

Educational Leadership and Social Capital

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This paper argues for a change in focus in the strategies that are being used to maximise the achievement of every child. The focus on school improvement has been very successful in many respects and has had a demonstrable impact on school standards. However it may now be appropriate to raise the question of the extent to which this improvement can be sustained and the capacity that there is to raise standards for all children given that increasing investment and effort does not seem to be producing commensurate outcomes. There is a case for arguing that results at national levels are ‘plateauing’ and significant improvements are increasingly difficult to secure. It remains the case that social factors are disproportionately significant in their impact on children’s academic achievement.

It may therefore be an appropriate time to focus on the social environment of the learner rather than increasing the emphasis on the technology of teaching. The relationship between the relative significance of the technical effectiveness of schools and the social environment is perhaps best encapsulated in the following example. The population explosion in the developed world in the nineteenth century is often attributed to improvements in medical science and practice. In fact, this only impacted on a minority of the population – the really significant improvements were the result of the provision of clean drinking water and sewerage system. The change resulted from sewers not surgeons, from prevention not cure and from work on the infrastructure rather than professional technology.

While social disadvantage may not be an excuse for poor achievement in academic terms, it certainly is an explanation. As Power et al (2002) conclude in their study:

..... (educational) outcomes in deprived areas are worse than those in non-deprived areas, whether they are measured in terms of qualification, attendance, exclusions or ‘staying on’ rates. Inner-city areas in particular feature as having low outcomes. (p26).

They go on to point out that in England in the 1990s ‘the gap in outcomes grew rather than narrowed’ (p64). They also point to the need to reduce the ‘compositional effects

that appear to result from high concentrations of disadvantaged students' (p65). A significant issue emerges in their conclusion that

.....schools serving deprived populations could do more to ensure better home-school relations, which appear to be less facilitative than those in schools serving non-deprived areas (p66).

Schools in deprived areas have a great deal in common with schools in non-deprived areas – the same curriculum, assessment regimes, inspection and accountability models etc. There are significant differences in funding, teacher supply and access to resources but these are not consistent as causal factors. What is consistent is the notion of deprivation.

This raises the question of the nature of the relationship between schools and their communities. Mulford and Silins (2001) found that there was not a direct causal relationship between high community involvement and improving student outcomes:

On the basis of our results, and if a choice needs to be made between working with and being sensitive to the community and improving home educational environments, then the latter will have more direct and immediate 'payoff' for student outcomes..... Of course, having a strong community focus may be important for other reasons such as for the development of social capital in the community, especially in poor inner city and rural communities. (p5).

The distinction between family and community is a valid one – the impact of the family is more direct, immediate and sustainable. However, the family is a classic manifestation of community; the status, significance and value attached to the family will often be a product of broader, community-based, values. The resilience and potency of the family will be a function of generic factors – most significantly social capital.

In their study of the factors influencing the development of young people in the United States, the Search Institute (2000) found what they describe as a "crumbling infrastructure" which has a number of key manifestations:

- Most adults no longer consider it their responsibility to play a role in the lives of their children outside the family.
- Parents are less available for their children because of demands outside the home.

- Adults and institutions have become more uncomfortable articulating values.
- Society has become more and more age-segregated.
- Socialising systems (e.g. families, schools and congregations) have become more isolated, competitive and suspicious of each other.
- The mass media have become influential shapers of young people's attitudes norms and values.
- As problems and solutions have become more complex, more of the responsibility for young people has been turned over to professionals.

These symptoms are in stark contradistinction to what would normally be regarded as criteria for an effective community. Amit (2002) offers criteria to describe a community:

People care because they associate the idea of community with people they know, with whom they have shared experiences, activities, places and/or histories.

Community arises out of an interaction between the imagination of solidarity and its realisation through social relations... (p18)

If there are not the 'shared experiences' and the 'realisation through social relations' then community can not be said to exist and the factors identified by the Search Institute (above) can be said to be both cause and effect. What is being described is a paucity of social capital – the lower the level of engagement in a community the lower the level of social capital and so the more likely it is that an area will be deprived – not just in economic terms but also in social terms. Social poverty is as negative and destructive as economic poverty.

