WHEN DO I GET TO LEAD?

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All adolescents have leadership potential; however not all adolescents have access to leadership opportunities.

(Archard, 2009; Hine 2013; McNae, 2011)
Student perceptions of \textit{accessibility to leadership} within the secondary school context.

Is it equitable?
Asking students

**How**

do you perceive and understand leadership?

**What**

do you say about access to leadership opportunities for students in your school?

**How**

can leadership be more accessible for more students?
How?

- 2 case study secondary schools
- Year 10 students
- 50 Questionnaires in each school
- 6 Interviewed students in each school
- Qualitative study
What students say

- It’s Stepping up and moving outside of your comfort zone
- Students saw leadership as ‘stretching yourself’, being challenged

“There’s always going to be someone out there better than you and you have to push yourself”.

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Students commented on their awareness of the **value of leadership**. “Leadership roles give you a lot of skills you can’t get anywhere else”

Students at Year 10 are capable of understanding **leadership**, and of designing a programme

Students need an opportunity to **peel back the layers** of their understanding through trying leadership out
Barriers

- The desire to fit in
- Teachers choosing

“Teachers say; I’m confident in these people but not in these people; well they don’t actually say that”

- The lack of confidence to begin

“I think we can do more than we think”
THE ROLE THEME

Leadership is “doing” a position or role

“I have never had a leadership position, I don’t have the skills for that”.
(Amelia)

How is your school presenting leadership to its students?
“There are lots of kids who do have the potential to become a leader but are never seen as a leader…..they lose confidence”.
(Steven)
(Emerson, 2018)
“…confidence is probably one of the most important things but at the same time sometimes it’s just easier to start leading something that you’re good at – something you’ve been doing for a long time”.

- Students thought that high confidence meant you would choose to lead or be chosen to lead
- The removal of negative thoughts was needed
- The recycling of the same students was off putting
Peer fear and the power it has

The perception that the leader needed ‘knocking off their perch’ seemed a significant barrier

The challenge of stepping up to lead when not in a formal leadership position.
Leadership is essentially service to others...... maybe informal acts of good

The ‘helping of others’ was seen very strongly as a desirable trait by the young people.

‘Helping others’ as a theme could encourage students to step up to leadership. (Emerson, 2018)

“Leadership means to simply be kind” (Ditra)
THE CHOOSING THEME

who gets to lead and who does not, and why and why not

“People who from a young age got their first opportunity”

Frustration voiced that the roles often go to the same small group of people

(Emerson, 2018)

Students spoke of other students they knew who would be good leaders if they were just given the chance
“Only after giving everyone the opportunity you’re also seeing who has the potential to be an amazing leader”
“If nothing changes, nothing changes”
(Herald, 2004)
“Leadership to me is just like a way of coming out of your shell”
1. Simplify it

We make it more complex than it actually is in reality.

“Once people get that first step that’s when they’re going to find the courage to try it again” (Anja)
- Students highlighted the need for learning about how to take the lead in a smaller, informal and casual manner. Amongst their friends, in classes, in their teams.

- One of the advantages of a less formal approach to leadership is the smaller amount of pressure it may place on the student.

- With smaller informal experiences some of the challenges and pressure may be removed or diminished.
2. Available to all

“All these people who do have the potential to become a good leader, they never become a good leader because they haven’t had the opportunity presented to them”.
3. Start earlier

- Avoid recycling the same leaders
- Why wait to senior school?
- Initiate and catalyse leadership earlier in the school experience at Years 9 and 10
4. Trust the students

- Students have the desire and capacity to mentor and encourage each other to step up

- Leaders believe there are many non-leaders with great potential

- Provide leadership learning
Lets **unbadge** leadership, and **grow** all our young people.

(Emerson, 2018)
References


