

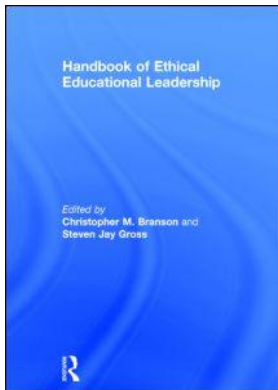
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STRIVING FOR MORAL PURPOSE

CHARLES BURFORD AND MICHAEL BEZZINA

In 2004 a group of Australian educators embarked on an international expedition to Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom in search of answers to questions about the impact, if any, of leaders on learning in schools and the characteristics of such leadership. The literature was enthusiastic but inconclusive (Hattie, 1999; Leithwood & Reihl, 2003; Marzano, 2003), despite a growing political and popular interest in student outcomes, standards, and the place of leaders in the learning process. The group was deeply influenced by meetings with Professor Jerry Starratt of Boston University, who challenged the group to look to the nature of authentic learning and the leadership processes that seemed to best influence such learning. This challenge led to an ongoing collaboration between Starratt and the authors in a search for a conceptual model of leadership for learning premised on a shared understanding of what constituted authentic learning. The issue that confronted the authors was the debate over learning outcomes and what constituted authentic learning. This question of what outcomes are worth pursuing, and why, is seldom raised by educators as they pursue policy on standard testing regimes, national curriculum, or reform agenda (Bezzina, Starratt, & Burford, 2009). The failure to expose the fundamental values or moral purpose of the educational enterprise, with the same kind of scrutiny as the means by which it is realized, has created an important gap in the discourse. Starratt says of this gap:

Educators miss this connection because they are accustomed to view the learning agenda of the school as an end in itself, rather than as a means for the moral and intellectual filling out of learners as human beings.

(2007, p. 266)

This missing connection lies in experience of moral purpose in schools—a construct elusive and yet fundamental to the success of schools and the work of their leaders.

This chapter tells the story of the Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners (LTLL) research project that emerged from this collaboration (Bezzina, 2008; Bezzina & Burford, 2010; Burford & Bezzina, 2007; Starratt, 2012) and in particular how this framework for leading for learning with a strong emphasis on moral purpose impacted on teacher perceptions, teaching practices, and leadership within the project schools in Australia from 2005 to the present.

The research reported on the importance of building shared moral purpose but recognized it as a sophisticated enterprise that requires leaders to navigate the complexities of modern schools in times that are ethically ambiguous. The complexity lies often in the challenge for leaders to choose between two “goods” rather than a “good” and a “bad” (Duignan, 2003; Duignan & Burford, 2003). Educational leaders in complex times find themselves constantly engaged in discerning the moral purpose of a community and how best to bring it alive and nurture it in a way that will allow it to shape the educational experience. Australian education is experiencing this ambiguity in the tension between the competing purposes and outcomes of education, with the force for the classical liberal, moral character and civic development approach to education losing out to “learning to earn” reflected in the new national compulsory testing regime (NAPLAN) and the league tabling (MySchool) that ranks schools according to the performance of students. These tensions are engaging teachers, leaders, and communities alike in Australia and elsewhere on the role of morals and ethics in the process of creating authentic learning. This story about the LTLL project is offered as an insight into this tension and one attempt to give leadership and vision to the challenge of leading school communities for authentic learning outcomes.

THE ETHICAL IMPERATIVE AND MORAL PURPOSE

The fundamental challenge of education is an ethical one, whereby the curriculum should acknowledge the moral character of learning and create a structure within which the learning agenda of the school connects to the central moral agenda of the learners during their 13 or more years in school—that is, the agenda of finding and fashioning themselves as individuals and as a human community (Starratt, 2007). This challenge calls on each school to be clear and explicit about its moral purpose and to build consensus around it.

However described, moral purpose has been consistently identified as one of the fundamental necessities for bringing about the kind of change and improvement that will deliver desirable student learning in schools. For the purposes of this study it can be understood as the commitment to ends that express underlying values and ethics. In the particular context of schools, the commitment is ultimately to the transformation of the learner into a fuller, richer, deeper human being. Klaassen (2012) sees this construct as a form of courage in educators that has three components:

- (1) the courage to retain certain professional and moral standards and to promote the development of moral norms and values in one’s students; (2) the perseverance to adhere to the goals of well-being of the pupil who is in need

of the daily help and strength of the teacher to reach the cognitive, social and moral goals of the school; and (3) the will and competence to function as a moral example.

(p. 20)

Klassen's approach focuses on the relationship of the characteristics of individual teachers or leaders and how these influence pupils and others in the educational community. While moral purpose has many other expressions, almost all of them include this notion that such purpose should be shared and/or pervasive in some way. Rationally, a purpose that is not shared belongs to the individual rather than the organization and is unlikely to impact on overall performance. The National College of School Leadership (2006) describes shared moral purpose as "a compelling idea or aspirational purpose, a shared belief [a team] can achieve far more for their end users together than they can alone."