Social capital is a comparatively new concept in discussions about education. The concept itself is still contentious and emergent; Field (2003) defines it in the following terms:

The theory of social capital is, at heart, most straightforward. Its central thesis can be summed up in two words: relationships matter. By making connections with one another, and keeping them going over time, people are able to work together to achieve things that they either could not achieve by themselves, or could only achieve with great difficulty. People connect through a series of networks and they tend to share common values with other members of these networks... (p1)

Field goes on to argue that:

In general, the research suggests that the influence of social capital is a benign one, in that it is associated with higher levels of performance... (p49)

and:

...we can conclude with some confidence that there is a close relationship between people's social networks and their educational performance. (p50)

For Putnam (2000) there is an absolute link between levels of social capital and success in the education system:

States that score high on the Social Capital Index – that is, states whose residents trust other people, join organisations, volunteer, vote and socialise with friends – are the same states where children flourish: where babies are born healthy and where teenagers tend not to become parents, drop out of school, get involved in violent crime, or die prematurely due to suicide or homicide. Statistically, the correlation between high social capital and positive child development is as close to perfect as social scientists ever find in data analysis of this sort. (pp 296 – 297).

Social Capital is essentially about networks, trust, engagement, communication, shared values aspirations and interconnectedness. High social capital produces the benefits that Putnam describes above. He also points out that “social capital appears to be a complement, if not a substitute, for Prozac, sleeping pills, antacids...” (p289).

Social capital appears to be the panacea for the social, psychological and physiological ills of society, and it might even extend to education. For Edgar (2001) the benefits of building social capital are clear:

The outcomes would be a more civil society, where tolerance, mutual respect and meaningful relationships prevent social disintegration in the form of family breakdown, delinquency, crime, interest-group conflict and ethnic violence, and where business can thrive. Clearly, it is a goal worth striving for. Without a civil society, we have either the law of the jungle or totalitarian state control, both based on fear, distrust and deceit, both yielding highest gains to those with power – physical, economic or educational. (p102)

What is clear is that high social capital enhances academic success; therefore, one answer to academic under-achievement might not be just to strive to improve the efficiency of schools but rather to increase social capital. It is very difficult to find any consensus as to the precise components of social capital but most models include the following elements:

- A strong sense of shared values and social aspirations

- A shared sense of social/geographical identity
- Levels of trust
- Levels of interdependence and sharing
- Collaborative action
- Levels of volunteering and social engagement
- Participation in faith based activities
- Turnout in elections
- Co operation on economic and social projects
- A sense of control and investment in the future

Education improvement and the community

The last decade of the twentieth century was the decade of school improvement. Vast amounts of energy were expended in improving the outcomes of schooling – and they were generally successful. By a range of criteria, schools were much better at schooling; literacy and numeracy scores rose and there was significant improvement against a range of criteria. This was largely achieved through the implementation of national strategies at institutional level. One effect of this was to make principals and headteachers the managers of externally imposed policy initiatives, what was referred to as leadership was in fact ‘super-management’ as the key areas of leadership activity were removed to the centre and implementation became the criterion for success. However, this success criterion is that of a previous generation – the success of schools may not be appropriate for a world in which:

Entirely new points of departure will be required in order to significantly improve the capacity of all segments of society, including enterprises and local communities, to break with the rigid and hierarchical methods of the past and embrace solutions based on greater personal accountability, internal motivation and uniqueness (Stevens et al (2000) p22).

Most government policies fail to address the issues of ‘personal accountability, internal motivation and uniqueness’ rather they emphasise consistency, conformity and compliance. According to Mulgan (2001):

Too much was imposed top-down rather than involving communities themselves; too many initiatives were short-term; too many focused on one or two problems rather than tackling the cluster of related problems in the round. (p184).

For Mulgan two of the key themes in the ‘emerging agenda’ for learning are:

- Policies for knowledge go wider than formal education: diet, housing and poverty bear directly on cognitive development and educational performance.
- Education and learning will increasingly take place beyond educational institutions... (pp 151 – 152).

