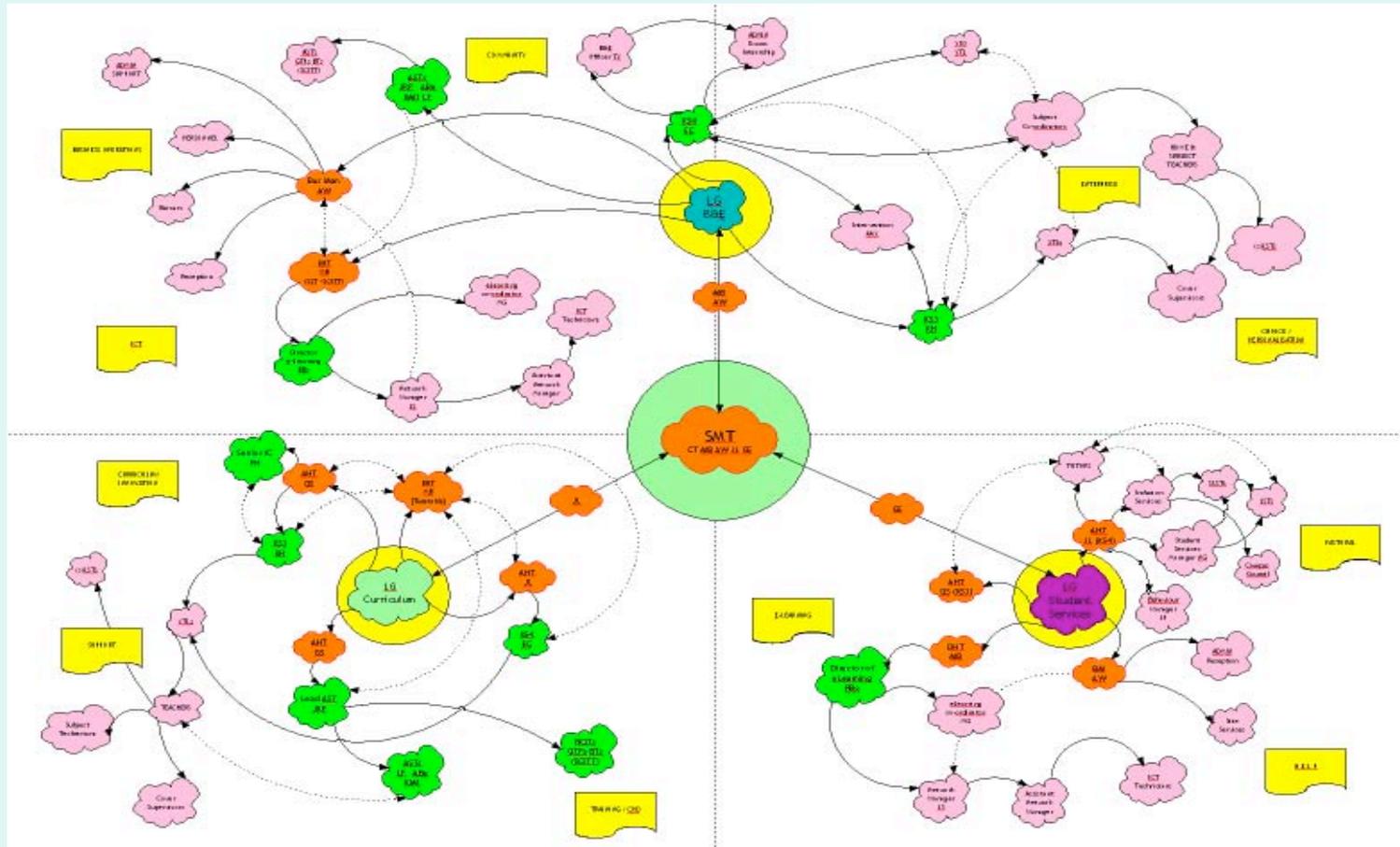
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New Structures



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Distributed Leadership



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Student Leadership

Community Leadership

Parental Leadership



Frequently Asked Questions



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How does it differ from delegation?

