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COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP =

A Study of School Principals in the  
Community and Comprehensive Sector

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*Michael Kelly*  
COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP -

A Study of School Principals in the  
Community and Comprehensive Sector

TRINITY COLLEGE  
by  
MICHAEL KELLY

A dissertation submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Educational  
Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of  
Master in Science in Educational Management.

June 1998

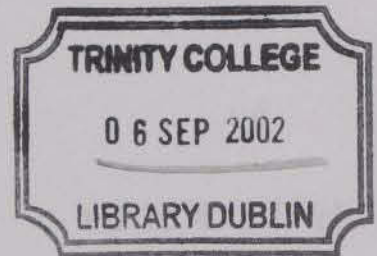
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COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

A Study of School Principals in the

Community and Comprehensive Sector



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A document submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Vocational  
Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of  
Master in Education in the Faculty of Education

2002

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### 3.1 Elements of collaborative leadership

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Acknowledging the many advantages that can be gained through building a national effectiveness, leaders and schools will be required to take the time, resources and demanding task of the process. It is possible that the staff, school which the people desire to be successful, need to be working collaboratively to increase capacity of the education system to cope with the challenges that are being faced. *Charting Our Educational Future* (1997) provides a range of strategies for schools which promote a strong sense of community and collaboration.

Collaborative leadership has been identified as a leadership style which involves shared and shared in group and individual work, resulting in a workplace which advances the teaching practice of a school and enhances student learning.

The author has defined collaborative leadership as the partnership between the principals of schools serving middle level, disadvantaged, urban schools and the principals of a survey of ten principals regarding their agreement with the practice of elements of collaborative leadership identified in the literature. All schools are in the community and urban/inner-city areas in the greater Dallas area.

A review of leadership theory is conducted and integrating the increased complexity of school leadership in the 1990s, the concept of collaborative leadership is defined and a model is developed. The concept of collaborative leadership is defined as a leadership style which is shared and a suggested framework and conceptual definition of collaborative leadership is provided. Research regarding collaborative leadership is reviewed and analysis of other research on collaborative leadership is conducted and analysis of other research on collaborative leadership is conducted. Further research on the concept might be conducted regarding the school population or various school types and characteristics and also on the impact of principal leadership on the implementation of new programs and initiatives in the district.

## ABSTRACT

Collaborative Leadership - A study of school principals in the Community and Comprehensive sector

Acknowledging the strong relationship between positive school leadership and institutional effectiveness, Ribbins and Marland (1994, p26) propose that the most immediate and demanding task for the principal "is leadership of the staff, without which the pupils cannot be adequately cared for." Noting the necessity to build the capacity of the education system to cope with and lead change, the White Paper Charting Our Education Future (1995, p154) envisages a more collaborative culture in schools which promotes a strong sense of collegiality among teachers.

Collaborative leadership has been identified as leadership which simultaneously values and caters to group and individual needs, resulting in a workplace which advances the teaching practice of a school and enhances student learning.

The author has deemed this style of leadership to be particularly pertinent for principals of schools serving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and has undertaken a survey of ten principals regarding their agreement with and practice of elements of collaborative leadership identified from the literature. All schools are in the community and comprehensive sector in the greater Dublin area.

A review of leadership theory is conducted and recognising the increased complexity of school leadership in the 1990s, the concept of transformational leadership in its collaborative mode is identified. The impact of principal leadership is considered against a background of collaboration in schools and a conceptual framework and operational definition of collaborative leadership are established. Research methodology is outlined and analysis of data suggests strong agreement with and regular practice of collaborative leadership as outlined. Further research on the concept might be conducted amongst a wider school population to ascertain teachers views and expectations and also on the impact of principal leadership on the introduction of new programmes to Irish schools in this decade.

Michael Kelly

June 1998

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

The foreword to the White Paper on Education, Charting Our Education Future (1995, p ix) begins with a statement that the early years of this decade have been characterised by an "intense debate on the most appropriate framework for the future development of education in Ireland." This debate has taken place at a time when Kavanagh (1993, p43) observes "change has become permanent and the pressure on schools to maintain relevance is relentless." Kavanagh notes that schools are expected to cope increasingly with many of the symptoms of erosion of community values and a fragmentation of traditional structures. Indeed, principals surveyed by Leader and Boldt (1994, p98) cited breakdowns in society and in families as an external factor that impinges directly and negatively on their workload. In that study, there was widespread consensus that family breakdown and dysfunction constituted a major source of problems for schools.

In light of these changes, Kavanagh (p43) writes that "there is a need for sensitive and enlightened leadership at every level within the system." Examples of the many changes which impinge directly on Irish schools are included in appendix 1.

Echoing the sentiments expressed in the White Paper, Charting Our Education Future (1995), Fullan (1993, p ix) believes that "teacher's capacities to deal with change, learn from it and help students learn from it will be critical for the future development of societies." Fullan proposes that education today has a moral purpose:

The moral purpose is to make a difference in the lives of students regardless of background and to help produce citizens who can live and work productively in increasingly dynamically complex societies (1993, p4).

Fullan (p 5) maintains that already too much is expected of educators. He points to the increased complexity of teacher's work and "deteriorating social conditions which continue to widen the awful gap between the haves and have nots." The pressures on schools outlined may be all the more acute in schools serving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds where in the words of Kellaghan et al (1995, p xiv) "a variety of complex factors.....result in some children experiencing severe difficulties at school."

The outlined changes have far reaching implications for the role of principals in meeting the requirements of schooling for the 21st century. Ribbins and Marland (1994, p26) propose that the most immediate and demanding task for the principal "is leadership of the staff, without which the pupils cannot be adequately cared for." In this regard it is worth noting a quote from Hallinger and Hauseman (1993) cited in Murphy and Seashore Louis (1994, p xv) that "despite a burgeoning prescriptive literature, it remains unclear what skills and capacities site leaders need to succeed in these transformed educational settings."

## 1.2 Rationale

A strong message consistently emerging from the White paper, Charting Our Education Future (1995) is that the implementation of outlined policies will depend crucially on partnership and consultation. Prominence is given to the need for leadership and commitment across the educational system (p x). Commenting specifically on school leadership and how the principal can decisively influence the effectiveness of a school, the White Paper (p 152) highlights "the crucial importance of the principal's instructional leadership role." The author accepts the notion of instructional leader envisaged in the White Paper but suggests that this image of the principal may be too narrow in focus to facilitate the type of leadership necessary for schools of the future.

Regarding instructional leadership, the author concurs with Goldring and Rallis (1993, p 98) who propose that "instructional leadership is only one key element in a dynamic school." Commenting on the evolving role of the principal in this decade, Murphy and Seashore Louis (1994, p 273) suggest the need for "evolution in the instructional leadership view of principal leadership that dominated reform efforts throughout much of the 1980's."

Indeed, Murphy and Seashore Louis (1994) cite the contribution of Conley and Goldman (1994 p 237 - 262) to their text (p 274) where it is suggested that the aforementioned evolution needs to be away from the principal as an expert and rather towards the principal as the supporter and facilitator of expertise which is more widely distributed in the school. Reviewing literature in this decade, Murphy and Seashore



Louis (1994, p 267) note "a continual emphasis on the human dimensions of tomorrow's leaders," while Goldring and Rallis (1993, p 60) expect a premium to be placed on the principal's human resource skills in the future.

Recognising that schools are "made up of intricate nets of complex interrelationships," Evers and Lakomski (1996, p 72) point to knowledge being located at every level of a school's organisation and suggest that future challenges can be faced with a far greater expectation of success if there is recourse to "the much bigger pool of intellectual resources of the whole school community."

Regarding this latter point, the author notes that the White Paper attaches importance to a style of leadership which facilitates groups working together. It appears to the author that the establishment of such a collaborative culture will be critical in meeting the challenges ahead. With this concept as a guide the author conducted an extensive literature review to identify a model of leadership best suited to the evolving role of the school principal.

### 1.3 Aims and Key Definitions

From the aforementioned literature review the author has identified collaborative leadership as a model worthy of exploration.

Collaborative leadership is identified as leadership which simultaneously values and caters to group and individual needs, resulting in a workplace which advances the teaching practice of a school and enhances student learning.

Given the author's own work context in the role of vice-principal, the author felt that this type of leadership was particularly pertinent for principals of schools serving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. A principal in such a context needs to be convinced that disadvantaged children should have educational opportunities and that arrangements in his/her school can make this happen. The principal must also be able to share this vision with the teaching and ancillary staff.

A collaborative leadership model, resulting in a workplace which advances the teaching practice of a school and enhances student learning, seems particularly relevant for principals in schools serving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The author's research will therefore focus on collaborative leadership practices in a selection of community and comprehensive schools in the greater Dublin area which serve pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The term school principal refers to those men and women who hold the position of principal in schools in the community and comprehensive sector.

The term community and comprehensive refers to the 81 schools who comprise this sector of Irish second level education.

The term disadvantaged refers to children who by virtue of being born into poor households or living in deprived areas, are most subject to educational failure and subsequent labour market exclusion, Kellaghan et al (1995, pp viiii, ix). To provide some understanding of the context in which the principals surveyed work, appendix 2 deals with educational disadvantage.

#### **1.4 Dissertation Structure**

Chapter one outlines the aspirations of the White Paper on Education, Charting Our Education Future (1995) against a background of change which has far reaching implications for schools and their principals. The rationale for the proposed study is outlined and key definitions are interpreted. In the second chapter, literature pertaining to leadership is reviewed while in the third chapter this general notion of leadership is narrowed down to an exploration of the concept of collaborative leadership. Following this, Chapter four outlines the research methodology while Chapter five portrays and analyses the data collected in the survey. Finally, chapter six deals with conclusions and recommendations arising from the study. Concluding materials consist of appendices and the bibliography.

## 1.5 Limitations

At the outset, the author recognises that the scale of the proposed survey and its context are a limitation as it may be difficult to make generalisations for other sectors of the Irish education system.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LEADERSHIP

#### 2.1 Leadership Theory

In Foster's words (1989, p39) "leadership as a construct and a practice has considerable currency in contemporary thought. Whether one looks at academic disciplines, practical fields or the popular press, the term 'leadership' figures prominently in the attempt to describe a particular set of relationships among people." Stogdill (1974, p259) noted that "there are almost as many definitions as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept." Writing almost forty years ago, Bennis (1959, p259) commented that "more has been written and less known about leadership than about any other topic in the behavioural sciences." Indeed Bass (1990) cited in Cheng (1996, p103) is credited as stating that the search for the one and only proper and true definition of leadership seems to be fruitless. Burns (1978, p18) informs us that "leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain purposes mobilise, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of the followers."

Sergiovanni (1987, p2) stated that "leadership is the process of persuasion by which a leader or leadership group induces followers to act in a manner that enhances the leaders purposes or shared purposes and more recently (1996, p87) that "leadership is generally viewed as a process of getting a group to take action that embodies the

leader's purposes or shared purposes." Greenfield (1986, p142) describes leadership as a "wilful act where one person attempts to construct the social world for others." In the words of Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989, p123) "leadership is concerned with gaining commitment to a set of values, statements of 'what ought to be' which then become the heart of the culture of the school."

In the last half century a significant body of knowledge relating to leadership in education has amassed. From Taylor's (1911) view that leadership was a matter of hierarchical power over subordinates through to human relations proponents who saw leadership as interaction between leaders and others in the group to behaviourists who advocated leadership as both people and task oriented. Contingency views proposed that no one leadership approach could be claimed as the most effective since successful leadership was contextual. Other dimensions and perspectives to be addressed include those of power, conflict, morality and gender. Conducting the above review of the last half century, Telford (1996, p8) proposes that "each of the perspectives of leadership has been a response to the shortfalls of its predecessor in an attempt to discover the full actuality encompassed by that elusive concept, leadership."

In 1978 James McGregor Burns made the distinction between transactional and transforming leadership which established a watershed in the thinking behind leadership theory especially as regards leadership and the connection with moral dimensions. Burns classified two dimensions for the exercise of leadership. Transactional leadership is essentially concerned with individuals within an organisation who negotiate their individual, as opposed to group, interests with the leader where both the leader and the staff are mutually happy with the agreement. Cheng (1996, p106) comments that in

the transactional model of leadership "the approach a leader can use to motivate followers or other people is invariably based on the cost-benefit exchange theories. Bargaining and negotiation are inevitable in the leadership process." Proposing transforming leadership, Burns suggests that purposes and visions should be socially useful, should serve the common good, should meet the needs of followers and should elevate followers to a higher moral level.

Referring to Burn's analysis, Mitchell and Tucker (1992, p31, 32) conclude that transactional leadership only works when both leaders and followers understand and agree about the important tasks to be performed. Leadership in such a setting is based on control and being in a position to reward or punish. They maintain that transformational (transforming) leadership arises when leaders are more concerned about gaining overall co-operation and energetic participation from organisation members than they are in getting tasks performed. Commenting further Mitchell and Tucker (p 32) state that transformational leaders are "people oriented rather than focused on tasks and performance, they build relationships and help followers develop goals and identify strategies for their accomplishment." Sergiovanni (1987, p6) maintains that "in transformational leadership administrators and teachers are united in pursuit of higher level goals that are common to both." Both want to become the best and want to shape the school in a new direction.

By contrast with earlier concepts of individual leadership, transforming or transformational leadership as it is more widely known, concedes that in the current demanding educational climate of frequent change and raised expectation no single person alone is likely to have the combined capacities necessary to engage in effective

leadership. Gregory (1996, p49) citing Middlehurst (1995, p278) refers to the range of activities that demand a leader's attention and states that leadership cannot possibly be left to one person: "achieving a critical mass of shared meanings and commitment to go forward requires leadership of a high order, spread at many levels of an institution." Telford (1996, p8) proposes that by "empowering a range of people within the school community a combined richness of educational thought and activity, superior to that of any single leader can be achieved."

This notion that leadership at its best is a shared venture engaged in by many very much reflects the thinking in *Charting Our Education Future: White Paper on Education (1995)*. The White Paper (p151) acknowledging that schools are complex institutions, suggests that "however competent a principal may be as an administrator or as an organiser, s/he will not succeed without involving other staff in delegated leadership roles." Recognition is given to the central role of the principal in "shaping the aims of the school and creating the support structures to promote the achievement of these aims." The principal is envisaged as a person to "mobilise staff individually and collectively to establish educational objectives, to support their continuous achievement and to evaluate and learn continuously from experience" (p152). Research conducted by Louis and Miles (1991) highlights this notion of sharing power. Their work indicates that leaders in successful schools are able to support the initiative taking of others without fear of losing control; they can facilitate the formation of various teams and working parties and provide resources for initiatives all the while maintaining close contact with the groups involved and monitoring their progress.



Sergiovanni (1987, p122) refers to "the extent to which leadership roles are shared and the extent to which leadership is broadly exercised" as "leadership density." Lieberman and Miller (1986, p108-109) cited in Sergiovanni (1996, p149) have observed the importance of patterns of interaction that exist among teachers and between administrators and teachers in schools. They refer to the significance of "building collaboration and co-operation, involving the provisions for people to do things together, talk together and share concerns." In *Leadership for the Schoolhouse* (1996, p35), Sergiovanni believes in the necessity of putting people first, of building them up by increasing their capacity to function, of increasing their commitment, of linking them to purposes and helping them to become self-managing. He continues by stressing the need to focus on the ends that they decide to pursue, ensuring that the ends are consistent with shared purposes, values and commitments.

