

# Leadership and Redefining the Three Rs

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By what criteria should schools be evaluated? Politicians are increasingly looking towards standardized test scores, the so-called objective data. Parents use anecdotal evidence about the school's reputation or its track record in university admissions. Accreditation agencies establish a more comprehensive array of success indicators. Yet one of the most startling and predictive barometers of school quality is contained in Roland Barth's (1990) classic work *Improving Schools from Within*. Barth suggests that the quality of a school is often reflected with remarkable precision in the quality of the adult-to-adult relationships within the school house. He observes that the manner in which adults speak to each other, share ideas, form work partnerships and even manage conflicts is often a profoundly accurate predictor of the quality of learning within the classroom.

But what have adult-to-adult relationships to do with student learning? For the past four decades, school people have been exhorted to be 'child-centred'. What has happened to the child in Barth's barometer? Western

educational research is finding 'the child' in the vital connections between high quality adult relationships and high quality student learning (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Garmston and Wellman 1999; Seashore Louis et al. 1996). We have known this intuitively for some time. But what is it specifically that links quality adult relationships to student learning? Both the 'hard' data and the increasingly important 'soft' data that are emerging from schools suggest that principals, department chairs and grade-level coordinators can and do have a powerful influence on school climate and that this influence nourishes powerful learning relationships and reflective craft practice (Deal and Peterson 1999; Lightfoot 1983; Marzano et al. 2005). It is within these learning relationships and reflective practice that we will find the seeds of school renaissance.

One of the limitations of this chapter is that most of the research and examples cited come from Western sources or international schools that have their philosophical roots in the American or British educational traditions.

However, there is growing evidence that the movement towards reflective professional practice and the emphasis on developing high quality adult-to-adult relationships are not limited to simply Western-style schools. In discussions with the senior leadership at the Aga Khan Educational Foundation in Paris several years ago, I became aware that one of the central planks in their forward-looking strategic plan for their schools in Africa and Central Asia was the nurturing of a culture of reflective practice. In similar conversations with the Ministry of Education in Malaysia, it has also become evident that there is an increasing awareness of the critical relationship between professional reflection and improved student learning. Perhaps more than any other non-Western country, Singapore has recognized the link between reflection and creative/critical thinking. Later in this chapter, I will focus on some of the issues that non-Western educational traditions face when they attempt to embrace cultures of reflective practice.

### **LEADERSHIP, BRAMBLES AND BORDER COLLIES**

The search for a metaphor for school leadership followed me to the foothills of the French Pyrenees, where a number of years ago my wife and I purchased a tumble-down farmhouse surrounded by acres of alpine meadowland. Amid my ruminations on school climate and leadership, I was forced to enter in to the annual battle with the blackberry brambles. According to local sources, the European bramble is one of the fastest growing entities in the world. It was been clocked at an incredible eleven inches in a 24 hour period! And so when we return to the Pyrenees each summer our once bucolic meadows are hideously overgrown in a jungle maze of tenacious brambles, and our rustic farmhouse resembles the castle Prince Charming discovers on his quest for Sleeping Beauty. All this explains why I became a shepherd. I invested in a small flock of sheep – four to be exact. I had been reliably told that sheep would eat the spring bramble

shoots and so keep the meadows open. So with a vanguard of four ravenous sheep, I launched my pre-emptive strike against the brambles. It was not, however, the sheep that provided the germ of a school leadership metaphor. It was instead the mid-summer televised European sheep dog trials.

If you have never seen a sheep dog trial, a brief word of introduction is in order. These are timed competitions, which pit sheep farmers and their incredibly well-trained dogs against each other in the speed and efficiency with which they can move and organize a flock of sheep. The trials begin with a farmer standing on a wooden platform at one end of a huge field. The field is surrounded by spectators. On the field a hundred or so sheep are scattered. These are sheep that neither shepherd nor dog has seen before. The shepherd then calls out a series of commands to his border collie. The dog proceeds to dash off to round up the flock, and then herd the hundred or so sheep from one end of the field to a relatively small circle marked on the grass at the other end. Once the sheep are within the circle, the sheep farmer calls out another specific instruction to the collie. The dog then locates one of the sheep that has been distinctively marked, cuts that sheep out of the flock, keeping the rest within the circle, and brings the individual sheep to his master's feet. To say I was impressed would be an understatement.