If a fundamental distinction between school management and educational leadership is accepted then a radical re conceptualisation of the nature and purpose of such leadership is required. In essence, the shift is from institutional improvement to community transformation. It is very doubtful as to how much more capacity to improve there is in the school system. A football team does not improve its league position by setting its players to run faster or pass more balls. It has to score more goals; running and passing are necessary but not sufficient factors in winning matches. Improving schools is a necessary but not sufficient component of educating a society.

If educational success is a function of high social capital then educational leadership has to make capital development a high priority. The change is from an emphasis on the school as an institution to the school as an agency:

Some forms of social capital are, by choice or necessity, inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups... Other networks are outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages. (Putnam, (2000) p22).

School improvement leads to bonding, introspection and detachment. While this creates institutional integrity, it compromises engagement and networking – the basis of the creation of social capital. If academic standards are to be raised in a sustainable way and broader educational aspirations achieved then educationists will have to see their role in terms of creating social capital rather than just improving classroom practice.

The Search Institute (1998) talks about ‘asset building’ rather than social capital but the principles are the same:

The answer does not lie primarily in creating new programs or in hiring in more professionals. The primary answer lies in bringing into reality a fundamental shift in thinking – from a problem focus to a positive vision. (p 8)

The Institute goes on to identify the characteristics of asset-building communities that include:

- All residents take personal responsibility for building assets in children and adolescents.
- The community thinks and acts intergenerationally.
- The community builds a consensus on values and boundaries, which it seeks to articulate and model.
- Families are supported, educated, and equipped to elevate asset building to top priority.
- The community – wide commitment to asset building is long-term and sustained. (p 9)

These points reinforce the model of a rich network with high interdependence and, perhaps the crucial component, a shared vision within the community as a whole.

Writing in 1915, Dewey argued:

The role of the community in making the schools vital is just as important as the role of the school itself. For in a community where schools are looked upon as isolated institutions, as a necessary convention, the school will remain largely so in spite of the most skilful methods of teaching. But a community that demands something visible from its schools, that recognises the part they play in the welfare of the whole....Such a community will have social schools, and whatever its resources, it will have schools that develop community spirit and interests. (Skilbeck (1970) p125).

‘Social schools’ is a very powerful image in this context, as is the notion of a school being ‘visible’; both reinforce the notion of schools being of their communities, not just in their communities.

An alternative, but reinforcing, perspective is found in the work of Paulo Friere. He argues for education as dialogue – the shared creation of meaning and the movement to action. For Friere dialogue is a co-operative activity based in respect, which can serve to enhance community through the building of social capital. Although Friere’s methods are not directly transferable to school systems his emphasis on collegiality and consensual governance offers a model for community action.

A New Focus for Curriculum

How do we actively create social capital within school communities? By focusing on and improving relationships schools can begin making a contribution to developing the entire communities' capacity to learn. Community leadership is all about the relationships. According to Michael Fullan, "Any school reform effort that seeks to improve relationships has a chance to succeed; any that does not is doomed to fail." If we are to take on a new role as school leaders as we argue that we must, what strategies are available to us?

First, schools can make relationships their core business. Schools are themselves communities. They have the opportunity to model the development and practice of social capital. They can become beachheads for education in a society that is confounded by seemingly unmanageable paradox.

A way to begin is to look at the curriculum relationally. Based upon the Relational Learning Model (Otero et al 2001) the development of equitable, interdependent relationships can be achieved when schools make at least four relationships the center of their work. These are the student's relationship to the subject, the student's relationship to other students, the students' relationship to the teacher and the student's relationship to the wider community. Using these four relationships as curriculum brings the entire staff together in an effort to enlarge and enrich the social capital within the school itself. As staff examines their practice they determine which critical relationship or relationships are being served by a program, activity or lesson.

Another approach involves looking at community involvement in a completely new way. As long as schools and school leaders see the relationship between parents, the wider community and the school as basically a contractual arrangement in a public service context there is little hope of engaging everyone in the school community as partners in the educational process.

