

“Think Tank” Report to Governing Council



On behalf of the Think Tank Members:

Professor David Hopkins
Chair NCSL Think Tank

Contents

PREFACE	1	Letter to Chair of Governing Council – Richard Greenhalgh
SECTION ONE:	2	The Role and Purpose of the Think Tank
SECTION TWO:	3	The Context for the Think Tank's Work and its Modus Operandi
SECTION THREE:	5	The Evidence Base
SECTION FOUR:	8	Leadership for Transforming Learning: Ten Propositions
SECTION FIVE:	16	Implications for a School Leadership Development Framework
CODA:	19	
APPENDIX ONE:	20	Think Tank Membership

Preface

Letter to Chair of Governing Council – Richard Greenhalgh

Dear Richard,

I was delighted to accept your invitation of earlier this year to chair the National College for School Leadership's Think Tank, and I am proud to present the first report to the Governing Council on behalf of Think Tank colleagues (attached).

During the early part of the year we developed the brief for the Think Tank that was approved at the Governing Council's meeting in April. The report contains an elaboration of this brief. Suffice it to say here that this report responds to the request to prepare advice to the National College Governing Council and Senior Team to help inform the College's thinking on a new framework for leadership development. Subsequent to that, the College's Director, Heather Du Quesnay, requested a more focussed document to inform her forthcoming consultation paper and a copy of that document is also attached.

As you will see from reading the report, the Think Tank does not yet consider its task done, and proposes during the autumn to hold further Think Tank meetings to specifically discuss approaches to the methodology of Leadership Development in the public and private sectors. We would also wish to encourage a "futures" conversation around the challenges and opportunities for leadership given new and emerging conceptions of schooling, the teaching profession and the role of government in the Knowledge Society.

You will appreciate that the Think Tank has been working to very tight deadlines and all members have given generously of their time in order to allow the reports to be submitted on time. I am especially grateful to Gareth Jones, Liz Mellon and Steve Radcliffe whose extensive knowledge of leadership in the public and private sectors has challenged and extended the views of the educators in the group. I also acknowledge with gratitude the contribution that Dame Pat Collarbone, Peter Newton, Tony Richardson and in particular Tony Mackay have made to the drafting process. I am certain that you too will wish to express your own gratitude to all colleagues on the Think Tank.

It is with pleasure that we present our first report for consideration at the Governing Council meeting on 18th September 2001.

Yours ever,

Professor David Hopkins
Chair, NCSL Think Tank

Section One: The Role and Purpose of the Think Tank

This decision was in response to a paper prepared by the Director, Heather Du Quesnay, entitled *A Strategic Approach to the Development of Leadership in Schools*. Governing Council Member Professor David Hopkins agreed to chair the Think Tank with membership drawn from both within and outside the NCSL Governing Council and Senior Leadership Team (See Appendix One for a list of members of the Think Tank).

The brief given to the Think Tank was refined at its initial meetings in February and March, and confirmed at the Governing Council meeting in April. The Think Tank brief invited an immediate contribution to inform a strategic approach to the achieving a greater coherence in the preparation and development of school leaders, whilst simultaneously encouraging a "futures" conversation around the conception of schooling, the teaching profession and the role of government. In particular the Think Tank was encouraged to:

- assist with the process of drawing up a new framework for leadership development and to catalyse the College's thinking on school leadership;
- brainstorm issues around the future of school leadership, to consider how leaders learn, and outline a conceptual model for thinking about school leadership;
- use these insights to engage in creative and innovative thinking about how the College will operate, including its relationship with schools, leaders and teachers, government and other educational agencies; and
- together with the NCSL staff to use the Think Tank outcomes to stimulate a discourse nationally about a vision for school leadership.

This first report from the Think Tank reflects the immediate responsibility to inform the work on the leadership development framework.

The report is divided into five sections:

- Section One describes the remit of the Think Tank and overviews this report.
- Section Two discusses the context in which

In January of this year, the Governing Council of the NCSL decided to establish a Think Tank to assist the process of drawing up a new framework for developing school leadership.

the Think Tank is operating and its modus operandi.

- Section Three reviews the evidence presented to and discussed by the Think Tank.
- Section Four presents a set of propositions that captures what has been learned from the first stage of the Think Tank's enquiry. The ten propositions are grouped into three sections reflecting the values, nature, and development and support of school leadership, and should be regarded as a set.
- Section Five further refines the implications of the propositions for a strategic leadership development framework.

In submitting this report for consideration at the Governing Council's meeting on 18th September 2001, the Think Tank believes that Sections Four and Five in particular, can contribute in a significant way to the new Framework for Leadership Development to be consulted on in the period October/November this year. To this end an edited version of this report that could be used more directly in the consultation process has also been prepared.

Whilst this First Report is necessarily focused on the immediate task, the Brief contains multiple expectations. It is the intention of the Think Tank to continue to meet to fulfil these expectations, particularly in relation to assisting with creative and innovative thinking around the future of school leadership and generating an energetic dialogue with the profession, policy makers and researchers about leadership. Further, it is clear that Think Tank deliberations have also contributed to Governing Council and Senior Leadership Teams strategic thinking more generally (both in and outside formal meetings) in a way that is not reported here.

Section Two:

The Context for the Think Tank's Work and its Modus Operandi

Although the brief given to the Think Tank was broad, it is important to recognise that it is working in a particular and possibly unique set of circumstances.

There are three specific influences that the Think Tank has taken into consideration in pursuing its work. The first is the policy context in which educational reform is currently operating in England; the second is the parallel work on school leadership being undertaken by colleagues within, and agencies outside, the College; third and of crucial importance are the conceptions of leadership and the experience of leadership development in the public and private sector. Each of these influences are briefly described below.