During this same time, I was co-authoring a new graduate-level course entitled 'The Effective Principal: From Theory to Practice'. I was asking myself a series of probing questions about the role of the school principal. What was the ultimate purpose of school leadership? Can that purpose be achieved simply by way of mastery of a collection of capacities and the practice of an assortment of strategies? A good deal of research seemed to point in the direction of a checklist of leadership capacities. Was school leadership simply the acquisition of a toolbox of skills – a paint-by-number, mix-and-match of situations and appropriate responses? I asked myself if the truly dynamic school leaders that I have

worked with had shared common attributes. And amid these musings ran flocks of sheep, skilfully chased by energetic border collies. Finally, a troubling question burst in upon my planning. If educational leadership could be reduced to a checklist of behavioural strategies, was it not analogous to the movement of sheep from one field to another?

I found the question troubling because at least some of the research I had been reading seemed to tacitly adopt this 'toolbox' model. The more I thought about it, the more distressing the question became. A principal assigns children and teachers to classes, organizes a master schedule of classes, arranges for the inventory of teaching supplies and sets attainable curricular targets. Within the classroom, the teacher sets behavioural expectations, determines learning objectives, budgets instructional time and then takes his or her students through the stages of expanding literacy and numeracy. These are necessary tasks. There is nothing inherently wrong with management and organization. Why was the shepherd analogy troubling? Going all the way back to biblical times, the conscientious shepherd has a long and noble history as a diligent and caring figure. The answer is that the metaphor is hollow and superficial because it does not address the purpose of leadership. Drawing on the work of Linda Lambert (1998), Richard Elmore (2000), James Spillane (Spillane and Sherer, 2004; Spillane et al. 2001, 2003) and others, I would like to suggest that the ultimate purpose of school leadership, whether it is practised by principals, team leaders or teachers, is to build leadership capacity in others. It is building leadership capacity in others that changes the hearts and minds of all who inhabit the school house. When sheep are moved from one field to another they remain intrinsically unchanged. In some schools the same is true for students. As young people are taken (in an orderly and efficient fashion) from the meadows of Ancient Civilizations to the fields of the Renaissance, from the pastures of Dickens and the Brontë sisters to the plains of Hemingway and Fitzgerald, these students too may remain unchanged. The fields may change, but like

skillfully herded sheep, the students remain largely unaltered by the experience. Unconnected and irrelevant information has been poured into young vessels, but the vessel itself is in much the same shape as it was before the so-called learning experience. This is both the tragedy and travesty of education.

When the purpose of leadership is to build leadership capacity in others, school people are actually transformed by the experience of working and learning together. Our hearts and minds are affected. We are not the same creatures that once grazed on the other side of the fence. When we build leadership capacity in others we create the school climate where learning relationships can flourish. The transformation of school climate that accompanies the pervasive development of leadership capacity in others provides a compelling vision of what Arthur Koestler referred to as the journey towards 'holonomy'.

## HOLONOMY AND FIVE STATES OF MIND

Koestler (1972) coined the term 'holonomy' to refer to the balance between individual autonomy (self-direction and self-fulfillment) and the integration of the individual into the purpose, vision and work of a community. The movement towards holonomy, like the movement towards building leadership capacity in others, involves the resolution of seemingly opposing forces: the personal desire for power, authority and autonomy and our profound psychological and spiritual need for ego-integration (Erikson 1977) and a sense of belonging to something larger and more significant than self. Costa and Garmston (2002) suggest that there are five states of mind that, when cultivated by the individual or by an organization (Garmston and Wellman 1999), can serve as pathways to holonomy: efficacy, flexibility, consciousness, craftsmanship and interdependence. These states of mind are also, not surprisingly, pathways to building leadership capacity in others.

