

## 2 *Shifting frames of reference: the need for ecological leadership*

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### **Introduction: a leader's current lot is not necessarily a happy one**

There are many empowered, enthusiastic and engaged educational leaders in the western world, who derive deep enjoyment and real fulfilment from their jobs. They hold deep and committed visions of what a good education should look like, they are passionate about empowering their students and in raising their educational achievement, and continue to transmit that enthusiasm to those around them, building a climate of energy, collaboration, trust and self-discipline. In the process they create institutions which are alive, buzzing with the thrill of learning, a joy to be in. Despite increased pressures, there is good research evidence (for example, Day et al., 2000; Gold et al., 2003) that these educational leaders do not sacrifice their ideals, but manage to hold on to their values and lead their schools through their moral visions of what constitutes a 'good education'.

Yet there is worrying evidence that many of these leaders now feel more pressurized than did their peers a couple of generations ago. Their numbers are getting fewer, and there are less and less individuals coming forward to take their place. Such shortages are reported throughout the western world. Fullan (1997), for instance, described a study of principals and vice-principals in Toronto in 1984, in which 90 per cent reported an increase in demands, with only 9 per cent reporting a decrease. Surveying the situation in 1997, he had to conclude (p. 1) that 'we appear to be losing ground [with the principal's leadership role], if we take as our measure of progress the declining presence of increasingly large numbers of highly effective,

satisfied principals'. Similarly, Williams (2001) details the same issues in both the USA and Canada. He cites a report by the US National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1998: 16), which suggested that 'half the district administrators interviewed felt that there had been a shortage of qualified candidates when they filled at least one principalship in the last year'. His own study in Canada likewise suggested that not only were retirement rates 20 per cent higher than provincial estimates, but the pool of qualified candidates for these positions was also shrinking. In the UK, Troman and Woods (2000) reported the same kind of declining enthusiasm for engaging in senior management positions. Finally, Gronn (2003a), reporting on his own research in Australia, as well as other studies in the USA and the UK, came to the same kind of conclusions: the western world is facing an impending crisis, where insufficient numbers of able people are willing to fill the principal's role.

Why are individuals so reluctant to take on such a role? Evans (1996) argued that despite the fact that there have always been tensions in leadership between such things as managing and leading, between demands and resources, and being a leader yet being dependent on others, what is new is the way the job has expanded and intensified, leaving leaders feeling disempowered, the quality of their lives diminishing. The study by Williams (2001) quoted above provides some of the detail for this argument. His study found that at least 70 per cent of all incumbent principal and vice principal respondents found the following (in rank order) to be issues of job dissatisfaction:

- adequacy of time to plan for provincially mandated changes;
- number of curriculum changes mandated by the province;
- adequacy of time to work with students;
- amount of in-school staff support for principals given workload requirements;
- amount of time the job required;
- resources made available to meet the assessment of the school's educational needs.

Now this phenomenon of increased workloads, lack of time to deal with them, and the stress consequent upon this, is not just a phenomenon of his Canadian principals, or indeed of educationalists generally. Work intensification, and the greater stress and pressure

which results, are a reality for many across the world of work throughout the western world, whether in the public, private or voluntary sectors. While Schorr (1992) has argued that US workers have worked longer and harder in order to purchase the goods that would make life in general more satisfying, other commentators have located such intensification elsewhere, particularly in the continued demand by the private sector to cut costs, necessitating reductions in manpower while not necessarily resulting in any reduction in work. Terms like 'delaying', 'outplacement', 'cutting back' and 'casualization' have all become familiar terms as organizations have sought to reduce their overheads. Handy (1989) described the future of work as being that of half the workers receiving twice the salary while doing three times the work. Anecdotal evidence and personal experience both suggest some truth in the first and last parts of Handy's prediction, the middle part seeming much more doubtful. This pattern has moved from the private to the public sector: just as private corporations have cut back on personnel and increased their demands on those remaining, so the public sector has felt a similar bite, as nation-states have retreated from large-scale welfare provision, demanding that their public sectors perform the same kinds of cost-cutting and manpower reductions, while at the same reducing individual room for manoeuvre by increasing the amount of legislative direction. For principals in schools, the result, as Evans (1995) put it, can be the demand for the impossible:

Wanted: A miracle worker who can do more with less, pacify rival groups, endure chronic second-guessing, tolerate low levels of support, process large volumes of paper, and work double shifts . . . He or she will have carte blanche to innovate, but cannot spend much money, replace any personnel, or upset any constituency.

