

Maximising the Potential of Your Students, Teachers, Staff and Community:
The Soft Stuff is Really the Hard Stuff

Section 1.0 Setting the Scene

1.1 Brian Setzer Orchestra (*Jumpin' East of Java*). What's happening here?

1.2 Jacques Loussier Trio (Ravel's *Bolero*). What's happening here?

Section 2.0 The Power of Language

2.1 Attunement vs Alignment

Leaders often talk about wanting to get their people “aligned” with their strategy. But that word suggests a mechanical image of getting all the pencils pointing in the same direction, like a magnetic field lining up the polarity of molecules. It isn’t that simple. Strategies, couched as they are in the dry language of corporate goals, speak mainly to the rational brain, the neocortex. Strategic visions (and the plans that follow from them) are typically linear and limited, bypassing the elements of heart and passion essential for building commitment.

...Getting people to really embrace change requires *attunement* – alignment with the kind of resonance that moves people emotionally as well as intellectually. The challenge is in how to attune people to your vision and then to your business strategy in a way that arouses passion. Emotionally intelligent leaders know that this attunement requires something more than simply making people aware of the strategy itself. It requires a direct connection with people’s emotional centres.

(Daniel Goleman et al 2002)

2.2 Potential vs Product

Language of Potential	Language of Product

Section 3.0 Everything offered at this workshop is based on certain beliefs about human beings

3.1 *No man is an Island, entire of it self; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.*

(John Donne 1624)

3.2 **Theory Y vs Theory X**

The assumptions of Theory Y:

- The expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest.
- External control and the threat of punishment are not the only means for bringing about effort toward organisational objectives. People will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which they are committed.
- Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement.
- The average human being learns, under proper conditions, not only to accept but to seek responsibility.
- The capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity and creativity in the solution of organisational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population.
- Under the conditions of modern industrial life, the intellectual potentialities of the average human being are only partially utilised.

(Douglas McGregor 1960)

What is the essence of Theory Y?

3.3 The Two-factor Theory

Maintenance Factors	Motivation Factors
Work environment Type of supervision Salary and fringe benefits Job security Attitudes and policies of administration Formal status	Sense of achievement Advancement The nature of the work itself Personal growth Responsibility Recognition (informal status)

(Frederick Herzberg 1966)

3.4 *Ubuntu*

In my culture and tradition the highest praise that can be given to someone is, “*Yu, u nobuntu*”, an acknowledgement that he or she has this wonderful quality, *ubuntu*. It is a reference to their actions towards their fellow human beings; it has to do with how they regard people and how they see themselves within their intimate relationships, their familial relationships and within the broader community. *Ubuntu* addresses a central tenet of African philosophy: the essence of what it is to be human.

People with *ubuntu* are approachable and welcoming, their attitude is kindly and well-disposed, they are not threatened by the goodness in others because their own esteem and self-worth is generated by knowing they belong to a greater whole. To recast the Cartesian proposition “I think, therefore I am”, *ubuntu* would phrase it, “I am human because I belong”. Put another way, “a person is a person through other people”. No one comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think or walk or speak or behave unless we learned it from our fellow human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human. The solitary, isolated human being is a contradiction in terms.

(Desmond Tutu 2007)

3.5 On Community

To belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of that community. What I consider mine I will build and nurture. The work, then, is to seek in our communities a wider and deeper sense of emotional ownership; it means fostering among all of a community’s citizens a sense of ownership and accountability.

(Peter Block 2008)

What do all the quotes in Section 3.0 have in common?

Section 4.0 An Interesting Twist: *The Wisdom of Crowds*

- 4.1 *Under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them.*

(James Surowiecki 2004)

And what are ‘the right circumstances’? According to Surowiecki, they are the aggregation of three principles:

1. *Diversity*
2. *Independence*
3. *Decentralisation*

Isn't this likely to lead to chaos? If Surowiecki is right, how might we build these principles into the life of a school and still have a coherent strategic direction for the school?

Section 5 School Culture

In all organisations, but especially in schools, while the structure is important, it is the culture, rather than the structure, that is the key to how the organisation operates, and how effective it is.

