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"Should I stand back, or should I lead?" Developing intentional communal cultures of emergent and distributed forms of leadership in educational settings
DRAFT PAPER

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Abstract

The day to day practice of leadership in education can oscillate from being a rewarding activity one moment, to one that can be littered with confusion and dilemmas the next. Leadership practice can so often lie beyond what is prescribed and standardised, every situation brings with it a uniqueness that cannot be replicated. Leadership can be individual, role-based, conjoint and extremely fluid and emergent; it can often exist in places where we are not looking for it. This paper is informed by 32 studies of distributed forms of leadership practice from around the world and focuses on the issue of intentionality and how it is related to developing communal cultures of emergent and distributed forms of leadership. On one hand, leadership can be intentionally given out to others as a means of leadership development and also as a way of coping with the intensification of work. On the other hand leadership emerges when formal leaders intentionally stand back and allow others to flourish, be they children, adolescents, adult students, parents/caregivers, or staff. Linked to this issue is the distribution of power in our educational settings, trust, and the importance of open and transparent communication.

Introduction

The theorising and understanding of leadership in education is being challenged by a reformation that shifts the focus from the leader as individual to also include more alternative distributed forms, where leadership is understood as a distributed and emergent property. The term *distributed leadership* has popularised these alternative forms of leadership in education, and is widely espoused as a means of improving our understanding of day-to-day school leadership practice (Harris, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2005). However, it is not without its problems (Gronn, 2003; Gunter, 2001; Hatcher, 2005; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007). This reformation raises implications for individuals in formal roles of leadership; leadership

practice is increasingly understood as a concept that also embraces individuals and groups beyond those in formal roles (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pescosolido, 2002). This paper draws on 32 studies of distributed and emergent leadership practice and focuses on the implications for individual leaders within a broader conceptualisation of leadership that is not limited to 'official' role-based organisational leadership. The first section presents an overview of how these distributed and emergent forms are currently conceptualised in education, followed by an analysis of the sources of leadership that were revealed across the studies. The final and third section focuses on the theme of intentionality and how it is linked to trust and open and transparent communication, highlighting key principles that need to inform a leader's decision of whether they should intentionally stand back or intentionally lead.

Categorising distributed and emergent forms of leadership

The work of Peter Gronn and James Spillane

The initial theoretical conceptualisations of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000, 2002; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004) still inform most of the current research on distributed and emergent forms of school leadership. Gronn conceptualises distributed leadership into two main categories; distribution as accumulation or aggregation, and distribution as a form of holistic and conjoint agency where actors influence and are influenced within a framework of authority (2002). The former he defines as numerical action and the latter as multiple or concertive action. Concertive action is interpreted in three ways:

- spontaneous collaboration;
  - anticipated through prior planning; or
  - unanticipated;
- intuitive working relations that emerge over time and are dependent on trust; and,
- institutionalised or regulated practices.

His conceptualisation of concertive action highlights both the informal friendship and social aspect of leadership activity and the formal organisational distribution of leadership through the division of labour. Sitting across these informal and formal aspects is the need for interdependencies so that leadership activity can be described across two or more people and be situated where there are overlapping or complementary responsibilities (Gronn, 2002).

The principle of interdependencies also shapes James Spillane's theorising of a distributed perspective of leadership practice. Structurally Spillane employs a similar approach to classifying forms of distributed practice as Gronn does. A distinction is made between accumulative activity that Spillane labels as leader-plus, and distributed practice; differences

however are evident between the two theorists with how each form is described. Spillane (2006) categorises leader-plus and distributed leadership practice as:

- leader-plus;
  - arranged through;
    - the division of labour;
    - co-performance where leadership functions are undertaken in a collaborated manner; and
    - parallel performance where duplication of leadership functions occur in a non-collaborated manner;
  - distributed by;
    - design or redesign of leadership positions;
    - default where intuitive action is enacted (in a manner similar to Gronn's intuitive working relations); and
    - crisis where impromptu action takes place particularly with unanticipated events (in a manner similar to Gronn's spontaneous collaboration);
- leadership practice through;
  - collaborated distribution that involves reciprocal interdependencies;
  - collective distribution where routines are pooled and co-performed but not at the same place or time; and
  - coordinated distribution of sequentially arranged leadership tasks.