Yet despite such demands, and increased imperatives for such demands to be seen as legitimate, and to feel guilty if they did not, people continued to go the extra mile, to work the extra evening, to forego the family event. Indeed, and as Gronn (2003a) points out, perhaps even more worryingly, in some cases people have become addicted to this pattern, and in effect are living to work, rather than working to live. The result, he suggests, is that: 'in consuming one's whole being, [work] does more than merely provide the physical and psychological wherewithal for a life. Because it becomes one's life, greedy work consumes one's life, so that work becomes the measure of what one is and not just what one does' (2003a: 153).

Blackmore (1995: 51) has made the same kind of point, arguing that due to the emotional demands of the job and the invasion of personal time and space, 'for many teachers and headteachers, the line between the professional and personal is increasingly blurred', and Fielding (2003: 12) takes this even further, worrying that the personal is not just increasingly utilized for the functional, but rather that '*the functional and the personal collapse soundlessly into each other*' [original emphasis].

These kinds of effects may cause great concern to observers, as they see the person they knew being transformed and not wishing it for themselves. Indeed, there is now increasing evidence that such individuals, to protect themselves, are 'disengaging' from the job, by either seeking early retirement, or by retreating to a level of occupational engagement that they believe is manageable. This is not just a phenomenon in education: Laabs (1996: 1) described individuals doing the same thing in the private sector as 'downshifters', wanting to slow down at work, 'so they can upshift in other areas of their lives'. He also suggested that there were two varieties of downshifters; 'those who want to break out of the corporate mold . . . and those who just want to work less'. At bottom though, was an existential question echoed among educators: 'Who am I and what's my life about?' (1996: p. 3). In education, if individuals have not yet reached a principal's position, such feelings may result in an unwillingness to take on the role, thus reducing the supply of suitable candidates for leadership positions. Gronn (2003a) details examples of this across the USA, the UK and Australia, while Williams (2001) does so in Canada. Those in senior and middle management positions, then, see the stress of the principal's job – the massive responsibility contradicted by the paucity of power, the effects upon families and lives, the emails and texts written in the early hours of the morning – and either realize that they are already well down that path, or decide that this is not going to happen to them. Added to which, and like many in the private sector, they may also come to believe that their loyalty to the organization is not reciprocated: that while greater and greater demands are made upon them, the downsizing, outsourcing, casualization and flexibility of the educational workforce attest to the fact that loyalty is increasingly an outdated commodity. As Misztal (2001: 33) suggested, 'it pays to quit'. When allied to demographic evidence across the western world that a large cohort of the teaching profession is reaching retirement age, this suggests that there is a genuine crisis in the teaching profession, and particularly at the top end. Fullan (2003: 24) seems to be absolutely right then when he concludes: 'The system is in deep trouble. There is a huge

need for new leaders, and at the same time there is a set of conditions that makes the job unattractive.'

### **Labels that kill**

So there is good reason to believe that the system is in trouble. Many of those who are capable of leading are increasingly worried about the effects that such a position has or will have upon them. Yet the problem does not just lie in the complexity and volume of the work, and the constraints placed upon the principal: part also lies in what is currently expected, and part of this has come from the labels they have been given, and the responsibilities thereby attributed to them. Officially sponsored definitions of leadership have acquired an impact upon the lives of educational leaders through being prescriptions rather than descriptions, prescriptions that mis-describe the way in which the work should be done. In so doing, they may simply ask too much of educational leaders.