Because traditional methods of involving parents and community had so clearly failed the Santa Fe Schools in New Mexico working with the Center For Relational Learning under a grant from the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation decided to design an approach to interacting with parents and the community that would develop and build social

capital as a primary goal of the community involvement strategy. The project centres on ‘public conversations’ involving common interest groups (for example, all parents or all teachers) which are trained and facilitated in public conversations skills and then moved into mixed interest groups. The project is designed to:

- enhance deliberative and civic skills;
- promote community involvement in education and collaborative problem solving;
- focus on teaching and learning;
- generate new understanding of and commitment to education;
- use public conversations as a means to improve education.

Dialogue in these settings is seen as having a number of positive attributes – it creates positive and sophisticated networks, it enhances the communication skills in the community and it can help secure involvement and sustain motivation. The conversations about education are, of themselves, educative. The process is also fundamentally democratic in that it encourages participation and builds capability in communities traditionally disenfranchised.

The project has the following transformational features:

- it focuses on educational improvement and reform through the active involvement of all stakeholders;
- it creates a common skill-base to support interaction;
- it reinforces and enhances engagement;
- it creates rich and sophisticated networks.

The project has the potential to inform policy, develop social capital, strengthen engagement and release human potential.

The strategy was developed after on-going consultation with parents, community members, staff and the top leadership of the school system. The need for a different kind of interaction between school and community was brought to a planning group for comment and exploration not as a problem to be solved. After two, maybe three heartfelt, honest and open conversations among fifteen to twenty-five people (these always included the superintendent) the planning group accepted the challenge to

create a community involvement process that would model and support the commitment, participation, ownership and excitement that the majority of participants in the earlier conversations had just experienced. Everyone knew that any strategy to involve parents and the community would not be sustainable unless those activities, meetings and events allowed for and encouraged the development of social capital in the form of honest, forthright, authentic conversations and interactions between the very diverse role groups that make up the Santa Fe school community. To use Putnam's (2003) language, without bridging conversations throughout the school community, there would indeed be little chance that such a diverse community could find a way to bond together around the educational needs of everyone in the community.

Finding better ways to bridge community and school is the essence of the school leader's role. Combining that role with the many other responsibilities of school leaders is a daunting task. Sue Goodwin, an Assistant Principal at Albert Park Secondary College in Melbourne found a way to integrate community, family and school needs. As a school leader she understood that the school's success was closely tied to the success of families and the surrounding community. Seeing the potential for increasing educational capacity throughout Port Phillip she linked with local council staff and members, the local police and youth development agencies as well as all schools in the area to explore ways to effectively link schools and the community. The result is the "Community School Yard" an initiative that belongs equally to all sectors of the community and is managed by a steering committee made up of representatives from all the organizations mentioned. In 2003, Sue's work was recognized when she was awarded a Churchill Fellowship. During her fellowship she investigated strategies and programs to develop the capacity and effectiveness of schools through the linking and integration of community support. She identifies four critical elements in 'Community Education' learning:

- The importance of effective communication and collaboration
- The value of quality relationship building and resilience
- The necessity of persistence and professional creativity
- The priority of strong leadership with clear vision

Unless school leaders actively embrace the role Sue has described schools will continue to find themselves isolated and increasingly abandoned as critical educational structures within our communities.

Bridging Strategies

Improving teaching and learning in the school involves the simultaneous pursuit of multiple objectives. In the case of schools in modern societies this requires a capacity for learning while you work. The critical resource for life long learning is an organizational culture rich in social capital. This involves the development of the capacity to bridge as well as bond. (Putnam 2003). Schools as exemplary human living systems have the goal of incorporating and integrating differences. What keeps people engaged with each other are relationships that have high degrees of satisfaction and achievement. In schools we have too long associated success only with achievement when success in life is more often associated with both satisfaction and achievement. If schools hope to create, model and extend learning cultures in the society then leaders will have to incorporate the following strategies in their work. Working with schools in several countries over the last five years, the Center for Relational Learning has identified ten important strategies for developing a culture of teaching and learning within a school that allows a school to take on its educational role within the larger society.