The most distinctive feature that sets Gronn's and Spillane's theorising apart from mainstream leadership theory and most research of school leadership is that they present a distributed, rather than an individual lens through which leadership practice can be studied and understood. The distributed frameworks that they have developed are not intended to be prescriptive; rather they provide an alternative perspective to "the myth of individualism that has captured our thinking about work in general and success in particular in Western society" (Spillane, 2006, p. 103). School leadership can be understood as distributed practice that is *stretched over* the context of the practice (Spillane, Diamond & Jita, 2003). Spillane (2006) defines leadership practice as a product of the interactions between school leaders, followers and their situation, though concedes that his theorising and empirical research has been limited to focusing more on those with formal leadership responsibilities and restricting the situation only to tools and routines. This predisposes his work towards a suggested managerial bias (Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006). Consequently, the empirical research of Spillane and his colleagues has a functional emphasis due to the little attention given to the local

school socio-cultural context and the wider policy context (Bottery, 2004); a shortcoming that Spillane (2006) acknowledges.

'Linear' categorisations of school distributed leadership

One of the more influential 'official' categorisations of school distributed leadership in England has been that of the Hay Group Education (UK). In 2004 they proposed to the government funded National College of School Leadership (NCSL) five aspects of distributed leadership and arranged them on a continuum as follows:

- *Instruct* – where initiatives and ideas come only from leaders at or near the top of a hierarchical organisational structure;
- *Consult* – where staff have the opportunity for input but decisions are still made at a distance from them by others near or at the top;
- *Delegate* – where staff take initiative and make decisions within predetermined boundaries of responsibility and accountability;
- *Facilitate* – where staff at all levels are able to initiate and champion ideas; and
- *Neglect* – where staff are forced to take initiative and responsibility due to a lack of direction at the top.

(Hay Group Education, 2004)

The ensuing result of the Hay Group's continuum led to the development of the NCSL *Distributed Leadership* pack for schools. However this categorisation of school distributed leadership is limited due to its resemblance to Hoy and Tarter's (2008) decision-making continuum that has a distinctive administrator-subordinate focus and ranges from unilateral decision making by the administrator, which is equivalent to *instruct* in the Hay Group continuum, through to group consensus where members share equally in the process, which is equivalent to *facilitate* in the Hay Group continuum. If a distributed framework is to be used to gaze upon school leadership practice then decision-making should be one of a range of possible contexts, rather than becoming a key component of the framework where a rational organisational perspective is privileged above a micro-political one that can bring to light concealment, control, fragmentation and confrontation inherent in the day-to-day practices of a school (Ball, 1987). Another limitation of the Hay Group continuum is the simplicity assumed around the point of facilitation (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006); at this point exists a far broader range of possibilities. Concertive action (Gronn, 2002) and distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006) can occur in a range of forms that cannot be limited to one point on any continuum.

The *facilitate* point of the Hay Group continuum is developed further by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) into three forms of distributed leadership: *guided distribution*, *emergent distribution* and *assertive distribution*. In a manner reminiscent of the Hay Group they present a continuum with apparent equal intervals but in the form of a thermometer:
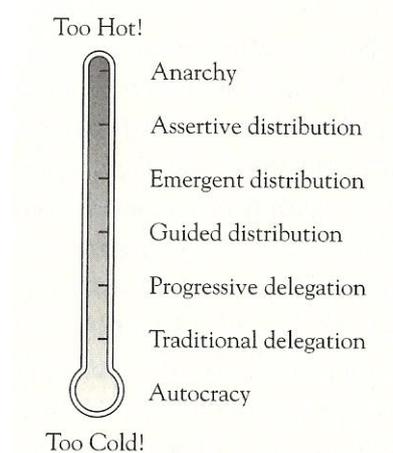
Too Hot!

Anarchy

Assertive distribution

Emergent distribution

Guided distribution

Progressive delegation

Traditional delegation

Autocracy

Too Cold!

Figure 1. Raising the temperature of distributed leadership

(Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 113)

The three 'cooler' points on Hargreaves' and Fink's thermometer are aligned to the *instruct*, *consult* and *delegate* range of points on the Hay Group continuum, though a distinction is made by Hargreaves and Fink in relation to delegation. *Progressive delegation* is presented as a form of *traditional delegation* "with one twist" (p. 118), where people's hopes are raised in relation to involvement, only for the champion of the process to leave and move on and the situation resort back to *traditional delegation* with predetermined boundaries of responsibility and accountability. Further up the thermometer, *guided distribution*, in a manner similar to Spillane's distribution by design, acknowledges that there can be intentional leadership distribution. Overt or covert power is exerted intentionally by one or a few individuals, though neither Spillane or Hargreaves and Fink critique power in any depth here in their models. The next point, *emergent distribution* is clearly aligned to Gronn's unanticipated spontaneous collaborative and intuitive working relations that emerge over time and Hargreaves and Fink state that this form of distributed leadership is everywhere, and so undermine their theorising of distributed leadership, a point I will discuss in more detail in the next paragraph. *Assertive distribution* is defined as having an activist orientation especially amongst teachers, who are "empowered" (p. 132) to challenge those in overall leadership roles. However the micro-political focus here is weakened by assuming that teachers need to be empowered by overall leaders to be assertive; genuine assertiveness should arise out of individual and group agency irrespective of the role of overall leaders. It is not a matter of