Historically, models have had much less effect. There have been numerous depictions of leadership over the years (see Northouse, 2003). Trait theories, for instance, have suggested that leaders possess certain distinct personal qualities; style theories have suggested that leaders are distinguished by the different importance they place on the management of tasks or the management of relationships; situational theories have argued that different situations actually require different kinds of leaders; and contingency theories have suggested that the best way forward is through the matching of a particular leadership style to a particular situation. However, if truth be told, these different theories seldom actually impacted upon the life and work of educational leaders. They might have helped individuals to reflect upon the type of leader they were, or thought best fitted them and their situation, but they were meant and taken more as descriptions than as prescriptions. If there was any message for leaders from such literature (which was largely written for those in the business world), it was that in an age of relative economic stability, the leader's job was a rational job, one of *Transactional leadership*. This, suggested Day et al. (2000), is essentially a form of scientific managerialism, in which leaders exercise power and influence through controlling the rewards in an organization, rewards they can offer or withhold from the workforce. Yet, as the context of leadership has changed, this model of leadership has increasingly come to be seen as inadequate. Designed to deal with stable structures and a predictable economic tomorrow, transactional

leadership came to be viewed as insufficient for coping with an age of continual change, when economic certainties and western marketplace superiority were constantly challenged. Now, an essential function of leadership would be to generate commitment to change from the workforce by providing a vision of the necessary changes, and of the means of achieving these which others would be persuaded to follow. Transactional approaches did not then touch deeper levels of workers' motivation, which were bound up with beliefs and culture. While transactional forms relied on the use of power and the exchange of favours, the transformational variety attempted to inspire others through vision and through the use of personal consideration. If these traditional theories emphasized rational processes, newer theories needed to emphasize emotions and values. With such unremitting change forced upon organizations and their leaders, *transformational leadership* came to be seen in the business world, and subsequently in the educational world, as an indispensable coping mechanism. Transformational leaders then, were to be social architects, who in creating a vision, developed the trust of their followers, building loyalty, self-confidence and self-regard. As a new age generated new challenges, transformational leadership was seen as a critical part of the response to them.

Yet if inadequately conceived terms are accepted, promoted and then utilized, they transform and corrupt reality, for they reify situations which did not exist before their promotion began. And there is good reason to believe that this happened with the adoption of transformational literature, for there is much to question here. For a start, transactional and transformational leadership may not be entirely separate entities. Certainly, when Burns (1978) first coined the term, he saw transformational leadership as independent, separate and ultimate qualitatively more valuable than its more mundane counterpart. Yet as Bass (1985) subsequently suggested, both may exist along a work continuum, both being needed for effective leadership to take place. If this is the case, then inadequate analysis may, particularly if it is adopted by influential bodies and then used prescriptively, lead to an unnecessary separation, and a relegation of essential duties to a less 'sexy' agenda. Yukl (1999) has also argued that through a preference in this research for exploring the influence of one individual upon another, transformational theories may have too narrow a focus, in the process neglecting such issues as task-oriented behaviour, the interaction of a leader with superiors, peers or outsiders, and of the influence and dynamics of leadership upon a group or an organization.

Such concentration on dyadic forms of relationship helps in part to explain the bias of transformational theories towards the depiction of

the leader as hero, though one also needs to bear in mind the individualistic predispositions of US culture, literature and folklore from which most leadership theories have originated. It is certainly easier to paint a picture of the leader as heroic individual, and prescribe actions that the individual must perform, than to try and untangle the complex interactive web of group efforts. Certainly, a dominant research methodology in both business and education literature is the recording of successful individuals' stories, and to generalize from these. It should then be no surprise to find that transformational leadership theories are all too easily conflated with charismatic theories of leadership. Yet such conflation is not only unhelpful but can be positively damaging: Yukl (1999), for one, argues that most charismatic leaders don't develop and empower others in their organization in the way one might expect transformational leaders to; and this may explain why many of the studies of successful change in effective business organizations were led by individuals who were *not* perceived as charismatic. As he says (1999: 298) 'the vision is usually the product of a collective effort, not the creation of a single, exceptional individual'. Yet such individualist emphasis can convince governments and policy makers that they should be promulgating a picture of the leader as just such a heroic, charismatic 'follow-me-over-the-top' figure, and for incumbent or aspirant leaders to believe that this is what they should be attempting to emulate.