These ten are:

1. Promote and practice of dialogue
2. Develop relational trust
3. Build and nurture community
4. Develop a personalized and hopeful learning culture
5. Focus on supporting creativity and renewal
6. Emphasize the importance of play in learning
7. Foster civic engagement both locally and globally
8. Initiate partnerships with staff, youth, parents, and community
9. Developing everyone's capacity as a student, teacher and leader
10. Incorporate other ways of knowing in teaching and learning

These are arenas of action. Place attention, energy and activity in any one of these arenas and you will see an increase in social capital, the kind of bridging social capital that is needed to bring the entire community into an educational partnership.

Space does not permit an in depth exploration of each strategy but illumination of a couple might help in understanding the power of each to transform teaching and learning relationships within and throughout the school and community.

Probably the most startling and significant example of the value of social capital in school transformation comes from the Chicago Public Schools. These schools, more than most, reflect the reality and urgency of school and community transformation. After a 10-year study of Chicago school reforms, researchers Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider have concluded that schools with a high degree of “relational trust” are more likely to make the kind of changes that help raise student achievement. They had to change the working relationships throughout the school community.

“Trust is the ‘connective tissue’ that holds improving schools together, write Bryk and Schneider. Although power in schools, as in most institutions, is not distributed evenly...all parties are ultimately dependent on each other to succeed...They content that ‘the fulfilment of obligations entails not only doing the right thing, but also doing it in a respectful way, and for what are perceived to be the right reasons.’” Again, without the bonding and bridging relationships that support the schools goals, improvement is difficult to achieve and impossible to sustain.

Bryk and Schneider suggest four vital signs for identifying and assessing what is now called relational trust in schools:

- Respect: Do we acknowledge one another’s dignity and ideas? Do we interact in a courteous way?
- Competence: Do we believe in each other’s ability and willingness to fulfil our responsibilities effectively?

- Personal Regard: Do we care about each other both professionally and personally? Are we willing to go beyond our formal roles and responsibilities to go the extra mile?
- Integrity: Can we trust each other to put the interests of students first, especially when tough decisions have to be made? Do we keep our word?

Such clear research documentation that supports the improvement of relationships as critical to both school improvement and transformation cannot be ignored given that schools must re-conceive their role and function in a learning society.

Another arena where social capital can be developed is in the promotion and practice of dialogue. Our relationships are defined by the quality and content of our communications. In schools, our interactions are governed by three conversations. The first is an instructional conversation. This is the one we see most often most often in the classroom. It is to do with a relationship in which our discussion is about acquiring skill, extra knowledge, perhaps career guidance material – something external to ourselves – a skill or ability. The second is a learning conversation. A learning conversation is closer to one in which our mutual growth is the end result. In this conversation, relationship and task get equal attention. The third is a community conversation. Community conversation is a vehicle for people to express and share the diverse views that they hold; to negotiate and reaffirm directions and vision; to develop social capital. All three conversations are enhanced when dialogue is the medium of exchange but community conversations depend on the art of dialogue most.

The importance of relationships that are grounded in equitable, fair and respectful discourse to the development of a culture of participation and learning cannot be overemphasized. Schools cannot hope to play a larger role in community learning unless the daily interactions between people are based in dialogue. Such skills for democracy can and should be taught and practiced from classroom discussions to council meetings and community forums. Many programs are designed to teach these skills.

Civic renewal is impossible without passionate, engaging dialogue. We argue that dialogue unleashes creative possibilities for our schools as well as for our communities. At its best, dialogue transforms us as individuals, while increasing our shared understanding and emboldening our collective will. Our capacity to learn from each other through democratic discourse despite major differences in experience and viewpoint can lead to decisive civic action that promotes social justice and mutual respect.