giving others power, rather it is a matter of being able to stand back to allow others to use the power they already have (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). The final point on the thermometer, *anarchic distribution* is equivalent to *assertive distribution* but without the influence of overall organisational leaders. Hargreaves and Fink state that *assertive distribution* is prone to shift into *anarchic distribution,* that "the line between autocracy and anarchy is a thin one" (p. 135). This implies that the *too cold* base of the thermometer can simultaneously produce the *too hot* tip of the thermometer and *vice versa*. This highlights the complexity of distributed and emergent forms of leadership where multiple forms could simultaneously be evident; a complexity and multiplicity that is not able to be produced in any type of linear continuum as the Hay Group (2004) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006) have developed.

However, Hargreaves and Fink do identify some important factors that must be considered in any conceptualisation of leadership; these are structure, socio-cultural and socio-political. They argue that distributed leadership occurs through structural means, such as roles and formal procedures at the lower end of the thermometer and then ascends the thermometer through socio-cultural factors in the middle and then socio-political factors towards the top. The identification of these factors is important, but must be considered alongside each other, rather than as different points along a continuum if a critical perspective of leadership is to be taken. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) undo their acknowledgement that leadership is "already distributed" (p. 136) by finally providing prescriptive guidance for overall leaders in how to progress up the scale of the thermometer while avoiding anarchy. Overall leaders have been positioned as the agents of change and in the context of schools, equate the role of principals firmly with that of transformational leadership where the leader-follower binary is emphasised rather than a more democratic and emergent perspective of leadership that is spread over the context and focuses on interdependent activity.

The tendency to prescribe steps towards developing distributed leadership is a common element of the continuums produced by the Hay Group (2004) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006). Though each point or category on a continuum is helpful in describing leadership practice, a majority of the continuum points are still limited to an over-emphasis on organisational structure and situating influence with the principal. This suggests that principals elicit responses that are privileged over staff in the school, a maxim that is not apparent in Gronn's or Spillane's distributed frameworks (Harris, 2006). Any categorisation of distributed and emergent leadership ought to reveal where the locus of power is situated, is it concentrated or is it dispersed, to what extent, and why (Gronn, 2000; Hatcher, 2005)? If distributed leadership is going to encompass the more emergent forms of leadership that are situated outside the power that can emanate from formal hierarchical positions of authority

then a wider context of power needs to be employed (Jermier & Kerr, 1997); our gaze needs to go beyond the technical and functional aspects of an organisation (Gunter, 2005; Hosking, 1988; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995).

A more critical categorisation

Any distributed perspective of leadership "is dependent on power sources and interactions" (Gunter, 2005, p. 51). Accordingly, Gunter (2005) identifies the following characterisations of distributed and emergent leadership:

- *Authorised* – where through delegation and empowerment, formal overall leaders seek to develop others into organisational roles of leadership or "push work down the line" (p. 52) as a means of addressing intensification of work;
- *Dispersed* – where leadership activity takes place "without the formal working of a hierarchy" (p. 52) through the pursuit of individual interests or consensus-building around shared beliefs in a community; and,
- *Democratic* – where the emphasis goes beyond the school as an organisation, to the school as a public institution in a wider democratic setting. Dissent, ethics and leadership for the common and public good provide a means to shift one's gaze "beyond the instrumentality of organisational goals" (p. 56).

According to Gunter (2005) the categories of *authorised* and *dispersed* distributed leadership provide frames through which practice can be described and underlying assumptions about power can be revealed. The *democratic* category is separated because any critique of power needs to engage with what is the purpose behind the power, there is an emancipatory aspect to it that goes beyond just revealing and describing. Authentic distributed leadership requires a distribution of power so that collective democracies can emerge (Hatcher, 2005); any framework, categorisation or research of distributed and emergent forms of leadership cannot be apolitical, either at a national policy level or at a local school level. A review of the majority of the research to date (see Appendix) has tended to overlook in-depth critiques of how power is situated across distributed and emergent leadership activity.