Another Australian project, titled IDEAS, focused on school improvement and shared this commitment to shared purpose being grounded in a shared commitment to explicit values (Andrews & Lewis, 2004). In other words, it is not sufficient to have a broad aspiration—there needs to be clarity and detail in the way the purpose is understood, and in particular about the values that underpin it. It has been demonstrated that clear and explicit dialogue about these values has a mutually reinforcing relationship with the emergence of a sense of shared leadership (Bezzina & Burford, 2010).

The most fundamental question—the essence of moral purpose—for educators is this: "What should I do if I am to make a genuine difference in the lives of my students?" It can be argued that educators achieve this when they infuse academic learning with a dimension of personal meaning, and thereby enrich the whole learning process (Starratt, 2004). This authentic learning is more than taking new knowledge and skills for oneself, and broader than the quest for relevance. It is about giving of one's unique humanity to others and to the community. The facilitation of authentic learning is a fundamentally moral activity because it engages students in a deeper understanding of the nature and purpose of their lives and in determining how they can best contribute to the greater good of the community and society (Hodgkinson, 1991). Learning which is not authentic to the needs of the student's life is not only inappropriate but also unethical. In other words, an educator who contributes to practices that are not authentic is engaging in behavior that is morally wrong (Starratt, 2012). This challenge goes to the very heart of what educators do, and was the stimulus for the LTL project that is described in the next section.

THE LEADERS TRANSFORMING LEARNING AND LEARNERS PROJECT

The LTL project aims to explore how leadership and learning practices based on a shared moral purpose might facilitate the work of teachers and leaders in enhancing student learning. It is an initiative that combines dimensions of professional development, school improvement, and research, situated in a sample of schools in New South Wales, Australia. The pilot phase (2005–2006) included 9 primary and

secondary schools from four systems; phase 2 (2007–2009) involved 11 primary and secondary schools from five school systems; and phase 3 (2010–2012) involved all 17 primary schools in a rural Catholic school system.

The full project methodology is described elsewhere (Bezzina, 2008; Bezzina & Burford, 2010; Burford & Bezzina, 2007; Starratt, 2012). In brief, schools have been involved, with support from their systems and Australian Catholic University, in a combination of university- and school-based activities, which critically applied a values-based conceptual framework to leadership for learning. Schools reflected on perceptions.

The conceptual framework that is at the heart of the LTL initiative is an attempt to capitalize on the growing consensus in the literature around leadership and learning behaviors that have been shown to enhance student learning (Leithwood, Bauer, & Riedlinger, 2007; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, 2007). This consensus extends to such issues as the importance of the quality of the teacher, primacy of assessment for learning, whole-school approaches to planning and implementation of curriculum, shared moral purpose, and the need to link leadership and learner. The set of values and ethics that capture the shared sense of moral purpose and are central to the project were identified through workshops involving an expert group of school and system representatives, which formed the steering group for the pilot study.

The feedback from the pilot phase gave rise to the framework in Figure 25.1.

In this framework, the moral purpose is expressed in the values and ethics espoused by a school, and its sense of a transformed learner. This moral purpose influences the exercise of educational leadership and the approaches taken to authentic learning and gives rise to a strong sense of teacher as leader (Bezzina, 2008; Bezzina & Burford, 2010; Burford & Bezzina, 2007; Starratt, 2012).

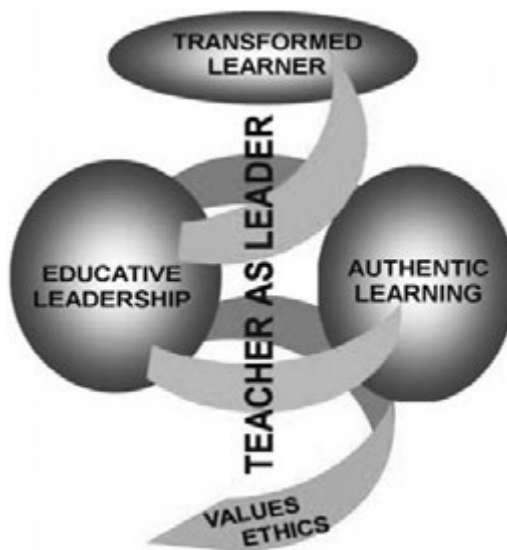


Figure 25.1 The LTL conceptual framework.

The elements of the framework are summarized below. In the second and third phases of the study (LTLL 2 and 3), schools worked with these elements, with a detailed set of focuses for each element and indicators for each focus, as a basis for reflection.

ELEMENTS OF THE LTLL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Values

Values shape behaviors (Ajzen, 2005) and thus are seen as foundational in the vision of the framework. If a school genuinely holds particular values, these should be visible in both the life and the rhetoric of the school. Different schools may choose to name different values as central to their activities. This perspective follows the position of Begley and Johansson (2003), who in discussing the tendency for scholars in educational administration to adopt the words *ethics* or *moral* as umbrella terms for anything values related, espouse the values definition of Campbell-Evans (1991), Leonard (1999), Begley (2000), and Hodgkinson (1996):

They reserve the term ethic or principals for a particular and very special category of transactional values and employ the word values as a generic umbrella term for all forms of “conceptions of the desirable.”

