NEAS 2024 MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

QUALITY REVOLUTION:

RETHINKING, RESHAPING, AND REDEFINING EXCELLENCE IN ELT

NEAS

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Leading & Supporting Staff Learning

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We recognise and pay respect to the Elders and communities – past, present and emerging – of the lands we are on today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation.

Before we begin…

What are some of the challenges your teachers and students are currently facing?
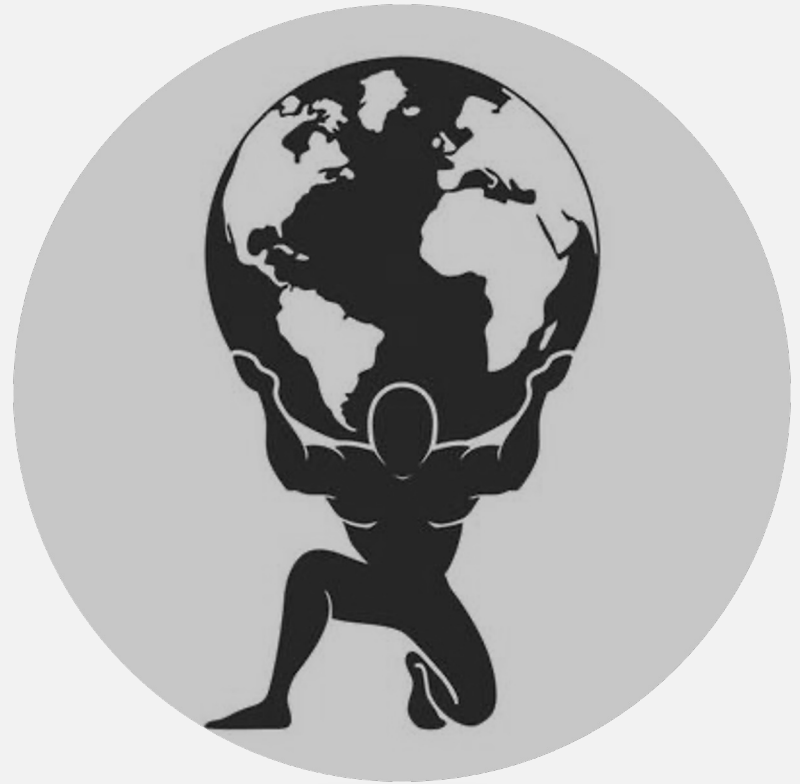
What does leadership look like?

Concepts of leadership

What style / approach to leadership might this image represent?

Does it apply to you or someone in your organisation?

What are the positive aspects of this style of leadership?

What are the potential problems or limitations of this style of leadership?

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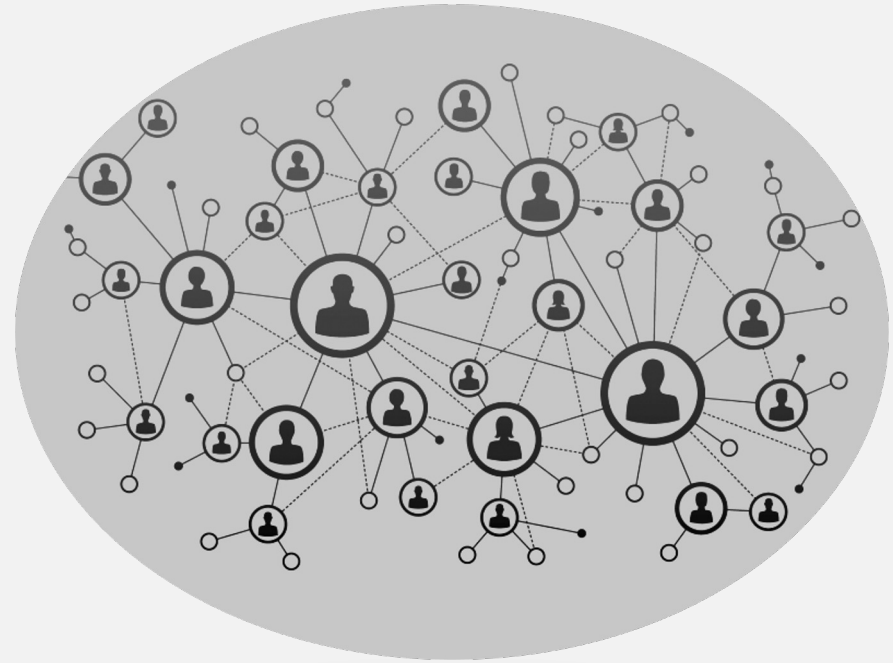What are the potential problems or limitations of this style of leadership?

