

POSITIONING STAKEHOLDERS IN CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP: WHAT ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS SAYING?

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that curriculum leadership is a shared phenomenon which has unique expressions at each teaching/learning site. As a shared phenomenon, it assumes that various people who have a stake in it will have a voice and an impact upon how it is shaped at each site. The paper draws on the theorising about curriculum leadership reported at previous AARE conferences in 1995, 1996 and 1997 as well as on recent exploratory research concerning the voices of teachers, parents and students in curriculum leadership in a small number of schools in Brisbane, Australia, Hong Kong; south eastern England, UK; and Phoenix, USA. The research focuses on stakeholders' perceptions about their place in curriculum leadership; their readiness to engage in curriculum leadership; and their conceptions of the potential to engage in curriculum leadership in their respective teaching/learning sites. A range of propositions will be presented and their implications for further investigation and practice will be discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Our theorising about curriculum leadership in recent years and as reported at the last three AARE conferences has brought us to the point of referring to places and spaces for teachers in curriculum leadership. At the same time, it has highlighted the need to consider the voices of other stakeholders (namely, parents and students). This paper provides us with the opportunity to share:

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a theorised position about curriculum leadership in terms of places and spaces for stakeholders;

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a summary of findings from some exploratory research in four cultural contexts concerning the voices of teachers, parents and students in curriculum leadership (and the perceptions of these stakeholders about their place, their readiness to engage in and the potential to engage in curriculum leadership action);

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a commentary on a set of propositions emerging from this exploratory research; and some implications for further investigation and practice.

A THEORISED POSITION ABOUT CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP

From our perspective curriculum leadership is a shared phenomenon at a teaching/learning site, and comes from an understanding of curriculum where the teacher is curriculum maker (and motivated to engage via an understanding of contextual factors and personal possibilities). In this way, we argue conceptually that there is a PLACE for teachers in curriculum leadership; and that such a PLACE will find its location in many PLACES geographically - classrooms, schools, systems as well as broader community and societal levels. Such a perspective opens the way for a more inclusive engagement in curriculum leadership by all stakeholders rather than being confined to those who are in recognised or official leadership positions in a school. While the implications of such a view are largely played out in all sorts of mixes at the local school level, there are, nevertheless, messages for those working at policy and system levels. The possibilities are considerable, and these are what we conceptualise as the SPACES for teachers in curriculum leadership.

The following figure seeks to portray the position we have come to regarding curriculum leadership.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS FIGURE IS ONLY IN DRAFT FORM AT THIS STAGE. IT REFERS PRIMARILY TO TEACHERS, ALTHOUGH IT COULD EASILY BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, NAMELY PARENTS AND STUDENTS.

THE FIGURE WILL BE CIRCULATED ON A SEPARATE SHEET AT THE CONFERENCE SESSION

This paper, then, is framed by a theorised position about curriculum leadership which derives from a view that celebrates the centrality of teachers in curriculum decision-making and their role as curriculum makers in schools and classrooms (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Brubaker, 1993; Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995; Aspland, Elliott & Macpherson, 1995; Macpherson, Elliott & Aspland, 1995; Moller and Katzenmeyer, 1996; Macpherson, Aspland, Brooker, Elliott & Thurlow, 1996; Macpherson, Aspland, Elliott, Proudford, Shaw & Thurlow, 1996; Elliott, Brooker, Macpherson McInman & Thurlow, 1997).

Curriculum leadership includes any initiative that teachers in the multi-faceted contexts of teaching/learning sites may undertake to encourage more effective learning and teaching. It is about leading learning and seizing opportunities that appear to have the potential to enhance learning and teaching experiences and outcomes. Our theorised position, then,

proposes that curriculum leadership involves those actions which are intimately related to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that teachers hold about their curriculum context, which interact with their personal qualities, resulting in actions for enhanced learning and teaching in that context. Furthermore, it recognises that:

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people (and particularly people working together) are important in any teaching/learning setting;

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curriculum leadership is a shared phenomenon among a range of stakeholders who make complementary contributions to the shape and practice of curriculum leadership at any one site;

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collaborative effort is desirable in promoting curriculum leadership for effective learning and teaching;

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at each teaching/learning site, curriculum leadership action is shaped by three contextual factors (the images of curriculum held by people, the organisational arrangements and the social relationships among people);

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individual personal factors are important in mediating the contextual elements and seizing the opportunities; and

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the mix of contextual elements is unique to each teaching/learning site of curriculum leadership action, and impacts upon the way persons individually and collectively mediate these elements and seize opportunities for curriculum leadership action (See Brooker, Aspland, Macpherson, Jenkins, Woods, Elliott, Proudford & Kemmis, 1996).