Yet such a model is likely to run counter to the natural predispositions of many excellent leaders, who are not, and never will be charismatic. It is likely to under-utilize the capabilities of others in the organization, as so much stress is placed upon the importance of one individual. It is likely, as Bryman (1992) points out, to suggest an educationally unethical approach to leadership through generating a non-rational commitment by followers. Finally, it is likely to increase the stress on an already stressed leadership group by suggesting that the responsibility at the end of the day is all theirs, leading to the kind of 'disengagement' inclinations mentioned earlier.

This situation – the reification of an activity through analysis and then the official endorsement and prescription of this reification – should be of particular concern to educators, so used as they are by now to the enthusiastic but uncritical advocacy by others beyond education of *their* adoption of business terms and activities. The sceptical might well argue that transformational and charismatic leadership theories are in reality little more than business management tools devised to mould workers' values and culture into accepting and then enthusiastically embracing managerial/capitalist

values as a means of increasing company profitability – what, I (Bottery, 2000) called the ‘hot’ styles of business management. Such transferences to the educational sector then need to be carefully critiqued for at least three reasons. A first reason is because the emphasis in the business literature has historically been on the techniques of transformational leadership rather than the purposes to which it might be put. A second is because the idea was originally devised to inspire others with a vision which had already been predetermined, and was not intended to include any notion of a shared participative approach in the determining of vision or the solving of problems. A final reason is because the original emphasis was on individuals inspiring others, with a tendency for conflation with non-rational charismatic leadership approaches, which might be used in anti-educational ways to bypass critical faculties in order to gain individuals’ commitment.

There already exists critical literature on the impact of poor quality and inappropriate business management ‘guru’ ideas on *private* sector practice (see, for example, Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 1996); to uncritically transfer such literature into the public sector is double nonsense.

### **The advent of distributed leadership**

Despite its limitations, there are, however, elements of transformational leadership which do lend themselves to educational, and ethical consideration, for it is very important for leaders and educators to have a clear vision of what they want to achieve, and how they want to achieve it. Moreover, when its heroic implications are reduced or eliminated, transformational leadership can also suggest that the processes of both education and leadership should involve the contributions of all parties, rather than being a matter of one person ‘doing leadership’ to others. Certainly, work in Canada (Leithwood et al., 1999), the US (Spillane et al., 2000), Australia (Lingard et al., 2003) and in the UK (Day et al., 2000; Harris and Lambert, 2003) suggest that, where manifested, it tends to have such characteristics. Indeed, it is partly on the basis of such results that writers like Spillane et al. (2000), Gronn (2003a, 2003b), and Harris (2003), and now the NCSL (2003) have argued that one needs to understand leadership as in reality ‘distributed’ across a much broader spectrum of individuals within an organization than is normally recognized. Harris (2003: 314) argues that such appreciation has been difficult in coming, most leadership studies in education



having been dominated by the studies of individual headteachers and principals, which only further instantiates individualistic views of leadership. Added to this, she suggests that in much educational practice, the 'social exchange theory of leadership' prevails, one which bears an uncommon likeness to transactional forms discussed earlier. Yet she suggests that the work of educational organizations would be better understood if leadership was seen as 'part of an interactive process of sense-making and creation of meaning' in which all members of an organization engaged. Such a view is supported by the work of Spillane et al. (2000), who argue that the degree of leadership distribution is only appreciated when, instead of adopting a methodology of examining individuals' positions and roles within the organization, one instead begins by examining how leadership tasks and functions are actually carried out. From this perspective, leadership is then much more easily appreciated as a shared, group and distributed process than has been generally recognized, either in the literature, or in the way in which roles and positions are created in organizations.