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It is an enduring but unrealistic expectation that a manager / leader has all the knowledge and capacity needed to solve all their staff's problems.

Other concepts, such as distributed leadership, allow for expertise to be shared across the organisation.

Even in traditional hierarchies, shifting from the 'manager knows all' culture to one that empowers teachers to be autonomous and inquisitive will provide many benefits.

The manager / leader is still crucial for providing the support, culture and resources for staff learning and development.

Leading Learning

Leading learning is

- focused on leadership within educational contexts
- focused on staff learning
- intentionally articulated as an action (verb), not a noun.

Why does it matter?

"In a context of constant change and reforms, lifelong teacher training is considered a priority and one of the main challenges faced by education systems to improve teaching skills and achieve better learning outcomes for students" (Sonmark et al., 2017; Trust et al., 2016)

The importance of staff learning

"In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic… the capacity for learning and innovation has been identified as a crucial component in strategies for organisational change and human resource development (Dirani et al., 2020; Luo and Galasso, 2020; McLean and Jiantreerangkoo, 2020).

Furthermore, **participation in continuous learning and development activities makes important contributions to the development of favourable working conditions, such as job satisfaction and well-being** (Cerasoli et al., 2018; Watson et al., 2018). **Learning also generates innovative ideas** for business development, **increased productivity**, **greater flexibility in staffing** and r**educed costs owing to ill health and undesired mobility** (Kim and Ployhart, 2014; Noe et al., 2014; Saks and Burke-Smalley, 2014).

Opportunities for learning in working life can thus be seen as a central factor for achieving both **individual and organisational sustainability** (Elg et al., 2015).

However, **employee learning does not necessarily arise on its own. It needs to be supported, made visible and disseminated within an organisation.**"

Wallo, A., Kock, H., Reineholm, C., & Ellström, P.-E. (2021). How do managers promote workplace learning? learning-oriented leadership in daily work. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *34*(1), 58–73.

Summary: the importance of staff learning

The concept of leading learning is an important distinction to the broader concept of 'leadership'. It focuses on teaching organisations such as schools, colleges, universities etc. It also focuses on the learning of staff, rather than just that of students.

There is increasing awareness and research that shows staff learning is linked to many important concepts in organisations, including:

- greater staff engagement
- greater job satisfaction
- reduced stress
- greater levels of autonomy
- more cohesive teams
- a stronger more positive organisational culture
- better student results.

Is a leader a manager?

Is a manager a leader?

Who *leads* learning (and what does it mean in practice)?

Rethinking leadership in our schools

"A leader is anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes and has the courage to develop that potential."

- Brene Brown, https://brenebrown.com/hubs/dare-to-lead/

"If we think about leadership as being confined to only those in positions of authority then we are wilfully ignoring the leadership talent and capability of many others. If leadership is fundamentally about influence, then within any school there are many sources of influence, both formal and informal."

Dr Alma Harris, https://www.teachermagazine.com/au_en/articles/distributed-leadership

Leadership and Management

(Technical)
Management
How

(Empowering)
Manager
How + Why

(Aspirational)
Leadership
Why
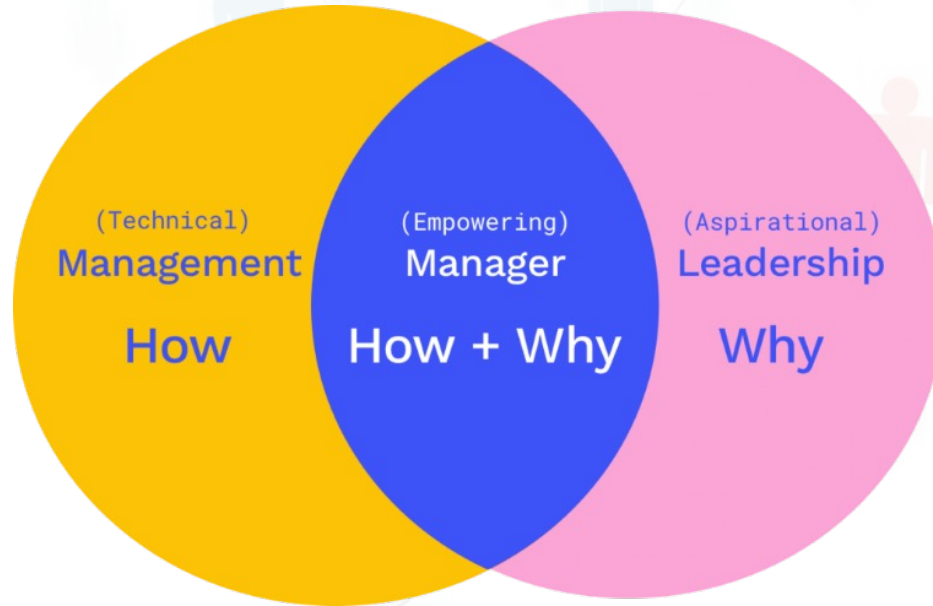
Leading Learning