Is the Head redundant?

What if teachers don't want to be leaders or see themselves in this way?

How do formal leaders now see their role?

What difference does it make?

But does DL make a difference to organisational/student learning outcomes?

(Harris 2008)

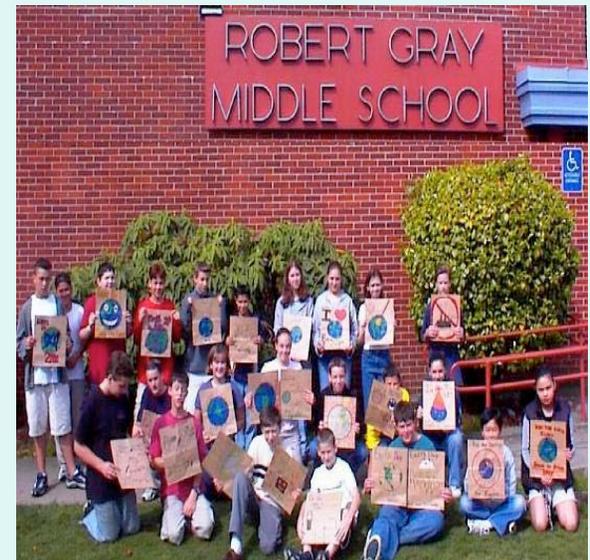


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**Improved student
outcomes**

**Better teacher morale
and self efficacy**

**Improved organisational
outcomes**



Barriers



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Barriers



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Leadership as role

Culture

Structure

Remuneration

Middle Level

Paradox 1

(Harris and Muijs, 2004)



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Without stable, consistent leadership in schools distributed leadership will be incredibly fragile.



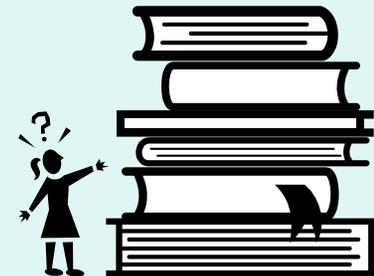
Paradox 2

(Leithwood et al, 2006)



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Distributing leadership to others does not seem to result in less demand for leadership from those in formal leadership positions



Facilitating DL



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Identify potential

Create Time

Create Opportunities

Feedback and reward loops

Networking

**Knowledge retrieval and sharing
processes**

No blame innovation

Better succession planning

Distributed leadership

(Harris, 2007)



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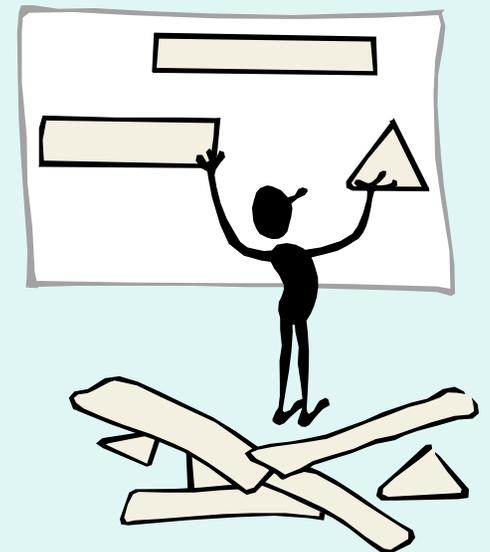
Connects leadership practice more closely with teaching and learning practice.



Core Principle

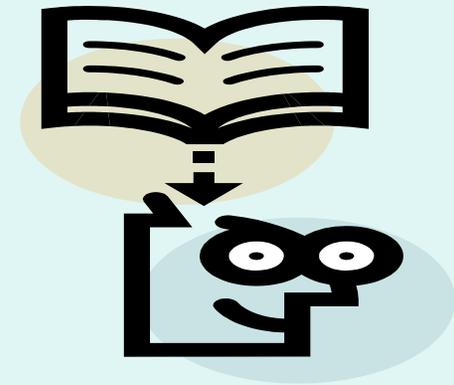
The most effective way to manage change is to create it.