From the outset, the Think Tank was conscious that it was operating in a complex policy context. Although not necessarily constrained by the range of sometimes competing policy directives, the Think Tank has taken full account of the range of policy initiatives surrounding and influencing the work of the College. In particular:

- The Remit from the Government to the College - September 2000.
- The subsequent transfer of responsibility from the DfES to the NCSL for the administration of the National Leadership Training Programs (effective April 2001). In particular the requirement, "to develop and oversee a coherent training and development framework for heads, deputies and others in leadership positions in our schools, giving them high quality, practical and professional support at all stages of their careers".
- The first corporate plan of the College for the launch year 2001-2002 setting out the College's aims, beliefs and values, key operational objectives and priorities.
- The Government's Green Paper "Schools Building on Success" released earlier this

year and the imminent White Paper setting out the second term Blair Government's educational reform agenda and the key role of leaders in the vital process of school improvement and transformation.

- The relationship between NCSL and the DfES and the partnership role of the NCSL with other key agencies (including the TTA, OFSTED, QCA, GTC, BECTA, LEA's) and schools and all those who support them.
- A growing international network of individuals and institutions connected to the NCSL operating in a mutually beneficial manner.

The Think Tank was mindful from the outset of complementary and parallel work on school leadership both within and outside the College. The Think Tank has sought to remain connected to these sources throughout its deliberations, using them to inform, guide and shape the task. These sources include:

- The NCSL Prototype Evidence Base
- Talking Heads
- NCSL International Study Visits
- Leadership Research Reviews
- Visiting Professors/Associates/Fellows
- OFSTED Data Base and related publications
- Evaluations of National Programs
- Challenging Schools Project
- Business/Public Sector Leadership Studies.

(Further information regarding these sources is available from the NCSL.)

The Think Tank was also acutely aware of the implicit myopia that often surrounds discussions within discrete professional settings. This is a

The Context for the Think Tank's Work and its Modus Operandi

tendency that appears to be particularly prevalent within education. As a consequence, the Think Tank was especially conscious to embrace multiple perspectives on its work and to learn as much as it could from experience in other sectors. To this end the membership of the Think Tank included experts from both the public and private sectors. In addition, the Think Tank considered research evidence from a range of non-educational settings, and as is seen below, a number of case studies on leadership development in both the private and public sector were presented and critiqued at Think Tank symposia. Unsurprisingly, the contrast between conceptions of leadership and leadership development in these sectors and education proved to be the most illuminating aspect of the Think Tank discussions.

The Think Tank was set an extremely tight timeline. It was however necessitated by the requirement to produce a new framework for leadership development for initial consideration by the Governing Council in September, a period of consultation with the profession in October/November, and adoption by the Governing Council in December 2001.

Following initial meetings of the Think Tank held on 27th February and 12th March, confirming role, purpose, process, context, timeline, reporting and membership, a series of Think Tank hosted symposia were scheduled over the period April to July 2001. It was agreed that the task was not to create a new orthodoxy but rather to create a powerful discourse around form and function of leadership for school improvement - leadership adequate to the challenges of a "transformation agenda".

As noted above, the Think Tank was mindful of current educational and political imperatives. In its work it also recognised tensions and multiple expectations, respected different views, and anticipated new emphases for leadership given changing forms of community and changing roles of the public and private sectors in education. While the Think Tank was optimistic of gaining new insights and generating creative thinking, there was a desire to be grounded and connected to the needs of the profession - needs which currently include strategic management, recruitment and motivation, and the need for personal reflection and growth.

Section Three:

The Evidence base

The purpose of the Think Tank Symposia was to produce a rich mix of strategic thinking, evidence and experience. In particular the symposia were designed to elicit learning about leadership from the public and private sectors in a way that was substantive in its own right, but that could also be expressed as a set of propositions to inform the work of the College.

The outcome of this work is presented in two ways in this report. First, in this section a brief account of each symposium is given together with a flavour of the key messages that emerged. (The papers presented at the symposia are in the public domain and are available from the NCSL archive.) Second, in Section Four the evidence from the symposia and reviews of other sources of knowledge considered by the Think Tank are distilled into a series of propositions. The following account of the symposia provided a summary of much of the key evidence on which the propositions are based.

Symposium 1 – 26th April 2001

The first symposium explored the nature and meaning of recent calls to focus anew on educational leadership, often referred to as instructional leadership. This is as distinct from other dimensions of leadership, increasingly referred to as organisational, strategic, personal and public. (These dimensions are referred to in the NCSL prototype evidence base and in the NCSL Directors Paper noted in Section One.)

Invited symposium discussants included: Professor Peter Hill (USA and Australia), Bruce David (Hong Kong and Australia), Heather Du Quesnay, Professor David Hopkins, Dame Pat Collarbone, Professor Mel West, Professor Geoff Southworth and Professor Michael Barber, with David Green and Mary Anne Schmitt (USA) as participating observers,

Tony Mackay as Facilitator, and Members of the Think Tank.

The symposium underscored the need for the NCSL to advocate and promote:

- clarity on the expectations and aspirations surrounding school leadership - from political, public and professional perspectives;
- responsibility at the centre for a comprehensive, coherent, and designed approach to school leadership;
- support required to ensure effective school leadership at the "intermediate" level – the role of LEA's, Head Teacher Associations, Universities et al;
- the leadership and management tasks at the school level, encompassing the facilitation of change, empowering people and designing effective learning environments;
- leadership development through mentoring, coaching, problem based approaches, and substantial ICT capacity, all underpinned by extensive professional knowledge and a strong evidence base.

(Papers prepared for this symposium are available from the NCSL)

Symposium 2 – 12th June 2001

The second symposium sought to capture current thinking around public and private

The Evidence base

sector leadership development to serve new and emerging conceptions of government/civil society and the knowledge economy.