Recently, talking with colleagues about signposts of a culture of dialogue we came up with the following:

1. we practice power-with, not power-over
2. we care as much about questions as we care about answers
3. we grow comfortable with ambiguity, uncertainty, not-knowing and paradox
4. we strive to Be as much as we strive to Do
5. we care as much about the learning of others as we do about our own learning – indeed, individual learning and group learning are inseparable
6. we devote as much energy to listening as we do to speaking
7. we value the process of witnessing the thoughts and feelings of others as much as we appreciate individual opportunities for self-reflection and disclosure
8. we leave ourselves open to be changed by the conversation

Developing skill in dialogue takes time and practice. School leaders have an obligation to create the spaces where dialogue can be learnt, valued and practiced, places where we can hold powerful instructional, leadership and community conversations. The introduction of Skills for Democracy (2000) states the value of dialogue to school transformation this way.

Good dialogue encourages people to solve their problems collaboratively, to see one another as valuable sources of knowledge and experience, and to forge new links with each other. In our view, there is no surer route to community building and to fulfilling the promise of democracy and lifelong learning than through the deepening of good, on-going dialogue. Such dialogue can increase student achievement, transform teaching and learning and renew relationships that connect communities to their schools.

Promoting and practicing dialogue and building relational trust are just two strategies that can develop a climate and culture within the school and between the school and

the surrounding communities where teaching and learning can be grounded in a network of relationships informed by social capital.

Building Capacity in Community

As Bob Dylan says in a recent song, “people are crazy and times are strange.” Things have changed and schools must respond to the society’s educational needs more holistically. Schools act like closed systems when they are open systems. Because schools have claimed sole responsibility for educational provision they have found themselves at odds and often out of touch with the educational aspirations of the society of which they are a part. Schools like other institutions find themselves operating as silos, out of touch and no longer an integral part of the community. Given this reality, schools cannot only be about the business of improving themselves; they also need to address this isolation and alienation. Schools must transform their relationship to the community. This involves changing attitudes, relationships and the deployment of resources.

Schools are living human systems and as such survive, develop and transform by experiencing, owning and integrating differences. This is accomplished by bringing together a diverse set of stakeholders to discover common ground through a democratic process thereby developing social capital and reconnecting schools and communities. The process that is best known for building educational capacity in community and has demonstrated success worldwide is called a future search. Developed over twenty years by Weisbord and Janoff, (2000) the future search is an action guide to finding common ground in organizations and communities. As a process that builds capacity across diverse communities it is unmatched in developing social capital and collaborative working relationships among the diverse constituents that make up contemporary school communities. As they state in the preface:

In future search people have a chance to take down the walls and assume more control of their future. Many participants welcome the chance to take responsibility and to learn and work with people from other walks of life. People are always more secure knowing first hand where others stand, and may begin in this setting to accept differences- in background, viewpoints, and values- as realities to be lived with, not problems to be solved.

This process takes place over a concentrated two and one half days but creates connections and working relationships that transform a school community into an equitable and inclusive community learning centre. This forum allows people to work through the dynamic issues that stand in the way of implementing anything—dreams and schemes, systems and projects, visions and values. The process is key for school leaders hoping to bridge the school and the community regarding the educational needs of all youth.

In an earlier work on productive workplaces, Weisbord (1987) sets out the agenda for leaders who see a larger educational purpose for their schools. He suggests that schools define productivity as a place where people learn and grow as they cooperate to improve the school's performance. The "bottom line," in this way of looking at schools, is dignity, meaning, and community in work. With over thirty years experience in organizations of all kinds he insists that we all hunger for community in the workplace and are in fact a great deal more productive when we find it. To feed this hunger in ways that preserve democratic values of individual dignity, opportunity for all, and mutual support is to harness energy and productivity beyond imagining. That is the challenge to every school leader in today's complex social environments.

The key is involving everybody. As school leaders who believe in dignity, meaning and community and who want to create the best place to learn must somehow, some way, involve everybody. This is not easy but it is possible. Beginning with a future search conference is a good way to start. The practical steps that can then be taken might include:

- Extending community use of schools on equal terms through shared access to resources.
- Switching from 'teachers in schools' to educators across the community.
- Using ICT to support learning across the whole community.
- Moving from age related teaching to needs based learning.
- Developing multi-use, multi-service approaches to educational resources.
- Introducing community based governance and accountability.
- Moving from professional services for the community to professionalism in community services.