The studies listed in the appendix reveal a range of perspectives, from leadership couples, to those in formal roles of leadership, teachers, students, parents and the wider school community. However each of these perspectives is also bounded by how leadership is conceptualised: it can be restricted to a managerial tool for delegating work onto others (Mayrowetz, Murphy, Louis & Smylie, 2007); described as an organisational quality that is restricted to official members of an organisation (Møller & Eggen, 2005); or, as a democratic

and holistic property of a collection of people who have formal and informal connections with a school (Giles, 2006; Mitra, 2005). All of the listed studies 'sit' somewhere across these conceptualisations and highlights the complexity of categorising distributed and emergent forms of leadership. On one hand leadership needs to be conceptualised across a managerial – holistic continuum, and on the other hand needs to consider the distribution of authority that constitutes leadership as acts of influence; is this distribution concentrated around a few or across many?
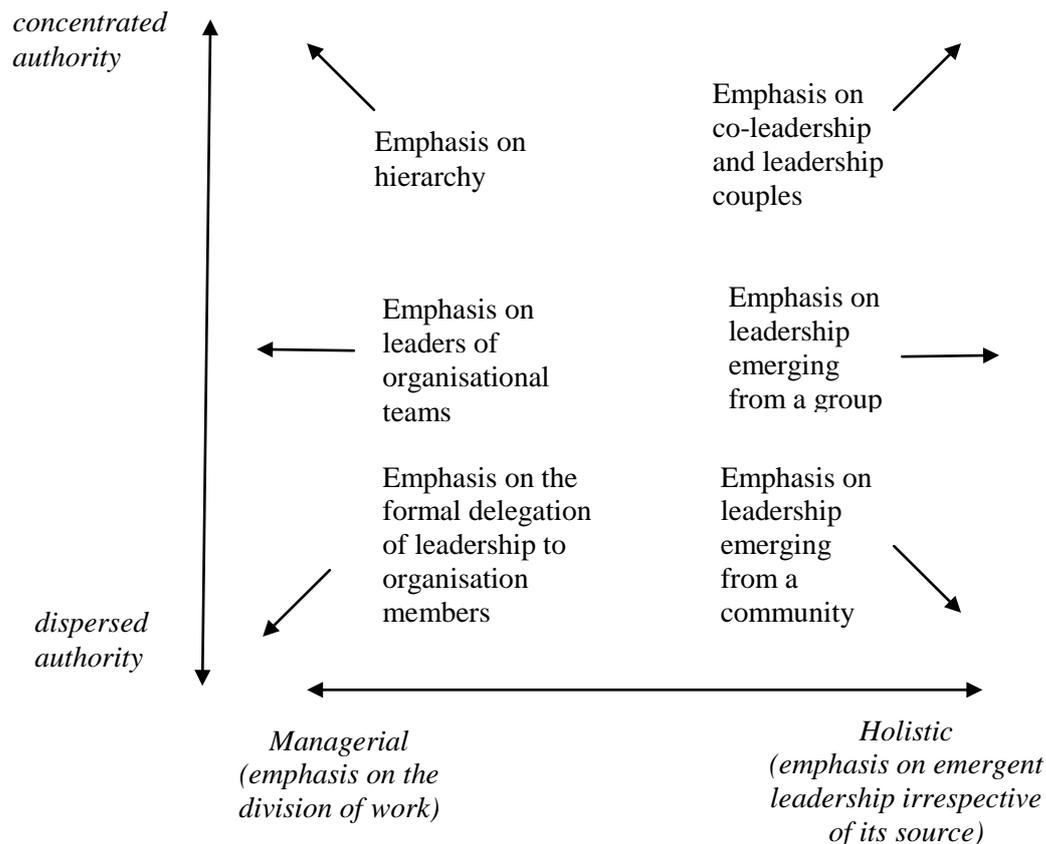

Figure 2. Conceptualisations of distributed and emergent leadership

A synthesis of the findings evident in the studies listed in the appendix, strongly suggest that the multiple conceptualisations of distributed and emergent leadership displayed in figure 2 can be evident in a school setting at any one time. Due to the policy environment in which schools exist, the managerial perspective cannot be ignored and due to leadership being a means that can enable 'best' ideas to emerge from anywhere (Smyth, 1989), a holistic perspective is also needed, particularly as values of participation, community and equity underpin the new *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007). Since these conceptualisations are not mutually exclusive, rather than concentrate and privilege one form of distributed and emergent leadership above another. Attention is now drawn to the findings

of the appended studies and how members of a school community practice distributed and emergent forms of leadership in the midst of seemingly opposing forces that have their roots either in New Public Management or democratic ideals.