(Begley & Johansson, 2003, p. 4)

The LTLL model proposed five such values as being basic to Catholic schools involved in the projects. These were developed by an expert group of senior system representatives, school personnel, and Australian Catholic University faculty involved in the study. They were: Catholicity, justice, excellence, the common good, and transformation. Different school communities and different systems would likely choose different sets of values or “conceptions of the desirable.” Lopez (2013) highlights a different attempt to capture the generic values of education in her analysis of the Six Pillars of Character developed by the Josephson Institute:

based on common values applicable to all, regardless of gender, race, age, politics and religion. These values . . . are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

(p. 185)

All of these values surfaced to varying degrees in the research into core values for LTLL. In a recent iteration of the model with schools in South Australia that were former Dominican Order schools, a completely different set of values were generated, specific to that particular order; however, like the Six Pillars, respect, caring, and trustworthiness were identified as core to this group as well. The critical issue is not the *nature* of the values but that there is an explicit and owned value platform. This study reports on some of the dimensions of working with such a set of values.

Ethics

Ethics are the norms and virtues by which members of a community are bound to a way of living out their desirable and preferred values. Starratt (2004) suggests that they are maps that we consult only when the familiar terrain we are traversing becomes a tangle of underbrush. He names three particularly significant ethics, which were adopted for this study: authenticity (calling for integrity in interactions), presence (calling for relationships that are open and engaging), and responsibility (recognizing personal and corporate accountability). Starratt uses the term *virtues* to describe the living out of these three ethics, suggesting that he sees them clearly as a personally preferred priority of values that teachers and leaders can bring to their leadership roles in schools. This model was preferred in the development of the LTL conceptual model to the more commonly used ethical schema developed by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001) of justice, care, critique, and the profession.

The Transformed Learner

The desirable values and ethics that form the basis of the model give rise to a particular set of aspirations for the learner. Transformed learners will take delight in both the subject and the process of learning, for which they take responsibility as part of a lifelong journey, as shown in Fink's (2005) taxonomy, with its emphasis on learning how to learn and become a self-directed learner. Their growing understanding reflects a rigorous, critical, and respectful approach to the subject matter and to their fellow learners. They will be committed to their own growth—physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual. Transformed learners will engage actively with society as citizens seeking to make a difference. The values and ethics already named, and the vision of the transformed learner, give rise to particular approaches to leadership and learning.

The elements of educative leadership, authentic learning, and teacher as leader are the vehicles by means of which the moral purpose is given expression.

Educative Leadership

Educative leadership is understood as the capacity to influence others in order to enhance student learning. Research identifying key features that distinguish good leadership of learning (Leithwood & Reihl, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson, 2007) informs features in this model that embody the values and ethics already discussed. They are: leadership through collegiality, leadership based on evidence, leadership for professional learning, leadership for sustainability, leadership building culture and community, leadership for effective change, leadership through networking, and leadership building capability.

Authentic Learning

Authentic learning is the very heart of the schooling enterprise. It is the most profound manifestation of the moral purpose, which is captured in its vision of transformed learners. Research has identified a set of features that has been shown to

impact positively on learning outcomes (Cuttance et al., 2003; Hattie 1999; Marzano, 2003). These are represented in LTLL as standards for learning, organizing for learning, pedagogy, student engagement, and assessment *for* and *as* learning. In LTLL, each of these is seen as a potential point of influence for the leader, and its implementation needs to be in accord with espoused values and ethics, using the types of leadership behaviors already identified.

Teacher as Leader

The quest to transform the learning of students challenges teachers to engage in leadership in new and more authentic ways (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006; Harris, 2002). It is through the actions of teachers living out their values and ethics as educative leaders, and in the provision of authentic learning for students, that this transformation will take place. Teachers as leaders have a clear and explicit understanding of the nature of the transformed learner. They are explicit about and committed to the values and ethics underpinning the development of transformed learners. They are skilled in the creation of authentic learning experiences and are contributors to the educative leadership of the school.

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTS OF MORAL PURPOSE

Purpose of the Study

This study tested the significance of the conceptual model that had been reconceptualized after the first LTLL Project (Burford & Bezzina, 2007). The study incorporated a variety of data sources. These sources included a pre-intervention reflective instrument focusing on key elements of the model: moral purpose, authentic learning, educative leadership, teacher leadership and the resultant transformation of the learner, focus group interviews with participating teachers and principals, and journals and Wii-based discussions among participants following an extended engagement with the program. These data were used to chart the success of the model and to enhance it for application in the LTLL 3 phase, which is also reported here.

The conceptual framework described above has informed—and been informed by—the implementation of phases 1, 2, and 3 of the LTLL project. Given the significance of moral purpose, there is comparatively little research data about how teachers understand it and how they see it operating in their schools. One of the objectives of this phase of the LTLL project has been to improve understanding of this aspect of leadership for learning. This chapter shares some of the findings of the second and third research projects.