Educational leadership and the Community

If our schools are to address the educational needs of all youth and be inclusive, schools and their communities must find new ways to work together on behalf of all youth. School and community leaders must learn how to develop a community-based and community driven curriculum focusing on building strong partnerships with parents, businesses, and the community as a whole. Leaders must learn how strong relationships can be build among all members of the community to develop community based activities that are socially inclusive and develop literacy and numeracy for all students. There are now available to school and community leaders numerous frameworks for positive change such as positive youth development, mentoring, service learning and asset development. Efforts in community education must focus on young adolescents' engagement with schools and their communities with a particular emphasis on:

- Community capacity building
- Successful engagement of young people
- Giving voice to those traditionally silenced by school structures and culture
- Interagency collaboration to support youth
- Transformative change through community centered leadership

In his conclusion to Better Together Putnam (2003) identifies a number of strategies that help to build social capital:

1. Creating rich and extensive social relationships.
2. The mobilisation and deployment of public and private agencies to secure investment.
3. A focus on small scale, local projects which are part of a federation.
4. The use of strategies that transcend racial, social and cultural divisions.
5. A high emphasis on the quality of dialogue and the skills needed to engage in conversations.
6. A recognition that real social change takes time so it is important to focus on “concrete, discrete and feasible targets on the way”. (p287)
7. Building opportunities for networking through the sharing of common space.

Putnam summaries the issues as:

Reweaving social webs will depend in part on the efforts of dedicated local leaders who choose to pursue their goals...through the sometimes slow, frequently fractious, and profoundly transformative route of social-capital building. But reweaving will also depend on our ability to create new spaces for recognition, reconnection, conversation, and debate. (p294)

As a practical example of getting started with a community school initiative we suggest beginning by engaging in dialogue around change. In consultation with a diverse set of stakeholders a one to three day dialogue around change is designed and facilitated creating a temporary community to address whole system issues and provide a model for leadership in the future. Each dialogue is developed around a number of critical questions. Previous dialogues we have facilitated have focused on the following questions. What changes are needed within us, our teachers, and the wider community to enhance/establish and sustain the learning communities we are all trying to create? How can systems theory and better relationships support our understanding of leading change in chaotic times? What is social capital and what role does it play in the changes we are seeking? How can we work with staff to not only reclaim and rekindle their passion for the craft of teaching but to revisit the moral purpose of why we entered this profession to begin with?

These perspectives on education in the community have significant implications for our understanding of the nature of leadership. The focus has to shift from improving the school as an institution, measured by very limited criteria, to developing social capacity in the community – still measurable but using very different criteria. It is reasonable to argue that the development of social capital would be a major factor in facilitating school improvement. The movement from reaction and remediation to deliberate and systematic prevention involves a significant reorientation of what how educational leadership is conceptualised.

The management of an institution is specific, focused and controllable; leadership in the community is diffuse and complex, the shift is, in Putnam's terms, from bonding to bridging. However educational leaders are very well placed to provide leadership in

the community – schools as institutions usually have very high social capital; educational leadership is fundamentally concerned with values and is essentially aspirational in nature. However it would be wrong to pretend that such a change is easy. Educational leadership to build capacity in communities requires a range of qualities and strategies which are implicit to running schools but which need different horizons and priorities:

1. A vision for the community based on consensual values and aspirations.
2. Building capacity through dialogue, conversations and engagement.
3. Highly developed relational skills rooted in trust and respect
4. A commitment to democratic processes.
5. The ability to work with networks.
6. A commitment to shared learning through experience.

In many communities, schools represent the biggest single public investment and are the best-resourced organisations – yet many only function for 15 per cent of the year. More importantly there is a symbiotic link between schools and their communities – children. Schooling is a necessary, but not sufficient, component of education. The purpose of schools is to help families and communities educate young people. Schools need to be successful with their communities, not in spite of them. .

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