This is exciting stuff for a number of reasons. First, it presents a much more complex – and accurate – description of decision making and leadership activity in organizations than is normally provided. Second, by acknowledging such complex patterns, it may help to prevent the degree of work intensification, and therefore of the kinds of individual pressure and stress described at the beginning of this chapter, for it sponsors a view of leadership which sees many, rather than just the lonely hero, as being involved. Another reason for thinking this is a positive move is that viewing leadership as dispersed helps organizations to more effectively utilize all the talents within them, and in so doing not only facilitates the achievement of goals, but also the empowerment of individuals. Finally, the distribution of leadership could play a critical role in the development of a societal democratic citizenship, because by empowering teachers, it encourages them to develop a more constructive and critical voice, and thus helps to ensure that those who work in such organizations are good role models for the next generation of citizens; for if educators do not show an interest in these matters themselves, how can the next generation be expected to understand the need for such practice?

Nevertheless, even though such a model seems a development over previous ones, a number of caveats must still be made. A first is that one must not get carried away with a *too* distributed vision. Gronn (2003b: 288), for instance, argues that executive level managers appointed as leaders 'surround themselves with an apparatus of secretaries, personal assistants, advisers, deputies, and support

groups' because 'to do their job properly, they rely on many other people'. Yet this does not necessarily suggest that leadership is dispersed or distributed: it could just as easily mean that there is so much 'clutter' surrounding the job, that they need these other people to free them up to keep their eyes on the main task. Furthermore, visions of distributed leadership need to take fully into account the asymmetry of power between different actors, which continues to be determined in large part by their formal positions within the organization. It is simply not the case that all actors have equal power or influence in decision-making situations. So while it is very clear that there are organizational leaders who are not institutionally appointed, the formal organizational and professional structure should not be neglected. Fullan (2003: xv), for example, while paying due attention to notions of distributed leadership, by acknowledging that it is only by developing leadership in others that principals can accomplish their tasks, nevertheless recognizes that 'the principal or head of the school [is] the focal point'. If there is other leadership in the school, then it is a leadership normally sponsored by the principal. Even more importantly perhaps, Fullan (2003: 22) recognizes that system-wide change involves going beyond the confines of the school, and that 'the principalship is the only role strategically placed to mediate the tensions of local and state forces . . . the solution is to acknowledge the extreme importance of the principalship'. The asymmetries of power could not be clearer, nor could the recognition of the power granted by formal positions.

A second caveat is that while, as Harris (2003) argues, such a view of teacher leadership implies a fundamental redistribution of power, it is important to recognize the full implications of this statement. Leadership, whether by teachers or anyone else, if it means anything, means participation in decision making, and not simply consultation. While such leadership is confined to areas of consensual agreement, or is granted through sponsorship by those appointed to formal leadership positions, then one can envisage reasonably harmonious organizational working. But Harris goes on to say that 'the implications . . . imply a fundamental redistribution of power and influence within the school as an organisation' (2003: 322). Indeed they might; but then it must be asked how this is to be achieved if those in formal positions do not wish to have their power redistributed in this way. And what will happen if those beyond the school also do not wish to see this happen? Furthermore, what if those who wish to exercise such distributed leadership see it as something which should not be limited to exercise *within* organizations, but as something which should extend beyond? While distributed leadership is seen as the

fairly comfortable functional exercise of cooperative and collaborative relations towards agreed learning agendas, even if this does involve the building of new and complex relationships, then there may be few problems beyond those of actual realization. However, if leadership is about power, which it surely is, and if it is something which by definition has to be wielded, not granted, this potentially involves issues of conflict, both educationally and politically, which are likely to pose very significant questions if those currently exercising power wish to maintain that position. This does not just mean resistance by authoritarian headteachers or principals; it means resistance by those at policy level who, over the last few decades, have been very keen to see the teaching profession as an implementer of externally constructed and driven agendas. As Woods (2003) points out, distributed leadership could be yet one more term used to devolve work and responsibility to those lower in the hierarchy, while not actually engendering *any* real change in the leadership architecture, and he is right to contrast a vision of democratic leadership, which explicitly states what this architecture should look like, with a term which, perhaps all too easily, might be appropriated for less democratic ends. The working out of distributed leadership for both functional learning within the school *and* for participation in wider educational agendas needs to be recognized and carefully thought through.