Advanced insight into the leadership theory debate was provided by Sergiovanni (1984, p6) when he classified leadership perspectives into five leadership forces as follows:

- technical - accomplishing the tasks of the organisation (planning, organising, co-ordinating, commending and controlling);
- human - attending to human factors (consideration of relationships among people in the organisation, morale, empowerment);
- educational - instructional leadership (addressing educational problems, developing and evaluating curriculum, professional development);
- symbolic - capacity of leaders to create, communicate and gain commitment to a vision (to impart purpose values and significance, utilise symbols); and

- cultural - capacity to build a strong school culture (to generate shared values and beliefs and a strong commitment to the organisation).

Bennis and Nanus (1985) explored the idea of vision and applied it to the leadership discussion. Their work showed that successful leaders were able to focus attention on vision, communicate the vision through symbols and rhetoric and because of their own commitment, see the vision through into practice. This ties in very well with Sergiovanni's symbolic force of leadership. The development of the concepts of transformational leadership, the five forces of leadership, vision and empowerment have all been influential in the work of current leadership theorists. Indeed Starratt (1988, p213) spoke of the need for leadership to translate a vision into the daily operation of schools if they were to be successful.

## **2.2 School Leadership in the 1990s**

Anson (1992, p303) states that "in a time of rapidly changing expectations, education is frequently cited as the avenue to assuring our strength and well being as a society." This mirrors the sentiments outlined by Minister Bhreathnach in her foreword to *Charting Our Education Future: White Paper on Education* (1995, p ix) where she maintains that the White Paper "sets out a framework for the development of education into the next century, against the background of a rapidly changing and evolving society." Recognising that "effective management and leadership at all levels within the school are essential if the school's goals are to be met," the White Paper (1995, p151) continues that "the achievement of school effectiveness depends crucially

on the leadership offered by experienced and skilled principals" who are supported by a committed middle management team.

Given the consensus regarding the centrality of principal leadership, literature in the last decade had continued to attempt to capture the elusive qualities of the concept. Yukl (1989, p 252) proposed a definition of leadership which embraces all the notions of leadership outlined in the previous section. Yukl proposed that "leadership is defined broadly as influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task behaviour to achieve these objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification and influencing the culture of an organisation." This definition includes the combined notions of leadership density, multi-dimensional leadership forces, the institutionalisation of a vision and favours transformational rather than transactional leadership.

Reviewing the leadership literature, Cheng (1996, p105) points out that the drawback of the traditional theories is that they fail to pay attention to the transformational function of a leader. Opining that an alternative perspective of leadership is emerging, he argues that a leader is one who not only adapts his behaviour to the situation but also transforms it. Quoting Bass (1985), Cheng continues that a transformational leader is one who motivates people to do more than they are originally expected to do by any of the following ways:

- raising their level of awareness and consciousness about the importance and value of designated outcomes and ways of reaching them;

- getting them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team, organisation or large policy;
- altering their need level on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy or expanding their portfolio of needs and wants from low level such as physiological or safety needs, to high level for example, esteem or self-actualisation needs.

From this perspective Cheng (p. 106) proposes that "leadership is not only a process to influence the behaviour of followers or constituencies but also their attitudes, values and beliefs; not only individual members but also the whole organisation; not only the goal achievement but also goal development and organisational culture building."

In defining leadership, the idea of leadership density is significant because account is taken of the extent to which leadership can suffuse an organisation and allowance is made for both formal and informal leadership influences to combine in a rich network. Southworth (1993, p 78,79) alludes to this network of influence when he states that "the seemingly ordinary and 'little stuff' of management is the vehicle for the leader's messages. The interruptions, decisions on the run and the chance encounters on corridors are the media for the message." He continues "that they occur fleetingly only means that the messages of leadership are transmitted in micro-seconds as well as in staff meetings." Grappling with the concept of leadership, Telford (1996, p10) proposes that with a broad base for leadership in the school a leader might be a principal, teacher, parent or student as long as they have the capacity referred to by Yukl to influence the following: task objectives and strategies, commitment and compliance to achieve these objectives, group maintenance and identification and the culture of the organisation.

Appraising Yukl's definition, Telford (1996, p10) concludes that leadership is not necessarily hierarchical but inclusive of all who comply with Yukl's criteria and who wish to contribute. Closely linked to the idea of leadership density is the concept of transformational leadership. This style of leadership is put forward by Telford (1996, p11) as one which can transform a school and is to be accomplished by a density of leadership across the school through empowered leaders of the school community. In this situation, the vision of the school is shared by all and as it becomes widely grounded in the routine activities of the school so it becomes institutionalised. Referring to the related literature and research of the last fifty years and the best practice of the 1990s, Telford (p12) contends that there is a clear message for all who want to listen. Namely, no single person alone has the combined capacity to do the job of being a school leader in the 1990s. Telford (p12) further draws attention to the fragile nature of an organisation's good health and emphasises how quickly it can deteriorate if the means of operation is one which depends on individual rather than collective negotiation and decision making.

In order to equip schools for the next millennium "it is necessary to work together in a focused way as parts of a single entity, to identify and achieve the purposes critical to making classrooms real places of learning for our students" Telford (1996 p13). This according to Telford is the essence of transformational leadership as it centres around workgroups of committed professionals.....who make schools better places to be, places of continuing learning for both themselves and their students.

Hughes (1993, p56) believes that really successful schools work for all the people in the building and he continues by citing Spooner (1981, p 107-117) who professes that

in a successful school the children are happy to come to it and the staff are pleased to work in it. Concluding this section the author notes Telford (1996, p13) who believes that most leaders strive to better understand how to be better leaders of their own schools "in order to make a constructive difference in the educational setting in which they work." According to Telford, collaborators will make a difference and what is needed is transformational not transactional leadership if schools are to become the places we want them to be.

### **2.3 The Bolman and Deal Framework**

Central to Burns (1978) proposition on transformational leadership was that this involved members of an organisation pursuing shared beliefs through combined efforts and overriding their individual interests in the search for the common good. This dovetails with the author's proposal for a dissertation on collaborative leadership practices among school principals. The concept of leadership density where teachers and others become empowered and undertake to institutionalise the vision of the school is fundamental to the notion of collaboration. If leadership is to be truly collaborative, group purposes are fundamental to its success rather than transactional exchange between the leader and the led.

Drawing on the work of Telford (1996) and Cheng (1994) in Australia and Hong Kong respectively, the author proposes to explore the concept of transformational leadership in its collaborative mode. Implicit in the literature on leadership of schools in the 1990s is the understanding that leadership has many dimensions. Southworth (1993, p78) is of the opinion that "leadership is more complex, subtle and interactive"

than analytical categories convey. He argues that the literature does not capture the character and nature of leadership in action and continues that not only do we need more descriptions of leaders in action, we also need richer and detailed descriptions of them at work.

Bolman and Deal in their 1991 publication, *Reframing Organisations : Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, suggest a reorganisation of the key concepts embodied in the accumulated body of leadership theory into what they call four frames. These four frames classify what is currently known about leadership into four categories - structural, human resource, political and symbolic and in so doing they provide "a framework for understanding and decoding the leadership milieu of a school or organisation" Telford (1991, p14). Bolman and Deal (1991) present the four frames to enlarge the focus of leader's thinking by providing a framework on which to interpret, analyse and understand what is happening in an organisation. The full picture of organisational complexity, Bolman and Deal suggest (1991, pxv), will remain elusive unless all angles are taken into consideration. Thus a narrow, simplistic view is avoided and a real sense of the organisational milieu is realised which can be acted upon. Each frame is based on a body of knowledge drawn from contributing disciplines and Bolman and Deal (1991, p14-16) believe that "only when managers, consultants and policy-makers can look through all four frames are they likely to appreciate the depth and complexity of organisational life."

### The Structural Frame

The structural frame emphasises the importance of formal roles and relationships. Structures in schools provide the means by which decisions are made and

implemented; where goals are set, where planning is designed and carried out, where job descriptions are clarified, where roles are identified and responsibilities allocated. It is a means by which the vision of the school is put into practice. This structural frame aligns with Sergiovanni's (1984, p6) concept of a "technical force of leadership," where accomplishing the administrative tasks of the organisation are the central focus.

### The Human Resource Frame

The human resource frame is built around the view that schools are social organisations steeped in human needs, wants and claims. Telford (1996, p16) identifies a constant interplay between the individual and the organisation to ensure a fit between administrative goals and individual members. If an organisation is alienating to its members, valuable human talents are lost and human lives become unfulfilled. Effective leadership is aware of the fact that people and organisations need each other. The organisation needs professional experience, expertise, ideas and commitment while people need satisfying work, an income and social and personal expression. Good leadership is sensitive to this interdependence. The emphasis in this frame is one of professional needs, feelings, prejudices and combines what Sergiovanni (1984, p6) would term human and educational perspectives.

### The Political Frame.

Dealing with the political perspective of leadership, this frame holds that a leader's understanding and management of the political milieu of school life is critical to the overall success of the school. Far from being considered an obstacle, a firm grasp of the politics of school life gives leaders a necessary tool for advancing the vision and



goals set out to achieve. Political influence need not bear negative connotations and used wisely it can be a constructive and necessary part of leadership activity.

### The Symbolic Frame

The concept of culture has had a central role in the leadership debate. Leaders in schools know that they must work simultaneously on staff needs and skills, on goals and roles and the dynamics of political power and conflict. Beyond all this there operates "an intangible manifestation that reflects the ethos or climate of a school. This tapestry that is woven into the fabric of the organisation is known as its culture," Telford (1996, p17). Sergiovanni (1984) referred to a cultural leadership force as one developing shared purposes and values. Deal and Peterson describe school culture:

This invisible, taken for granted flow of beliefs and assumptions gives meaning to what people say and do. It shapes how they interpret hundreds of daily transactions. This deeper structure of life in organisations is reflected and transmitted through symbolic language and expressive action. Culture consists of the stable, underlying social meanings that shape belief and behaviour over time.

This accumulation of beliefs, values, attitudes and norms of behaviour are embedded in the activities of school life and are represented in the symbols, rituals and ceremonies of the school. Starratt states:

Leadership in the cultural perspective is exercised not so much by scientific management as by guarding essential values of the culture, by reminding people in the organisation of the essential meanings of the culture, by promoting rituals and celebrations which sustain those essential meanings and values (1993, p5).

The symbolic frame is a means of decoding the culture. Leaders who can read between the lines of the symbolic frame are in an enviable position as they can nurture and promote the beliefs and values embedded in school life. Schools are full of symbolic happenings and events and leaders who can recognise their significance have the potential to exploit their capacity to bring success to the school.

In much of the literature associated with leadership theory, culture is seen as synonymous with values, beliefs, shared meanings, symbols, rituals and ceremonies. The author acknowledges that a collaborative culture needs interpretation in a broad context which includes the symbolic frame but also embraces structural, human resource and political perspectives. Bolman and Deal (1992, p325) are of the opinion that "prevailing educational models oversimplify and overlook the multiframe complexity embedded in the everyday world of school leadership." The next chapter will deal with the notions of collaboration and collaborative culture. Elements of collaborative leadership from each frame will be identified and this in turn will create a framework on which to develop the proposed research.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP**

#### **3.1 Foreword**

Chapter two documented the related literature encompassing the leadership debate. In this chapter, the author proposes to explore the concept of transformational leadership in its collaborative mode. The focus now moves from transformational leadership in general to collaborative leadership in particular. Beginning with a short section on collaborative leadership and the impact of principal leadership, the author moves to an outline of the background of collaboration in schools in general and then considers the implications of research at primary and secondary level. At this stage elements of collaborative leadership for each of Bolman and Deal's (1991) four frames are identified. Integrating these collaborative elements will provide in Telford's (1996, p25) words "an operational definition of collaborative leadership."

#### **3.2 The Impact of Principal Leadership**

Fully functioning collaborative leadership should ensure that the vision of the school becomes "institutionalised" as envisaged by Starratt and Sergiovanni (1988, p213). Telford (1996, p27) identifies collaborative leadership as a transforming leadership which facilitates "the development and maintenance of a culture immersed in structural, human resource, political and symbolic elements." This leadership is proposed as a vehicle to generate achievement and success for a school and is seen as

critical in meeting the various challenges facing schools today. Leithwood, Begley and Cousins observe:

Such a culture appears to be adaptive to increasingly prevalent conditions associated with calls for reform such as: new and more complex expectations for student outcomes; school leaders being able to provide instructional leadership; high expectations by the public for its schools and many associated, external pressures for change; a rapidly expanding body of technical know how concerning instruction and changing family environments (1992, p129).

Commenting on the role of the principal, the Report on the National Education Convention (1994, p42) notes that "research has identified a strong relationship between positive school leadership and institutional effectiveness." This statement is reflected in Charting Our Education Future : White Paper on Education (1995, p157) where "the role of the principal in decisively influencing the effectiveness of the school" is stressed. Similarly, Ubben and Hughes (1987, p14) propose that "the nature of the leadership and managerial behaviour manifest at the building level makes a difference about whether or not, or the degree to which, the intended outcomes of schooling occur."

On the question of making a difference, Hallinger and Leithwood (1994, p208), writing on the impact of principal leadership, note consensus on this from three interested parties to the discussion. They report that "parents, teachers and school administrators have noted the effects of principals on the learning climate, educational programmes and workplace norms of schools; that policy makers, though further removed from school settings, believe principal leadership to be critical for the achievement of students and that researchers concur in this belief." In conclusion they affirm that "it has almost become an article of faith that the capacity of schools to

improve teaching and learning is strongly mediated by the quality of leadership exercised by the principal."

The burden of leadership on the principal in this context is considerable and has widespread implications as Barth observes:

If the teacher-principal relationship can be characterised as helpful, supportive, trusting, revealing of craft knowledge, so too will others. To the extent that teacher-principal interactions are suspicious, guarded, distant, adversarial, acrimonious or judgmental, we are likely to see these traits pervade the school. The relationship between teacher and principal seems to have an extraordinary amplifying effect. It models what all relationships will be (1990, p19).

Fullan (1991, p169) believes "that as long as we have schools and principals, if the principal does not lead changes in the culture of the school or if he/she leaves it to others it normally will not get done. That is, improvement will not happen."

### **3.3 Background To Collaboration in Schools**

Early studies of collaboration at school level were generated by the work of Lortie (1975), whose text, School Teacher : A Sociological Book, researched the work of teachers in terms of what they valued and how their workplace functioned. Lortie's work revealed that the cellular organisation of schools separated teachers from their colleagues and resulted in professional isolation.

Mohr and MacLean cited in Smyth (1991, p130) capture the essence of this feeling of isolation:

In both elementary schools and high schools, teachers are isolated from one another, and the regimented quality of the school day perpetuates that isolation. In one day of teaching it is possible to have many intense emotional and intellectual exchanges with students, to experience in less than an hour a wide range of thought and emotion that people outside the profession can only imagine and yet at the end of the day to feel as if you have been separated from the world, solitary and lonely....As a result, teachers may shun further human interaction in their professional lives. The isolation, the exhaustion and the need to pull away conflict directly with a teacher's corresponding need for more contact with colleagues, both for friendly support and for professional discourse (1987, p2).