Invited symposium discussants included David Laughrin (Ministry of Defence), Carol Lunney (Cabinet Office), Tessa Brooks (National Health Service), Gareth Jones (BBC), Brian Liversidge (Brathay Hall), David Crofts (Unilever).

The symposium highlighted the need for the NCSL to promote and advocate:

- individual leadership development with attention to both skill acquisition and emotional growth (including an emphasis on self awareness and authenticity) as well as organisational development;
- the potential impact that the leader of an organisation has on the climate of that enterprise and subsequently on its performance;
- the importance of the Senior Leadership Team and the substantial contribution that dispersed and distributed leadership and "network" leadership can make to the climate of the organisation – particularly given new organisational forms to serve the knowledge economy;
- the importance of leadership development which is experiential, work site based, continuous, coach supported and feedback rich (including 360 degree approaches);
- the importance of managerial leadership – including knowledge of organisational structures, processes and systems combined with management and leadership of people and change to achieve organisational effectiveness.

(Papers prepared for this symposium are available from the NCSL)

Symposium 3 – 25th June 2001

The third symposium provided the opportunity to explore evidence and insights about "effective school leadership in action" from the OFSTED database and publications, from

evaluations/reviews of national leadership programmes and from research reports on schools in challenging circumstances.

Representatives from OFSTED, Tim Key and David Howarth, members of the NCSL Senior Leadership Team and Think Tank members attended the symposium.

The focus of the initial discussion was data from the OFSTED that highlighted the mix of key features of leadership and management that have contributed to school improvement. These included:

- leadership that ensures clear direction for the work and development of the school, promotes high standards, and communicates this set of beliefs and goals to staff, students, parents and community;
- a determination to concentrate on changes most likely to lead to improvement - high leverage strategies;
- effective use of data on pupil participation and performance and target setting;
- an agreed understanding of the qualities and characteristics of student thinking and learning to be improved, and implementing this through all aspects of decision-making, action, culture and design;
- high visibility and accessibility of the senior team in the school and its local community;
- well focused management systems, development planning and monitoring;
- effective resource management and financial planning; and
- the establishing of effective partnerships with external agencies.

Further discussion in the symposium emphasised the challenges in thinking strategically about leadership to serve school improvement, innovation and transformation. Whilst different needs were recognised given the complexity of school settings and the range of leaders

Section Three:

The Evidence base

from beginning to experienced, there was also a common agenda to respond to a reality that:

- demands are rising and will continue to do so;
- teaching and learning needs to change and increasingly we know how to do this at least at a strategic level;
- the school whilst self managed is also part of a system;
- responsibility for finding solutions at the school level is vital given an environment of greater autonomy;
- leadership, leadership teams, networks and partnerships will be central to delivering on this common agenda;
- leadership development for this agenda needs to focus on both individual and organisational learning, skill development and emotional intelligence, and recognise the importance of problem-based approaches, on-site learning with the support of coaches and mentors, and networks both real and virtual; and
- that transformation is possible.

Framing the Propositions – 25th June & 23rd July 2001

The insights gained from initial Think Tank discussions, the three symposia, the parallel work of the NCSL Leadership Team and the reviews of research and evidence from elsewhere constitute the knowledge base developed by Think Tank members. On the basis of this evidence, the Think Tank moved to frame a set of strategic statements or propositions that could serve to inform the College's thinking on a new framework for leadership development. An outline of Section Four of this report was developed at the Think Tank meeting following the symposium on 25th June and critiqued at the Think Tank meeting of 23rd July.

In advancing the propositions, the Think Tank gave itself the challenge of articulating positions on:

- learners and learning now and in the future;
- leadership to serve this learning;
- leadership development methodologies to serve "leadership for learning";
- appropriate leadership support structures;
- policies and a policy environment to serve leadership for learning;
- the importance of NCSL to serve leadership for learning.

Whilst developing the set of propositions about school leadership it was also recognised that their implications for a strategic leadership development framework should be further refined and articulated. Section Five of the report therefore, represents the implications of this thinking for developing a framework for leadership development.

Section Four:

Leadership for Transforming Learning:

Ten Propositions

On further reflection it became clear that what had been learned from this enquiry could be expressed economically as a set of propositions. The following ten propositions are grouped into three sections reflecting the values, nature, and development and support of school leadership. The propositions should be regarded as a set; they build on and amplify each other as the argument develops. Taken together they constitute the parameters for a framework for school leadership that is firmly grounded in learning as well as transformational.

The emphasis on transformation is both deliberate and necessary. Reform strategies and leadership programmes can no longer take only an incremental approach to change to student learning and attainment. This is particularly the case given the ambitious national agenda for sustainable improvement for all students in all settings. Leadership now needs to be seen within a whole school or systems context and to impact both on classroom practice and the work culture of the school. Hence the emphasis on transformation. This implies an expansion in the capacity of the school to manage change in the pursuit of student learning and achievement, and the creation of professional learning communities within the school to support the work of teachers.

The implications of this perspective for school leadership are as obvious as they are profound.

The Values of School Leadership

Proposition One – School leadership must be purposeful, inclusive and values driven

Leadership for transformation needs to be purposeful, inclusive and values driven. Purposeful in so far as there is clarity as to the goals of education and schooling; inclusive to ensure that these aims are widely owned within and outside the school community; and values driven because it is only an unrelenting focus on learning and empowerment that will ensure success in the new knowledge society. Although clarity of purpose and ownership are necessary conditions for effective leadership, it is the underpinning values and beliefs that give leadership its power. It is these values and beliefs that also inform the moral purpose of education and leadership style.