Multiple sources of leadership

The field of educational leadership is usually restricted to the realm of the principal (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson & Hann, 2002). A distributed and emergent perspective of leadership acknowledges leadership practice that occurs outside of formal leaders, particularly the principal, and so raises the issue of how formal and informal forms of leadership co-exist in a policy environment that emphasises managerial leadership as I have discussed earlier. Leadership can become less visible when it is stretched across several people; this is in direct contrast to the highly visible forms of leadership that are equated to the individual charismatic or transformational leader who is at the top of a hierarchical structure. Crowther and his colleagues (2002) found that principals needed to know when to step back so that individual expression could emerge from anywhere within the school. From a teacher's perspective administrators are generally not aware of how crucial this is in relation to building trust; telling teachers that they are trusted is not enough: they need to be encouraged to critique school practices and have influence (Starratt, 2003). Leadership practice also occurs without the principal knowing or being involved (Spillane, Camburn & Pareja, 2007) and may contribute to principals feeling disengaged from leadership situations (Goldstein, 2004).

Principals

The focus on principals in the studies came from several perspectives and did not mutually exclude leadership from other sources in the school (Harris & Day, 2003). Principals were generally viewed as the person who could make distributed leadership work (Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss et al., 2007), they tended to have a more visible profile performing leadership functions (Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003) and their day-to-day practice revealed "much about distribution and what it means in practice" (MacBeath, 2005, p. 356). However these findings need to be interpreted in the light of the respective research designs and underlying assumptions that each research team make about leadership. Both Camburn's and Leithwood's studies acknowledge that their gaze was restricted to only those in formal roles of leadership or admit that their data was likely to have underestimated the amount of informal leadership that took place in the schools. Leithwood and his colleagues (2007) also acknowledge that their data was grounded in district reform initiatives where the principal is usually accountable on behalf of the school for attaining expected targets (Leithwood, Jantzi, Earl et al., 2004), rather than school-based initiatives that can promote collective

accountability. Research design can also pre-empt the type of findings that arise from a study; MacBeath choose only to shadow principals, even though just for one day each and not teachers; data from teachers was collected but not *in situ*, so leadership activity was only viewed through the lived experience of the principal, not the other staff or students.

Other studies revealed that principals also had a role in stepping back and relinquishing responsibility. In the context of primary school senior management teams a key contributing factor in developing team synergy was the principal's readiness to relinquish control through sharing and delegating tasks (Wallace, 2002), a factor that was also apparent in Dinham's (2005) study of New South Wales secondary schools. Dinham's study also highlighted the importance of trust and providing people 'space', which according to MacBeath (2005) is a foundational premise for distributed leadership and one of several characteristics that link distributed leadership practice indirectly with school improvement (Mulford & Silins, 2003). In these studies, principals were also described as a transformational leader. Several accounts are provided where influence and power were situated initially with the principal before being distributed out in the form of leadership functions (Crawford, 2003; Franey, 2002; Harris, 2002; Harris & Day, 2003). This has led to stages or phases being prescribed for other principals to follow as a means of distributing leadership (Franey, 2002; MacBeath, 2005) and is reflected in some of the categorisations of distributed leadership that I have discussed earlier (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hay Group Education, 2004).

Students and parents

A perspective of distributed and emergent forms of leadership that is usually overlooked is one that includes students, parents and their voice. A democratic view of student and parent leadership goes beyond consulting them in decision-making processes to assisting them develop their own leadership voice. Both Flecknoe (2002) and Mitra (2005) highlight the positive impact of student leadership particularly in relation to learning; students learnt to become active, rather than passive members of the school (Flecknoe, 2002), teachers' perspectives of students changed, tensions decreased and teachers partnered with students as they engaged in student-voice activities (Mitra, 2005). In his case studies of three schools, Giles (2006) brings further light to leadership activity situated with parents who became actively involved in the school environment. In one school where the greatest degree of ownership was experienced by the parents, the principal supported and nurtured groups of parents as "confident self-actuating leaders" (p. 274) due to a foundational, rather than a complementary approach to distributed leadership. Power was not retained by the principal in relation to trying to manage the parents; rather the parents empowered each other to become activists on behalf of their community as they collaborated with the school.

Teachers

Collaboration and collegiality amongst teachers within their school are also key themes that are evident in some of the studies, though tended to depict the principal as having less individual influence as discussed earlier. Leadership was not dependent on formal leaders, rather it was, dispersed in the form of pedagogical leadership (Friedman, 2004; Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie, 2003), in the form of teams (Johnson, 2004; Scribner, Sawyer, Watson & Myers, 2007), evident at all levels of the school (Fitzgerald, Gunter & Eaton, 2006; Lingard et al., 2003), fluid (Lumby, 2003) and enacted within a culture of care (Lingard et al., 2003). However the process of developing and enabling shared leadership is not without its issues; it can be a slow painful process (Friedman, 2004) and is dependent on mutual open dialogue based on premises of trust, collaboration and collegiality (Fitzgerald et al., 2006; Friedman, 2004; Johnson, 2004). When open dialogue is not evident, conflict and mistrust can arise, particularly when an espousal of distributed and emergent forms of leadership is not carried through into practice. Storey (2004) in her account of competition between leaders in a school reveals the frailty of these forms of leadership once issues of boundary overlap occur between individuals. In this case the situation was never resolved emphasising the need for dialogue in relation to power, expectations and the forming of interdependent relationships.

