Leading in Difficult Times
Revisiting Moral Purpose

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There are two things that people complain about

• 1. The way things are

• 2. Change
Around the Globe

So much reform, so little change
Why Educational Reform Fails

- Convoluted Policies
- Bad Timing
- Limited Capacity
- No Implementation Process
- Zero buy in
- Change fatigue
- Changing Priorities
What do we know about successful systems?

1. The quality of a system or school cannot exceed the quality of its people.
2. The only way to improve student outcomes is to improve the quality of teaching.
3. High performance requires every child to succeed.
Successful Education Systems

Focus on the right things not the latest things
Right Drivers (Fullan, 2010)

- Capacity Building
- Professional Learning
- Teacher Led Change
- Leadership
Leadership Matters

•Kenneth Leithwood, Alma Harris & David Hopkins (2020) Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited, School Leadership & Management, 40:1, 5-22, DOI: 10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

‘School Leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning’.
Leadership - What We Know

- Leadership is the key to school and system transformation
- Collaborative, Connected and Collective leadership is powerful
- Leading for equity and excellence is at the heart of school and system success
Putting Equity at the heart of school and system reform

• More than aiming resources at the most disadvantaged schools or students;

• More than introducing strategies or temporary interventions aimed at school improvement.

• Structural inequity is the target.

• Plus a fundamental rethink of educational policy priorities and how they impact upon the most disadvantaged.
So

• What are we committed to, as educational leaders?
• Has this changed during COVID or simply been consolidated?
Shifting Context

COVID 19 – school leadership in disruptive times

Alma Harris & Michelle Jones

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Context has shifted – COVID 19 and Beyond (Harris and Jones, 2020)

• ‘This is a perfect storm with imperfect leadership responses.

• School leaders are walking a tightrope without a safety net.

• There are no precedents and no guides to leading schools in a pandemic’.
Three Questions

What have been the challenges for school leaders during COVID?

Have school leadership practices changed, during COVID, if so in what ways?

What are the leadership implications - COVID19 and beyond?
Challenges - Equity

• COVID19 has revealed a stark digital divide with many young people living having no or limited access to the internet.
Challenges

Student Learning

Access, having a dedicated space to work, connectivity, competing demands on time, lack of routine, a disconnect with teachers and friends, apathy, boredom and low mood or mental health issues.

Regular communication, on going checking in, a variety in the digital diet, parental interest, and support in learning, teaching that is engaging and teachers who are proficient enough in the learning platforms
Communities are a key resource for school leaders, as they host a wealth of additional expertise, knowledge, and local capacity.

Forging stronger links with parent/community groups to support families, young people and children is now a necessity to deal with the many issues that COVID19 has generated particularly for vulnerable, marginalised, or isolated young people.
Programmes of family support are essential to ensure that positive relationships are built upon by school leaders and extended to maximise students’ learning.

Community engagement in schooling is crucial to ensure that schools can adjust to any future crisis and guarantee continuity of learning for all students hence it should be a policy priority.
Leading in Disruptive Times
What Evidence Tells Us
(Harris, 2021)

1. Under Pressure
2. Emotional Stress
3. Adaptive Leadership
4. Personal Resilience
5. Equity
6. Family and Community
7. Changing Leadership Practices
Challenges to Leadership

School leadership practices have changed considerably and maybe, irreversibly because of COVID19.

The evidence also points towards the importance of context-responsive leadership and compassionate leadership.
Changes in Leadership Practice - Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership has become the default leadership response in this current crisis requiring more school leaders, at all levels, to connect, share, learn and network their way through issues.

Through absolute necessity, rather than by design, effective school leadership is now connected, collaborative, creative and responsive.
Professional Learning for School Leaders

Most school leadership preparation and training programmes prior to COVID19 are likely to be out of step with the challenges facing school leaders today.

New programmes will be required that fully and adequately encompass the leadership skills, practices and actions suited to the current context and ongoing situation.
Compassionate Leadership Practice

Crisis and change management are now essential skills of a school leader.

School leaders will need to be engaged in constant crisis and change management which will require support, collaboration, and empathy.

School leaders need compassion for themselves and others.
• Most school leaders are running on empty.

• Self-care must be a priority for those leading schools at all levels
Is this the answer?
But schools, alone, can only do so much.
Commitment

Equity

The evidence suggests that a **strong relationship between school leaders and stakeholders** is critically important for securing better outcomes for all students, particularly during periods of remote learning.

The international evidence highlights the **centrality of stakeholder engagement** in maintaining and sustaining positive learning for all students during periods of remote learning.

The evidence unequivocally shows that stakeholder engagement in students’ learning can have a profound and positive impact on students’ attainment and achievement during periods of remote learning.
Compassionate leaders

Notice
Empathise
Support
Act

SHATTERING INEQUITIES
REAL-WORLD WISDOM FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS
ROBIN AVELAR LA SALLE
RUTH S. JOHNSON
Foreword by Michael Fullan
Leadership for equity is a moral purpose.

“Education without morals is like a ship without a compass, merely wandering nowhere.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.
Moral Purpose

• ‘School leaders are defined by their determination, their hope, and their unshakable belief that whatever happens, whatever the cost, whatever the scale of the challenge, they will continue to do everything in their power to safeguard the learning of all young people’.

(Harris and Jones, 2020).
Thankyou

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