The evidence and experience considered by the Think Tank was diverse in context, inspiring in aspiration, yet presented remarkably consistent images of leadership across the private and public sectors. The task has been to render this richness in a form that is both accessible and challenging as well as being faithful to the ideas and practice from which it emanated.

The values and beliefs that infuse successful leadership focus on learning and empowerment. This implies a broader and deeper view of learning. It is broader, because within a transformational perspective learning refers not just to the progress of students, but also to the learning of teachers and leaders, and organisational learning on the part of the school. It is deeper because learning reflects not just induction into knowledge but the acquisition of a range of learning skills that allow the learner, be they student or teacher or leader, to reach their potential and to take more control of their world. Becoming more skilful and more competent is the basis of empowerment.

Across the range of public and private settings, it is clear that effective leadership is infused by a commitment to clearly articulated values and beliefs and the engendering of trust within the organisation. In all of these situations this implies a personal style that is warm, congruent, intuitive and unafraid to selectively show weakness; and a leadership style that provides focus, engenders trust and is unafraid to practice 'tough empathy'.

Above all school leadership should be infused with a moral purpose. The reason for this is the vital importance of closing the gap between our highest and lowest achieving students and to raise standards of learning and achievement for all. This is the contemporary moral purpose of school leadership.

Section Four:

Leadership for Transforming Learning:

Ten Propositions

The implications for school leadership that is purposeful, inclusive and values driven are:

- *A commitment to equity, empowerment and higher standards of learning and achievement as the moral purpose of education.*
- *An impetus for transforming the school as a learning community for students and teachers, adequate to the expectations of a knowledge society and economy.*

Proposition Two – School leadership must embrace the distinctive and inclusive context of the school

There is a paradox that currently confronts leadership in a wide variety of public and private organisations as well as schools. It is the tension on the one hand between 'one size fits all' policies and strategies, and the contrasting relativism that claims that each organisation is uniquely distinct and cannot therefore learn from other settings however similar. Both of these positions are evidently fallacious. The challenge for educational leaders therefore is to adopt and adapt well proven practices from elsewhere within the context specificity of their own school.

Despite wide variations in setting, the educational challenges facing schools and their solutions are remarkably similar. Raising levels of achievement, enhancing the learning repertoires of students and the creation of powerful learning experiences are educational challenges that are independent of social context. So too is the need to prepare and sustain effective and innovative teachers, to establish the organisational conditions within the school that support ongoing as well as developmental activities, and to create administrative and support structures that sustain development and effectiveness at the various levels within the system. Effective teaching and learning is not, it appears, culturally or socially bounded, nor are the organisational settings within which they occur.

Yet schools are in one sense unique. The challenge for school leadership is to embrace both the uniformity and the uniqueness. Although there are strategies and policies that work well in many different settings, the trick is to build the response from the inside out, not the outside in. It is as if the ingredients may be the same but that the recipe has to be made and mixed anew for each school. Context specificity implies treating

each schools as individual settings, but in the knowledge that there are increasingly sophisticated tools to assist us in developing every school. Recent research for example from business and education has identified development strategies for different levels of organisational or school effectiveness that still keep the focus on learning and teaching as the core technology of schooling.

School leadership therefore needs to be attuned to a variety of contextual dimensions such as catchment areas, effectiveness level and improvement trajectory. It also has to audit its stakeholder expectations recognising and assessing the multiple levels of the school – community, parents, students, teachers and governors, behavioural, attitudinal cognitive and relational variables. It should not be assumed however that effective leadership in one setting can equally successfully transfer to another, nor a particular leader be equally skilful in a variety of settings.

Basing school leadership on the distinctive and inclusive context of the school implies that:

- School leadership must embrace the context of the school in all its complexity as a first step to utilising proven practices from elsewhere.
- The particular mix of skills of school leadership will differ, often dramatically from context to context.

Proposition Three – School leadership must promote an active view of learning

A key focus for school leadership is high quality learning and teaching. Powerful learning does not occur by accident, it is usually the result of an effective learning situation created by a skilful teacher. Successful teachers are not simply charismatic, persuasive, and expert presenters; rather, they provide their students with powerful cognitive and social tasks and teach them how to make productive use of them. The focus for school leadership must therefore be the creation of settings that support and facilitate learning for students, teachers and leaders.

There is now an increasingly sophisticated literature on how learning occurs and on the ways in which the learning experience can be organised to make a positive difference to students. The impact is not just on test scores and examination

Leadership for Transforming Learning: Ten Propositions

results, but also on the students' learning capability. This is the heart of the matter. If the teacher can teach the student how to learn at the same time as assisting them to acquire curriculum content then the twin goals of learning and achievement can be met at the same time. Effective leadership will focus on enabling teachers to make the difference to student learning.

It is unlikely that the physical architecture of the school will change dramatically in the next decade or so. What should change out of all recognition however is the internal architecture or learning environment of the school. The advances in information technology and the expansion of teachers repertoires of teaching strategies will allow us to create and organise learning experiences in radically different ways.

The rise and development of a digitally delivered curriculum will have important implications for teachers and school leaders. Media rich online learning resources are being delivered to learners through home PCs at school and home, through digital TV and in time through other devices that can access the World Wide Web. Increasingly students will be able to access and learn through these materials 'virtually', alongside their peers or independently in virtual learning communities, as well as face to face in school. It is likely that not only will students be able to learn independently but that assessment will also be possible on-line. The prospect of 'concurrent learning' is emerging as a new challenge for schools and school leaders. This will have major implications for the way in which the curriculum and teaching is organised and learning assessed.