(Drucker, 1995)

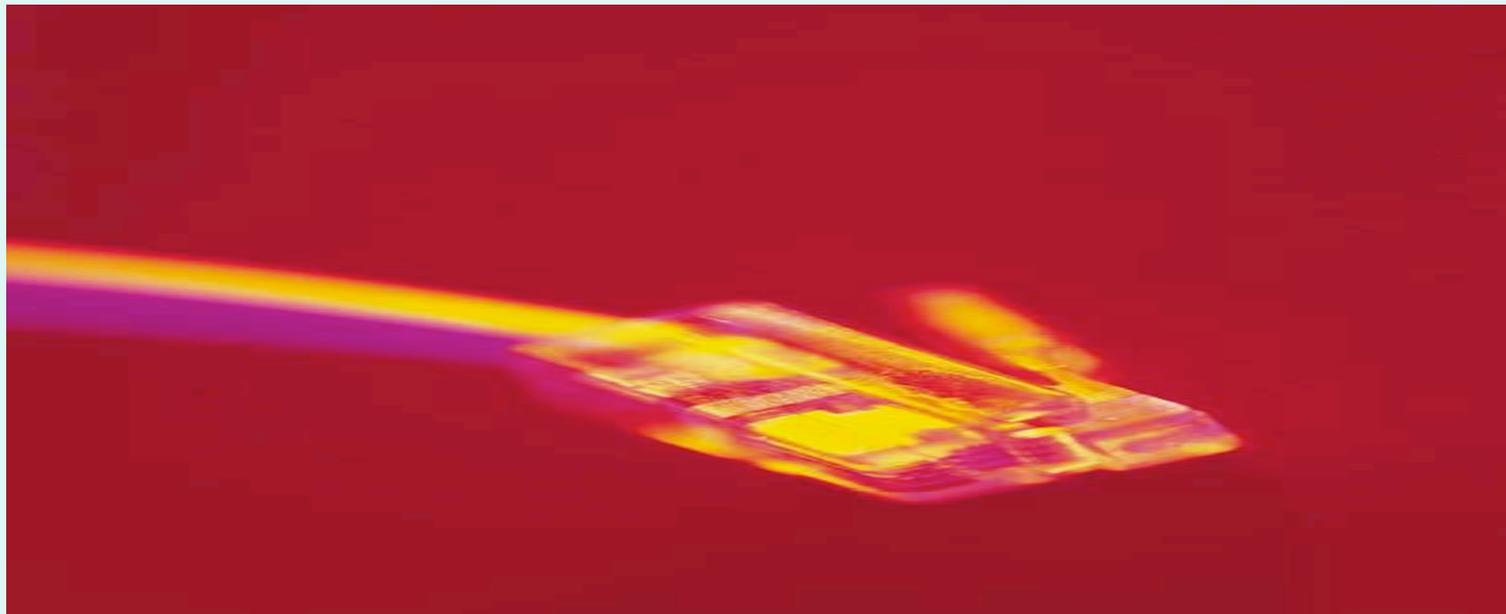


Locating the Tipping Point

The crucial question is not whether leadership is distributed but how it is distributed?



Making Connections: Relationships



Sustainability: Succession Planning



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Patience: Clock Building rather than Time Keeping