METHODOLOGY

LTLL 2. The full LTLL 2 sample comprised 11 case study schools, 5 secondary schools, and 6 primary schools, drawn from five Catholic educational systems in New South Wales. The schools were nominated by their systems. Two of these systems are based in country cities and the other three are in metropolitan Sydney. Forty-five teachers

made up the 11 project teams that were part of this study. Each project team included the principal, at least one other person in a formal leadership role, and one younger teacher with no formal role. The whole project was designed and managed collaboratively by representatives of the Australian Catholic University, the case study schools, and the systems to which they belonged. The schools were the focus of analysis, and data for the study were gathered through the use of a Reflection Guide built around the conceptual framework, and through in-depth interviews at the conclusion of the second year of the project.

School teams used the LTLL Reflection Guide to rate their school's performance on each focus in each element of the model, using a three-point "traffic light" scale (red = not in evidence, amber = unsure, green = clearly in evidence) and to nominate the sources of evidence for their rating. The Reflection Guide was a refinement of the one used in the pilot (Bezzina, 2008; Burford & Bezzina, 2007). At the conclusion of the workshop, each school had developed a profile of its current performance at the commencement of LTLL. This was then used as a basis on which schools decided on an improvement initiative, and it constitutes a benchmark measure for each school. During 2008 and 2009, schools came together periodically to engage critically with elements of the framework and to refine their school-based initiatives in the light of this experience. They were also supported in an ongoing way by staff of their school systems as they applied their learning to their school improvement initiative. The Reflection Guide was completed again at the conclusion of the LTLL intervention at the end of 2009.

Subsequent to the completion of the developmental element of the LTLL project, a research assistant, who had had no role in the project to date, interviewed each school's project team. There were 11 core questions for these interviews, conducted with each of the 11 school teams. These questions were:

1. How has the LTLL experience impacted on your school in terms of sense of moral purpose?
2. How has the LTLL experience impacted on your school in terms of school leadership?
3. How has the LTLL experience impacted on your school in terms of classroom practice?
4. How has the LTLL experience impacted on your school in terms of staff collaboration?
5. How has the LTLL experience impacted on your school in terms of student engagement in learning?
6. How has the LTLL experience impacted on student outcomes?
7. How has the LTLL experience impacted on your school in terms of the learning culture?
8. How has the LTLL experience impacted on your school in terms of the evidence used by teachers?
9. What has been your most significant learning from LTLL?
10. What were the biggest challenges you faced? How did you address them?
11. What have you achieved through LTLL? What in particular helped you do this?

These interviews were transcribed and then analyzed to identify emerging themes. In LTLL 2, the themes identified were: sense of moral purpose, school leadership practice, classroom practice, staff collaboration, student engagement, student outcomes, learning culture, use of evidence, learnings and challenges. These themes were interrogated through the lenses of the conceptual framework in terms of moral purpose, educative leadership, authentic learning, and the transformed learner.

LTLL 3. The LTLL 3 phase (2010–2012) of the study was researched, and the design and methodology varied in some important elements from LTLL 2. This phase included all 17 primary schools from a Catholic system set in rural New South Wales. Some of these schools are amongst the state's most isolated, and some also have high numbers of indigenous students. In addition, unlike LTLL 2, where leadership teams and a young teacher made up the LTLL team of three or four people, LTLL 3 involved all teaching staff. This phase included 269 participating teachers and 17 principals. This variation from the existing practice of the involvement of a leadership team from participating schools was caused by the desire of that system leadership to in-service all teaching staff in the district around the LTLL model and the availability of federal and state government funding for such reform activities. This funding was titled the Partnership Schools Project and was designed to impact on the level of literacy and numeracy in primary schools through the utilization of school improvement models that had a leadership framework within them. The earlier success of the LTLL 2 model made it ideal for the kind of reform required for Partnership Schools. This research also involved the regional leadership team and superintendent.

The number of schools and their isolation necessitated the offering of LTLL 3 in four regional centers of Western New South Wales, with a spacing of 6 months between the programs for each group. The research design for this study replicated that of LTLL 2 except for the elements outlined above concerning numbers and the nature of the staff groups involved.

RESULTS OF LTLL 2 AND 3 RESEARCH

Analysis of the interview transcriptions for both groups yielded a number of emergent themes under each of the elements of the conceptual framework. These were tallied according to the number of schools in which each theme occurred. Table 25.1 reports those themes that emerged in 5 schools or more, as giving a sense of a significant consensus. The first frequency shown is for the 11 schools of LTLL 2 (2007–2009) and the second is for the 17 schools of LTLL 3 (2011–2012).

An analysis of the emergent themes for each element of the framework gives rise to a pattern that can be described as including four components. While there is no evidence yet for their sequential nature, there is a certain logic to describing them as such, with an implicit movement through each phase as described below.

Attention

The attention phase involves focusing on a particular issue and giving it some priority.