Basing school leadership on an active view of learning implies that:

- *School leaders regard the design, management and monitoring of settings for active learning as their key task.*
- *School leaders create the conditions and provide the support to enable teachers to improve student learning, encouraging the creation and dissemination of professional knowledge of learning strategies (including e learning) that work in classrooms and schools.*

The Nature of School Leadership

Proposition Four – School Leadership must be instructionally focussed

Contemporary educational reform places a great premium on the effective leadership and management of schools. The logic of this position is that an orderly school environment that is efficient and well managed provides the preconditions for enhanced student learning. Yet policy initiatives that focus solely on leadership and management have difficulty in achieving more than a generalised impact on student learning. Leadership to promote student learning needs to give attention to engaging students and parents as active participants, and expanding the teaching and learning repertoires of teachers and students respectively. For these reasons the construct of 'instructional leadership' is attractive. Instructional leadership consists of:

- Defining the values and purposes of the school (proposition 1)
- Managing the programme of teaching and curriculum (propositions 3 & 4)
- Establishing the school as a professional learning community (proposition 6).

The focus on instructional leadership is not exclusive of a range of other leadership skills. It implies a general orientation towards leadership rather than an exclusive approach. There are three key skill clusters or domains that consistently inform school leadership. The following is indicative only of these skills.

Organisational leadership involves the co-ordination of the work of the school through direction setting, allocating roles and establishing structures, and maintaining an effective human resource and school support strategy. Organisational leadership is enthusiastic about innovation but strategic in predicting, interpreting and applying change.

Instructional leadership is actively and visibly involved in the planning and implementation of change, but encourages collaboration and working in teams. It emphasises the quality of teaching and learning with high expectations of all staff and all pupils, whilst recognising that support and encouragement are needed for everyone to give of their best.

Section Four:

Leadership for Transforming Learning: Ten Propositions

Personal / Interpersonal leadership inspires commitment to the school's mission which gives direction and purpose to its work. It cares passionately for the school, its members and reputation but with the ability objectively to appraise strengths and weaknesses in order to preserve and build upon the best of current practice and to remedy deficiencies. There is skilled communication, and a commitment to knowing oneself as a precursor to leading others.

Much has been made of the distinction between management and leadership. The arguments for one or the other disguise the reality that both are vital but the optimum combination of skills in these areas will vary according to context. It is in these ways that these three skill clusters should be viewed.

Basing school leadership on a concept of instructional leadership implies that:

- School leaders are expert in designing, managing and monitoring the instructional process
- School leaders are also skilful in the organisational, strategic, instructional, personal and interpersonal domains.

Proposition Five – School leadership is a function that needs to be distributed throughout the school community

Instructional leadership offers a more sustainable model of leadership for a profession that, by the nature of the personnel it recruits, has leadership potential widely spread amongst its members. If this potential is to be realised, then it will need to be grounded in an approach to leadership that is opportunistic, flexible, responsive and context-specific, rather than prescribed by roles, inflexible, hierarchical and status-driven. This view of leadership, then, is not hierarchical, but federal and involves clarity of direction, structures and support.

This approach to leadership involves building an evolving consensus around values that will unite and excite members of the school community. It means moving from the lowest common denominator of school aims to the highest common factor of shared values and beliefs. It incorporates being articulate about these

beliefs and holding action accountable to them – by those leading at all levels. It follows that instructional leadership is not inextricably linked to status or experience. It is distributed and potentially available to all. In this way, coaching and mentoring for example, are central leadership qualities, designed to support individuals and, in so doing, to expand leadership capacity.

There is now a good deal of evidence particularly from the public and private sectors to support this view of distributed leadership especially within learning organisations. Here, leaders are stimulators (who get things started); they are storytellers (to encourage dialogue and add understanding); they are networkers and copers; and problem identifiers and solvers, too. They tend to have wider social repertoires than has been customary in hierarchical educational settings, so as to encourage openness and to perpetuate relationships whilst wrestling with ambiguity. They will be improvisational and comfortable with spontaneity. They care deeply, about teachers, about students and about education.

Successful school leadership is not invested in hierarchical status, but experience is valued and structures are established to encourage all to be drawn in and regarded for their contribution. Such arrangements provide the context within which leadership capacity is expanded and leadership characteristics are naturally learnt. Collaborative work has been found to increase the involvement, engagement and affiliation across all staff. Teachers are motivated through seeing their professional skills valued and by being offered opportunities to share with and to lead others; by having their capacities continually expanded, and by feeling that their school is making a difference to the lives of young people.

Regarding school leadership as a distributed function implies that:

- School leadership is an activity that is spread across the school community
- Schools that wish to constantly evolve will need to harness their human and social capital that is their richest potential, creating and sharing the leadership opportunities that provide the capacity to achieve this.

Ten Propositions

Proposition Six – School Leadership must build capacity by developing the school as a learning community

What is particularly significant about contemporary school leadership is that it needs not only to focus directly on improving student behaviour, learning and attainment, but also pay attention to teacher and school development. In a wide range of public and private organisations there is now significant evidence to suggest that leadership is more likely to be effective if it addresses not only the learning of individuals, but at the same time dimensions of organisational capacity. Without an emphasis on capacity a school will be unable to 'transform' itself or sustain continuous improvement efforts that result in student attainment.

School capacity can be defined as the collective competency of the school as an entity to bring about effective change. As Michael Fullan has commented, although the concept of school capacity includes 'human capital', i.e., the knowledge, skills and dispositions of individual staff members, no amount of professional development of individuals will have an impact if certain organisation features are not in place.

Two organisational features are key. The first is the establishing of a 'professional learning community' in which staff work collaboratively to set clear goals for student learning, assess how well students are doing, develop action plans to increase student achievement, whilst being engaged in inquiry and problem-solving. These are the 'social capital' aspect of capacity. The other component is programme coherence. This is the extent to which the school's programmes for student and staff learning are co-ordinated, focused on clear learning goals and sustained over a period of time. The most effective schools are not those that take on the most innovations, but those that selectively take on, integrate and co-ordinate innovations into their own focused programmes. Interestingly, it is the teachers and leaders in these schools who appear the most knowledgeable about national policy initiatives.