Traditionally school cultures were based on norms of professional isolation and autonomy. Reviewing research in this area, Telford (1996, p19) points out that such cultures evolved in schools during a much different educational climate to that prevailing today. Among the differences outlined, which link well with the reference to Leithwood et al (1992) in the previous section, are the fact that school leaders were not expected to act as instructional leaders, accountability in various forms was not important and relationships with the school's catchment area and community were weak and underdeveloped. In addition, the expectation was one of academic achievement and there were few external pressures for change.

Given the changed educational climate and setting in which today's schools operate, it is not surprising that a new culture in schools is emerging which is broadly termed a collaborative culture. In the words of Ashton and Webb (1986) cited in Fullan and Hargreaves (1992, p61) "the main benefit of collaboration is that it can reduce teachers sense of powerlessness and increase their sense of efficacy."

A number of studies have researched the incidence of collaboration as opposed to isolation. Susan Rosenholtz's *Teachers Workplace: The Social Organisation of Schools* (1989) gives an informed account of the collaborative work environment of thirteen "moving" or "learning-enriched" primary schools in Tennessee. These schools were characterised by a collaborative culture which generated shared goals, staff norms of continuous learning and mutual support. This in turn contributed to greater technical competence and confidence among teachers which resulted in high teacher commitment and improved student learning.

Rosenholtz reports that in such schools, teachers have a common purpose, work openly and co-operatively and are distinguished by a sense of cohesion and community. This collaborative environment makes it possible for all staff to work together as a team without embarrassment, despite differences among them. A common goal is shared and in accepting responsibility for its attainment, all staff help each other.

The other significant work in this area was undertaken by Jennifer Nias, Geoff Southworth and Robin Yeomans and published as *Staff Relationships in the Primary School* (1989). Providing a detailed account of collaborative cultures in five English primary schools, this research showed that collaboration is bound up in the very culture and fabric of the school. Characterising this collaborative workplace was a dominant culture of shared values, beliefs and understandings. Nias et al describe collaboration in schools thus:

in the choreography of collaborative schools, norms of self reliance appeared to be selfish infractions against the school community. With teaching defined as inherently difficult, many minds tend to work better together than the few. Here, requests for and offers of advice and assistance seemed more like moral imperatives and colleagues seldom acted without foresight and deliberate calculation (1989, p208).

Nias et al (1989, p 46-74) described an organisational culture which enabled the teaching and ancillary staff to work closely together. They described this culture as a culture of collaboration and maintained that it rested on four interacting beliefs:

- Individuals should be valued;
- Since individuals are inseparable from the groups of which they are a part; groups too should be fostered and valued;
- The most effective way of promoting these values is by developing a sense of mutual security;
- A commitment to fostering openness amongst staff.

This collaborative work culture acknowledges and values the interdependence of the individual and the group in a school and harnesses that balance of relationships so that in the words of Fullan and Hargreaves (1991, p49) "the individual and the group are inherently and simultaneously valued." As a consequence, Telford (1996, p21) maintains that "teachers in this culture are empowered personally and collectively, acquiring a combined confidence which enables them to respond critically to the demands of the workplace."

Assessing principals leadership as a critical factor for school performance at multi-levels, Cheng (1994, abstract; p299) reports from his research in one hundred and ninety primary schools in Hong Kong. Cheng's leadership description draws on the



structural, human resource, political and symbolic dimensions of leadership as advocated by Bolman and Deal (1991) and outlined in the previous chapter.

In the aforementioned study, Cheng developed "a measure of strong leadership" in which "a principal can be supportive and foster participation for teachers, can develop clear goals and policies and hold people accountable for results, can be persuasive at building alliances and solving conflicts, can be inspirational and charismatic and can encourage professional development and teaching improvement."

The leadership outlined above "is found associated with high organisational effectiveness, strong organisational culture, positive principal-teacher relationships, more discussion in decision making, high teacher morale and professionalism, less teacher disengagement and hindrance, more teacher job satisfaction and commitment and more positive student performance particularly on attitudes to their schools and learning."

Telford's research (1996, p65), in the area of collaborative leadership and school success in primary and secondary schools in Melbourne, highlights collaborative leadership as increasing staff cohesion and generating a positive mood and high teacher morale. Formal and informal networks of support existed and teacher skills were increased in a stimulating professional atmosphere. Peters and Waterman (1982, p240) identify such an approach as being highly productive and one which brings rewards for the organisation and the individual. They propose "that nothing is more enticing than the feeling of being needed, which is the magic that produces high

expectations. What's more, if it's your peers that have those high expectations of you, then there is all the more incentive to perform well."

Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) examined transformational leadership in Canadian schools and the extent to which it develops collaborative cultures. Their work took place in nine primary and three secondary schools and established connections between transformational leadership strategies and the development of collaborative cultures.

Six broad strategies were used by leaders to influence school cultures (p270 - 276):

- strengthening the school's culture;
- use of a variety of bureaucratic mechanisms to stimulate and reinforce cultural change;
- fostering staff development;
- engaging in direct and frequent communications about cultural norms, values and beliefs;
- shared power and responsibility with others;
- use of symbols to express cultural values.

The Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (1993, p37) noted a strong correlation between collaborative leadership and effective teacher development. Telford's work in an Australian context, (1996, p118) reflects this when identifying four insights into what "constitutes the heart of the leadership milieu."

They are

- development of the educational potential of the students;
- professional development of teachers;

- good organisational health;
- institutionalisation of vision.

Noting that the above features are linked and interdependent Telford (1996, p118) concludes that when all four are present and operate simultaneously, a fully functioning collaborative culture has been established.

The preceding research does indicate that a school culture which simultaneously values and caters to individual and group needs results in a collaborative workplace which will advance the teaching practice of a school and enhance student learning in the process. Fullan and Hargreaves describe a fully functioning collaborative culture as consisting of:

Pervasive qualities, attitudes and behaviours that run through staff relationships on a moment-by-moment, day-to-day basis. Help, support, trust and openness are at the heart of these relationships. Beneath that, there is a commitment to valuing people as individuals and valuing the groups to which people belong (1991, p48).

Returning to the importance of leadership in fostering such a culture, Kotter (1990, p6) refers to the development of a human network for achieving goals by "aligning people - communicating the direction by words and deeds to all those whose co-operation may be needed so as to influence the creation of teams and coalitions that understand the vision and the strategies and accept their validity."

Reviewing the findings of Nias et al (1989), Soutworth (1993, p74) points out that in three of the five schools featured, the heads had worked for over ten years to develop and sustain an organisational culture which enabled both teaching and ancillary staff to work closely together. Fullan (1988, p45) argues that "organisations do not get

healthy by themselves." Rosenholtz (1989, p44) echoes this when concluding that "norms of collaboration don't simply just happen. They do not spring spontaneously out of teachers mutual respect and concern for each other."

Supporting the above statements, Telford (1996, p60) contends that "what leaders in schools actually do - their behaviour, their actions, their priorities in the daily choice of administrative practice - are all critical to the development of a collaborative culture."

What is beginning to emerge at this stage is in Fullan's words (1991, p161) "a more complex but clearer appreciation of the effective principal as a collaborative leader of continuous improvements in the school as an organisation." The work of Rosenholtz (1989) and others cited thus far points to what Fullan (1991, p161) describes as "the centrality of the principal in working with teachers to shape the school as a workplace in relation to shared goals, teacher collaboration, teacher learning opportunities, teacher certainty, teacher commitment and student learning."

### **3.4 Research at Primary and Second Level**

A concern for the author at this stage is that much of the research quoted thus far has its origins in the primary school sector. Research conducted by Leithwood (1987) goes some way towards allaying this concern. Leithwood's work compared the characteristics of effective elementary and secondary schools and he reported that of the thirty four characteristics examined, twenty three were common to both levels. Fullan (1991, p 161, 162) supports the contention that it is in order to draw on

research at primary level when he states "that the kinds of things that effective principals pay attention to are similar to all levels of schooling and size of schools." While Hallinger and Leithwood (1994) bemoan the scarcity of studies at second level, Fullan (1991, p162) contends that taking account of all the evidence "the difference is a matter of degree, not of kind".

In the literature search conducted to date, the author notes a consensus of opinion on the need for a new type of leadership for schools of the future. This has been identified as collaborative leadership.

Bolam et al (1993) investigated teacher's and head-teacher's perceptions of effective management in primary, secondary and special schools. In reviewing their work, Southworth (1995, p23) noted their finding that:

many of the head teachers in the sample had leadership qualities which went beyond technical managerial competence. In particular, they had good skills in motivating, developing and empowering teachers (p46).

The author interprets this as an acknowledgement that principals at all levels now need a different array of skills from those traditionally associated with the position. The author proposes that this is indeed a move towards collaborative leadership.

Southworth (p23) contends that to be effective, leaders need to be able to bring a group of colleagues along with them and enable these fellow group members to play their part in a collective enterprise. Acknowledging that "leadership is a complex and slippery concept," Southworth does point to two outcomes from his own work (1995) with ten primary head teachers. First, heads regard management as more than technical competence. They see headship as an interpersonal role in which human and

personal qualities are as important as professional attributes. Second, the work involves ethical considerations such as fairness and being aware of the authority one possesses. Southworth continues that "school management is thus not only about competencies, it is also a moral enterprise." This very much reflects the image of the collaborative leader as outlined in the next section of this chapter.

Relying on the work of Bredesen (1991) as well as his own research, Southworth (1995, p27) maintains that on becoming a head teacher, an individual needs to be ready to deal with the demands of different audiences and be ready to perform before them. He continues that the nature of headship is being reshaped and that the role is changing in certain respects because the work itself has changed. As evidence he cites:

The expansion in the number of players, the shift in responsibilities, the increase in accountability, the permeability of the school's boundaries and stronger links with the community, all create a new set of circumstances and forces which heads have to manage. Headship has been transformed because the blend of tasks and responsibilities has changed (p27).

Given the scenario outlined above, Southworth (1995, p39,40) believes that "one of the characteristics heads need is the capacity to perceive and understand a situation."

The author's understanding of Southworth's position is that there is a need for a principal to be able to interpret, analyse and understand what is happening in an organisation. In this regard, the author advances Bolman and Deal's (1991) four frames to assist principals, given that Bolman and Deal (1992, p325) stated that "prevailing educational models oversimplify and overlook the multiframe complexity embedded in the everyday world of school leadership." Acknowledging this complexity, Southworth (1995, p39,40) cautions that we may need to contemplate the

idea that we may never discover all there is to know about effectiveness since school leadership "may be just too complex, too organic, too unpredictable and too contingent upon so many variables that we can never be sure of very much." Citing Huberman (1992) he suggests (p40) that there may just be "too many moving parts."

It is understandable that Southworth is less than totally optimistic but the author suggests that a first step in coming to terms with the complex milieu of a modern day principal is to recognise the multi-faceted nature of the job and try to define its daily practices.

The argument for multi-faceted, collaborative principals is taken up by Goldring and Rallis (1993). Commenting on the challenges facing today's school principals. They contend that principals in the 1990s need to be multi-faceted to cope with the day-to-day workings of their schools. Quoting research by Smylie (1992), Johnson (1989) and Malen and Ogawa (1988), they refer (p40) to the influence of the teacher - principal relationship in deciding teacher participation. They note that "teachers are willing to broaden their roles when they work with principals who are collaborative, open, supportive and facilitative." Such principals :

establish organisational conditions that create and enable cohesive work groups that substitute for the direct, more autocratic leadership of a bureaucracy; they support experimentation and risk taking through motivation and co-ordination (p51).

Drawing attention to the role of the collaborative principal, the principal is seen to motivate and co-ordinate in a variety of ways. Symbolic, structural and political acts are all highlighted and Goldring and Rallis (p51) assert that "these acts serve to encourage a collaborative and professional atmosphere, keeping the school moving

forward together." They also legitimise teacher's work by saying "your work is important and accepted: you belong." The author contends that this very much reflects the thinking behind Bolman and Deal's (1991) four frames of reference.

Goldring and Rallis (1993, p118) suggest that an area of training for principals might be in developing the ability to apply multiple perspectives or frameworks to situations. Principals should be able to analyse an organisation and organisational events from a variety of models as envisaged by Bolman and Deal (1991). Citing Wimpleberg (1990), Goldring and Rallis (p118) contend that by applying multiple perspectives, principals will be able to interpret organisational phenomena. Leaders will thus move away from "merely applying specific skills to developing skills that afford a deeper understanding of organisational events."

Concluding this section, the author accepts the validity of research in the area of collaborative leadership at both primary and second level. The author concludes that each of the four frames outlined by Bolman and Deal (1991) - structural, human resource, political and symbolic - as used by Cheng (1994) and Telford (1996) - have a role to play in gaining an understanding of the operation of leadership in an organisation. Leaders who establish a collaborative culture through the astute management of the four frames can play a significant part in contributing to their school's success.

The author now turns to outlining a conceptual framework and operational definition of collaborative leadership.



### 3.5 A Conceptual Framework and Operational Definition.

"Based on findings from the related theory and centering on specific and extensive collaborative elements of leadership," Telford (1996, p23, 24) has identified specific collaborative elements. These elements have been categorised by Telford into Bolman and Deal's (1991) four frames "in order to ensure the full range of potentialities and complexities of leadership have been embraced." The integration of the collaborative elements into the four frames form a conceptual framework from which collaborative leadership behaviours and practices can be viewed. A comprehensive schedule of the collaborative elements can be found in appendix three.

The categorisation of the collaborative elements has been made in Telford's words (1996, p25) "in an attempt to rationalise what by very nature is an irrational context, namely the vigorously dynamic milieu of the day-to-day endeavours of a school". Acknowledging that elements are linked and interrelated, Telford explains that they have been grouped and classified into the four frames for the purposes of eliciting their cause and effect relationships.

Integrating the identified collaborative elements into Bolman and Deal's (1991) four frames has provided an operational definition of collaborative leadership.

This definition is illustrated below.