Table 25.1 Emergent themes organized under elements of the framework

Element of the model	Themes	Frequency (number of schools 11/17)
Moral purpose	Teachers reflected on authenticity and learning	9/15
	There was a clearer sense of purpose	8/14
	Moral purpose had a major impact on practice	7/15
	There was a greater focus on authentic learning	5/13
Educative leadership/ teacher as leader	Enhanced professional dialogue	9/15
	Increased focus on teacher leadership	8/16
	Development of teachers as leaders	8/14
	Teachers taking greater initiative	7/14
	More sharing of responsibility	6/15
	Practice of leadership team has changed	6/10
	There were increased levels of trust	6/13
Authentic learning	Teachers work together more	10/15
	Classroom practice has changed	10/16
	Evidence of practice was collected	10/11
	Different ways of thinking about teaching and learning	9/15
	Changed culture of learning	9/12
	Teachers used new methodologies	9/13
	Teachers used evidence to assess student outcomes	9/12
	Teachers used evidence to reflect on teaching and learning	8/14
	Greater sharing of resources	8/14
	Learning tasks are more authentic	7/14
	Teachers asked deeper questions about teaching and learning	7/11
Practice was more student centered	7/15	
Transformed learner	Students were more motivated and engaged	10/16
	The program was transformational	8/14
	Students achieved at a higher level	8/11
	Students took more responsibility for their learning	8/15
	Students learned at greater depth	6/12

Reflection

This is the process of engaging intellectually—and perhaps emotionally—with the ideas and their implications.

Response

Taking action as a consequence of having given consideration to some aspect of practice.

Outcome

The consequences of having acted in particular ways.

These four phases can be mapped against the responses in Table 25.1.

Turning first of all to moral purpose, responses indicate *attention* in the form of a clearer sense of purpose, and in particular a greater focus on authentic learning as an aspect of this. Teachers *reflected* on authenticity and learning and the *response* took the form of a new sense of moral purpose, which had a major impact on practice. The interview data support this way of understanding the dynamic.

The importance of *attention*, and the extent to which it was part of the LTLL experience, is clear in the words of one interviewee:

So a lot of people actually stopped and thought, “Why am I here and why am I doing this?”

A young teacher in an LTLL 3 school talked about LTLL as being a “big brush” experience:

[It] made me actually think about what I was doing because quite often you go into cruise control and do things like old habits. This made me actually think about what I was doing.

One teacher captured the way she reflected on moral purpose and how it impacted on her in these words:

I was thinking more of me personally as a teacher because when this all started I'd only taught for 2 years and I never once at Uni or I don't know if it was the first year here but I'd never once heard anything about moral purpose. I just knew I wanted to be a teacher, didn't think about why or anything. Learning about this transformational learning, I can't go back. I can't go back and teach any other way. If I go to another school I have no idea what I'm going to do because I now have to teach this way, I've had to change personally.

Once she focused on the question of moral purpose and engaged in reflection on it, it drove a personal response in the way she taught—a change that she argues will go beyond the parameters of her present school.

With respect to educative leadership and teacher leadership, we see *attention* through increased focus on teacher leadership. One participant described this in connection with the way that staff meetings were run:

And next year we're building on this by changing our whole model of staff meetings and so on so that we have the focus on teacher leadership.

Reflection is frequently reported as taking place through enhanced professional dialogue, as in the case of this secondary science department:

Teaching staff now want to learn more. I mean, I walked into the KLA [Key Learning Area] meetings in the past, in science, for example, and the head of

science was using one of the [LTLL] articles to open professional discussion with the rest of the staff. Now, that's . . . yeah, that's a big change, and it, alright, initially, probably a year ago I kind of said, this needs to be part of your agenda, whereas now it's happening on its own again.

The *response* to this kind of reflection took the form of greater sharing of responsibility, teachers taking greater initiative, and changed practice within the leadership team. In the words of one participant:

There's been a shift from the leadership team doing everything, or the old LTLL team doing everything, to teachers actually taking responsibilities at their own level to do things.

A primary *outcome* of this emerging understanding of leadership has been the development of trust, named explicitly by 6 of the 11 schools in LTLL 2 and 16 of the 17 schools in LTLL 3. This increased response may be due to the presence of the entire staff in the latter program. Trust is given great significance, as captured by this comment:

People trust one another. Not completely everyone but they're getting there. It's that you're not going to judge me; you're going to help me. That's huge, it's really big.

The impact of the LTLL experience in building that trust was identified explicitly by the teacher who said, "The element of trust has grown as a result of the process that we've been through."

With respect to authentic learning, we see attention operating in the form of a changed culture. A typical comment was: "Now we have a culture of questioning and I think that's crucial," and there was widespread recognition (from 9 of the 11 schools in LTLL 2 and 12 of the 17 in LTLL 3) that LTLL had contributed to this. One of the best insights came in this observation of what had occurred, reflecting on the observations of an ex-member of staff who was now an occasional visitor to the school:

Because he comes in occasionally, he really notices the change in culture, and it's a lot easier for him than it is for us, and he said one of the significant things he has seen is a change in educational culture, and pedagogical culture and he said, that's the hardest thing to do. He said, I can really see that shift there. He said, "I was as guilty as anyone around here of thinking, these kids can't achieve very much academically so why bother?" I would have thought he was a fairly conscientious guy, but he said that, you know, there was a culture of saying, well look, these kids are never going to be fantastic, so therefore we just set the mark there. And we've, I think we've moved beyond that, and I get a real sense that, you know, there's a shift there.