- 5.1 What is organisational culture?

- **Values** *Those things we think are important and good;*
- **Beliefs** *Those things we believe are true;*
- **Norms** *The ways we act out (or don't act out) the values and beliefs. 'The way we do things around here'.*

Reflection: What do you think are the key (3 or 4) values and beliefs in your school?

5.2 How are they acted out (or not acted out)?

Section 6.0 Some Thoughts on Leadership

- 6.1 *We need to deglamorise leadership and consider it a quality that exists in all human beings. We need to simplify leadership and construct it so that it is infinitely and universally available.*

(Peter Block 2008)

6.2 **An Abundance Mentality**

An abundance mentality (is) a bone-deep belief that “there are enough natural and human resources to realise my dream” and that “my success does not necessarily mean failure for others, just as their success does not preclude my own”.

The normal distribution curve, embedded deep in the bowels of both academia and business, tends to spawn the scarcity mentality because of perceived “zero sum” situations. If people somehow avoid being “scripted” into a scarcity mentality by their schooling, they may acquire it from an athletic or social experience.

People with scarcity mentality tend to see everything in terms of “win-lose”. They believe “There is only so much; and if someone else has it, that means there will be less for me”.

The more we develop an abundance mentality, the more we are prepared to share power and profit and recognition, and the more we are genuinely happy for the successes, well-being, achievements, recognition, and good fortune of other people. We believe that their success adds to – rather than detracts from – our lives.

(Stephen Covey 1992)

6.3 **Distributed Leadership and Distributive Leadership**

There is not much conceptual daylight between notions of ‘dispersed’ and ‘distributed’ leadership, but there has been some debate around the implicit assumptions that may lie behind these notions; Distributed leadership, it is argued, may imply that this is something in the gift of a headteacher, allocating leadership roles magnanimously while holding on to power. Hence the term ‘distributive’ which implies a holding, or taking initiative as a right rather than it being bestowed as a gift. In other words, it is a value or ethic, residing in the organisational culture.

(John MacBeath 2003)

6.4 Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership is real. It exists...Teacher leadership facilitates principled action to achieve whole-school success. It applies the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth, and adults. And it contributes to long-term, enhanced quality of community life.

Teachers as Leaders Framework:

- (i) Teacher leaders convey conviction about a better world.
- (ii) Teacher leaders strive for authenticity.
- (iii) Teacher leaders facilitate communities of learning.

(Frank Crowther et al 2002)

6.5 Parallel Leadership

Parallel leadership encourages a relatedness between teacher leaders and administrator leaders that activates and sustains the knowledge-generating capacity of schools. Parallel leadership is a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity. It embodies mutual respect, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression.

Parallel leadership has three distinct characteristics:

- (i) **Mutualism**, in the form of mutual trust and respect between administrator leaders and teacher leaders;
- (ii) **A sense of shared purpose**: an alignment ('attunement') between the school's stated vision and the teachers' preferred approaches to teaching, learning and assessment;
- (iii) **Allowance for individual expression**. Observed relationships between teacher leaders and principals allowed for, even encouraged, a high degree of individual expression and action. This phenomenon may be inconsistent with recent emphases on teamwork, collegiality, and collaboration in educational workplaces. But the leaders and their allies had strong convictions about individual values as well as a capacity to accommodate the values of others.

(Frank Crowther et al 2002)

6.6 The Hockeyroos

- *A leaderful team;*
- *A focus on executing individual and team processes at the highest possible level, rather than a focus on results.*

(Ric Charlesworth 2001)

Section 7.0 A Cautionary Word on Distributed Leadership

Myth #1 The Distributed Perspective is a Blueprint for Leadership and Management

The distributed perspective often is talked about as though it was (in itself) an approach to leadership. The cases in this volume suggest that while school leaders intentionally can distribute responsibility for the work of leading and managing the school, it is not a five-step plan for leaders to follow.

If teachers are to develop as leaders, it does not simply happen by decree. Instead, they need opportunities to develop as leaders, and this often involves considerable work on the part of formally designated leaders such as the school principal.