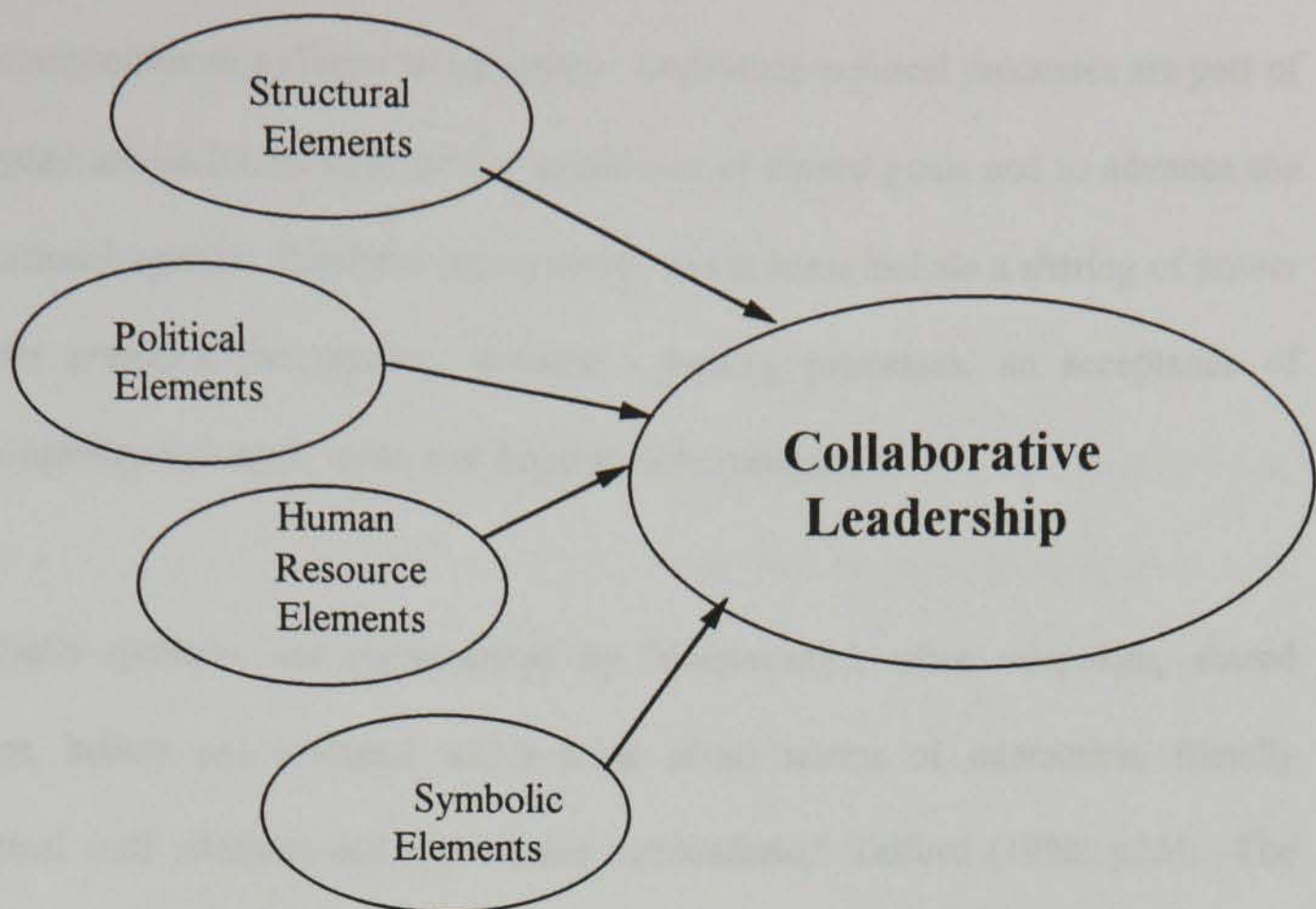


FIG. 3.1 Elements of Collaborative Leadership Source : Telford (1996, p26)

- Structural elements refer to the way in which leaders structure decision making processes to allow for appropriate staff, student and parent participation so that a shared vision and agreed means of implementing the direction, policies and programme of the school can occur. Elements of collaboration to facilitate this would include democratic processes performed by the principal to foster leadership density, a sharing of goals, planning and frank, open and frequent communication.
- Human resource elements refer to the professional development of staff through co-operative sharing of their collective experience. Elements highlighted include the centrality of teaching and learning to the school's purpose and positive student/staff relations. The principal fosters an environment of mutual support, value and regard for professional development and continuous learning and improvement.

- Political elements centre around reaching agreement through discussion, negotiation and compromise in a climate of openness. Legitimate political processes are part of everyday school life to facilitate the attainment of shared goals and to advance the educational agenda. Elements underpinning this process include a sharing of power by the principal, participatory decision - making processes, an acceptance of responsibility and again, open and frequent communication.
- Symbolic elements are characterised by "deep-rooted, often unspoken, shared values, beliefs and attitudes which bring about norms of interaction, friendly informal staff relations and a pervasive camaraderie," Telford (1996, p26). The principal fosters an atmosphere where elements such as genuine care and concern for colleagues both personally and professionally is the norm. There are shared beliefs and values and rituals and ceremonies symbolise and give a visible presence to symbolic perspectives.

All the elements in each of the four frames are linked and interrelated. By integrating them into the four frames they offer a focus for analysis. They are also a means of making sense of an irrational and chaotic working world. Hallinger and Hausman (1993, p114 - 142) comment that "despite a burgeoning prescriptive literature, it remains unclear what skills and capacities site leaders need to succeed in these transformed educational settings."

In this regard, Murphy (1994, p24) refers to "the increased principal's work load as well as the expanded repertoire of skills they need to function effectively." Fullan (1992, p19) comments that principals "are in the business of contending with multiple

innovations simultaneously." Vandenberg (1992, p26), cited in Murphy (1994, p23), writing of primary and secondary heads in Belgium, is of the opinion that "nowadays a principal has to write in pencil, since what is written today by a pencil can be easily erased tomorrow."

In this climate Leithwood (1992, p9) urges educational leaders to build a shared vision, to improve communication and develop collaborative decision making processes. Fullan (1992, p19) encourages principals to nurture collaborative work cultures. He suggests that in this collaborative work culture "principals must concentrate on fostering vision-building; norms of collegiality that respect individuality; norms of continuous improvement; problem-coping and conflict resolution strategies; lifelong teacher development that involves inquiry, reflective practice, collaboration and technical skills."

Fullan (1992, p20) agrees that the process of helping to develop collaborative work cultures is complex. "It requires great sophistication on the part of school leaders to express their own values without being imposing; to draw out other people's values and concerns; to manage conflict and problem solving; to give direction and to be open at the same time."

Sergiovanni (1992, p42) concludes that with the right type of leadership "principals can spend less time trying to figure out how to push and pull teachers towards goals and more time dealing with the issues of teaching and learning and ensuring financial, moral, political and managerial support for the school."

Studies in the United States, Canada, Hong Kong and Britain have been conducted to identify the nature of a collaborative culture. Few, with the exception of Telford (1996) in Australia, address the notion of what it is that leaders actually do in schools and their leadership practices to promote, develop and sustain a collaborative culture. Southworth (1993, p78,) argues that "leadership in action is more dynamic and complex than the analyses of it in the literature." He contends that the literature does "not capture the character and nature of leadership in action," and continues that "not only do we need more descriptions of leaders in action, we also need richer and more detailed descriptions of them at work."

The author proposes to explore the understanding and practice of collaborative leadership among principals in a selection of community and comprehensive schools in the greater Dublin Area. All of the schools serve pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to a greater or lesser degree. To provide some understanding of the context in which these principals work, appendix 2 looks at the issue of educational disadvantage. The following chapter will outline the research methodology.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Outline

Johnston (1977, p151) in his publication A Review of Research Methods in Education, highlights the questionnaire as "one of the most common methods of data collection." He continues that the questionnaire is invariably "mailed to a selected sample of individuals who record their responses and mail back the questionnaire." As a research method Johnson (p151) states that the questionnaire may be used to learn about the opinions and attitudes of respondents, activities they engage in and also their past experiences.

Anderson (1990, p207) in Fundamentals of Educational Research, acknowledges that the questionnaire has become one of the most useful means of collecting information. He considers that "a well constructed questionnaire permits the collection of reliable and reasonably valid data relatively simply, cheaply and in a short space of time."

Having considered the views of Johnson and Anderson above, the author decided on the research questionnaire, including a Likert Scale, as the most appropriate instrument for the proposed research.

Commenting on the Likert Scale, Anderson (1990, p212) points out that "it is easy to respond to, straightforward to analyse and sufficient for most needs." Anderson

continues that Likert Scales "provide an excellent means of gathering opinions and attitudes and provide a great deal of information in a short period of time." With these points in mind the author now turns to outline the research methodology.

## **4.2 Research Methodology**

The research instrument was designed to furnish information in three areas:

Section A : to provide a profile of each principal surveyed

Section B : to measure the responses of these principals to statements describing collaborative leadership practices

Section C : to measure the degree to which the principals currently practise the outlined collaborative leadership practices.

### **4.3 Sample**

The focus for the research was on principals of schools in the community and comprehensive sector serving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The students in some schools were entirely from disadvantaged situations, others less so. A group of ten principals was selected. All work in the same sector of secondary education as the author. All the principals work in the greater Dublin area.

### **4.4 Research Instrument**

One approach to the study of leadership in schools has been identified by the author as Collaborative Leadership. This style of leadership simultaneously values and caters to group and individual needs, resulting in a workplace which advances the teaching practice of a school and enhances student learning.

A questionnaire focusing on collaborative leadership from a principal's perspective and practice was used as the data collection instrument for the study. To facilitate the use of an appropriate Likert scale, it was necessary to compile a series of statements to define the concept of collaborative leadership. In this regard, the work of Cheng (1994) and Telford (1996) proved particularly valuable. Their research provided the source for the forty one statements which were used in Sections B and C under four categories in each.



Section A of the questionnaire was designed by the author to provide a profile of each principal surveyed in terms of the size, type and location of the school in which they work, middle-management structures in existence, training received for their present position, the number of years experience of each respondent in the teaching profession and/or as principal or vice-principal.

Section B aimed to measure the responses of these principals in terms of their level of agreement with statements describing collaborative leadership. Forty one statements were used over four categories.

Section C endeavoured to measure the degree to which these principals currently perform the outlined collaborative leadership practices. Again, forty one statements were used over four categories.

The four categories used in Sections B and C were structural, human resource, political and symbolic, after the work of Bolman and Deal (1991). Of the forty one statements used, ten came under structural, fourteen under human resource, nine under political and eight under symbolic.

In Section B, each respondent was asked, using a scale from one to five, to indicate their level of agreement with each statement describing collaborative leadership. A high mean score would indicate a strong level of agreement with the statements outlined while a relatively lower mean score would indicate a weaker level of agreement.

In Section C, the set of statements describing collaborative leadership was repeated and respondents were asked to indicate, on a scale from one to five, the degree to which they currently practise the outlined behaviours in their role as principal. A high mean score was taken to indicate a frequent level of practise of the collaborative leadership concept while a lower mean score implied a lower frequency of implementation.

#### **4.5 Pilot Test**

A pilot study was carried out in February 1998 to evaluate the effectiveness of the questionnaire. It was administered to two principals and two vice-principals who were not included in the final study. All four questionnaires were returned. The effectiveness and layout of the questionnaire were assessed and changes were made in the light of feedback received. These changes included:

- a more concise introduction at the start of the questionnaire;
- an abbreviated description of each of the four frames in Section B;
- a re-arrangement of the forty one statements so that statements pertaining to each frame were displayed on one page;
- a re-wording and sub-division of some of the statements since the feedback suggested that more than one area was covered. An illustration of this would be under the human resource frame where the author changed from one statement to two in the areas of support for new teachers and teachers with difficulties.

## 4.6 Administration

The modified questionnaire (appendix 5) was posted to the ten selected principals on March 12th 1998. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a letter from the author (appendix 4). This date was selected by the author as it gave one month to April 8th, the beginning of the Easter holidays, for the return of the questionnaires. Each principal had been contacted by the author by phone during February to ascertain their willingness to be included in the survey. At the beginning of April, seven of the ten questionnaires had been returned. With just one week to the Easter holidays, the author wrote to the three principals who had not responded. This led to the three remaining questionnaires being returned by April 8th which was just within the time span allocated by the author.

The return of all ten questionnaires, within the allocated time span meant that the author had a full range of responses to analyse in chapter five.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

#### 5.1 Structure

In this chapter the author will present and analyse the data from the ten completed questionnaires. The sections included and order followed is detailed below.

#### 5.2 Section A : Principal Profile.

This section provides a personal profile of each of the respondents in terms of their experience in the teaching profession and the context in which they now work.

#### 5.3 Section B : Collaborative Leadership : Response

The response of the ten principals to statements outlining collaborative leadership is detailed here.

#### 5.4 Section C : Collaborative Leadership : Practice

The degree to which the respondents currently practice the outlined behaviours in their role as principal is recorded here.

#### 5.5 Section D : Collaborative Leadership: Comparison of Response and Practice.

This final section uses some graphic illustrations to highlight the degree of alignment between response to and practice of the outlined statements.

## 5.2 Section A : Principal Profile

Table 5.2 (a) Respondents experience in position of principal and relevant experience prior to appointment.

| Principal Male/Female | Years as Principal | Years as Vice-Principal | Years in present school | Total years in teaching | Experience prior to Principal |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Male               | 16                 | 5                       | 16                      | 29                      | 13                            |
| 2. Male               | 15                 | 2                       | 19                      | 29                      | 14                            |
| 3. Male               | 6                  | 2                       | 18                      | 26                      | 20                            |
| 4. Male               | 23                 | 5                       | 23                      | 33                      | 10                            |
| 5. Male               | 4                  | 9                       | 4                       | 25                      | 21                            |
| 6. Male               | 27                 | 4                       | 27                      | 41                      | 14                            |
| 7. Male               | 5                  | 10                      | 5                       | 25                      | 20                            |
| 8. Male               | 14                 | 2                       | 14                      | 30                      | 16                            |
| 9. Female             | 2                  | 9                       | 18                      | 27                      | 25                            |
| 10. Female            | 7                  | 14                      | 21                      | 32                      | 25                            |
| AVERAGE:              | 11.9               | 6.2                     | 16.5                    | 29.7                    | 17.8                          |

Source : Appendix 5

An appraisal of Table 5.2(a) shows that all ten respondents have significant years of experience in the teaching profession. This experience ranges from 25 to 41 years with an average of 29.7 years. Experience prior to appointment as principal ranges from 10 to 25 years with an average of 17.8 years. The author mentions this latter point as applications for the position of principal stipulate that an applicant must have a minimum of 5 years wholetime experience as a teacher.

With the exception of two relatively recent appointments, the remainder had between 18 and 27 years service in their present school. This length of service suggests wide ranging knowledge of the contexts in which their schools operate. Indeed, in the case of four respondents, they were appointed when the school was first established.

All the respondents indicated that they had experience as vice-principal before their present appointment. This ranged from 2 to 14 years and was referred to by two respondents as having provided valuable experience.

The length of service as principal ranges between 2 and 7 years for the most recent appointees and between 14 and 27 years for the others. The average figure for years as principal was 11.9 years. This experience may have proved valuable in that it provided a comprehensive background from which to view and interpret the concept of collaborative leadership.

All the respondents worked in the community and comprehensive sector in co-ed schools in the greater Dublin area. In the case of six schools, all students came from local authority housing and would be deemed to come from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the case of the other four schools, pupils came from a mix of local authority and private housing which meant that the school would still serve a sizeable proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Of the ten respondents surveyed only 2 were women. This represents 20% of the survey but the number of women in the most senior management position in Irish

education would be far short of this. Indeed in the community and comprehensive sector at large, from a total of 81 principals only 7 are female (8.4%).

Table 5. 2 (b) School Population

| Principal | Staff | Students | Student Nos.<br>Increasing/<br>Decreasing | Single<br>Sex/<br>Co-ed |
|-----------|-------|----------|---|-------------------------|
| 1         | 60    | 812      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |
| 2         | 65    | 850      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |
| 3         | 26    | 281      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |
| 4         | 36    | 391      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |
| 5         | 52    | 800      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |
| 6         | 22    | 310      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |
| 7         | 32    | 425      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |
| 8         | 46    | 640      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |
| 9         | 19    | 254      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |
| 10        | 58    | 976      | Decreasing                                | Co-ed                   |

Source : Appendix 5

The schools of principals 3, 6 and 9 have smaller staff and student numbers as they do not provide the full cycle available in the other schools. Two have a student population to Junior Certificate level only and the other has students to Leaving Certificate only, drawn from the two junior schools.