This commentary on the renewed culture embodies the idea of having adopted different ways of thinking (*reflection*). The data in Table 25.1 identify a number of

responses in the form of working together, changed classroom practice and new methodologies, and greater use of evidence, including its use to reflect on outcomes and on teaching and learning practice. For example, in one school they made the following observations about the new approach to the use of evidence:

I believe what we will see is that the conversation around the evidence about children's learning will become, and I do mean this, more authentic, more responsible. Not that it wasn't in the past, but I have a feeling that some people were doing things because they'd done it for a while and that's how we do it. Now we have a culture of questioning and I think that's crucial.

A system leader in LTLL 3, when commenting on overall outcomes for all the schools, said:

They now all talk very strongly—and that is at all levels, from the office through to principals and school staff—about the sense of evidence-based learning. It is very clear that they understand what evidence is. They're not just always looking for evidence being a number. They're seeing that evidence has a variety of forms.

Student centeredness, identified by 7 schools in LTLL 2 and 15 in LTLL 3, was a key aspect of the participants' experience and was summed up by one interviewee in these words:

It isn't about the teachers, it's about the children. Sometimes that can get a bit lost in life.

This refocusing on the centrality of the student led to *outcomes* in the area of changed classroom practice and increased emphasis on authentic tasks, as captured in these observations:

The children are now really questioning the value of their learning and she [the teacher] says it keeps her on task as well; to make sure what she's doing is truly authentic. So we really do believe, the four of us, that there have been enormous shifts in the classroom that we have data to support.

My observations are that the classrooms are far more active than they were. A comment that one of our students made when we filmed them and got their recordings of the changes was that it's better now because the teachers are doing it with us. And I thought that summed it up, because it's no longer the teacher telling them. They are learning together. . . . It's far more active and engaging and interactive. Far less teacher directed.

The results in the area of the transformed learner understandably emphasized *outcomes*. These were of two types. The first reflected the nature of student dispositions in the form of motivation, engagement, and owned responsibility. The second had to do with learning outcomes, in terms of depth of learning and achievement.

The previous quotation captures the sense of engagement among students well. Another participant emphasized the sense of self-responsibility and shared responsibility in this observation:

We interviewed children and . . . they spoke very raw but really deep thoughts about how their learning has changed. A lot of students said the responsibility is put onto the students in how they learn and their responsibility as learners. Also the way they use each other to help them with their learning has changed. I think they're really two good points. The responsibility to be responsible for their own learning and also to share their ideas with others.

Turning to learning outcomes, the extent to which these were measurable depended on the focus of each school's initiative. Some lent themselves to quantifiable measures and recorded great success, as was the case in this school, reporting results on an externally set public examination:

We've seen . . . that we have grown, that we can actually improve. So we don't sort of take it for granted anymore and we look at developing other areas. So particularly because we've done the math, the growth has been unbelievable, we increased by 43 percent and then we're hoping to do that with literacy, so we're putting things in place for literacy. I think it's very exciting because all our little ones in reading have reached the system benchmark—we're very excited about that.

As well as the remarkable growth in student learning here, it is worth noting the shift in perception on the part of teachers—"We can actually improve." There is almost a sense of surprise in the statement.

From another perspective, teachers observed qualitative changes in the learning, and in particular the capacity for meta-cognition:

I think another clear student outcome lies in the students' ability to talk about their own learning. We've really very much tried to help them to develop really strong meta-cognitive skills and to be able to have those conversations about what helps them to learn better, and what's underpinning what they're being asked to do.

LEARNINGS AND CHALLENGES

The LTLL project engaged schools in an investigation of the fundamental moral purpose of their work and the relationship between leadership and authentic learning. The processes of participant engagement were shown to follow a fairly consistent pattern of attention, reflection, response, and outcomes in these matters of essence to their learning communities. All the schools involved have viewed the outcomes for staff and students very positively.

Specifically the testing of the elements of the LTLL conceptual model have further supported some positions within the literature and validated the continuation of

LTLT as an appropriate model for meaningful school reform. One of the challenges shown in the LTLT 2 research by 8 of the 11 schools was the challenge of getting the staff to understand and support the conceptual model. The response in LTLT 3 of 14 of 17 schools supporting this suggests that this may have been affected by the whole staff being involved in LTLT rather than just the leadership team.

The linkage of moral purpose and learning has been a recurring theme in the literature in recent years and has again dominated the themes of this research, with 7 of the 11 schools in LTLT 2 and 15 schools in LTLT 3 indicating that moral purpose was now at the center of what they did. According to Sergiovanni (2007), a school built on authentic learning sets out “to transform its students not only by providing them with knowledge and skills but by building character and instilling virtue” (p. 22). Authentic learning, then, is about the transformation of the learner. For this to occur, the nature of learning as we know it needs to change. To show the impact of the model, 10 of the 11 schools importantly said that LTLT helped to transform learning in their school.

Intertwined with this acknowledgment that learning became more authentic was the issue of moral purpose. For this learning to happen in a way that is both effective and sustainable, there needs to be a shared moral purpose in the learning community. This shared moral purpose, which has been the focus of many scholars’ writings in recent years (Andrews & Lewis, 2004; Barber & Fullan, 2005; Bezzina, 2008; Cuttance et al., 2003; Fullan, 2001; MacBeath, 2005), again dominated the outcomes of this research, suggesting that unless there is a moral agenda at the heart of the learning community, the learning cannot be authentic (Starratt, 2004).