It is now clear that for school improvement, leadership needs to focus on two dimensions – that of capacity on the one hand, and teaching and learning on the other. Usually the focus has been on either one or the other. Those schools that have some excellent individual teachers and teaching, but no collaborative capacity requires a different style of leadership from schools that although collaborative has teaching of

inconsistent quality and little discussion of practice. Different again is the leadership style required in schools that are characterised by minimal capacity and poor teaching. Even in schools where both capacity and the quality of teaching and learning are high, leadership is not just about sustainability, but how to make the school even better. The approach to leadership required in these four broad school work cultures will vary in their mix of coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pace setting and coaching styles required at appropriate times.

Basing school leadership on building school capacity for developing the school as a professional learning community implies:

- *School leaders understand the concept of capacity and its constituent elements*
- *School leaders can lead and manage the transformation of the school culture.*

Proposition Seven – School Leadership must be futures oriented and strategically driven

Many leadership theories and practices look backwards rather than forwards. They reflect ideas and ways of working that may have worked well once but are not necessarily applicable to today's changing circumstances. This does not imply that leadership is based on some unknown and opaque view of a possible future, but rather it is driven by a vision of what the school can be. Because of increasing external demands and the uncertainty of events leadership has to be skilled in responding to unpredictability.

School leadership that is "futures" driven has three characteristics. The first is an articulate vision for the future of the school based on the values and beliefs that the school community is committed to. Second, is an ability to scan the environment for "futures" trends and directions and to adapt or work with them to help develop the school's internal purpose. Third, is an ability to manage the change process. In the early phases of any change effort, there will be activity at both the classroom level – putting into practice a change in curriculum and teaching, and at the level of the school – capacity building, the process of learning how to change. In particular the way in which staff development, whole school planning, and enquiry and action research are organised in order to support improvement. Once

Section Four:

Leadership for Transforming Learning: Ten Propositions

a school has developed the 'capacity to change' then successive cycles of innovation become much easier. Driving these changes requires the skills of effective change agents, such as the ability to generate trust, to diagnose the state of the school, to plan into the medium term and to give people the confidence to continue.

Leadership that is strategically driven reflects the balance between the schools' maintenance and development functions – in the context of both improvement and transformation. At present, schools are facing two kinds of pressure. The first is that of development. Schools cannot remain as they now are if they are to implement an ambitious reform agenda. The second pressure is that of maintenance. Schools need to maintain some continuity with their present and past practices, partly to provide the stability which is the foundation of new developments and partly because the reforms do not by any means change everything that schools now do. There is thus a tension between development and maintenance. All this may require changes in the school's organisational arrangements. On the one hand, these arrangements must support maintenance - the preservation of what has worked well to give the school its stability and its reputation. On the other hand, they must also provide a means of dealing effectively with new developments. Strategic leadership is therefore about both ensuring maintenance and supporting development.

The implications for school leadership that is "futures" oriented and strategically driven are:

- A realisation that educational change is complex, non-linear, frequently arbitrary, and often characterised by unpredictable shifts and fragmented initiatives.
- School leaders can lead the school as an organisation through balancing development and maintenance in the context of both improvement and transformation.

Developing and Supporting School Leadership

Proposition Eight – School leadership must be developed through experiential and innovative methodologies

There is a much greater consensus on the skills and capacities for leadership than on how those

skills can be developed. What is clear is that the complex arrays of leadership abilities require a central commitment to life-long learning. This will include establishing courses for potential, new and experienced leaders. It will involve a move away from a dependence on competency-based approaches (with multiple indicators of desirable behaviour) to programmes based on such key concepts as school climate, leadership style, school performance and role clarity. There will also be a focus on personal characteristics and capabilities in the areas of driving school improvement, building commitment, delivering through people and creating an educational vision. In other words, these courses would support the nature of school leadership identified in Proposition Four by focusing on:

- defining the values and purposes of the school;
- managing the learning and teaching program;
- building the school as a professional learning community.

Almost all of the innovative programmes of leadership development in the public and private sector are connecting participants to practice in a variety of ways particularly through the use of mentors and coaches. In education this involves both an access to local professional learning teams, mentors, and coaches, as well as support from a co-ordinated network of providers. In addition, ICT is increasingly emerging as a central, integrative, interactive part of the learning cycle with emerging on-line learning, virtual activities, the use of websites, e-network and e-discussion groups.

This approach to leadership development connects participants to their own experience and context and best professional practice. Of course, on the job training and development are not new concepts – they draw on the apprentice model and provide a contextual setting and entitlement to support. In order to maximise this potential, leadership development and support requires coherence, continuity and progression. Prior learning and experience needs also to be acknowledged and then extended.

The challenge is to identify a range of opportunities that will enable school leaders with different life experiences to learn effectively

Ten Propositions

within a context that acknowledges their preferred learning style, their personal characteristics and their different working environments. Further, the challenge is to design learning opportunities that promote concurrently the continual development of knowledge, skills and understanding, and social and emotional intelligence.

Basing school leadership development on experiential and innovative methodologies implies:

- *An increasing emphasis on an applied knowledge base, on problem framing and solving, with an on-the-job or field based focus, often involving team learning, and a responsiveness to need and stage of development.*
- *The most valued expertise about school leadership will increasingly reside in the leaders of the profession itself, so by promoting shared learning and innovation and creativity.*

Proposition Nine – School leadership must be served by a support and policy context that is coherent, systemic and implementation driven

Large-scale reform requires policy implementation that is both system wide and system deep. That is policies need to reflect 'joined up thinking' horizontally across the policy spectrum, as well as linking downwards vertically through the layers of the system. 'System wide' applies to the coherence and contingency across a policy spectrum; this applies both to coherence in structures as well as to coherence at the level of values, aspirations and ways of working. 'System deep' refers to clarity and coherence at both the top and the bottom of the system – at the level of policy and in the minds of the majority of teachers.