Table 5.2 (c). Total Staff and Student numbers

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| Total Staff   | 416   |
| Total Student | 5,739 |

Source : Appendix 5

Taking the above totals for staff and student numbers together, it is clear that the ten principals are charged with responsibility for providing leadership to significant bodies of people not to mention the interaction with the parents/guardians of the students in their care. At one level they have the leadership and management of fellow professionals and on the other hand the educational welfare of the students with whom these professionals interact.

Given that many of these students and their parents would be deemed to come from disadvantaged backgrounds, this presents a significant challenge to the leadership skills of each individual principal. All respondents would strongly hold the core belief that children from disadvantaged backgrounds should have full educational opportunities and that school arrangements can make this happen. It is with this in mind that their agreement with and practice of collaborative leadership is explored in Sections B and C.



Table 5.2 (d) Middle Management/Post Structures

| Principal | Vice Principal | A Post | B Post |
|-----------|----------------|--------|--------|
| 1         | 2              | 7      | 13     |
| 2         | 2              | 7      | 14     |
| 3         | 1              | 2      | 7      |
| 4         | 1              | 5      | 11     |
| 5         | 2              | 8      | 15     |
| 6         | 1              | 6      | 7      |
| 7         | 1              | 5      | 10     |
| 8         | 1              | 6      | 11     |
| 9         | 1              | 2      | 3      |
| 10        | 2              | 8      | 15     |

Source : Appendix 5

The figures furnished are accurate at the time of survey. However in the next six months the number of A and B posts in schools is due to increase as a result of negotiations between the Government and the social partners under an agreement reached in 1994.

The presence of 2 vice-principals in some schools arises from the Government decision in 1995 to agree the appointment of an extra position in schools which had over 1,000 students or over 900 in the case of schools in disadvantaged areas. The number of A and B posts is decided by a points rating per school based on the age of the students on the register in a particular academic year. This system is set to change and be based on the number of whole time teachers in a school.

## Middle Management

Recent publications including the White Paper: Charting Our Education Future (1995) make reference to the role of vice-principals and senior post holders in schools. In an effort to improve the overall management and efficiency of the school and alleviate the burden of responsibility which the principal has traditionally carried, the White Paper (p154) states that "the principal and vice-principal should be seen as a cohesive management unit." The Report on the National Education Convention (1994 pp 55-53) contends that "devising senior teacher posts which assign responsibility and accountability to teachers for the academic and pastoral programmes in the school would reduce considerably the workload of the principal." The White Paper continues (page 155) that "discussions on a major reorganisation of the middle management system - vice-principals and post holders - will be initiated."

Reference has already been made to the large number of teachers, students and parents/guardians to whom the principal is responsible. Given the emphasis on middle management structures outlined in the White Paper (p154) "so that the principal would have more time to concentrate on the central aspects of management generally associated with this role," it seems to the author that a collaborative leadership approach might be best suited to make an effective team of the people concerned.

## Training

Eight of the ten respondents did not receive any training for their present position. Of the two who did, one stated that it was a condition of employment at that time (mid 1970's) and the other respondent was the most recent appointee. This latter case may indicate a recognition of the need to provide leadership courses for new and acting principals. The author notes an increased provision in courses of this nature by third level institutions in recent years.

This reflects an aspiration in the White Paper, Charting Our Education Future (1995) where (p126) reference is made to the "unanimous acceptance of the need for a cohesive national policy on, and a comprehensive programme of, in-career professional development of teachers." School principals are identified (p129) as "key personnel and there is a need for specially targeted programmes for principals." One target outlined is that "by the end of the decade, all school principals will have participated in, and be part of development programmes."

The most recent appointee drew attention to the fact that no training was given for the position of vice-principal and felt strongly that it should have. If there was no training for the position of principal it can be taken that none was provided for the vice-principalship. This seems remiss given that teachers will have followed Degree/Diploma courses for three to four years to specialise in a particular subject area and gain the necessary qualifications to teach. Training is deemed necessary to become an effective teacher but not to become a leader of teachers.

Over time the 'good' teacher may be promoted, eventually to the position of principal. Sarason (1982) quoted in Fullan (1988, pp 7,8) observes that being a classroom teacher by itself is not a very good preparation for being an effective principal. He continues that teachers as future leaders obtain only a very narrow slice of what it means to be principal through their own interactions with principals. This narrowness of experience may be all the more constrained when the teacher's experience is limited to just one or two schools. Sarason concludes that the narrowness of preparation of such a teacher may work against them as principals charged with shaping a culture which embraces change and improvement.

Eight respondents felt that training would have been beneficial. One had reservations, depending on the type of training involved and one felt that a lengthy term as vice-principal had provided adequate preparation. This could well depend on the relationship between the principal and vice-principal and the degree to which the vice-principal was afforded access to areas of management and leadership in the school.

Two respondents stated that as vice-principals they had been particularly fortunate in their relationships with their principals. While this is to be encouraged it seems too great a risk to have preparation for the post of principal contingent on such a relationship.

Of the ten respondents, eight indicated that they had undertaken training/in-service since their appointment. Five had undertaken postgraduate courses with research modules at third level institutions. Courses and seminars organised by Department of Education, trade unions, management associations and teacher education centres had also been availed of. Four respondents had undertaken the MSc course for which this

dissertation is submitted. This indicates to the author that there is a willingness among principals to avail of courses and training which will assist them to be more effective leaders and managers of their schools. In the author's own experience as a vice-principal, management associations are becoming more aware of their role in this whole area of inservice.

Appendix 6 details those areas in which the respondents indicated that training would have proved beneficial.

### 5.3 SECTION B : COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP : RESPONSE

In this section the principals surveyed were asked to respond to forty one statements outlining collaborative leadership under four frames - structural, human resource, political and symbolic. The response was indicated by circling the appropriate number where:

|   |   |                   |
|---|---|-------------------|
| 5 | = | strongly agree    |
| 4 | = | agree             |
| 3 | = | undecided         |
| 2 | = | disagree          |
| 1 | = | strongly disagree |

#### 5.3.1 The Structural Frame

The structural frame addresses the importance of formal roles and responsibilities. Structures in schools provide the means by which:

- goals are set;
- decisions are made;
- planning is designed and carried out;
- roles are identified;
- job descriptions are clarified;
- responsibilities are allocated.

Table 5 . 3 (a) Collaborative Leadership Response : Structural Frame

| Item Number | Average Score | Rank Order |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1           | 4.9           | 2          |
| 2           | 5.0           | 1          |
| 3           | 4.5           | 8          |
| 4           | 4.9           | 2          |
| 5           | 4.6           | 7          |
| 6           | 4.5           | 8          |
| 7           | 4.9           | 2          |
| 8           | 4.9           | 2          |
| 9           | 4.8           | 6          |
| 10          | 3.9           | 10         |

Source : Appendix 5

The average scores indicate a high level of agreement with the collaborative leadership concept under the structural frame. Encouraging an atmosphere which respects and values all members of the school community and promotes frank, open and frequent communication was ranked highest (item 2).

Clustered closely to item 2 were the scores for items 1,4,7 and 8. These referred to the extension of leadership opportunities and sharing of responsibility. In such a climate, the facilitation of fair and equitable decision making was considered desirable as was the creation of structures to support teaching and learning. The score of item 9 indicated a recognition of the role parents play in supporting teaching and learning.

While still quite high, the scores achieved by items 5,6 and 3 regarding the structure of staff meetings and the decision making process seem a little at variance with the strong scores of items 7 and 8.

Only item 10 falls somewhat below the other average scores possibly due to the degree of indecision indicated by respondents. Relating as it does to the establishment of a students representative body, item 10 deals with an aspect of school life which is not that well developed in Irish schools generally. Dealing with relationships within the school, The White Paper, Charting Our Education Future (1995, p163) proposes that "the board of Management of each second level school will be encouraged to promote the formation of a student's council." The author will return to these results later.

### **5.3.2 The Human Resource Frame**

The human resource frame is built around the view that:

- Schools are social organisations steeped in human needs, wants and claims;
- the individual talents, skills and energy of each member are the school's most vital resource;
- there is a constant interplay between the individual and the organisation to ensure a fit between administrative goals and the goals of individual members.



Table 5.3 (b) Collaborative Leadership Response : Human Resource Frame

| Item Number | Average Score | Rank Order |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1           | 4.5           | 14         |
| 2           | 5.0           | 1          |
| 3           | 4.8           | 8          |
| 4           | 4.8           | 8          |
| 5           | 4.7           | 11         |
| 6           | 4.9           | 3          |
| 7           | 4.9           | 3          |
| 8           | 5.0           | 1          |
| 9           | 4.9           | 3          |
| 10          | 4.9           | 3          |
| 11          | 4.8           | 8          |
| 12          | 4.6           | 12         |
| 13          | 4.9           | 3          |
| 14          | 4.6           | 13         |

Source : Appendix 5

High average scores in this section indicated a very strong level of agreement with the statements outlined. Indeed 50% of the scores are clustered around the 4.9 and 5.0 mark (items 2,8,6,7,9,10,13). A further three (items 3,4,11) score 4.8.

The highest scores were jointly attributed to the creation of an atmosphere of openness and professional honesty and the encouragement of a sense of community wherein staff support each other and foster a spirit of collaboration.

In such a climate it was strongly agreed that people be encouraged to take initiative and accept responsibility. Staff accomplishments were deemed worthy of praise and recognition. An awareness of the need to find a fit between individual and organisational goals was helped by the principal keeping a high profile around the school and being available to support staff, old and new.

Placement of a high value on individual members was indicated by the scores attributed to items 4,3 and 11. Facilitating the professional development of teachers (item 5) could be linked to the concern in item 13 with catering for the needs of all students.

Surprisingly, though scoring quite a high average, the lowest score at 4.5 was returned for the statement which indicated that an awareness of the principal's daily administrative practice was critical in developing a collaborative culture.

Might this indicate that while there was very strong overall agreement on what constituted collaborative leadership, the actions undertaken were of a fragmented nature and not seen within the overall compass of a collaborative leadership approach?

### 5.3.3 The Political Frame

The political frame holds that a principal's understanding and management of the political milieu of school life is crucial for the overall success of a school. There is

- acceptance that politics is inevitable in daily school affairs and that problems will routinely arise;
- recognition of the importance of reaching agreement through discussion, negotiation and compromise in a climate of openness.

Table 5.3 (c) Collaborative Leadership Response : Political Frame

| Item Number | Average Score | Rank Order |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1           | 4.4           | 9          |
| 2           | 4.6           | 6          |
| 3           | 4.6           | 6          |
| 4           | 4.7           | 3          |
| 5           | 4.7           | 3          |
| 6           | 4.5           | 8          |
| 7           | 4.7           | 3          |
| 8           | 4.8           | 1          |
| 9           | 4.8           | 1          |

Source: Appendix 5

Average scores for items under the political frame fall between 4.4 for item 1 and 4.8 for items 8 and 9.

There was strong agreement on the need to be accessible to staff and to promote an open, supportive environment where views could be fairly represented. The importance of information being readily available to staff with a view to fostering a sense of trust in the decision making process also gained a high level of agreement.

Respondents agreed that the principal should use his/her influence to ensure democratic decision making but also agreed that the principal had the authority to make the ultimate decision. As well as the principal's formal position of authority, attention was drawn to the use of informal contacts to diffuse conflict and promote good organisational health.

The scores indicate a high level of agreement with and awareness of the political milieu among respondents. Given this, the author notes that the lowest score was attributed to item 1 regarding the use of political skill to solve everyday problems through negotiation.

The respondents agreed with the political behaviours outlined but did not interpret such behaviours as forming part of an overall strategy. The use of informal contacts, item 7, was scored higher than the more formal process outlined in item 1.

### 5.3.4 The Symbolic Frame

The symbolic frame focuses attention on the shared beliefs and values that are woven into the very fabric of the school. Beyond those areas addressed in the other three frames, there exists an intangible element which reflects the ethos or characteristic spirit of a school.

Table 5.3. (d) Collaborative Leadership Response : Symbolic Frame

| Item Number | Average Score | Rank Order |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1           | 4.8           | 3          |
| 2           | 4.8           | 3          |
| 3           | 5.0           | 1          |
| 4           | 4.9           | 2          |
| 5           | 4.8           | 3          |
| 6           | 4.8           | 3          |
| 7           | 4.8           | 3          |
| 8           | 4.5           | 4          |

Source : Appendix 5

As with the other frames, the respondents strongly agreed with the statements outlined. Average scores ranged from 5.0 for item 3 to 4.5. for item 8. There was complete agreement on the creation of a school atmosphere where it was the norm for students to respect themselves, other people and property. Coupled with the promotion of good, standard and approved practice among staff, this high level of

agreement sent a very strong message about the characteristic spirit of these schools and the role of each individual therein.

All respondents strongly subscribed to the core belief that children from disadvantaged backgrounds should have full educational opportunities and that school arrangements could make this happen. There was also common consent that application of the collaborative leadership concept as outlined under the other three frames could facilitate a shared vision of what each school could offer to these children.

Considering the level of agreement outlined, the lowest score of 4.5 went to item 8 regarding the promotion of beliefs and values through routine events and formal ceremonies. Perhaps this score represents a lack of awareness of how participation in even routine events can send powerful signals to others in the school community regarding the ethos of the school and the principal's commitment to nurture it.

## 5.4 SECTION C : COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP : PRACTICE

This final section requested principals to indicate the degree to which they currently practise the outlined behaviours in their role as principal on a scale where:

5 = always

4 = frequently

3 = sometimes

2 = very little

1 = not at all

### 5.4.1 The Structural Frame

Table 5.4 (a) Collaborative Leadership Practice : Structural Frame

| Item Number | Average Score | Rank Order |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1           | 4.5           | 2          |
| 2           | 4.7           | 1          |
| 3           | 4.1           | 8          |
| 4           | 4.5           | 2          |
| 5           | 4.4           | 5          |
| 6           | 4.4           | 5          |
| 7           | 4.5           | 2          |
| 8           | 4.2           | 7          |
| 9           | 4.1           | 8          |
| 10          | 2.8           | 10         |

Source : Appendix 5

Observing that all average scores are down, it is noteworthy that the highest score of 4.7 was attained by item 2. The emphasis here was on encouraging an atmosphere which respects and values all members of the school community and promotes frank, open and frequent communication.

The clustering of scores for 6 items between 4.7 and 4.4 indicates a frequent level of practice of the outlined behaviours. Given that the structural frame is put forward as a means by which goals are set, roles are identified and responsibilities allocated, the level of practice indicated by the respondents is very much in line with the collaborative leadership concept identified by the author in the literature.

The lowest score at 2.8 is attributed to item 10 dealing with the establishment of a student representative body.