A common factor that appears to bind school staff together and yet still allow for disagreement is the focus on learning. In their study of 24 schools during the QSRLS, Lingard and his colleagues (2003) found that a commitment to leadership as a dispersed property was dependent on productive leadership, not the distribution of 'busy work' through management task delegation. Productive leadership supports academic and social outcomes, where there is a focus on pedagogy, a hands-on knowledge of education theory, supportive social relations and a culture of care (Lingard et al., 2003). Consequently the gaze shifts away from the principal to teachers as leaders of learning, thus emphasising a multiplicity of leadership sources within a school (Friedman, 2004) and raises the question as to how much leadership activity occurs beyond the formal leadership roles within a school's organisational structure.

Expertise not position

From a distributed and emergent perspective, leadership practice was described as an organisational and relational quality, rather than an individual one because it existed across multiple individuals and arose out of their interactions (Møller & Eggen, 2005; Spillane et al., 2003). Expertise, rather than position was the basis for leadership authority (Timperley, 2005) and allowance for individual expression and autonomy were found to be key elements that enabled leadership practice to arise out of expertise irrespective of role (Crowther et al.,

2002). In some situations leaders acted as a "boundary spanner" so that the leadership practice became intentionally interdependent across a wider number of people and organisational boundaries (Timperley, 2005, p. 409). In Timperley's (2005) study, literacy leaders acted as a boundary spanner between principals and teachers and in Goldstein's (2004) study consulting teachers acted in a similar manner between principals and teachers after they had both experienced disengagement from each other under a new teacher appraisal system. If position is not the basis for leadership authority then a degree of intentionality is needed to 'see' leadership practice beyond the norm of equating leadership with formalised positions and titles of leadership.

Intentionality, trust and dialogue

Intentionality is a theme that runs across several of the studies, ranging from the individual leader perspective with emphasis on the principal through to a broader cultural perspective. At a surface level principals appear to be positioned as a 'power store-house' who can distribute leadership onto others, particularly in times of reform or in turning around 'failing' or 'struggling schools' (Crawford, 2003; Dinham, 2005; Harris, 2002; Harris & Day, 2003; Wallace, 2002). There is certainly evidence to suggest that principals do play a key role in distributed forms of leadership, however it appears debatable as to whether or not they are the heroic transformational leader who contributes significantly to educational transformation. On the one hand principals do have an official role to carry out, but on the other hand also need to know when to relinquish control as evidenced in some of the studies (Crowther et al., 2002; Dinham, 2005; Friedman, 2004; MacBeath, 2005), even though it can be difficult at times (Goldstein, 2004). As leadership emerged across schools, principals were described as motivating (Franey, 2002), relational (Dinham, 2005) and supportive of teachers (Fitzgerald et al., 2006); it was important that others in particular were intentionally given space to develop their leadership (Dinham, 2005; Giles, 2006; Lingard et al., 2003).

At a deeper and more widespread level intentionality was evident in aspects of a school's culture and revealed a collective responsibility for enabling leadership to emerge. A commitment to student learning underpins distributed forms of leadership and has a suggested indirect effect on student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2007; Mulford, 2005; Mulford & Silins, 2003). However these findings are drawn from large scale studies and the finer grained studies of local schools reveal that distributed forms of leadership practice differ from school to school and are dependent on the unique culture evident in each school (Møller & Eggen, 2005; Spillane, 2005; Spillane et al., 2007). Some of the schools exhibited cultures that promoted teacher learning (Dinham, 2005), negotiation rather than compromise (Crowther et

al., 2002), shared custodianship of shared values (Gronn, 1999), leadership across boundaries of role (Goldstein, 2004; Timperley, 2005), student voice (Mitra, 2005), collaboration (Fitzgerald et al., 2006; Johnson, 2004; Scribner et al., 2007), and collegial support amongst teachers (Fitzgerald et al., 2006). In each case there was some aspect of intentionality behind the developing of these cultures, they did not just emerge by themselves. This raises the question as to what extent is intentionality concentrated around a few people or dispersed around many and where the focus of intentionality is located; is it focused on tasks and routines, developing democratic school communities, where power is situated, pedagogical leadership or implementing a national educational reform initiative? It is my contention intentionality will be dependent on context, yet reliant on two key aspects of school culture that traverse across most of the studies: trust and open honest communication. Both of these themes appear to be critical in allowing democratic and emergent forms of distributed leadership to intentionally emerge and provide a platform for the critique of policy and reform from an educational perspective rather than a managerial one.