*Efficacy*

In the 1980s a landmark study by the Rand Corporation (Costa and Garmston 2002) identified teacher efficacy as the single most important variable in affecting successful school change. Neither the curriculum nor the instructional methodology mattered nearly as much as the teachers' belief in themselves. Efficacy is that 'can do' attitude that reflects personal empowerment. It is predicated on an internal locus of responsibility: the belief that I can personally make a difference. It is the hallmark of optimism and hope. In the process of building leadership capacity in others, there is arguably nothing more important than engendering efficacy in both colleagues and students.

*Flexibility*

Flexibility is the ability to perceive situations from multiple perspectives. It is both the capacity for empathy and the ability to disengage and take the 'balcony' view. Recent work in differentiated instruction (Kusuma-Powell and Powell, in preparation; Tomlinson and Allan 2000) is pointing to a strong correlation between effective instruction and the ability that teachers have to come to know their students as learners. When we write about 'knowing our students' we are not referring to simply superficial social knowledge: family background, friendship groups or outside interests. Of course, such information is important. However, the deep knowledge that we are referring to involves the arduous work of coming to know students' learning profiles, their intelligence preferences, their readiness for specific challenges, their cultural backgrounds and the wiles and whims of their often mercurial emotional landscapes. Flexibility of thought and perception promotes deep knowledge of others.

*Consciousness*

In addition to knowing our students, research (Goleman et al. 2002; Kusuma-Powell and Powell, in preparation) also suggests that a prime component of effective leadership and teaching comes from penetrating self-knowledge. Consciousness, as defined by Costa and

Garmston (2002), is awareness of self and others. This involves being aware of how we select and construct our perceptions, being cognizant of the personal and cultural baggage we carry into situations, explicitly exploring how congruent our values and our behaviors are and 'mining' our experiential insights.

*Craftsmanship*

As leaders and learners, one of our explicit professional responsibilities is to nurture craftsmanship in self and others. Craftsmanship can be seen in the classroom as the execution of a masterful unit plan of learning. It can be seen in the larger organization in the implementation of a targeted programme of professional development. Craftsmanship is both a goal and an energy source. It comes centre stage when we seek to improve our pedagogical craft as teachers or when we assist a middle school student to improve his or her expository writing skills.

*Interdependence*

Interdependence is the state of mind most directly allied to holonomy. It is the process through which we cultivate in ourselves and others the confluence of individual autonomy and the constructive growth of a learning community. It is the subtle and yet critically important work of building learning relationships that simultaneously celebrates the work of the individual and the connectedness we have to common purpose.

Our conscious attention to these states of mind provides the conditions necessary for developing leadership capacity in others. There is a significant paradigm shift in accepting that the purpose of educational leadership is to develop leadership capacity in others. Leadership ceases to be a noun and becomes a verb (Lambert 1998). Leadership in schools ceases to be the exclusive and exulted position of the few and becomes a basic human right. Everyone has the potential and the right to work as a leader (1998). The psychological and emotional shift from traditional perceptions of leadership is nothing less than quantum. Leadership is no longer a personality trait. Leaders and leadership are not synonymous. Leadership becomes the communal process of learning that

leads to constructive change. This shift has the potential to transform schools and the people who inhabit them. As we explore the shift in leadership, we need to unlearn some of our traditional and perhaps even unconscious perceptions about power and authority. We need to rethink the nature of our professional relationships and our various roles within the school house. What does it really mean to be a principal? To be a teacher? What are the responsibilities involved in being a good colleague? What are our shared purposes? What does trust look like when it comes to permeate the culture and climate of a school? In short, we need to re-examine the congruence between our habitual perceptions and our deeply held values.

### LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

In a seminar hosted by the Academy of International School Heads (AISH), Michael Fullan began a provocative workshop by stating that 'any school improvement initiative that does not also improve relationships is bound to be ineffective'. Increasingly, Western educational research is revealing the vital connections between high quality adult relationships and high quality student learning (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Garmston and Wellman 1999; Seashore Louis et al. 1996). By high quality adult-to-adult relationships, Roland Barth is not writing about mere civility, passive cooperation or conviviality. In fact, Garmston and Wellman (1999) see conviviality as a potential hindrance to the development of thoughtful and reflective work groups. Barth is referring to adult learning relationships that reflect hard-earned collegiality and produce thoughtful, reflective and highly productive teams. In education we have known intuitively about the connection between high quality adult relationships and accelerated student learning for some time, and many international schools have actually written mission and philosophy statements that enshrine the importance of 'team work', 'collaboration' or 'collegiality'.