#### 5.4.2 The Human Resource Frame

Table 5.4 (b) Collaborative Leadership : Practice Human Resource Frame

| Item Number | Average Score | Rank Order |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1           | 4.5           | 6          |
| 2           | 4.7           | 1          |
| 3           | 4.4           | 7          |
| 4           | 4.7           | 1          |
| 5           | 4.4           | 7          |
| 6           | 4.7           | 1          |
| 7           | 4.2           | 10         |
| 8           | 4.6           | 5          |
| 9           | 4.7           | 1          |
| 10          | 4.0           | 13         |
| 11          | 4.2           | 10         |
| 12          | 3.7           | 14         |
| 13          | 4.3           | 9          |
| 14          | 4.1           | 12         |

Source : Appendix 5

The human resource frame referred to the interplay between the individual and the organisation and recognised that the individual talents, skills and energy of each member constituted a school's most vital resource.

Reviewing the scores, the highest ranked items reflect the points just made. Four items, 2,4, 6 and 9, all score 4.7. Areas scored under these items include encouraging

a sense of community whereby staff, support each other to foster a spirit of collaboration and value people as individuals, plus the grounds to which they belong. All this in a climate where staff are encouraged to take initiative and accept responsibility.

These and other scores like 4.5 for item 1 indicating the importance of the principal's role in developing a collaborative culture, reflect favourable on the climate which these respondents endeavour to generate in their schools. Allowing for all inputs to a school, the maintenance of that intangible entity 'good will' has always been high on priorities and senior management would realise that without it very little of note transpires.

Allowing for this high emphasis on nurturing the human resources of a school, some scores merit consideration. Given what has gone before, might one have expected higher scores for item 14, dealing with parents and the wider community and item 10, operating a support network for new staff? Item 12, relating to intervention when the performance of a staff member was deemed unacceptable, gained a number of low scores which perhaps indicates that even in a collaborative culture the teacher retains a high degree of autonomy and may not be all that accountable to the principal. Whether this is due to lack of skill on the part of the principal or a reflection of the status quo in Irish schools in another matter.

### 5.4.3. The Political Frame

Table 5.4 (c) Collaborative Leadership Practice : The Political Frame

| Item Number | Average Score | Rank Order |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1           | 4.6           | 2          |
| 2           | 4.4           | 4          |
| 3           | 4.3           | 5          |
| 4           | 4.2           | 7          |
| 5           | 4.7           | 1          |
| 6           | 4.1           | 9          |
| 7           | 4.3           | 5          |
| 8           | 4.6           | 2          |
| 9           | 4.2           | 7          |

Source : Appendix 5

The cluster of scores for items 5,8 and 1 between 4.7 and 4.6 indicate an awareness among respondents of the political reality of school life. While there is recognition that it may fall to the principal to make the ultimate decision, this comes about in a context where the principal is accessible to staff thus ensuring a fair representation of all views. The political skill of the principal in solving everyday problems through a process of negotiation is very important.

This accessibility to staff seems significant given that the practice of informal contacts rates higher than formal processes in addressing problems, diffusing conflict and promoting organisational health.

The scores for the 9 items in this section range from 4.1 to 4.7 which indicates frequent practice by the respondents.

#### 5.4.4 The Symbolic Frame

Table 5.4 (d) Collaborative Leadership Practice : Symbolic Frame

| Item Number | Average Score | Rank Order |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1           | 4.7           | 1          |
| 2           | 4.3           | 4          |
| 3           | 4.5           | 2          |
| 4           | 4.2           | 5          |
| 5           | 3.6           | 7          |
| 6           | 4.1           | 6          |
| 7           | 4.5           | 2          |
| 8           | 3.6           | 7          |

Source : Appendix 5

Significantly, given the context in which the ten respondents work, the highest score of 4.7 was gained by item 1. This indicates that all respondents strongly related to the core belief that children from disadvantaged backgrounds should have full educational opportunities and that school arrangements can make this happen.

The scores for items 3 and 7 at 4.5 suggest that this core belief is nurtured in a climate where it is the norm for students to respect themselves, people and property and for staff to show genuine care and concern for colleagues both personally and

professionally. The author contends that if such norms exist in a school, teaching practice and student learning will be enhanced.

To further nurture these norms, respondents indicated widespread awareness and practice of the other three frames. Furthermore, a score of 4.2 for item 4 indicated that good practice among staff was promoted and encouraged.

The lowest scores of 3.6 for items 5 and 8 merit consideration. The average score for item 5 was lower due to a very low score by one respondent. A score of 3.6 for item 8 indicates that while strong shared beliefs and values may be woven into the fabric of a school, the respondents did not always avail of opportunities to communicate and promote these beliefs and values.

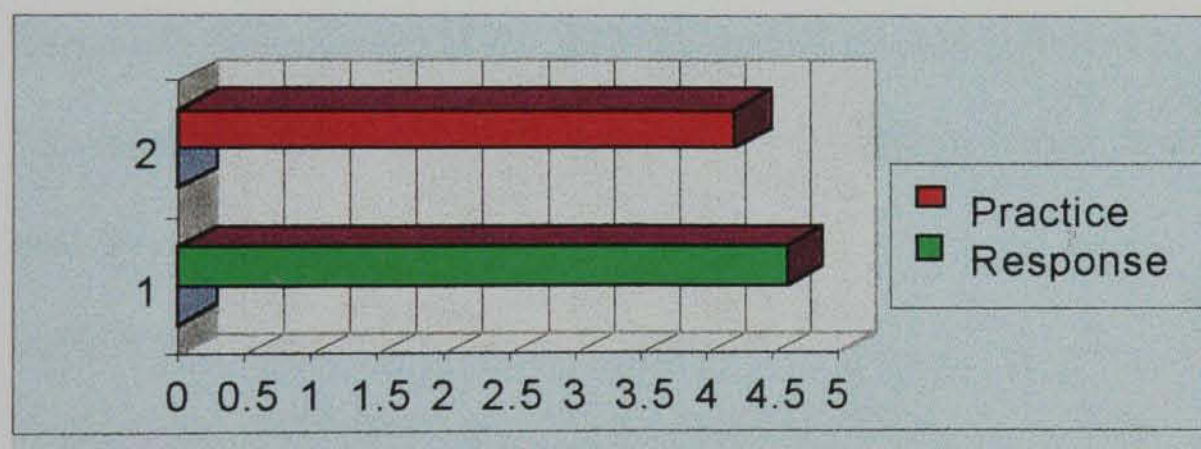
The final part of this chapter will deal with a comparison of the returns for Sections B and C.

## 5.5 COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP : COMPARISON OF RESPONSE AND PRACTICE

For the purposes of comparison and graphic representation, the author calculated the total mean scores for items under each of the four frames and compared response to practice.

Perusing the scores for response and practice it is worth noting that a response figure between 4 and 5 indicates agreement with the statements outlined up to strong agreement. Likewise, a practice figure between 4 and 5 indicates a level of practice of the outlined behaviours from frequently to always.

Table 5.5 (a) Comparison : Structural Frame.



Total Mean Score

Source : Tables 5.3 (a), 5.4 (a)

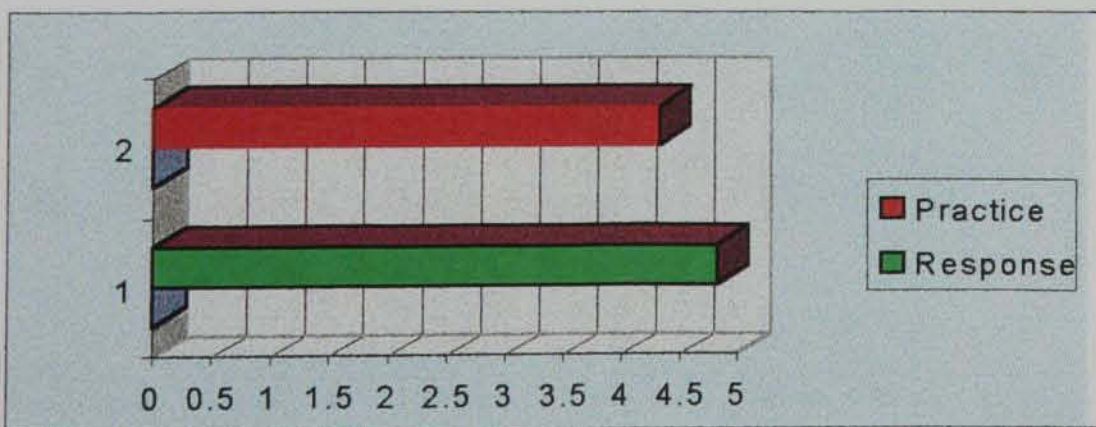
Interestingly the same items scored highest under response and practice. Item 2 was ranked first in both cases and items 1,4 and 7 were ranked second. These results denote a very strong correlation between agreement with the concept of collaborative leadership and its practice under the structural frame.

To the author this indicates a keen awareness among respondents of the role they play in organising school management structures to support teaching and learning in their schools.

The greatest discrepancy between response and practice relates to items 9 and 10 dealing with parents and a student representative body. Future studies may return higher scores for these items since the White Paper, Charting Our Education Future (1995, p139) noting that "the relationships between the school and the home are of fundamental importance," proposes to "adopt a range of measures aimed at fostering active parental partnership with schools." Reference has already been made to the White Paper (p163) regarding the formation of student councils.

Overall, the comparison of response and practice under the structural frame reflects favourably Sergiovanni's (1987, p122) notion of leadership density which is outlined as "the extent to which leadership roles are shared and the extent to which leadership is broadly exercised."

Table 5.5 (b) Comparison : Human Resource Frame



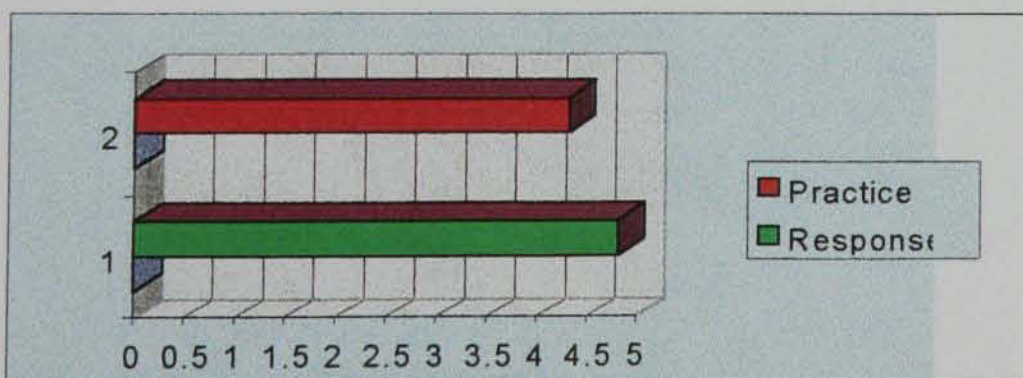
Total Mean Score

Source: Tables 5.3 (b), 5.4 (b)

Item 2 ranked first under response and practice. There was unanimous agreement among respondents that the creation of a community where staff supported each other and fostered a spirit of collaboration was a vital element of collaborative leadership under the human resource frame. That such sentiment should be mirrored under practice is significant. The author contends that the outcome of the research under the human resource frame confirms what Sergiovanni (1996, p35) espouses, namely the necessity of putting people first. Sergiovanni stresses the importance of building people up by increasing their capacity to function, improving their commitment and enhancing their ability to become self managing. All of these concerns are widely covered by practice under the human resource frame.

Lower scoring items under practice refer to parental links and support networks for new staff. The lowest score, item 12, referred to intervention when the performance of a staff member was deemed unacceptable. This may reflect a dearth of skills in dealing with such matters or the degree of autonomy of the individual teacher even within a collaborative culture.

Table 5.5 (c) Comparison : Political Frame



Total Mean Score

Source : Tables 5.3 (c), 5.4 (c)

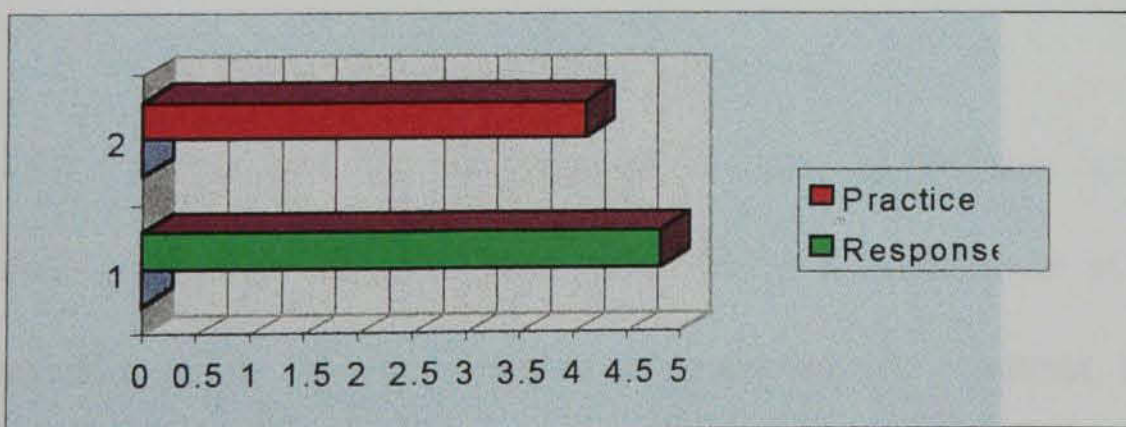


The proximity of scores for response and practice under the human resource frame is repeated here under the political frame. A clustering of scores between 4.7 and 4.3 for items 5,8,1,2,3 and 7 indicates an appreciation among respondents of the political nature of school life.

To quote Hargreaves (1995, p ix), the comparison denotes an awareness that "the real world of schools is a political world, a world of power and influence, bargaining and negotiation, assertion and protection." Blase and Anderson (1995, p13) highlight the behaviours of school principals as being particularly important in setting the political 'tone' of the school. Where this is so teachers were seen to develop "a positive political orientation towards others which resulted in positive, supportive, collaborative, integrative and reciprocal political interactions."

The response to and practice of items under the political frame suggests a leadership among respondents which according to Hargreaves (pV111) in Blase and Anderson (1995) is "open, honest, collaborative, inclusive and democratic."

Table 5.5 (d) Comparison : Symbolic Frame



Total Mean Score

Source : Tables 5.3 (d), 5.4 (d)

While practice and response scored between 4.1 and 4.8, there is a greater difference between them than occurs in the other three frames. This is possibly due to the intangible nature of the items in this frame since, not unlike the political frame, their interpretation and implementation are very personal in nature.

Despite this, the underlying core beliefs of the respondents shine through and this augurs well for the staff of their schools and the children in their care. In the area of practice, items 5 and 8 do score lower and this influences the total mean score of 4.1

Reference was made in chapter 3.6 to the fact that the elements in each of the four frames are linked and interrelated. The author cites the response to and practice of item 7 under the human resource frame and item 5 under the symbolic frame as an example of this association.

The response to item 7 at 4.9 under the human resource frame was very high. This referred to the provision of praise, affirmation and recognition for staff accomplishments. Ranked a joint 3 under response, it ranked 10 under practice.

Likewise with item 5 under the symbolic frame. A response score of 4.8, ranking 3, deals with attaining individual staff member's commitment to the school and the adoption of the school's principles and purposes. By contrast, the practice score for item 5 is 3.6, ranking 7. These results under different frames suggest to the author that within an overall collaborative culture, more time needs to be spent attaining the commitment of individual staff members. This commitment might perhaps be nurtured by a greater use of item 8 under the symbolic frame. Item 8 refers to the use of public

ceremonies and even routine events to communicate and promote the beliefs and values of the school.