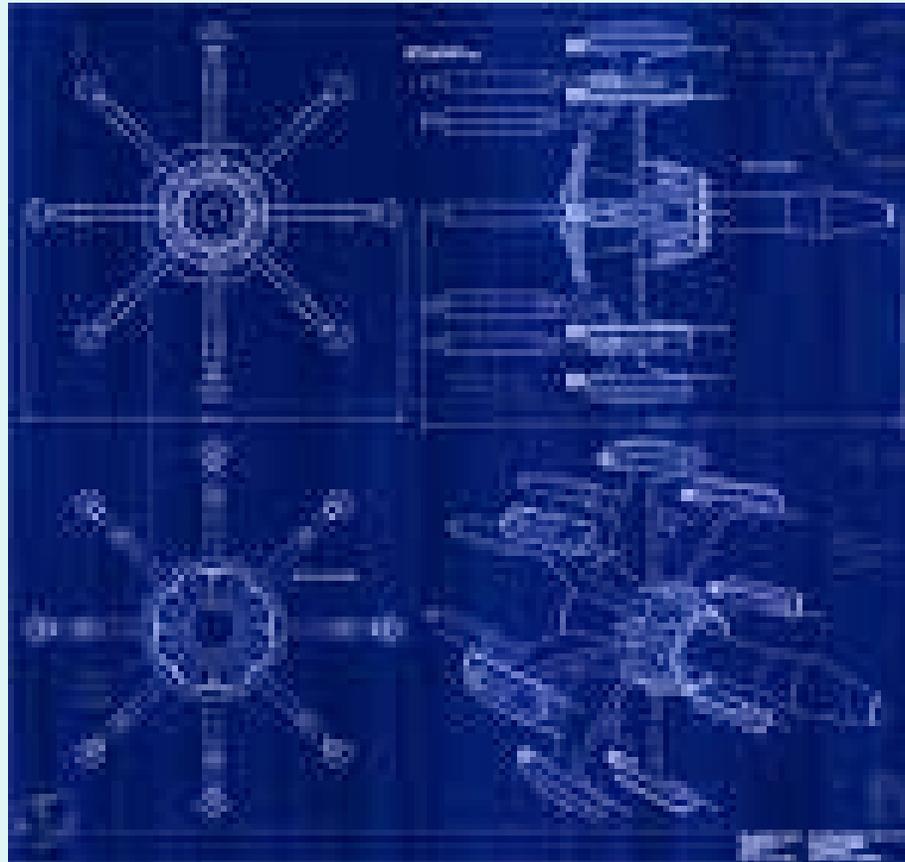
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So is there a Blueprint?



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Long haul: Two Vital Tests



**Leadership that secures
improved teaching and
learning**

**Leaders who develop
other leaders, at all levels**

If we are serious about leadership for deep learning



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*Move away from
the idea that
leadership is the
preserve of an
individual*

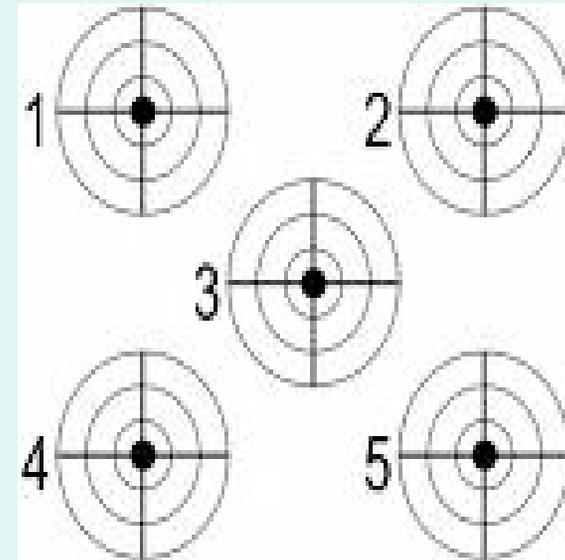


If we are serious about learning



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***Move away from
narrow targets
and focus on
learning***



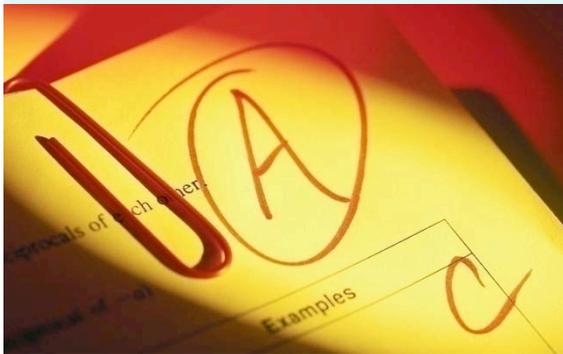
Wherever and Whenever we choose

(Edmonds, 1979)