Even in the hard-nosed, unsentimental world of business, a recent barrage of leadership books is touting the power of quality professional relationships. Lewin and Regine (2000), authors of *The Soul at Work*, relate the commercial world to the new science of complexity theory. According to the authors, we are no longer living in the linear world that produced Henry Ford assembly lines and time and motion efficiency experts. In the old Newtonian world, things and people may exist independent of each other, and when they do interact they do so in simple, predictable ways. However, in a post-Newtonian, non-linear, dynamic world – such as the one we are increasingly seeing ourselves as heirs to – everything exists only in relationship to everything else. And these interactions often lead to complex and unpredictable outcomes (Garmston and Wellman 1995; Wheatley 1992). Anyone who has worked in a school will be familiar with the attributes of a post-Newtonian existence. In this brave new world, relationships are the prime organizing principle.

Education has known about the importance of relationships for a long time. Even in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the great Russian cognitive psychologist Lev Vygotsky was writing about how learning occurs in a social context (1986). Teachers and students have known intuitively for years that constructive relationships within the classroom are an essential condition for learning (see, for example, Chapter 20 by den Brok and Koopman in this Handbook for a review of research on teacher–student relationships). When we think back on a particularly influential teacher from our own past experience, we tend to focus on the power of that learning relationship rather than the content that was mastered. Michael Fullan (2001) identifies five characteristics of effective leadership for school change, one of which is strong relationships. Lashway (2001) further links the development of learning relationships to the school improvement process. He writes that 'deep changes require deep learning, and leaders must build teacher learning into the everyday fabric of school life' (p. 7). Fullan characterizes learning relationships as

'knowledge building, knowledge sharing, knowledge creation and knowledge management' (p. 77).

Marzano et al. (2005), in their meta-analysis of leadership research, identify 11 factors that contribute to schools focusing on doing what he refers to as the 'right work'. One of these factors is Collegiality and Professionalism. He cites research by Brookover et al. (1978) that attests to the connection between learning relationships and school climate. 'We believe that the differences in school climate explain much of the difference in academic achievement between schools that is normally attributed to composition' (p. 303). Marzano et al. go on to write:

In operation, collegiality and professionalism are a function of implicit or explicit norms of behavior among staff members. These norms serve to create relationships that are professional in nature while being cordial and friendly. This factor also includes structures that allow teachers to be an integral aspect of the important decisions in a school. Finally, this factor involves professional development that is focused, skill-oriented, and cohesive from session to session and year to year. (p. 89)

There is, however, an undeniable social and emotional dimension to learning relationships. Whenever we talk to principals and teachers about learning relationships we hear the words and phrases 'trust', 'risk-taking' and 'respect'. Learning relationships rarely happen spontaneously or naturally. They are not the result of some mystical interpersonal 'chemistry'. On the contrary, such relationships are painstakingly constructed by leaders, ascribed and emergent, who strive to build leadership capacity in others through humility, active listening, mediating the deep thinking of colleagues and viewing others as trusted resources in a common endeavour. Collins (2005), in his description of Level Five Leadership, the leadership that permeates the transition of good companies to great organizations, identifies the companion attributes of Level Five Leaders as humility and intense personal will.

What is it then that truly distinguishes learning relationships from other social

relationships and what is it that makes these learning relationships the cornerstone of high quality schools?

## REFLECTION AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

In a single phrase, I would like to suggest that the single most distinguishing characteristic of learning relationships is professional reflection. From Socrates to Solzhenitsyn, writers and philosophers have bemoaned humankind's inability to learn from raw experience. History, we are told, repeats itself because we are congenitally unable to learn from experience. We can, however, learn from *reflection on experience*. This is also true when it comes to our craft knowledge as teachers and as school leaders. We learn not from our experience in the classroom, but from our reflection on our teaching and student learning. One year's reflection is immensely more valuable than 20 years' experience. So relationships in and of themselves are not enough. Strong teacher communities can be effective or not, depending on whether teachers make breakthroughs in learning or whether they reinforce methods that do not achieve results. Fullan (2001) makes the distinction that:

weak collaboration is always ineffective, but strong teaching communities can make things worse if, in their collaboration, teachers (however unwittingly) reinforce each other's bad or ineffective practices. This is why close relationships are not ends in themselves. Collaborative cultures, which by definition have close relationships, are indeed powerful, but unless they are focusing on the right things, they may end up being powerfully wrong. (p. 67)