Trust

Trust emerged as a strong central theme throughout most of the 32 studies; it is strongly interrelated to power and both presuppose each other (Møller & Eggen, 2005). Trust needs to be intentionally developed and protected over time; it cannot be assumed to exist or rushed in its development. Freidman (2004) describes how the emergence of shared leadership was a painful and slow process and started with a very tentative vision, trust needed time to develop. This was also evident in the fine-grained studies of leadership couples as each individual broadened their 'zone of indifference' towards the other, increasingly releasing each other over time in acts of mutual trust (Court, 2003; Gronn, 1999; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004). Similar findings were evident in studies of schools where trust was a precursor for complementary relationships and individual expression (Crowther et al., 2002; Dinham, 2005); there needed to be respect for teachers' professionalism and expertise (Fitzgerald et al., 2006). Sometimes trust was built through social interactions in team settings (Johnson, 2004; Scribner et al., 2007), though teams can also be used by senior leaders to implement a managerial agenda, thus creating the potential of suspicion among team members (Crowther et al., 2002).

The studies reveal that trust is multi-faceted; it can take the form of expertise trust, idealistic trust and communicative trust. Expertise trust is closely related to authority being based on expertise rather than position. Central to this perspective is the positioning of teachers as professional and productive pedagogical leaders; a focus on pedagogy, rather than measuring student learning outcomes, can allow teacher expertise to emerge as a distributed form of

leadership from any where across a school (Crowther et al., 2002; Fitzgerald et al., 2006; Lingard et al., 2003). Idealistic trust assumes that members of a school community can move from being passive bystanders to active participants; this is evidenced in the assumptions of idealistic trust that were made in relation to the studies that focused on students, parents and the wider school community (Flecknoe, 2002; Giles, 2006; Mitra, 2005). Communicative trust appears to be a 'glue' that binds together the process of developing and protecting trust; it is the active component that supports intentionality and enables leadership to emerge in the social dynamics of the situation, rather than through formal role (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Trust or lack of trust, then becomes the strongest potential influence on interpersonal behaviour (Bligh, Pearce & Kohles, 2006). This places communication as a key component of conjoint activity which distinguishes distributed forms of leadership from individual leader-follower form of leadership.

Open and honest communication

The process of developing communicative trust is dependent on the degree of open and honest communication amongst the members of a school community and was evident or implied across most of the studies. In relation to leadership couples both individuals needed to be committed to assertive and intentional open dialogue, particularly in relation to the division of responsibility (Court, 2003; Gronn, 1999). For leadership and trust to emerge across a wider group of people a freedom to disagree and work towards negotiated outcomes, rather than ones established out of compromise is required (Crowther et al., 2002; Friedman, 2004). As with trust, for shared work to emerge, there needs to be an ongoing and intentional commitment to openness between members (Hargreaves, 2003). However a commitment to openness assumes that members are able to actively engage in productive dialogue that reveals the degree of alignment or misalignment between espoused views and the theories-in-use that are revealed through action. This issue was highlighted in Storey's (2004) account of the breakdown between staff when in-depth dialogue was replaced with assumptions about what distributed leadership meant. Where on the other hand, productive dialogue did take place, distributed leadership emerged as a conjoint activity based on mutuality highlighting the importance of interdependent relations rather than independency or dependency.

Conclusion

The importance of intentionally developing relational trust cannot be overstated; it is directly related to engaging students more effectively in learning and involves a willingness from all to engage with a degree of vulnerability (Robinson, 2007). For those in formal roles of leadership, vulnerability is not likely to be found listed within many espoused views of leadership and particularly not encouraged in the performative high stakes environment that

can exist through education policy. Yet, humility and fierce resolve are the hallmarks of effective overall leaders (Collins, 2001); maybe it is from this position where leaders need to decide 'should I stand back, or should I lead'? I would argue that no matter what their response is, as long as humility, resolve and a commitment to open and transparent dialogue are intentionally present, trust will emerge, as will distributed and emergent forms of leadership, innovation and learning. Whether or not they step back or lead, maybe both should be viewed as acts of leadership.