The conceptual framework that underpins LTLT expresses this moral purpose in the values and ethics espoused by a school, which is inextricably linked to the transformation of the learner. The “moral purpose influences the exercise of educational leadership and the approaches taken to authentic learning, and gives rise to a strong sense of teacher as leader” (Bezzina, 2008, p. 5).

The LTLT research also supports and furthers the findings of Harris (2002), Duignan and Bezzina (2006), Andrews and Lewis (2004), Burford and Bezzina (2007), and Bezzina and Burford (2010) that the construct of teacher as leader is essential to the promotion of learning in the school. This was seen to emerge through the facilitation of sharing leadership and collective responsibility taken for student learning outcomes:

I think the learning and leadership thing is important to me, that everybody is a leader, so therefore accepting that straight away that you’re on staff therefore you’re a leader.

And again, from an older, experienced teacher:

I found that I saw myself for the first time as a leader. I never really thought that I’d be in a leadership-type position. . . . Being in the school for a long time, I’ve always thought, well, I’ll just be a little worker. But then I was able to see myself as a leader and recognize that I had some things to offer, which, you know but you don’t actually do it until something like LTLT comes along.

Eight out of 11 schools in LTLL 2 and 16 out of 17 in LTLL 3 indicated that the LTLL had transformed their approaches to leadership. Other learnings and challenges reported were supported by the literature as enhancing student learning. These components identified in this theme included leadership through collegiality (Novak, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2007), leadership based on evidence (Leithwood et al., 2007), leadership for professional learning (Southworth, 2005), leadership for sustainability (Davies, 2008; Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves, 2005), leadership building culture and community (Caldwell, 2008; Deal, 2007), leadership for effective change (Fink, 2005; Fullan, 2004), leadership through networking (Fullan, 2005; Hopkins, 2007) and leadership building capability (Bezzina, 2008; Robinson, 2007; Sergiovanni, 2007). The research reasserts the position of Busher (2006) that it is the leader's role to build a culture that promotes engaging learning in the context of a learning community where all community members take on leadership for learning while engaging in learning for life (Fink, 2005; Ungunmerr-Baumann, & Wells, 2007). Authentic leaders in schools "not only understand the challenges of their contexts, and commit totally to ensuring such learning for all their students, they possess a philosophy, a mind set, 'a story', 'a stance', a value system which guides all of their leadership activities" (Fink, p. 38).

One school principal supported this position when sharing her learning about this as follows:

[W]hen you go through a leadership process as the leader . . . you just have to allow things to grow within themselves. It was pretty messy the first 6 months. You've got to live with it for a while and reflect on it and then say what did we learn from that and what are we going to do next? For me that's been great because at this end of it we can look back and we can see a tremendous amount of things that have happened, but when you're in there it's hard to see how we are going to come out the other end, so that's been very interesting.

The LTLL model provided members of the school communities with a common language with which to address issues of moral purpose, authentic leadership, and authentic learning. This is also a strength of the model, particularly since many people in schools do not "speak the same language" when it comes to such things. A common language supports a common understanding of moral purpose, which in turn fosters a greater sense of ownership and more effective collaboration. The importance of this link was supported by the observation of the superintendent in LTLL 3 when speaking about the impact of LTLL on all the schools of the system:

When you visit schools, they are able to speak a common language and they seem to have gone through a common experience. [One] of the elements of the common language they certainly know about is moral purpose and they speak of moral purpose as the real driver of what they are and who they are. They have a deep understanding of this, whereas it's quite often a concept that is missed by people.

Indeed, the research shows that the LTLL model, which essentially facilitates collaboration among teachers, succeeded in bringing people together in a way that was new and engaging. This collaborative approach, which confronts the isolation of the classroom, has also, for some, made the prospect of facing change less daunting.

One principal identified the importance of dialogue and trust to build this culture:

But I think we underestimated the power, underestimated the value of professional conversation and actually stopping to listen to people. . . . The beginning teachers had a voice too. So I think as a team the effect of being able to openly and honestly communicate with each other was huge. That was the other thing. It was OK not to get it. It was OK not to be quite there. Despite the vulnerability of this, the trust had to be there.

Despite the challenge of engaging with a new conceptual model of learning, participants saw its utilization as possibly the most important outcome of the project. The model provided participants and members of their school communities with a common language with which to address issues of moral purpose, leadership, and authentic learning. This is also an apparent strength of the model, as many people in schools do not “speak the same language” when it comes to learning and leadership. The common language generated through the use of the model supports a common understanding of moral purpose, which in turn fosters a greater sense of ownership and more effective collaboration. Indeed, the research shows that the LTLL model, which essentially facilitates collaboration among teachers, succeeded in bringing people together in a way that was new and engaging. This collaborative approach, which confronts the isolation of the classroom, has also, for some, made the prospect of facing change less daunting.

Perhaps the interviewee who best summed up the experience of transformation resulting in her school following LTLL was the one who said:

The transformation has not only been with the students, it’s been with the teachers as well. But it’s very much a journey. It’s far from over. There’ll be no end. It’s a continuous learning journey because transformation is an ongoing process.