Several years ago, I co-presented a weekend workshop on differentiated instruction at a large international school. Within minutes of the opening of the workshop, both presenters sensed resistance from some of the participants. Their verbal and non-verbal behaviour suggested a degree of apathy, passive resistance and in some cases overt irritation. During the first coffee break, we set out to learn more about the attitudes and dispositions

that the participants had brought with them to the workshop. The first thing we learned was that the administration had declared that attendance at the Saturday and Sunday workshop would be mandatory (something the presenters had not been informed about in advance). 'We need to create', the principal informed me, 'more of a culture of professional development.' This edict had understandably had the opposite effect and had engendered no small degree of resentment. However, more interesting in terms of our exploration of professional relationships and reflection were the participants' perceptions of their school. During the weekend we heard many comments that this school was one of the finest, if not *the* finest, international school in the world. It had outstanding public examination results, highly selective admissions and exemplary university admissions. Many of the participants saw no earthly need for differentiated instruction or, for that matter, professional development. We also heard repeatedly that the school had an amazingly talented teaching staff. So far so good. But as we listened to teachers talk about their school, we also heard about a school climate that was characterized by a high degree of aggressive interpersonal and interdepartmental competition. We heard that rumour and gossip were rife, new ideas and innovations were routinely dismissed and that public ridicule was a common feature of faculty meetings. We heard that risk-taking was almost non-existent, professional development was widely scorned and that teacher turnover among younger teachers was particularly high. In the words of one teacher: 'It is a close knit teaching staff that has managed to petrify the status quo and fossilize our collective intellect.'

Fullan's words (2001) return to us: 'Collaborative cultures ... are indeed powerful, but unless they are focused on the right things they may end up being powerfully wrong' (p. 67). What helps teaching faculties focus on the 'right things' is the act of reflection. While it is certainly possible to engage in solitary professional reflection (for example, keeping a professional journal), we have found that when teaching partners, groups,

grade-level teams or departments engage in reflection as a collective activity the results are often extraordinarily beneficial and enriching (Langer and Colton 2005; Powell and Napoliello 2005). The fertile exchange of collegial reflection often produces powerful insights and 'ah hah!' moments that can serve as potent influences on instructional improvement. Most of the teachers that we have encountered agree that not enough time is spent on professional reflection. Kaagan and Markle (1993) write:

Discussing educational issues is something that the diverse actors in the education drama rarely get to do. Merely providing time and resources to support team development around these issues seems to have a marked pay off. By making overtly collective and open reflections that up to now have remained singular and closed, there emerges a strong will and capacity to innovate. (p.11)

In this fast-paced, frenetic world of ours, reflection is almost a counter-intuitive activity. However, there is strong evidence – even from the business world – that 'Slow Knowing' (Claxton 1997) may actually help us distinguish between fashionable but shallow ideas that promise more than they can deliver and initiatives that are more worthy of our time and energy. The word reflection conjures up different connotations for different people and at least some of these associations may be obstacles to practice. Reflection for some teachers connotes a formal process that they may feel they lack the skills to engage in. For others it presents a time-consuming activity that detracts from their 'real' work. For yet others there are quasi-mystical associations that render images of sitting in silence in a moonlit garden in a painful yoga-like posture.