An inter-frame comparison as outlined above brings into focus the importance of relationships at all levels in a school. The White Paper, Charting Our Education Future (1995, p162) refers to the significance of relationships and sense of community within schools. There is recognition that the climate in a school arises from a specific ethos or characteristic spirit and reflects the relationships among all members of the school community.

It is the author's contention that practice of the items under the symbolic frame, can contribute to enhancing relationships in schools.

Reviewing tables 5.5 (a), (b), (c) and (d), it is clear that while there is a very high level of agreement with the statements defining the concept of collaborative leadership, this is not quite so strongly represented in the daily practice of respondents.

Table 5.5 (e) Highest scoring items

| Item Number | Frame          | Response Score/Rank | Practice Score/Rank |
|-------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 2           | Structural     | 5.0 : 1             | 4.7 : 1             |
| 2           | Human Resource | 5.0 : 1             | 4.7 : 1             |
| 8           | Political      | 4.8 : 1             | 4.6 : 2             |
| 3           | Symbolic       | 5.0 : 1             | 4.5 : 2             |

Table 5.5 (e) does however illustrate a very high level of consistency for the highest scoring items in each frame under the headings response and practice. This indicates to the author that the respondents are favourably disposed to promoting a collaborative culture in their schools.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Outlining the aspirations of the White paper on Education, Charting Our Education Future (1995) against a background of continuous change and a heightened interest in and expectation of our schools and those who lead them, chapter one indicated the author's reservations regarding the notion of instructional leadership. In recognition of the evolving role of the school principal, the author identified the concept of collaborative leadership from a review of literature. A survey of the level of understanding and practice of this concept among principals of schools serving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds was then conducted.

#### 6.1 Strengths and Limitations

Ten principals were surveyed and the prompt return of all questionnaires, fully completed, can be taken to indicate that the research questionnaire held the respondent's interest. Likewise, the small scale of the study and the comparable contexts in which it was conducted lent a degree of uniformity and afforded the author a supervision facility that might not have been the case in a larger study.

Against this, all the respondents work in the same sector of Irish second level education. The scale of the survey and its context are a limitation in that the widespread applicability of the outcomes is open to question. These limitations mean that it is difficult to make generalisations for other sectors of the Irish system.

While all the respondents replied from their own broad level of experience, it must be stressed that the responses received represent the respondents subjective perceptions of the research questionnaire. It could be argued that the questionnaire should have been supported by interviews with the respondents. Also, the 41 statements contained in the questionnaire were identified in the literature by the author and no claim is made that this list is exhaustive in representing elements of collaborative leadership.

Finally it must be recognised that the reliability of data such as that collected is open to question since there may be a discrepancy between what people actually do in their daily practice and what they say they do.

## **6.2 Outcomes**

Smyth (1989, p 170) writes that "one of the problems with a construct like leadership is that although it may have some meaning in the management sciences, it is difficult to transport it into schools in a way that makes much sense." Commenting on the need to move from a managerialist view of leadership, Smyth (p 190) argues the case for "involving all school participants in an active and inclusive process of questioning, challenging and theorising about the social, political and cultural nature of the work of schools."

With respect to the survey of collaborative leadership amongst school principals, the author notes a very high level of consistency for the highest scoring items in each frame under the headings response and practice. An overall review of tables 5.5 (a) - (d) shows a close relationship between response to and practice of the 41 items of

collaborative leadership. The survey did show that the agreement with the collaborative leadership concept outlined was greater than the practice, with the perceived agreement consistently scoring higher than the practice of the concept.

Each frame brings a particular insight to the study of leadership in schools and the principals surveyed related strongly to the organisational arrangements made under the four frames to facilitate and foster a collaborative culture in their schools. The four frames are linked and interdependent and when all four are operated simultaneously Fullan (1992, p 86) believes that the principal has undertaken a larger goal, that of transforming the culture of the school. Fullan sees the principal in the role of collaborative leader as being the key to the future.

### **6.3 Implications**

Having identified the concept of collaborative leadership and surveyed its understanding and practice, what are the implications for the future? Regarding collaboration, Sizer comments:

The real world demands collaboration, the collective solving of problems....Learning to get along, to function effectively in a group, is essential. Evidence and experience also strongly suggest that an individual's personal learning is enhanced by collaborative effort. The act of sharing ideas, of having to put one's own views clearly to others, of finding defensible compromises and conclusions, is in itself educative (1992, p 89).

It seems to the author that the principals in the survey have made a shift away from the traditional hierarchical structure in schools to a style of leadership with an emphasis on

democratic procedures. These procedures are inclusive rather than exclusive and see the operation of the school as a collective responsibility.

A common thread running through all four frames of this model of leadership is the emphasis on the human dimension of the school as an organisation and the quality of relationships therein. The author believes that this emphasis has far reaching implications for schools of the future.

Hargreaves (1995, p 1) cited in Duignan and Bhindi (1997, p 203) states that the quality of the relationships within a school and within classrooms is central to effective teaching and learning. He concludes that how teachers work with teachers affects how well they work with their students.

Writing on teacher motivation, Lieberman and Miller (1990, p 160) maintain that "the relationship with one's principal is of paramount importance in a teacher's work life" and Sykes (1990, p 116) observes that since "teachers derive their deepest satisfaction in teaching from their work with students" the creation of conditions "in which teachers can be successful provides direct benefits to both teachers and students." Such positiveness lies at the heart of the definition of collaborative leadership advanced by the author.



## 6.4 Conclusions

The survey data indicates that the practice of collaborative leadership is well established in the respondent's schools. From this the author draws the following conclusions.

There is a very strong emphasis on the human dimension of the school organisation. This is manifest in the deep-rooted core belief regarding the role education has to play in the lives of the students attending these schools and the manner in which leadership density is firmly established. The respondents have made a shift away from more traditional hierarchical structures to a style of leadership where the emphasis is on democratic procedures. Such procedures are inclusive rather than exclusive and see the operation of the school as a collective responsibility.

Regarding the latter point, it is significant that the schools in this sector came into being in the last 25 years and their creation in the early 1970s marked a new beginning for second level education in Ireland. A noteworthy feature was their internal management process where promotion was based on merit rather than seniority as was the case in other sectors. In such a climate teachers were encouraged to seek and undertake responsibility for the daily management of the school and this helped to foster a collaborative culture.

Issues raised in this regard include:

- Time

A critical element in facilitating a collaborative culture in schools is the time available to the principal to nurture and enact the concept. All the respondents have a well structured middle-management system in operation in their schools. This assists their involvement in collaborative leadership practices which might not be the case if they were principals in the voluntary secondary sector surveyed by Leader and Boldt (1994). Whether the current reorganisation of middle management structures in schools will facilitate such collaborative practices on a wider scale remains to be seen.

- Training

Nine of the ten respondents had no training for the position of principal. This aligns closely with the findings of Alexander (1992, p 18) who reports that "there has been inadequate in-service and training to prepare principals for the role they are expected to play." While Bennis and Nanus (1985 p188) observed that "nearly all leaders are highly proficient in learning from experience" eight respondents felt that training would have been beneficial. The author welcomes the recognition in the White Paper : Charting Our Education Future (1995, p152) of the need for formal training and preparation. The author suggests that those charged with devising such training programmes should draw on the experience of practitioners such as those surveyed.

- Continuous learning

The concept of training and on-going inservice for principals is very significant. The example of leaders as learners sends a powerful message to other members of the

school community. Given that a teacher may spend up to thirty five years in the classroom, Fullan (1992, p 116) notes that the school can be a place in which teachers learn or stagnate. Echoing Hargreave's (1995, p 1) concerns with teaching and learning, Fullan (1993, p 138) believes that "you can't have a learning society without learning students and you can't have learning students without learning teachers." Collaborative leadership has a key role to play in creating the conditions for the continuous professional development of teachers in what Greenleaf (1977) cited in Duignan and Bhindi (1997, p 206) calls "people-building" leadership. Bennis and Nanus (1985, p 205) believe that "fostering organisational learning by example may be one of the most important functions of leadership."

Pertaining to the future, Murphy and Seashore Louis (1994, p 279) note the emerging outline of a new form of leadership but they caution that we are still far from a prescriptive model for the principal of the future. The author concludes that collaborative leadership advances a model of leadership envisaged by Sergiovanni (1996, p 185) as being "tough enough to demand a great deal from everyone" and yet "tender enough to encourage the heart."

## 6.5 Further Research

Telford (1996, p 70) concludes that specific leadership behaviours are critical to success in developing and sustaining a collaborative culture in schools. Avolio and Bass (1988, p 46) note that very little is known about the process by which individuals become energised and under what circumstances a transforming leader will be most effective. In this regard it would be interesting to put this collaborative leadership model before teachers and monitor their response in terms of what qualities they seek in a principal and what their experience actually is.

The concept could be explored with a wider range of people in each of the respondent's schools to ascertain the impact of collaborative leadership on staff, students and the organisation in general.

Goldring and Rallis (1993, p 95) comment that research reveals no clear relationship between the attributes of school principals and levels of student achievement. This decade has seen the introduction of several new programmes into the Irish post-primary sector. Some programmes involve new methods of assessment and this will in turn involve changes in how students are taught and how their progress is evaluated. Might some research be undertaken regarding the impact of principal leadership on the introduction of these new programmes and their subsequent impact on student outcomes?

## Appendix 1 Changes Impinging on Schools

Kavanagh (1993, p43) points to a convergence of many changes which in varying degrees impinge directly on schools. Kavanagh's index has been augmented by the author in view of change since 1993. This list is not exhaustive.

- declining student population;
- school closures and amalgamations;
- an ageing teaching force;
- withdrawal of religious from schools
- major curricular reform at Junior and Senior levels;
- widespread debate and discussion leading to the Education Bill and the Government White Paper on Education : Charting Our Education Future (1995);
- discussion on a major review of middle-management structures;
- changes in the governance of schools;
- greater parental involvement;
- increased transparency of the exam system.

Source : Kavanagh (1993, p43) and author.

## **Appendix 2 : Educational Disadvantage**

### **Government Recognition**

In this decade, successive Governments' positions on disadvantage as set out in various documents are worthy of note. In the Green Paper, Education For A Changing World (1992), a priority "to tackle barriers to participation, which militate against those from disadvantaged backgrounds" is stated. The programme of Government 1994-1997, A Government of Renewal (1994) proposed "an examination of the needs and abilities of all children from disadvantaged backgrounds to encourage and facilitate their continued participation in education "(p64, 65). The White Paper, Charting Our Education Future (1995), recognised the need "to provide students with the necessary education and training to support the country's economic development and to enable them to make their particular contribution to society in an effective way" (p10). The Government priorities outlined are best summarised by Minister Bhreathnach in her foreword to the aforementioned White Paper when she concludes:

The ultimate objective of the strategies set out in this White Paper is an education system which will provide every student with fulfilling educational experiences at every stage in a lifetime of learning. As our society becomes more complex, the capacity to learn continuously will determine each individual's life chances and decisively influence the quality and prosperity of our society.  
(1995, px).

## Research

In February 1995, the Minister for Education commissioned the Combat Poverty Agency to furnish a report on criteria for the identification of schools in designated areas of disadvantage. The Combat Poverty Agency engaged the Educational Research Centre to undertake the work specified. The contents of the report by Kellaghan et al. (1995), Educational Disadvantage in Ireland, and its recommendations were considered by the Minister and her Department in November 1995. This in turn led to the publication by the Minister of revised criteria for the identification of schools in the most disadvantaged areas and recommendations on more accurate targeting of limited resources and positive discrimination in favour of the most disadvantaged children.

Kellaghan et al. (1995) argue compellingly on the central role that education has to play in improving the life chances of young people today.

They argue:

This is particularly the case for young people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Children who have been born into poor households or live in deprived areas are most subject to educational failure and subsequent labour market exclusion..... The connection between poor educational qualifications and unemployment becomes more pronounced over time, reinforcing the cycle of poverty and inequality (pp V111, 1X).

The Combat Poverty Agency understands educational disadvantage to mean "that young people from socially and economically deprived backgrounds benefit substantially less from educational expenditure than those from better off backgrounds" (p X).

Estimates of poverty and of poor educational achievement indicate that 16% of the population may reasonably be regarded as educationally disadvantaged. Educational disadvantage tends to be regarded as largely an urban phenomenon. This is because it appears in its most concentrated and visible form in inner-city flat complexes and in suburban housing estates characterised by poverty, high levels of unemployment and low quality housing. The author feels it is worth noting that educational disadvantage is not just confined to cities. Kellaghan's Report (1995 p. 47, 48) reveals that the majority (60.7%) of disadvantaged pupils live in rural areas with populations of less than 10,000 followed by Dublin (25.5%). Dublin does have the greatest concentration of disadvantage (18.1% of all pupils in the city are disadvantaged). At post primary level when one considers designation by type of school, the community and comprehensive sector, where the author proposes to undertake research, has the second highest representation.

### **The Education System**

Problems associated with educational disadvantage are among the most pressing facing the educational system in Ireland. The preface to the Kellaghan Report (1995) points out that:

A variety of complex factors that have their roots in the social and economic conditions of communities and families and in discontinuities between the experiences of children at home and in school contribute to a situation in which some children experience severe difficulties at school (p XIV).



Reflecting concern on the need to come to terms with the difficulties outlined, The Report On the National Education Convention (1995, p8) stated that a key concern was to "enable each and every pupil make the most of their potential; to overcome limitations wherever this is possible; to mitigate their effects wherever it is not."

Regarding the above aspiration, Kellaghan et al (1995, p3) outline home conditions that may place a child in a disadvantaged situation in school in relation to how time and space are organised and used; how parents and children talk to each other and spend their time; the values and rewards that govern parents' and children's choice of activities; exposure to acute and potentially chronic stresses.

They also (p3) draw attention to conditions in school which may contribute to disadvantage. This can occur if the language of the classroom draws unevenly from the sociolinguistic home experiences of children, if teachers have low expectations, set undemanding standards and make parents from a less well off socio economic background less welcome than might be the case if they were middle class parents. Teachers may also lack familiarity with children's home backgrounds with the result that they cannot help pupils integrate their home and school experiences. In addition, teachers may not take account in their classrooms of the categories of meaning that children bring with them to school.

Given the home and school conditions which may contribute to disadvantage, the most systematic use of indicators of educational disadvantage in Ireland is to be found in the Schemes of Assistance to Schools in Designated Areas of Disadvantage (1993)

published by the then Department of Education. At post primary level indicators include:

- possession of a medical card;
- receipt of unemployment benefit or assistance;
- residing in local authority housing;
- living in a one-parent family;
- literacy/numeracy problems in school;
- exam performance;
- educational qualifications of parents.

While education on its own is not going to solve the many economic and social problems that a disadvantaged situation gives rise to, it is seen as having an important role to play. "A first assumption in trying to come to terms with these problems is that all individuals, whatever their social origins, should have equal opportunities to access education, training and the occupational structure," Kellaghan et al. (1995, p27). This reflects a core belief which Telford (1996) found in her research in Australian schools and is one which the author proposes to draw on in his research with principals of schools serving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. This core belief is based on the conviction that disadvantaged children should have educational opportunities and that school arrangements can make this happen.