While the research with LTLL 3 schools was conducted, at the same time the schools had varying levels of experience with the LTLL model due to the staggered commencement of the four regional centers over a period of 18 months. While the themes identified corresponded clearly with the LTLL 2 research, other outcomes emerged. Briefly these findings included:

1. Schools are using the LTLL model and the reflection guide to make sense of other initiatives from government and systems.
2. Collaboration is the key—it increases confidence and morale, builds teams, and supports leadership.

3. Younger teachers who were given formal teacher leadership roles continued to exercise this leadership with colleagues despite cessation of targeted partnership funding from the government.
4. LTLL supplied a pool of enthusiastic leaders, both young and experienced, without formal leadership development, mentoring, and/or succession programs in place at the system level.
5. System leaders noted that LTLL had provided a common language and focus that offered potential as an ongoing renewal model for schools.

In an unanticipated outcome, possibly resulting from the compulsory involvement of schools in LTLL 3 as contrasted with the nominated volunteer experience of the earlier iterations of LTLL, a school undergoing cultural upheaval and strong discord among leadership and staff became a participant. The experience indicated that LTLL has the potential to be a circuit breaker for schools with dysfunctional cultures at both the relational and teaching/learning levels. The case in point within this research indicated the required use of the reflective guide in the early LTLL phase and subsequent dialogue, causing relationships, and learning issues at the center of the problems to be surfaced. The toxic level of these issues resulting essentially from leadership and teacher bullying, betrayal of trust, and loss of purpose necessitated both internal and external intervention for change to result; however, the role of the LTLL 3 project in precipitating these events is demonstrated in the following comment:

At the time we were all very angry and bitter and I think having those really clear questions and the traffic lights really set that up for us to talk about what wasn't working and why it wasn't working. I think it was just perfect timing because that wasn't moving. We weren't going to move past it [lack of communication and bullying from the leadership] because we were stuck . . . we were all very cranky, and we were just so angry that we didn't want to move past it because there was nowhere to go.

Acknowledging that LTLL provided the stimulus to break the stalemate, one respondent pointed to the importance of this critical intervention:

Twelve months before LTLL, we probably would have been too afraid and too stuck within ourselves to take on anything like that [change in teaching Information Communication Technology, ICT] due to fear of the wrong reaction or responses coming back to us. Whereas after that [LTLL], we thought, let's give it a go. . . . That wouldn't have happened 12 months ago.

An emotional response from a teacher who now saw meaning in her teaching and felt committed to teaching again after the staff engaged with LTLL emphasized the core issue of moral purpose as essential for authentic learning.

Children aren't silly. They know when their teachers are stressed out and they know when things aren't going right at school. Then, seeing us all being friends

and helping each other, and someone jumping into our room whenever something's not right, they realize, wow, that is good. So their learning starts improving because they know that if there's a problem, we're not going to try and work it out on our own. If we can't, we're going to work with the rest, so of course their learning's going to get better.

In addition to this issue, related to the change shock effect of LTLL on a school suffering from a dysfunctional culture, was the impact of LTLL on the leadership understanding and aspirations of many young teachers in LTLL 3 schools. These young teachers were usually given substantial responsibilities for the conduct of the LTLL project, which was a point of contrast to the LTLL 2 and 1 experiences. The evidence from the whole school experience of LTLL 3 was the benefit of the broad-based leadership experiences for staff and the creation of a cadre of young, enthusiastic, and committed teachers who had experienced success in leading peers in an educational renewal experience. Their enthusiasm for further leadership experience despite an absence of formal credentials or professional development in leadership suggests this applied structured experience of leadership for learning may have potential for educational systems experiencing leadership succession problems. The following comment by one young educator, who was involved in LTLL 3 first as a teacher and then in a later group as the new leader of another school, typified this impact on emerging leaders:

It taught me strategic planning . . . so that I'm able to release some responsibility to the other leaders of the school. Not just to the people who hold roles but to everyone. LTLL gave me a good framework to be able to work and embed my learning and leadership into my everyday practice.

The findings of LTLL 2 and 3 yielded a picture of a group of schools undergoing genuine change in leadership, learning practice, and outcomes. The findings showed that teachers and leaders, when focusing on moral purpose, learning outcomes, leadership, and classroom behaviors, all tended to return to the capacity of moral purpose to trigger renewal and improvement.

CONCLUSION

This chapter told the story of the experience of an innovative Australian education project designed to transform the learning experience of students through the utilization of a conceptual model linking moral purpose, leadership, and authentic learning. The research demonstrated the usefulness of having such a conceptual model that was valued as providing alignment focus and structure as a basis for attention, reflection, response, and outcomes to educational challenges. The schools and systems were impressed and appreciative of the way in which the moral purpose of their work—and in particular the linkage to leading and learning—were made explicit and were challenged. The use of a shared conceptual framework was also seen as giving coherence to the philosophy of sharing and the practices by which this is given

expression in leadership in schools. The project has had lasting positive effects on the schools and their learning outcomes, and most participants viewed it as their best career experience of professional learning. The team that set out to discover the link between leadership and learning and found moral purpose shares this experience.

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