One of the characteristics of contemporary educational systems is the tendency to reduce local support for schools. Paradoxically, in times of innovation and change, the local support level becomes increasingly important. The need is for more creative and responsive structures for working with schools. These 'cross-over structures' are the variety of networks, agencies, offices, and institutions that play a vital role in implementation. In developing a policy of

systemic educational change, a number of agencies are inevitably affected (and indeed created).

Networks, partnerships and alliances (involving both traditional and new sources of support) are ways of achieving the level of support required by schools in rapidly changing and volatile contexts. They not only assist in disseminating 'good practice', but they also help to overcome the traditional isolation of schools, and to a certain extent challenge hierarchical structures. Many schools have traditionally operated almost exclusively through individual units; be they teachers, departments, schools or local agencies. Such isolation may have been appropriate during times of stability, but during times of change there is a need to 'tighten the loose coupling', to increase collaboration and to establish more fluid and responsive structures. Networks are a means of doing this.

The key point is that working with systems means conceptualising strategies with whole systems in mind. Working with schools means taking into account the total set of changes facing given schools, and figuring out the best relationship with the surrounding infrastructure. Large-scale reform then, will require units to make connections and to synergise activities around common priorities.

That school leadership is served by a coherent, systemic and implementation driven policy and support context implies:

- That policy makers continually keep the 'big picture' in mind in searching for connections and ways of exploiting potential synergy.
- A competence in using external support rather than being used by it together with a facility in creating and exploiting networks.

Proposition Ten – School leadership must be supported by a National College that leads the discourse around leadership for learning

The vision of leadership encapsulated by these propositions reflects both an evolution and a step change from previous conceptions of school leaders. The strong and unrelenting focus on student learning, professional learning communities and capacity building and organisational coherence is more compelling

Section Four:

Leadership for Transforming Learning: Ten Propositions

and liberating than images of avuncular school leaders beset with short-term administrative tasks. It is also the leadership profile that holds most promise for genuine school transformation.

The challenge of transformation requires that 'futures orientation' and 'strategic thinking' will be informed by other professions/sectors and fields of endeavour. However, recent studies comparing the leadership qualities of head teachers with senior executives conclude, "Highly successful business executives would be extremely challenged to exert outstanding leadership in schools". The realisation of the image of school leadership portrayed in these propositions will not be easily won.

Nonetheless, the challenge of systemic educational change requires leadership of a very different nature representing a break with tradition. Without such a view of leadership, expectations of our educational system will continue to rise beyond the capacity of the

system to deliver. Without such a view of leadership, our capacity to inspire, attract and excite quality educators will be diminished.

To achieve such a leadership role what is required is a 'champion' for school leadership that can lead the debate in the country, with teachers, senior managers, governors, communities educational officers and politicians. An agency sufficiently powerful to make the argument, to develop and implement programmes in partnership and to link together policies and other agencies. In short what is required is a National College for School Leadership.

That school leadership is supported by a national college implies that:

- *The National College leads the discourse around leadership for learning.*
- *The National College takes the leading national role in co-ordinating policies and initiatives for the leadership of school improvement and transformation.*

Section 5:

Implications for a School Leadership Development Framework

The Think Tank purposefully focussed the propositions on school leadership per se, because without a firm concept of leadership any proposals for leadership development would be built on shaky foundations. The propositions do however have clear implications for a leadership development framework. The purpose of this final section therefore is to tease out the implications of the Think Tank's work to help inform the College's thinking on a new framework for leadership development. In doing this, the Think Tank is mindful not to trespass on operational matters or concrete proposals that are rightly the responsibility of the National College's senior team. These implications are therefore pitched at the level of principle. They reflect a logical sequence building from the evidence gathered and assessed by the Think Tank, through the development of the propositions, and the proposing of these implications and recommendations.

Although the propositions are principally concerned with "school leadership", they each have clear implications for "leadership development". So much so that by substituting "leadership development" for "school leadership" one has a set of parameters for a leadership development framework. Thus leadership development should:

- be purposeful, inclusive and values driven;
- embrace the distinctive and individual context of the school;
- promote an active view of learning;
- be instructionally focussed;
- be dispersed throughout the school community;
- build capacity by developing the school as a learning community;
- be "futures" orientated and strategically driven;
- be developed through experiential and innovative methodologies;
- be served by a support and policy context that is coherent and implementation driven;

The series of propositions described in Section Four comprise an agenda for school leadership in the medium term.

As previously noted the ten propositions should be regarded as a set and are grouped into three sections to reflect the values, nature, and development and support of school leadership.

- be supported by a National College that leads the discourse around leadership for learning.

Through this extrapolation one can begin to define the characteristics of a Leadership Development Framework. Simply phrasing propositions for leadership, as implications for leadership development can however lead to tautology. The Think Tank therefore felt it more helpful to derive a series of implications from the propositions and then to identify recommendations or 'action images' that the National College Governing Council and Senior Team may wish to consider when developing a new Leadership Development Framework.

Implication One:

That the school leadership curriculum be designed around principles of knowledge creation and transfer (see propositions 3 & 7).

- The first recommendation is that the Leadership Development Framework is informed by what is known about high quality learning.