Other significant stakeholders such as students and parents join with teachers in having an important role in curriculum decision-making. If curriculum leadership is a shared phenomenon at a teaching/learning site, and if it seeks to include all stakeholders in its enactment, then it follows that we must be interested in the socially-constructed contexts and processes which shape curriculum leadership as a shared phenomenon at the levels of both conceptualisation and practice. Considerations of alienation (for example, Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1996) and calls for partnerships and collaborative efforts in education (for example, Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1996 & 1998; Education Queensland, 1997; Education Department, Hong Kong, 1997; Blunkett, 1997; Downes, 1998; Galton, Hargreaves & Comber, 1998; and Maclure, 1998) point to the need of finding authentic ways of listening to the voices of these stakeholders and including them in curriculum leadership action (or practice).

There is no doubt that other significant stakeholders from the broader community, business and industry areas could be identified. However, significant stakeholders for the purposes of this paper are confined to teachers, students and parents (See Bates, 1991; Brady, 1995). As a means of listening to the voices of these stakeholders (in terms of their readiness to engage in curriculum leadership action), the following research question has been posed:

How does a view of curriculum leadership as a shared phenomenon contribute to shaping stakeholders' perceptions of:

1. their PLACE in curriculum leadership;
2. their READINESS to engage in curriculum leadership action; and
3. their POTENTIAL to transform curriculum through having voice and authentic inclusion (PLACE AND SPACE) in curriculum leadership.

Such a question facilitates an interaction with the lifeworld perspectives of a small selection of teachers, students and parents about the empowerment of stakeholders to engage in and transform (ie. to have voice and authentic inclusion in) curriculum leadership action. Authentic inclusion has to do with the actual and visibly demonstrable involvement of stakeholders in not only providing their perceptions of what should be included in the curriculum and how it should be experienced by learners, but also being a meaningful (or empowered) and continuing part in the processes which make the "why", "what", "how" and "so what" decisions associated with curriculum leadership action. The exploration of these perspectives has been and continues to be informed by literature relating to such areas as empowerment and transformation (for example, Romanish, 1991; Smith, 1993; Kemmis, 1995, Shor, 1996) teacher leadership (for example, Macpherson, Elliott & Aspland, 1995; Rallis & Rossman, 1995; Moller and Katzenmeyer, 1996) and voice (for example, Keedy & Drmacich, 1991; McConnell, 1991; Trotter, 1991; Dana, 1992; Gitlin, Bringham, Burns, Coley, Myers, Price, Russell & Tiess, 1992; Mellencamp, 1992; Orner, 1992; Roberts & Dungan, 1993; Rosaen, 1993; Covalieskie, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994; & 1996; McIntyre, 1996; and Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace, 1996).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EXPLORATORY RESEARCH INVESTIGATION

The nature of the research question and the theoretical framework which informs it suggest that an appropriate way of pursuing an exploratory research investigation is via an action research approach which is both critical and collaborative (Aspland, Macpherson, Proudford & Whitmore, 1996). The approach is critical in that it operates within a socially-critical position (Kemmis, Cole and Suggett, 1983) of curriculum leadership which values the centrality of teachers and significant others in curriculum decision-making, along with notions of empowerment and transformation (Smith, 1993); and collaborative because the research investigation highlights the lifeworld perspectives of participants as both sources of and contributors to the analysis of data and as a basis for working together in transformative action. The approach is action-oriented as it attempts to critique (from a socially-critical perspective) past and present curriculum thinking and practice as a basis for participants themselves to reconstruct and transform their practice. Broadly, then, the approach provides a basis as an example of critical education research (Smith, 1993) for participants to develop a sense of empowerment (individually and/or in collaboration with colleagues) to engage in and advocate for critically-informed and transformed (in an ongoing sense) curriculum practice.