Such recognition raises a third caveat. As noted earlier, all too often the emphasis in the business literature on transformational leadership has been on the *techniques* rather than the purposes to which it might be put. Distributed leadership faces the same question. For what ends will such leadership be used? Some of the reasons provided for adopting a version of distributed leadership have been given earlier, the central one seeming to be that it will produce more effective learning. Harris (2003: 322) in her discussion of teacher leadership appears to be moving towards a more political vision in her suggestion that this could lead to 'a fundamental redistribution of power and influence within the school'. But questions of power need to be taken further: thus, while distributed leadership may facilitate more effective learning in an organization, this does not address the questions of *what kind* of learning such distributed leadership should facilitate, and for what purpose. And if discussions of distributed leadership produce debate about the redistribution of power and influence in school, they need to ask questions like: should distributed leadership empower a level of participation greater than that required for the realization of the three 'E's of efficiency, effectiveness and economy? Should it recognize participation as a good in

itself, a skill which those within a democracy need to practice to become effective citizens? Should it explicitly recognize a commitment to the public sector, that public institutions have a commitment beyond the profit and loss ledger, to concerns of equity, care and justice? In the end the point is simple: debates on the meanings of leadership must not get so wrapped up with definitions that they forget that leadership, however it is construed, has critical effects upon the vision and direction of the school, and needs to constantly come back to this issue.

A final caveat is that while a strong point of some current theories of distributed leadership is an emphasis upon the situated nature of leadership activity, they do not always recognize the extent of such context. Thus Spillane et al. (2000: 27) convincingly argue that understanding leadership in a distributed manner helps us to understand that 'the sociocultural context is a constitutive element of leadership practice, fundamentally shaping its form'. This is extremely helpful in preventing leadership from being seen as some kind of insulated personal quality, pointing instead to the need to understand that there is an interdependence between the individual and the environment (which includes other actors), and which therefore points towards the distributed quality of leadership. But such an understanding should point us not just to the environment of the school but to that beyond it as well. Spillane et al.'s study is prevented from doing this by two factors. One is the methodology: by beginning from the tasks of leadership, they fail to conceptualize such tasks within a macro-perspective. As they say, 'To access leadership practice we must identify and analyse the tasks *that contribute to the execution of macro functions*' (2000: 24) [emphasis added]. This all too easily becomes a fundamentally implementational and functional rather than critical orientation, and in so doing limits itself to a discussion of what leadership is currently concerned with, rather than with what it ought to be concerned. Fullan's (2003) view is wider, explicitly stating the need for school principals to move beyond the functioning of the school to exercise influence and power at the district, even the state level. Yet even this still seems to be unnecessarily restrictive. In his book, Fullan discusses a talk by Michael Barber (2002), adviser and then policymaker to the British government, who described the movement in education in England and Wales over the previous 30 years as a movement from uninformed professional judgement, through to uninformed central government prescription, onto a more informed central prescription, and then finally into an age of informed professional judgement. Fullan's focus in his book is on the development of an informed cadre of