How do we do it?

In 60 seconds, brainstorm the different learning opportunities that your teachers engage in.

Leading Learning

Formal learning can be considered any structured, organised learning activity in / for the workplace.

Informal learning can be considered any unstructured, experiential learning that takes place in the course of daily activities in the workplace (Marsick & Watkins, 1990), or in any other sphere of life (Cunningham & Hillier 2013).

To successfully support staff learning, we need to keep a broad concept of what learning looks like.

Teachers' informal learning

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Focusing on teacher's informal learning:

1. Is important within the context of school reform or implementation of an innovation or new teaching method
2. Is crucial for quality of student learning
3. Plays an important role in retaining teachers
4. Could potentially ease pressure on teachers
5. Reflects a growing awareness that formal professional development is insufficiently transferred to the daily practice of teaching.

Kyndt, E., Gijbels, D., Grosemans, I., & Donche, V. (2016). Teachers' everyday professional development. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 1111–1150. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315627864

How do teachers learn?

Teachers learn through four different types of activity:

(1) experimentation;

(2) reflecting on one's own practice;

(3) learning from what others are doing; and

(4) in the course of carrying out daily activities

(Lohman, 2006 and Smaller, 2005)

How do teachers learn?

Activities to support staff learning include:

- Formal training opportunities (but don't forget the informal learning that occurs)

- Job rotations (or task rotations)

- Designating time in meetings for discussions and reflections aimed at promoting learning

- Improvised educational interventions "on-site" to gather a group together to solve a problem / learn from a recurring problem.

How do we support teachers' learning?

Educational leaders must

- facilitate positive interpersonal relationships among members of the organization (Cuyvers et al., 2016)

- be tolerant of errors and failures that may arise during experimentation (Schürmann and Beausaert, 2016)

- facilitate reflection on one's own professional practice through peer feedback (Hoekstra et al., 2009).

Discussion

1. What does your school do to foster positive relationships amongst staff?

2. Is your school / leadership tolerant of errors and failures that arise through teacher experimentation. How is this demonstrated?

3. How are teachers supported to engage in ongoing, meaningful reflection on their practice?

How do we support staff learning?

There are many different strategies. Unfortunately, there is no single approach that will be ideal for you.

Instead, a range of strategies need to be considered and several need to be selected.

Time and energy need to be invested over an extended period of time. No change in behaviour, attitude or culture happens quickly!

One place to start

The most common, and possibly most effective, activity you can engage in is conversations with staff.

These discussions can be

- Formal and scheduled (e.g., performance reviews)

- Semi-formal (as need / situations arise)

- Informal (corridor / lunch break conversations etc.)

Each of these has a role in the organisation and can be used to support staff learning.

1:1 conversations

- are powerful drivers for learning.

- provide clear insight into staff needs and attitudes.

- are cost-effective

However:

- there is a time cost.

- they must be followed up on (regardless of whether formal or informal).

- They still lead to a need for resources.

Summary

1. Supporting staff to engage in learning (exploring, reflecting, agitating etc.) leads to <u>so many </u>benefits for the individual, for the school, and for the students.

2. Everyone has a role to play in creating a culture of (ongoing, informal) learning.

3. There is no single approach that will work. Investment of time and energy into multiple strategies over time is needed.

4. Small steps (actions) matter. E.g., a five-minute conversation can be meaningful and impactful, if followed up on appropriately.

5. Managers, coordinators, head teachers etc. are <u>essential</u> in supporting staff learning initiatives.

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