Within this broad action research approach, narrative (for example, Gough, 1994; Aspland, Brooker, Macpherson, Proudford & Kemmis, 1996; Aspland and Macpherson, 1996;

Aspland, Macpherson, Elliott & Brooker, 1997; Beattie, 1997; Fenstermacher, 1997) and conversation (for example, Applebee, 1996, Feldman, 1997, Aspland, Macpherson, Brooker and Elliott, 1998) are used as a basis for interacting with and seeking to understand the lifeworld perspectives of teachers, students and parents in terms of the three parts to the research question as outlined above.

An analytical process which seeks to be both collaborative and critical uses iterative techniques (as a form of hermeneutic circle - See Schwandt, 1997) to emphasise that the voices of teachers, students and parents at various case sites are recorded as faithfully as possible. The uniqueness of individual voices and sites is significant as a basis for ongoing reflection, critique and reconstructive/transformational action. Therefore, individual case reports are necessary, and through some form of critically reflective networking, they can be used as the basis for moving from each unique situation to a unified alliance of some kind. Such an alliance, for example, would be a basis for stakeholders to engage in whatever form of political action considered appropriate as a means of having an impact on both local thinking and practice and wider educational policy formulation.

However, the paradox of research investigations which focus on cases (Simons, 1996) has to be addressed in that both the richness and diversity of perspectives and the similarities across cases are being captured. In this respect, the exploratory research investigation outlined a little later does not seek to generalise; rather it seeks, with the case study data, to be generative of ideas about discovering and creating space for the voices of significant stakeholders in curriculum leadership at the teaching/learning sites.

The data sources in this exploratory research investigation (and in any ongoing larger investigations) are the significant stakeholders who develop narratives and engage in subsequent small group conversations which reflect upon, critique and seek to reconstruct stakeholders' perceptions about curriculum leadership action within a framework provided by the three parts of the research question. Since this exploratory research investigation aimed to generate rather than to generalise ideas about considering space for the voices of significant stakeholders in curriculum leadership, the specific sites or groups for study do not claim to constitute a "representative" cross section of teaching/learning sites or groups. However, the ideas being generated form a living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) which will continue to develop in further studies which may include larger and more representative samples and which, in time, may lead to more generalisable findings in the future. Any understandings and insights at this stage are very much an emergent construction (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The documented data from this exploratory research investigation include the written narratives (where they were completed), field notes of conversations with people participating, case summaries (checked by the relevant participants); broad summaries of each cross-cultural context (checked with small critical friend groups of local higher education people); and a reflective diary written by the researcher. It is from these sources that a number of propositions emerge.

One difficulty with this type of research (both in the early exploratory stages and in later more extensive and detailed stages) is capturing directly the voices of those stakeholders which the research is claiming to represent. Schools are becoming increasingly wary of university researchers and principals, it seems, are playing the role of protective gatekeepers very effectively. A salutary lesson is being re-emphasised here concerning the need for time to initiate and maintain a collaborative working relationship with the schools used and the teachers who participate. There has to be something in it for them, and especially in the very practical terms of day-to-day life in classrooms. Added to all of this is

another dimension - the perception of those in gatekeeping roles that students and parents might not have all that much to offer in terms of curriculum leadership!

Yet another difficulty relates to the reporting of this type of research. It would not be possible within the limits of this paper to represent the full detail of what the voices of all stakeholders are saying. One is caught between dwelling on the detail of one voice and or one site; and relishing the account as a good literary piece (or story) at a descriptive level on the one hand, and trying to critique what the voices are saying and informing at a theoretical and methodological level, on the other. This article "errs" on the side of the latter. The tentative first steps of an emerging living educational theory and a research methodology (an emergent construction in Denzin and Lincoln's (1998:3) terms) become the focus, then, for the remainder of the paper.

SOME EXTRACTS FROM THE REFLECTIVE DIARY KEPT DURING THE EXPLORATORY RESEARCH INVESTIGATION

It became obvious that, as the exploratory research investigation proceeded, action research, in its fullest sense, was not going to be feasible. However, there were encouraging signs that in a larger and longer research investigation, action research would be both appropriate and possible. For example, the data from the investigation demonstrate that an insightful and useful platform for negotiating further investigation was being developed within and across sites. The propositions presented a little later are evidence of such a platform.