The available evidence suggests a strong tendency at post primary level for students of similar levels of achievement and similar backgrounds to be grouped within individual schools and even within classes in schools, Kellaghan et al (1995, p64).

The Conference of Major Religious Superiors (CMRS) Education Commission (1989) cited in Kellaghan et al (1995, p64, 65) highlighted the negative effects on student's motivation of grouping together students of low levels of achievement. This was likely to reinforce rather than solve the problems of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

While Kellaghan's et al (1995) report on Educational Disadvantage in Ireland makes recommendations on actions to be taken at national and local level, it does acknowledge that "whatever is done in the educational system cannot be expected to solve completely the many problems that disadvantage gives rise to, many of which originate outside the educational system" (p64). The report continues with the aspiration "that poverty and disadvantage will not be reinforced through the operation of the educational system," and that action within the system will help to create a situation where children from poor families, especially those in which parents are unemployed, will not grow up to be poor and unemployed themselves.

To conclude, reference has already been made to the fact that Dublin has the greatest concentration of educational disadvantage. That pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are concentrated in particular schools is borne out by returns from schools applying for designation as disadvantaged. Given this concentration and the combination of home and school factors mentioned from Kellaghan's Report (1995), there are pronounced implications for the teaching staff and principals of such schools.

### **Appendix 3 : Elements of collaboration**

#### Structural Frame:

- democratic processes;
- leadership density;
- direction/vision;
- shared goals;
- shared responsibility;
- roles;
- policy process;
- program procedures;
- co-ordination;
- planning;
- listening;
- frank, open and frequent communication.

#### Human resource frame:

- centrality of teaching and learning;
- strong sense of community;
- value and regard for professional development;
- teachers as curriculum leaders;
- parents as co-partners;
- teams;
- teachers teaching teachers;

- professional honesty;
- support, praise, trust;
- acceptance;
- sharing;
- continuous learning;
- continuous improvement;
- positive student/staff relations;
- staff cohesion.

Political frame:

- absence of hierarchy;
- power sharing;
- open discussion;
- consensus;
- majority rule;
- shared responsibility;
- using authority;
- using influence;
- diffusing conflict;
- agreed upon 'political' behaviour;
- participatory decision - making procedures;
- disagreements not seen as disruptive;
- absence of sub-groups;
- negotiation;

- coalitions;
- networks;
- frank, open and frequent communication.

Symbolic frame:

- beliefs;
- values;
- attitudes;
- norms of behaviour;
- shared meanings;
- symbols;
- rituals;
- ceremonies.

Source : Telford (1996, p23, 24).

Appendix 4

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN 2 IRELAND  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
M.Sc. in Educational Management  
3028 Arts & Social Sciences Building  
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March 1998.

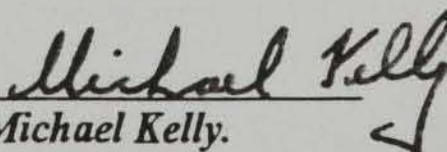
To: The Principal,  
Community School,  
Tallaght,  
Dublin 24.

*Dear Principal,*

I am in my second year of the M.Sc. course in Educational Management in Trinity College. This year, students are required to conduct some research around a chosen topic identified from a literature review. In this regard, I have selected the topic Collaborative Leadership and enclose a questionnaire to explore your agreement with statements outlined and current practice of same.

Thank you for your co-operation in undertaking to complete this questionnaire. The information enclosed will be treated with strictest confidence.

Yours sincerely,

  
Michael Kelly.

# **COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP**

*Principal Questionnaire*



## INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature has highlighted principal leadership as a critical factor for school performance. This is particularly true at present given the various demands on and expectations of our education system against a background of a rapidly changing and evolving society. One approach to the study of leadership in schools has been identified as Collaborative Leadership.


*This style of leadership simultaneously values and caters to group and individual needs, resulting in a workplace which advances the teaching practice of a school and enhances student learning.*

The intention of this questionnaire is to survey collaborative leadership practices among school principals in a selection of schools serving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in the community and comprehensive sector.

## FORMAT OF QUESTIONNAIRE

- Section A** : Profile of the principal.
- Section B** : Collaborative Leadership : your response to the statements outlined in each of the four frames.
- Section C** : Collaborative Leadership : the degree to which you currently practice the outlined behaviours in each of the four frames.

Thank you for your co-operation in undertaking to complete this questionnaire. The information enclosed will be treated with strictest confidence.

  
Michael Kelly, March, 1998  
10-03-98

**SECTION A : PRINCIPAL PROFILE**

1. Are you Male  Female

2. Your experience (no. of years) as:

| <i>school</i>  | <i>This school</i>   | <i>Other</i>         |
|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Teacher        | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Vice-Principal | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Principal      | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

3. Your school:

|               | <i>Type</i>          | <i>Boys</i>          | <i>Girls</i>         | <i>Co-Ed</i>         |
|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Secondary     | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Community     | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Comprehensive | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Vocational    | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

4. Nature of catchment area: Rural  Urban

5. Nature of housing: Local Authority   
 Private   
 Mix of above

6. Number of students

7. Student Numbers: Increasing   
 Static   
 Decreasing

8. Number of staff

9. Present Middle Management/Post Structures:

(a) Number of Vice Principals   
 (b) Number of 'A' Posts   
 (c) Number of 'B' Posts

10. **Training**

(a) Did you receive any formal training for your position as Principal?

Yes

No

(b) If "yes" state where and what it consisted of:

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(c) If "no"

- do you think you should have?

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- how would training have been of benefit to you?

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(d) Have you received any formal training since your appointment?

Yes

No

(e) If "yes" from whom?

- Management Association
- Department of Education
- Degree/Diploma (Specify)
- Education Centres
- Other (Specify)

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## SECTION B : COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Please indicate your response to each statement below describing collaborative leadership practices, by circling the appropriate number where:

**5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = undecided; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree**

### 1. THE STRUCTURAL FRAME

The structural frame addresses the importance of formal roles and responsibilities. Structures in schools provide the means by which:

- goals are set, decisions are made, planning is designed and carried out;
- roles are identified, job descriptions are clarified, responsibilities are allocated.

### COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP UNDER THE STRUCTURAL FRAME INVOLVES:

(5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = undecided; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree)

- Careful organisation of school management structures to support teaching and learning and enhance individual student learning  
5 4 3 2 1
- Encouraging an atmosphere which respects and values all members of the school community and promotes frank, open and frequent communication  
5 4 3 2 1
- Providing opportunities for people to fully participate in decision making processes.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Extending leadership opportunities and a sharing of responsibility in the school community  
5 4 3 2 1
- Encouraging staff to have a significant say in the organisation of the school and their professional lives.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Structuring staff meetings to facilitate whole staff contribution in a large group and also in smaller discussion groups which report back  
5 4 3 2 1
- Facilitating fair and equitable decision making  
5 4 3 2 1
- Ensuring that people are aware of what to do if they are unhappy about some aspect of the organisation  
5 4 3 2 1
- Creating structures whereby parents experience a welcoming and supportive atmosphere  
5 4 3 2 1
- Facilitating the establishment of a students representative body.  
5 4 3 2 1

## 2. THE HUMAN RESOURCE FRAME

The human resource frame is build around the view that:

- schools are social organisations steeped in human needs, wants and claims;
- the individual talents, skills and energy of each member are the school's most vital resource;
- there is a constant interplay between the individual and the organisation to ensure a fit between administrative goals and the goals of individual members.

### COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP UNDER THE HUMAN RESOURCE FRAME INVOLVES:

(5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = undecided; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree)

- Being aware that the principal's daily administrative practice is critical in developing a collaborative culture  
5 4 3 2 1
- Encouraging a sense of community whereby staff support each other and foster a spirit of collaboration  
5 4 3 2 1
- Facilitating continuous learning by staff through frameworks such as subject meetings, curriculum development opportunities, team teaching etc.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Valuing people as individuals and valuing the groups to which individuals belong.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promoting improved classroom practice by affording teachers opportunities for professional development  
5 4 3 2 1
- Encouraging people to take initiative and responsibility  
5 4 3 2 1
- Providing praise affirmation and recognition for staff accomplishments.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Creating an atmosphere of openness and professional honesty.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Being available to staff and maintaining a high profile around the school.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Operating a network of support for new staff  
5 4 3 2 1
- Providing support for teachers with difficulties  
5 4 3 2 1
- Intervening when the performance of a staff member is deemed unacceptable  
5 4 3 2 1
- Ensuring that in so far as possible the school caters for the needs of all students.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promoting positive links with parents and the wider community  
5 4 3 2 1

### 3. THE POLITICAL FRAME

The political frame holds that a principal's understanding and management of the political milieu of school life is crucial for the overall success of a school. There is

- acceptance that politics is inevitable in daily school affairs and that problems will routinely arise;
- recognition of the importance of reaching agreement through discussion, negotiation and compromise in a climate of openness

#### **COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP UNDER THE POLITICAL FRAME INVOLVES:**

(5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = undecided; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree)

- Using political skill to solve everyday problems through negotiation  
5 4 3 2 1
- Sharing power and responsibility and providing opportunities for active participation  
5 4 3 2 1
- Facilitating open discussion to create the conditions for democratic decision making.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Using influence and authority to create a climate for balanced discussion so that consensus is reached.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Accepting, that having considered all points of view, the principal must use his/her authority to make the ultimate decision  
5 4 3 2 1
- Provision of formal processes through which issues can be addressed and problems solved in a fair and amicable manner.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Exercising informal contacts to diffuse conflict and promote good organisational health  
5 4 3 2 1
- Being accessible to staff and promoting an open, supportive environment which ensures a fair representation of views.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Ensuring that information is readily available to staff thereby developing a sense of trust in the decision making process  
5 4 3 2 1

## THE SYMBOLIC FRAME

The symbolic frame focuses attention on the shared beliefs and values that are woven into the very fabric of the school. Beyond the areas addressed in the other three frames, there exists an intangible element which reflects the ethos of a school.

### COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP UNDER THE SYMBOLIC FRAME INVOLVES:

(5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = undecided; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree)

- Having deeply held core beliefs e.g. that children from disadvantaged backgrounds should have full educational opportunities and that school arrangements can make this happen  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promoting and protecting your core beliefs through your application of the other three frames to firmly establish a shared vision in practice.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Creating an atmosphere where it is the norm for students to respect themselves, other people and property.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promoting good, standard and approved practice among staff which takes notice of the responsibility of care 'in loco parentis'.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Attaining individual staff member's commitment to the school and adoption of its principles and purposes.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promoting shared beliefs to bring about a common purpose which underpins the daily practice of the school.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Fostering a sense of community where genuine care and concern for colleagues, both personally and professionally, is the norm.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Availing of public ceremonies and routine events to communicate and promote the beliefs and values of the school.  
5 4 3 2 1

## SECTION C : COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Please indicate the degree to which you currently **practise** the following behaviours in your role as principal on a scale where:

**5 = always ..... 1 = not at all**

Please do so by circling the appropriate number below.

### 1. THE STRUCTURAL FRAME

- Carefully organise school management structures to support teaching and learning and enhance individual student learning  
5 4 3 2 1
- Encourage an atmosphere which respects and values all members of the school community and promotes frank, open and frequent communication  
5 4 3 2 1
- Provide opportunities for people to fully participate in decision making processes  
5 4 3 2 1
- Extend leadership opportunities and a sharing of responsibility in the school community.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Encourage staff to have a significant say in the organisation of the school and their own professional lives.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Structure staff meetings to facilitate whole staff contributions in large groups and in smaller discussion groups which report back.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Facilitate fair and equitable decision making.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Ensure that people are aware of what to do if they are unhappy about some aspect of the organisation  
5 4 3 2 1
- Create structures whereby parents experience a welcoming and supportive atmosphere  
5 4 3 2 1
- Facilitate the establishment of a student representative body.  
5 4 3 2 1



## 2. THE HUMAN RESOURCE FRAME

(Practise where: 5 = always.....1 = not at all)

- Be aware that the principal's daily administrative practice is critical in developing a collaborative culture  
5 4 3 2 1
- Encourage a sense of community whereby staff support each other and foster a spirit of collaboration  
5 4 3 2 1
- Facilitate continuous learning by staff through frameworks such as subject meetings, curriculum development opportunities, team teaching etc.,  
5 4 3 2 1
- Value people as individuals and value the groups to which individuals belong.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promote improved classroom practice by affording teachers opportunities for professional development  
5 4 3 2 1
- Encourage people to take initiative and responsibility  
5 4 3 2 1
- Provide praise, affirmation and recognition for staff accomplishments.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Create an atmosphere of openness and professional honesty  
5 4 3 2 1
- Be available to staff and maintain a high profile around the school.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Operate a network of support for new staff  
5 4 3 2 1
- Provide support for teachers with difficulties  
5 4 3 2 1
- Intervene when the performance of a staff member is deemed unacceptable  
5 4 3 2 1
- Ensure that in so far as possible, the school caters for the needs of all students.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promote positive links with parents and the wider community.  
5 4 3 2 1

### 3. THE POLITICAL FRAME

(Practise where: 5 = always.....1 = not at all

- Use political skill to solve everyday problems through negotiation  
5 4 3 2 1
- Share power and responsibility and provide opportunities for active participation  
5 4 3 2 1
- Facilitate open discussion to create the conditions for democratic decision making  
5 4 3 2 1
- Use influence and authority to create a climate for balanced discussion so that consensus is reached.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Accept that having considered all points of view, the principal must use his/her authority to make the ultimate decision.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Provide formal processes through which issues can be addressed and problems solved in a fair and amicable manner.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Exercise informal contacts to diffuse conflict and promote good organisational health.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Be accessible to staff and promote an open, supportive environment which ensures a fair representation of views.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Ensure that information is readily available to staff thereby developing a sense of trust in the decision making process.  
5 4 3 2 1

#### 4. THE SYMBOLIC FRAME

(Practise where: 5 = always.....1 = not at all

- Have deeply held core beliefs e.g. that children from disadvantaged backgrounds should have full educational opportunities and that school arrangements can make this happen  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promote and protect your core beliefs through your application of the other three frames to firmly establish a shared vision in practice.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Create an atmosphere where it is the norm for students to respect themselves, other people and property  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promote good, standard and approved practice among staff which takes notice of the responsibility of care in 'loco parentis.'  
5 4 3 2 1
- Attain individual staff member's commitment to the school and adoption of its principles and purposes.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Promote shared beliefs to bring about a common purpose which underpins the daily practice of the school.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Foster a sense of community where genuine care and concern for colleagues, both personally and professionally, is the norm.  
5 4 3 2 1
- Avail of public ceremonies and routine events to communicate and promote the beliefs and values of the school  
5 4 3 2 1

## **Appendix 6 Areas identified by respondents with regard to training.**

- School accounts/financial management
- Building maintenance
- Personnel/human resource management
- Facilitating collaborative decision making
- General administration
- Anticipating and resolving conflict
- An overview of what is involved in setting up a school
- Updating on educational issues
- Awareness/familiarity with Department of Education procedures, expectations, deadlines.
- Timetabling, structural issues.

Training in the above areas would lead to greater confidence as indicated by one respondent.

Source: Collaborative Leadership Questionnaire : Author 1998.

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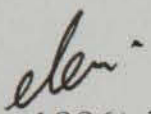
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