professional teachers, developed and led by transformational principals, and he spends little time on the historical background of UK education, apart from some small allusion to the problems which accompanied this 'process'. However, Barber's view is a pro-governmental evolutionary one with which many will disagree, not least because it fails to do justice to the turmoil, anguish, stress and distrust felt by teachers over the last 30 years, and which forms a critical backdrop to the manner in which many educationalists now view New Labour pronouncements. It also fails to address any of the same kinds of issues and feelings which Hargreaves (2003) describes in Canada and the USA. Such functionalist views of leadership which attempt to be ideologically neutral are light years away from the kind of 'bastard leadership' which Wright (2001) suggests is the lot of many English headteachers at the present time, and by implication, far beyond such shores. This is a leadership which feels itself ground down by overwork, by impossible timescales, by enormous amounts of paperwork, whose job is not to lead so much as to implement government policies, which themselves are driven by larger political and economic forces which only occasionally link with the kinds of aspirations and moral agendas which many school leaders still hold dear. Yet this more problematic description of the reality of leadership better fits the picture described at the beginning of this chapter – that of work intensification and leadership disengagement. And to understand such work intensification and leadership disengagement, it seems critical to understand the larger context which has created such conditions, for if this is not recognized and not changed, then those attempts which are made to solve problems will never be more than sticking plasters on wounds that need more extensive attention.

### **The need for the ecological leader**

To understand such issues, it is then simply insufficient to concentrate upon the school, the district or even the educational system. To understand the tasks ahead for educational leaders, the larger context of educational leadership needs to be understood. The 'socio-cultural context' needs to embrace far more than the school, the district, or even the educational system. It needs to describe and understand the quite unique forces existing within societies today, which in many cases emanate beyond them, which condition, constrain and in some cases coerce the work of educational leaders. The rationale of this book, then, is the belief that critical questions need to be asked

concerning the purposes of educational leadership, questions which go beyond official recommendations, and to examine the manner in which official sponsorship is often driven by forces which do not always have as a priority the educational, political or social welfare of recipients. This book then aims to be both practical and critical: it aims to help educational leaders and aspiring educational leaders to examine their own values and practice by providing a wider-than-normal framework within which to locate them. It therefore advocates that leaders need, as never before, to be 'ecologically aware' – to be cognizant of those forces which impact upon not only their own practice, but upon the attitudes and values of the other educators within their organizations, the aspirations and endpoints of their students, and upon those in the wider communities they serve. Such leaders, then need to place their practice within both meso- and macro-contexts, and appreciate not only of what these contexts consist, and how they frame educational practice, but what leaders need to do to engage with them to protect their visions.

The book then begins by examining such supra-educational pressures, locating them at global, cultural and national levels. It suggests that the world of educational leadership is a paradoxical combination of control and fragmentation. It examines, in particular, the educational objectives of western industrialized countries, and how some governments have exercised a degree of central direction of educational activity which has resulted in an excess of control, while a paradoxical drive within these societies towards an excess of consumption has exacerbated existing problems of fragmentation. The second part of the book examines the impact of these upon the work of educational leaders, and suggests that these may be best conceptualized as the challenges to trust, meaning and identity. The final part deals with organizing a response, and suggests that educational leaders need to do this by developing an appropriate form of learning organization, and by developing new understandings of the role requirements of professional educators. Such a reframing of professionalism then, finally, suggests the need for educational leaders who are 'ethical dialecticians' – individuals with moral compasses, yet who are sufficiently aware of their own limitations, of the massive changes impacting upon educational institutions, and of their need to listen to others, to adopt a 'provisionalist' attitude to their understanding of the world. At the same time, they also need to possess the political and pragmatic astuteness to help balance a grounded morality, a personal and epistemological provisionalism, and an ecological awareness, leading to the ability to work with others towards the formation of real learning communities.

It will then be clear that a critical area of professional development is going to be a deeper understanding of the etiology of leadership challenges, for only through understanding the sources of these challenges can educational leaders begin to move to realize the kinds of vision that compelled many of them to take up leadership positions in the first place. Furthermore, it is only by understanding and beginning to change the structures and language that discourage potential leaders from continuing their climb that an educational system can be developed which encourages people to work within it, and which contributes to a healthy and vibrant society. This examination begins in the next chapter at the level of global change.