In the exploratory work, it was the intention that participants would be invited to construct a narrative from their own experience in curriculum practice at teaching/learning sites using the three parts of the research question as a framework. Conversations in small groups were to follow at each teaching/learning site in three cultural contexts (Brisbane (Australia): Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China): and Cambridge and surrounding counties (United Kingdom)). However, this intention could not always be fully realised at each site, and the research approach had to be modified to meet local constraints and the limited time available at each cross-cultural context.

The three contexts have all experienced curriculum policies which focus on quality learning outcomes in largely economic rationalist terms and with a highly technological present and future in view. At the same time, educational systems within the contexts have undergone restructurings with an emphasis on school-based management. There are examples within each context of a call both to an external accountability to standards and outcomes on the one hand, and to a local responsibility to engage in collaborative curriculum decision-making on the other.

There are, of course, differences across and within the three cultural contexts. What follows are some extracts from the researcher's reflective diary. The reflections record recurring themes across the contexts while noting points that are particular to a context or site.

HONG KONG

The reflection is based on interactions with people at one primary school and one secondary school; and with a range of higher education people who provided general contextual information and checked my observations and interpretations.

PLACE: It is apparent that the schools see themselves as communities, but they recognise that the factors associated with curriculum leadership are not operating in a mix which would be inclusive of all stakeholders. The concerns that parents are too busy and that young students would not understand seem to work against developing a sense of acceptance and

the use of a commonly-understood language. Signposts for further investigation and action include the mapping of a teaching/learning site, using the curriculum leadership factors. Such mapping would help to identify possible starting points for ongoing work. Attitudes of those who currently have the power (ie. teachers) possibly need to be challenged, critiqued and reconstructed in order to develop a broader understanding of where other stakeholders may play complementary roles in curriculum leadership. It is obvious that the two schools, if mapped in detail, would present unique mixes of the curriculum leadership factors, which, in turn, would require unique ways of responding. The nature of the broader historical and social contexts is also significant in mapping the specific school contexts.

READINESS: Professional development is seen to be the key to developing a sense of competence and confidence. The value-laden nature of curriculum and teaching is a worthwhile focus for the content of professional development activities. This, of course, is crucial in terms of engaging in critical reflection and articulating a defensible position for curriculum practice. What is interesting about the comments is that the needs of students and parents are not mentioned. Professional development needs to be extended to include the development of all stakeholders, especially if authentic participation and esteem/worth of all stakeholders are to be taken seriously. At this point, parents and students appear to be sidelined, and while this could be defended on the grounds of cultural and historical context, it cannot be sustained in the context of the current policy rhetoric which is calling for local action and greater participation.

POTENTIAL: Guarded optimism is expressed at both schools and it relates to a degree of cynicism that the rhetoric of policy is not always apparent in the reality of practice. The development opportunities alluded to above will need to address such areas as interpersonal skills that value and recognise the distinctive inputs of the various stakeholders; shared language; more collaborative and democratic ways of seeing school organisation; and the use of Action Research to strike the balance of theory and practice in the ongoing critique and reconstruction of curriculum practice. It is also important to consider the complementary roles of the various stakeholders and to take account that even within a stakeholder group, there may well be a variety of opinion. The complexity and diversity of curriculum leadership action at various sites highlights the need to portray the uniqueness of each site and to develop ways of moving ahead that are appropriate for that site.

AUSTRALIA

The reflection is based on interactions with teachers, students and parents at one primary school and one secondary school in Brisbane.

PLACE: It is obvious that the various stakeholders see a place for themselves in curriculum leadership, but again, as in Hong Kong, so much depends on understanding the unique characteristics and dynamics of the particular school. The sense of community seems to require a deeper understanding and a greater elaboration in practice at these schools. The power held by teachers, at least in the perceptions of students and parents, would be an area of fascinating investigation and action. There is obviously much work to be done in the area of making parents and students feel more accepted and included.