(James Spillane & John Diamond 2007)

Section 8.0 Where does this lead us? *To the Soft Stuff: but the Soft Stuff is Really the Hard Stuff!*

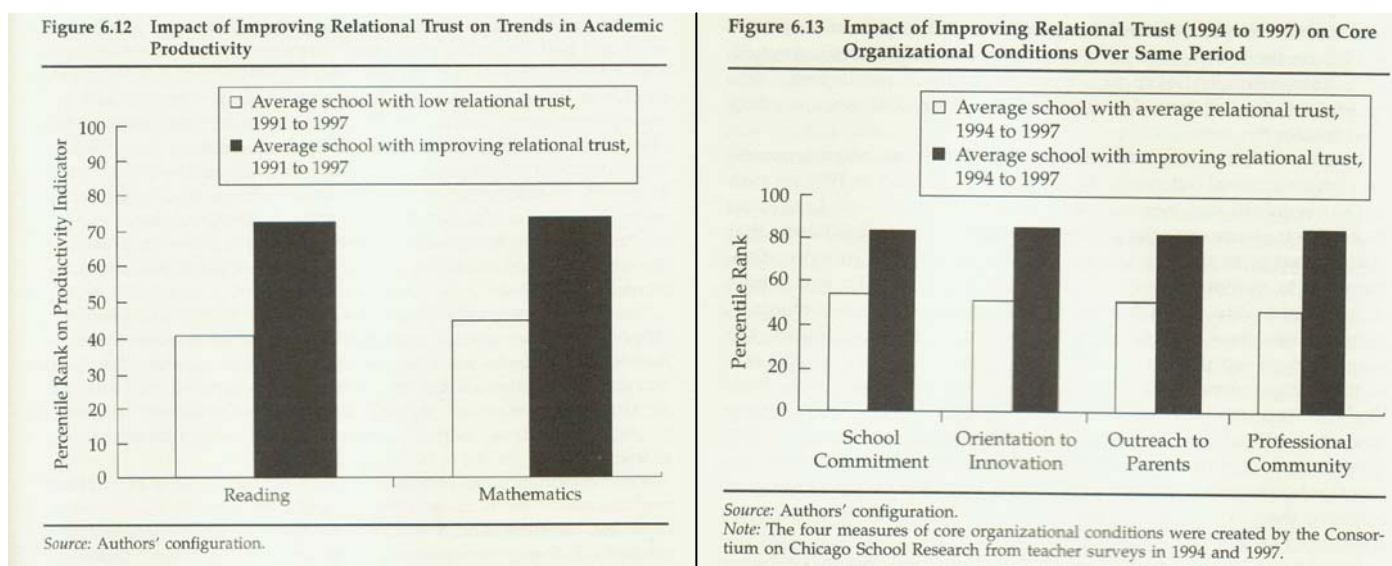
- 8.1 An 'organic' human culture, rather than a clinical bureaucratic culture, characterised by much intra-community dialogue, by 'authentic pedagogy', and by reciprocal high expectations.

(Fred Newmann & Gary Wehlage 1995)

- 8.2 A culture characterised by high levels of reciprocal trust and respect among teachers, students, parents and support staff.

(Anthony Bryk & Barbara Schneider 2002)

From Chicago: Two Graphs, same Story



(Anthony Bryk & Barbara Schneider 2002)

8.3 **More on trust and respect:** The role of the principal is crucial

In recent research, trust has been shown to be a key resource in school reform. Increasing trust in schools has been linked to increased participation among faculty in school reform efforts, greater openness to innovations among teachers, increased outreach to parents, and even higher academic productivity in a school.

While trusting relationships are not a substitute for student-centred, academically challenging instruction or a more participatory governance structure, they can be seen as the groundwork necessary for such interventions to succeed schoolwide. For example, a more rigorous curriculum that calls for changes in teaching methods is more likely to be adopted by the entire faculty and implemented in the intended fashion in a school where teachers trust one another and their principal. Similarly, trusting relationships among parents, teachers, and administrators allow shared decision making to work toward the benefit of the students rather than dissipating into conflict and personal agendas.