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Appendix: Studies of school distributed leadership

Author(s)	School Distributed Leadership Study
Camburn et al (2003)	A quantitative study of approximately 100 Elementary schools in the U.S. The study focused on the distribution of leadership to formal roles and new roles generated from 3 Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) programs.
Court (2003, 2004)	Three case studies of New Zealand primary school's co-principalship and the struggles that were experienced with the regulations that only normalised single principalships in schools.
Crawford (2003)	A 3 year case study of one primary school subject to OFSTED special measures in England.
Crowther et al (2002)	The findings of "The teachers as leaders research project, 1996-2000". Two school case studies were reported and the term parallel leadership was used to describe leadership across each Australian school.
Dinham (2005)	A study of the role of principals in producing outstanding education outcomes in State schools. 50 sites from across secondary schools in New South Wales, Australia were selected who were believed to be outstanding. Data was collected from principals, staff, students and documents.
Fitzgerald et al. (2006)	A qualitative study of 82 middle leaders from eight schools across England and New Zealand. The leadership of learning was found to exist through all levels of the schools with both formal and informal leaders.
Flecknoe (2002, 2004)	A case study of one English primary school and the development of democratic leadership amongst staff and students (2002). Further commentary in relation to challenging orthodox organisational leadership through democratic student leadership is provided (2004).
Franey (2002)	A Principal's narrative account of school improvement supported by the NCSL in England.
Friedman (2004)	A case study of the development of shared leadership in one Massachusetts urban high school.
Giles (2006)	Three case studies concerned with how principal leadership in challenging urban elementary schools in the Northeast United States facilitated greater parental involvement.
Goldstein (2004)	Study of Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) in one large U.S. urban school district. PAR had undergone a change from a principal-centred summative evaluation of teachers to a peer-based system.
Gronn & Hamilton (2004)	An investigation of co-principalship within three Australian Catholic schools. This article focuses on one of the schools where a male and female co-lead the school.
Grubb & Flessa (2006)	An examination of ten schools, most situated in California. Each case study provides an account of alternative ways of organising work that is traditionally carried out by a single school principal.

Harris & Day (2003)	Case studies of effective leadership in 12 schools in England. The research was commissioned by the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT).
Harris (2002)	Case studies of 10 schools facing challenging circumstances funded by the NCSL in England.
Johnson (2004)	A study of how five school leadership teams in South Australia countered the politics of managerialism.
Leithwood et al. (2004)	A 4 year study of 10 schools where data was collected over 354 days across the schools. The study focused on the sources and distribution of leadership in relation to the large-scale literacy and numeracy reform initiatives in England.
Leithwood et al. (2007)	A study of patterns of leadership distribution in 4 elementary and 4 secondary schools based in the same Canadian education district. Data was collected through interviews of 67 staff at the district and school level.
Lingard et al. (2003)	A discussion of the findings from the data collected from 24 schools during the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS). Leadership was one of the issues studied in the research.
Lumby (2003)	A discussion of two research projects of colleges throughout England that highlights the challenges that can arise with a distributed perspective of leadership.
MacBeath (2005)	An exploration of what distributed leadership looked like from the perspective of principals and teachers in 11 schools. The study was sponsored by the NCSL, England.
Maxcy & Nguyen (2006)	Case studies of two Texan schools that are used to critique distributed leadership frameworks.
Mayrowetz et al. (2007)	An examination of distributed leadership reform that is being implemented across 24 States in North America through State Action Education Leadership Projects (SAELP) funding. An earlier sample of 6 schools is used to inform the article.
Mitra (2005)	A three year qualitative study that broadens the concept of distributed leadership to include student voice. The study took place in one Californian high school.
Møller & Eggen (2005)	Secondary school leadership analysed from a distributed perspective with the data originating from the Norwegian part of the "Successful School Leadership Project". The fieldwork was based in 3 schools and included data from interviews and observations over a week.
Mulford (2005), Mulford & Silins (2003)	Findings of 'The Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes (LOLSO) project from 3,500 year 10 students and 2,500 teacher/principal questionnaires conducted in half of the secondary schools in South Australia and all of the secondary schools in Tasmania.
Scribner et al. (2007)	A social distributed leadership study of two teacher teams that focused on the specific artefact of talk in one Missouri secondary school.
Spillane (2005), Spillane et al (2003) & Spillane et al (2004)	Findings from "The Distributed leadership Project". A 5 year study of leadership practice in 13 of Chicago's elementary schools.
Spillane et al (2007)	A study of 52 principals' day-to-day work from south-eastern United States. Data was collected through logs, questionnaires, observations and interviews.
Storey (2004)	A detailed case study of how competition between leaders in one English secondary school revealed the frailty of espousing distributed leadership at

	a rhetoric level.
Timperley (2005)	New Zealand Government sponsored professional development for literacy leaders in 7 schools across 4 years. The analysis of data was *stretched over* (Spillane, 2006) the interactions of the principal, literacy leader and teachers.
Wallace (2002)	A study of senior management teams in primary schools. Findings are presented from questionnaires returned from 65 principals across England and Wales and from four subsequent case studies of senior management teams.