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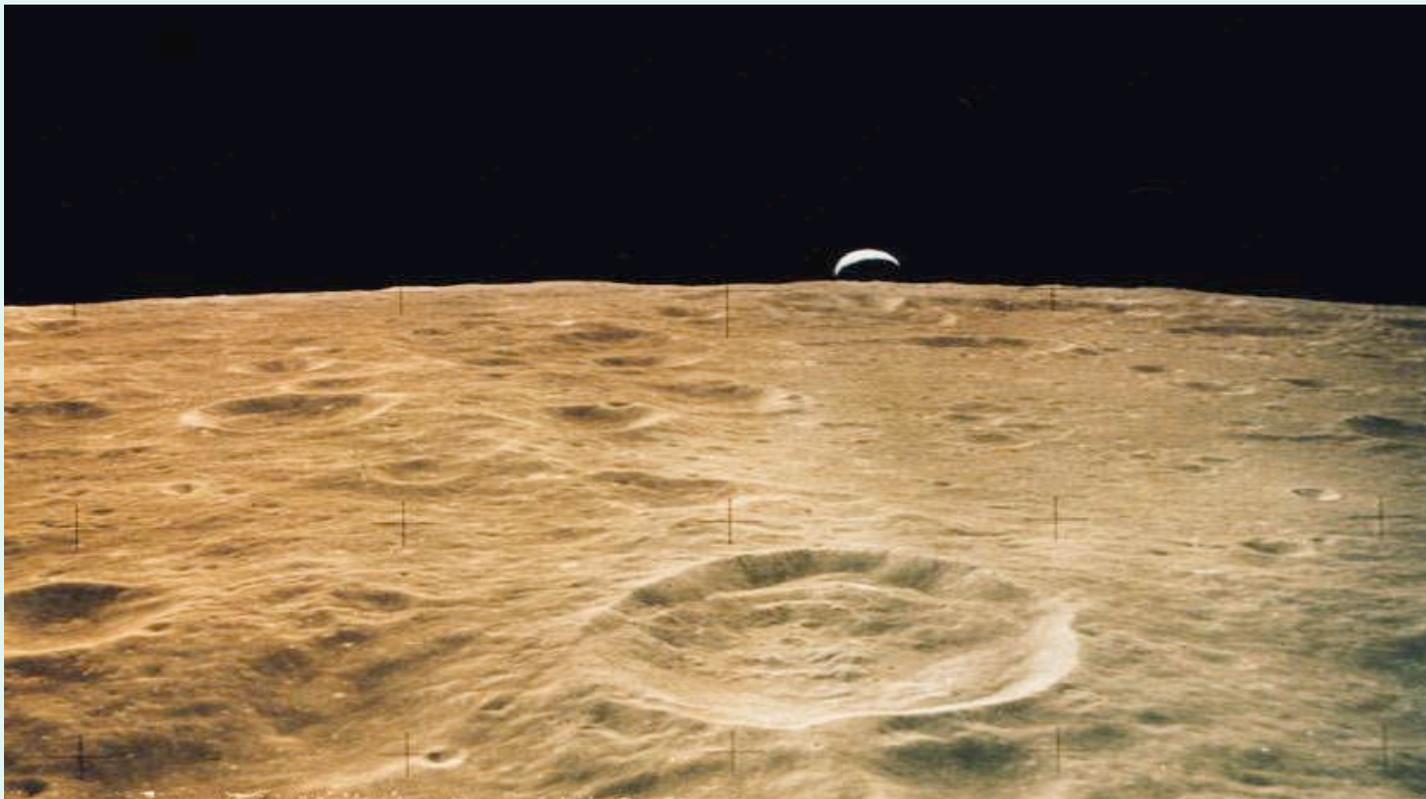
We can improve learning and life-chances of young people



You can accomplish
anything in life, provided
you do not mind who
gets the credit (Truman)



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Be Optimistic



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