The evidence gathered by the Think Tank demonstrates consistency in the qualities of the systems that enable and promote learning. Coherent and passionately held values and beliefs underpin such learning systems, and in them, the learners' collaboration, self-direction and participation are encouraged. There is also a

Implications for a School Leadership Development Framework

focus on critical and reflective thinking; and the emphasis on creativity and intuition encourages problems to be articulated and solutions found. High levels of emotional involvement will also be required. All the processes and relationships in the system encourage development, application, effort, pace, interest, concentration, understanding and improvement.

Implication Two:

That school leadership programmes be focused on the promotion of learning, the context of the school, and capacity building (see propositions 1, 2 & 6).

- The second recommendation is that the Leadership Development Framework is underpinned by an understanding of the professional development systems and processes that ensure the greatest impact in schools and on pupils.

In establishing a Leadership Development Framework the National College must always have at the forefront of its mind the need to be preparing for the future rather than simply deriving its activity from the past. Development activities will need to focus on social process, understanding the learner, and organisational development, whilst being facilitative and consultancy based in approach. It will need to take a holistic perspective over a long period of time and ensure the development of both individuals and the organisation. Thus the challenge for NCSL is to identify a range of opportunities which will enable school leaders with different life experiences to learn effectively within a context of their preferred individual learning style, their personal characteristics and their different working environment.

Implication Three:

That school leadership programmes are inclusive and skills focused in the instructional, the organisational/strategic and personal/interpersonal domains (see propositions 4 & 5).

- The third recommendation is that the Leadership Development Framework provides a professional development route in the appropriate skill domains enabling preparation,

induction, development and regeneration of school leaders.

The Framework must be a flexible and ever developing landscape of professional development opportunities. High standards of content and leadership training must be required and assured. Easy access for participants to evaluative information about what is offered is crucial. As a result of participation in the Framework school leaders need to emerge better informed, reflective, sharing and learning. In particular the Framework should offer:

- a spiral curriculum reflecting skills in the instructional, the organisational/strategic and personal/interpersonal domains that ensures double loop learning;
- help to leaders to know that the future is not some place participants are going to but a place they are creating - "the best way to enjoy the future is to create it";
- a menu of opportunities which acknowledge individual needs analysis, learning style and stage of development;
- e-learning which enables participants to construct actively their own learning and share their reflection with others;
- learning opportunities that because of this structure create enduring change in individuals and their organisations.

Implication Four:

That school leadership development methodologies promote skill acquisition, innovation and inquiry (see proposition 8).

- The fourth recommendation is that the leadership development providers share and demonstrate a common understanding of what constitutes the best adult learning.

Leadership development providers should have a common experience of leadership development in order to ensure that the College's signature pervades their work. As with much of the best adult learning this would be characterised by experiences encouraging reflection and application, critical and systemic thinking. Contextual interventions, often with a

Implications for a School Leadership Development Framework

community focus should be prevalent. A process centred approach with a long-term focus, usually on the job and working with groups from the same school should provide the essential focus. Alongside this emerging radical tradition sit key contextual issues, related to adult learning that should help define and steer the nature and structure of the Leadership Development Framework. All learners for example, have preferred learning styles and these are highly influential in the effectiveness of any activity. A flexible and responsive combination of opportunities for learning is therefore essential to meet a range of individual styles and development needs.

Implication Five:

That school leadership development assists in " of the transformational agenda, and in so doing promotes a discourse around leadership for learning (see propositions 9 & 10).

- The fifth recommendation is that the Leadership Development Framework is responsive to and supportive of the needs of the individual, provides a national focus as well as context specificity, and that

experiences within the framework are integrative, inspirational, innovative and transformative.

The Framework should have open access and to be responsive to the needs of the individual. The route map needs to be flexible with opportunities for side roads and no one right way through. It should be rich in partnership, exciting for participants and based upon the professional standards. What is offered within the Framework should be affirmative and empowering as well as challenging.

Collaborative learning frequently has these characteristics and much of what is offered should be based upon learning that is shared and mutually supportive. Overall the Framework should be informed by and contribute to a discourse about what works well and why in our schools. The learning within the Framework should always have a national focus as well as context specificity for its individual participants. Although the immediate aspiration is to enhance school leadership, the ultimate aim is to transform nationally the quality of learning and achievement for all students and those that teach them.

The Think Tank appreciate that these proposals for the Leadership Development Framework present the National College with a number of robust challenges that will need to be met over the period between its consultation with the profession and the implementation of the Framework.

These include:

- Quality assurance of learning and outcomes (proposals due for implementation September 2002);
- Managing the transition from existing programmes to Framework implementation (due from September of 2002);
- Structuring client and partnership funding arrangements;
- The unique position of NPQH;
- Continuing to identify and support the best available development opportunities nationally;
- Strengthening data and information gathering nationally to better understand the impact of National policy and to better inform that policy as it emerges.

This is a formidable agenda that is crucial to the successful transformation of our educational

system. The Think Tank believes that the National College is well placed to support this agenda in two ways. First, it is in a unique position to gather evidence of the effectiveness and impact of Government policy and to use that evidence to inform National policy development and strategy. Secondly, the Think Tank strongly believes in the critical role of the National College for School Leadership in "leading the discourse around leadership for learning". It derives support for these views from the College's remit letter of 25th September 2000. The remit letter encouraged the National College to:

- provide a single national focus for school leadership development and research;
- be a driving force for world class leadership in our schools and the wider education service; and
- be a provider and promoter of excellence; a major resource for schools; a catalyst for innovation; and a focus for national and international debate on leadership issues.

The Think Tank has produced this report as a direct response to and support for this aspirational vision. In producing this advice for the National College's Governing Council and Senior Team, the Think Tank has drawn on evidence from the best of practice in both the public and private sectors, as well as research evidence in education. Because of the breadth, strength and unanimity of the evidence base, the Think Tank believes that this report provides a manifesto for the future of school leadership that is both transformational and firmly grounded in learning.

Appendix One:

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