The most frequent question that emerges in conversations with teachers and school leaders about professional reflection is 'Where does the time come from?' With increasing work demands, pressures from a variety of external sources, including demanding parents and results-oriented boards of directors, teachers are despairing of having yet another professional expectation added to their already overflowing plates. If reflection were another such curricular add-on, we might agree. However,

reflective practice is not something extra, a nicety to be entertained when the urgencies of our daily duties are complete. Reflection represents the critical difference between moving sheep from one meadow to another and creating a truly transformational school climate. Time is not the issue, priority and leadership expectations are. Reflection is, however, often correctly associated with the discomfort that many of us feel when we are confronted with ambiguity and cognitive dissonance. The British poet John Keats wrote in a letter to his brother about 'negative capability' – by this he meant cultivating the capacity to wait, to remain attentive even in the face of incomprehension. Keats penned the letter just after he had spent an evening with a friend who 'could not feel he had a personal identity unless he had made up his mind about everything'. As Fullan (2001) points out, this attentive waiting in the face of incomprehension requires a degree of inner security, the 'confidence that one may lose clarity and control without losing one's self' (p. 123).

There are three compelling reasons why schools should embed reflection in the fabric of their school climate and culture. First of all, the example of such collective professional reflection sets an explicit norm that within *this* school all adults are learners and that we have much to learn from each other. Within this simple statement lies profound humility and the foundations of mutual respect. Colleagues are perceived as valued educational resources. Second, when teachers and principals engage in reflective practice their knowledge of both their craft and student learning increases dramatically (Langer and Colton 2005). For example, we know that effective differentiated instruction is predicated upon the teacher having a deep knowledge of his or her students as learners and a profound knowledge of the curriculum to be taught. While some teachers may be able to achieve this level of understanding in solitude, most of us benefit enormously from the support, perspective and feedback of our colleagues. Third, collective professional reflection supports a climate of trust and shared accountability. When we share our experiences in the classroom, our triumphs and

our failures, we place in public view fragile pieces of ourselves. We take a risk and fulfill one of the little written-about expectations of our profession – courage. Too often lack of a trusting environment is cited as a reason for the absence of reflection. If we are honest with ourselves, the culprit is not the absence of trust but the absence of courage.

When we reflect with colleagues on our professional experiences, we come to share both goals and responsibility. We cease to be solitary shepherds. We begin to take professional accountability back to where it rightly belongs – away from the politicians and media – and placed in the hands of responsible and responsive classroom practitioners. In this complicated time of multiple and often conflicting demands on our profession, the implication of learning relationships and collective reflection is clear: *no teacher or principal needs to go it alone*. Collegial support and encouragement are crucial when one is engaged in the risky business of professional improvement.

## REFLECTION AND COLLABORATION IN NON-WESTERN SCHOOLS

From my work with teachers coming from non-Western cultural traditions, it is evident to me that the customary hierarchical structures of the local communities may have a profound impact on the adult-to-adult relationships within schools and may serve as barriers to creating what we in the West have come to think of as 'professional learning communities'. Marilyn Friend and Lynne Cook (2003) defined collaboration as responsibility and accountability that are shared between 'co-equal' work partners irrespective of their assigned and ascribed roles. This Western egalitarianism may at times be at odds with non-Western cultural traditions. This 'clash of cultures' is not limited to the world of education and was vividly illustrated in articles in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* (Ingersoll 1999) and on the BBC (Woods 1999) that focused on the poor safety record of Korean Airlines. The articles concluded that one of the reasons for this poor



safety record was the fact that while the cockpits of the Korean Airline planes (built by the Western aeronautical firm Boeing) were designed for Western-style crew collaboration, the pilots, co-pilots and other crew members were predominantly recruited from the Korean military and brought with them a hierarchical and authoritarian culture which precluded, for example, the navigator questioning the judgement of the pilot. The cockpit architecture was literally in opposition to the crew culture.

In some cases, relatively recent historical events can have a profound influence on the adult-to-adult relationships within an organization. A school administrator in China commented to me that all of his efforts to get his Chinese staff members to form effective work teams had been frustrated. He simply was unable to get them collectively to share accountability. He attributed at least part of the reluctance of the Chinese staff to share responsibility to the legacy of fear generated by the Cultural Revolution. Non-Western educators frequently comment on how the perceived 'professional egalitarianism' of the West may be seen as disrespectful by non-Western teachers and administrators. In Asia, the strength of the Confucian tradition with its emphasis on familial piety and age-graded hierarchical respect can have the effect of impeding collective reflection and organizational creativity. Singapore, in particular, has recognized this phenomenon and has launched a number of initiatives to confront it. Brown and Isaacs (2005) in their book, *The World Café: Shaping Our Futures through Conversations that Matter*, write about large-scale café-style conversations organized by the Singapore government in order to foster reflection and creative thinking. The Singapore Ministry of Defense hosted a café-style conversation to explore the question: 'How can we expand our purpose from deterrence to nation building?' In another such café-style conversation scores of Singaporean teachers were invited to reflect on the question: 'Given the changing needs of our country, what does it mean to teach?' In yet another case, a large group of Singaporean police officers