(There is no doubt that) the growth of trust between teachers is related to the growth of teacher-principal trust.

(Julie Kochanek 2005)

8.4 **And still more on trust and respect:** It leads to safer schools

In 2005, Page Smith and Larry Birney explored patterns of bullying in 106 schools in Texas. The result? Smith and Burney argued that school trust and student bullying are related...the greater the level of trust, the lower the level of student bullying, and vice versa.

For me, the main implication that can be drawn from this study is that bullying is less likely to be occurring in schools where all people trust and respect each other.

(John McCormick 2006)

Section 9.0 Moving to Action

- 9.1 Our aim is to build a spirit of community, with school-wide agreement – through attunement rather than alignment – on why we're here:

...Community is something more than a collection of individual longings, desires, or possibilities. The communal possibility has its own landscapes, and its own dynamics, requirements, and points of leverage.

...The communal possibility rotates on the question "What can we create together?" This emerges from the social space we create when we are together. It is shaped by the nature of the culture within which we operate but is not controlled by it.

(Peter Block 2008)

Hillbrook's attempt at this: *In Balance We Grow*

- 9.2 A school-wide definition of leadership that is inclusive of all members of the school community, and is embedded in the culture as an expectation, not just a definition.

Hillbrook's attempt at this: *Leadership is making a positive difference in the lives of others.*

- 9.3 *From Little Things Big Things Grow*
(Paul Kelly 1990)

Stories that capture the spirit:

- Rosa Parks and the American Civil Rights Movement;
- Muhammed Yunus and the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh;
- *Pay It Forward.*

9.4 Continuing dialogue among teachers about ‘why we’re here’ and what we’re trying to achieve at our school. Some ways to facilitate that?

9.5 Taking student voices seriously.

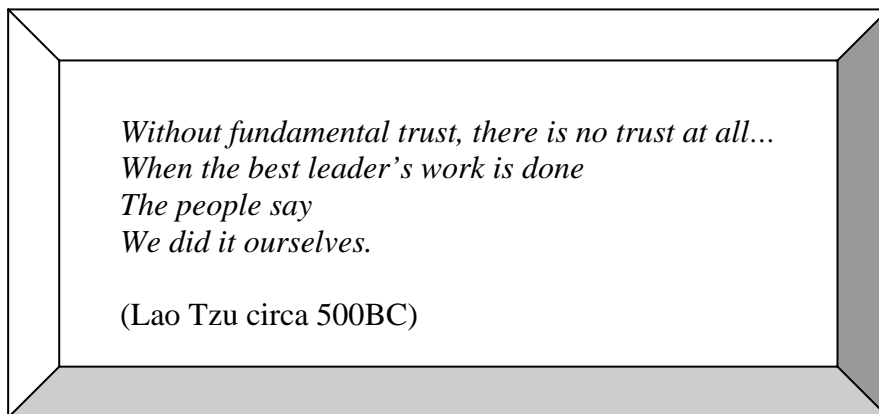
- *My experience is simply that trust creates responsibility. Having the students choose a topic, giving the Pupils’ Council real power, only increases the participation and responsibility. (Male Danish high-school student 2004)*
- *The most important thing of all is to feel like a collaborator, to be taken seriously and to feel the importance of the work you do. (Female Danish high-school student 2004)*
- *Democracy is a very strange thing, and it’s very difficult to set the limit. But the most important thing is to remember us in any kind of decisions, listen to us, and use us as collaborators not just someone you ask when everything is decided. We don’t ask you to turn over all the responsibility to us, but you really have to teach us to make good decisions. (Female Danish high-school student 2004)*

What do you think is the key message here?

- 9.6 Taking parent voices seriously.
Building trusting, mutually respectful relationships with parents; inviting their input and taking it seriously. Again, as Julie Kochanek has pointed out (2005), the role of the Principal is the key.

Some ways to facilitate this?

10. Conclusion: The Paradox of Strong Leadership



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