were brought together in a café conversation and asked to reflect on: 'What does it mean to care?' (p. 200).

The research of Richard Nisbett (2003) suggests that students and teachers coming out of an Asian tradition may actually think differently to their Western counterparts. He writes that Asian traditions of thought make Chinese and Korean students generally more sensitive to background circumstances, more likely to see shades of grey, and perhaps even more tolerant of ambiguity than their Western peers. Asian students and their teachers are less likely to be driven by strict linear logic and more likely to seek the 'middle ground'. Given this sensitivity to context and relationships, it may well be that a non-Western professional learning community will appear quite different from its Western counterpart. This may be a fruitful area for further research.

## RENAISSANCE: THE WAY FORWARD

This brings me to the third 'R': renaissance. I draw much of my thoughts about renaissance schools from the work of Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston. In their remarkably insightful book *Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools* (2002), they write about the principles that guide renaissance work in schools. The three most frequently asked questions in renaissance schools are deceptively simple and yet provocatively reflective: 'Who are we? Why are we doing this? And, why are we doing it this way?' (p. 360). These simple questions compel us to explore our professional identity, our personal and collective mission, our values and, perhaps most uncomfortable of all, how effective we are as educators and leaders. In a renaissance environment we build leadership capacity in others by framing these questions in the context of clear norms and values, frequent reflective dialogue about instructional practice, professional collaboration and shared responsibility for student learning. In the words of Garmston and Powell (2006), we no longer hear teachers talking about 'your'

students and 'my' students. We hear colleagues discussing 'our' students. In a renaissance school the vast majority of norms are voluntary. Because the norms and values are clear and the locus of responsibility is internal, there is no need for a great many externally imposed rules and regulations to control behaviour. Renaissance schools have the twin goals of developing the individual and developing the organization. These are schools that are on the road to becoming holonomous. Leadership is distributed. Colleagues are strong role models for one another; they coach and consult.

This chapter opened with the troubling metaphor of the shepherd and his dog herding sheep. I will close it with a different metaphor, hopefully more apt to the work of leadership in schools. There is always a risk in employing a biblical metaphor – the possibility of offending believers or alienating non-believers. But in some respects, this chapter is all about taking risks, so here goes ... the metaphor comes from the Gospel of Matthew. As some readers may recall, when Jesus learned of the beheading of John the Baptist he withdrew in grief to a lonely place by the side of a large lake. But his fame preceded him, and a large crowd gathered on the shores of the lake. They wanted Jesus to heal their sick. They wanted to hear him preach. When evening came, Jesus noticed that the multitude had become tired and hungry, and he instructed his disciples to take the meagre five loaves of bread and two fish offered by one small boy and divide them amongst the five thousand. The disciples were understandably incredulous. How could five loaves and two small fish possibly feed such a large crowd? However, in the act of sharing, the loaves and fish miraculously multiplied and the great crowd ate and they were satisfied.

So I believe we can foster a similar miracle in our schools. Leadership is not a finite substance that needs to be guarded and controlled. Too many cooks do not spoil the broth. Leadership is not something to be rationed to the select few. When we develop leadership capacity in others, like the loaves and fish in the biblical story, there is always enough to go around. When we think of leading as a

genuinely shared endeavour, we transcend power and authority relationships, territoriality, the need to control and our temptation towards scarcity mentality. When we perceive that the purpose of leadership is to develop it in others, there is neither shortage nor abundance. There is process, an energy source, a shared goal. In short, we are able to redefine the traditional foundations of schooling – the three Rs – and we create renaissance school climates in which learning relationships and reflective practice prosper and flourish.

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