READINESS: There is some degree of confidence expressed in stakeholders' comments about readiness to engage in curriculum leadership at both schools. Professional development for teachers needs to be extended in terms of school community development for all stakeholders if there is to be any authentic participation and any sharing of power. Again, boundaries need to be determined so that all stakeholders know what their potential for contribution is. It is interesting to note that at one school, teachers identified themselves

as curriculum modifiers, adaptors and researchers. This augurs well for taking critical reflection and developing a defensible position in curriculum thinking and practice seriously.

POTENTIAL: The diversity of opinion evident among parents highlights the complexity of a school context as well as the associated need to map that context as a means of understanding it. It cautions against the application of "pat" recipes for action and change. It emphasises the need for professional development to be climates for fostering a sense of empowerment in all stakeholders. Further, it indicates that we should address the needs of stakeholders who perceive themselves to be marginalised and that the "in" stakeholders think about ways of sharing power and implementing strategies that are empathic and inclusive.

UNITED KINGDOM

The reflection is based on interactions with parents and students and teachers associated with a variety of schools in southern, eastern and central England, (eight in all); and a number of higher education personnel in some universities.

PLACE: Schools' personnel present a fairly bleak picture of the broader context within which the school has to operate. On closer examination, however, the range of examples observed when walking around schools and talking with children and teachers) is impressive. This does not deny the heaviness which teachers feel in terms of the imposed rigidity of the National Curriculum; but it does illustrate that where a school community has the organisational arrangements, the social dynamics and a shared view of curriculum that are facilitative of valued involvement of all stakeholders, the negative personal factors felt by teachers in such a crushing policy environment can, to some extent, be mitigated. Parents and students see that their place in curriculum leadership is limited at the edge of the real decision-making. They see their role limited to a subject-oriented view of curriculum and they do not stress an active role in a process-oriented view of curriculum. Where they do see possibilities for an involvement, they see that involvement largely to be very much a supporting, if not subservient one. They see that the approaches taken by school personnel in key roles are significant in including them. It was interesting to note that the National Curriculum has, to some extent, given parents and students a language to discuss curriculum matters. However, the language associated with the rhetoric of the 1997 White Paper (Blunkett, 1997) which talks about the voices of teachers and parents appears less well known. It is worth noting that there is a diversity of opinion among both parents and students concerning their place in curriculum leadership. It seems appropriate, therefore, to use the curriculum leadership factors and the propositions to map the curriculum environment of a teaching/learning site as a basis for understanding and better-informed action.

READINESS: The focal point is the development of all stakeholders in order to establish a sense of authentic partnership. The overall school leadership style seems to contribute to such developmental processes - a style that values and maintains very open channels of communication, consultation and negotiation. Parents, especially, note that development and training are important if they are to have a more meaningful role in curriculum. Both parents and students note that communication is very important, as are the processes associated with consultation and negotiation. The style of this communication needs to be in such a form that makes sense for parents and students. The place which they occupy in relation to teachers is an area of uncertainty, and it would appear that schools have to clarify the complementary roles of all stakeholders. Associated with this, of course, is a shared understanding of what the school is about in terms of teaching and learning.

POTENTIAL: This is captured by one Head Teacher who, on reflection, realised that her school holds exciting promise for the future as she consolidates the spadework of her early period there. She sees fresh challenges, in spite of growing external pressures, to ensure that lively debate is maintained within the school community via ongoing feedback, good communication to all stakeholders, empowerment of all stakeholders to participate meaningfully, and a sense that the school's ethos and focus will continue to evolve to meet changing needs. She believes in her teachers, her parents and her pupils. Very little is said about potential, and the rigidity of the externally-imposed syllabus is seen to work against any appreciable increase in parental and student participation. A sharing of frustrations among teachers, parents and students might be a useful beginning to shared understandings and collaborative actions about pressures on the school curriculum from without, and processes associated with making local curriculum decisions (and feeding back to the policy level). An empathic understanding of the distinctive roles of teachers, parents and students may create an environment with the potential for authentic inclusion of all stakeholders based on parity of esteem rather than upon a quantitative equality of input.

A SET OF PROPOSITIONS EMERGING FROM THE EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

It would appear that considering space for significant stakeholders in curriculum leadership involves the development of a sense of community at a teaching/learning site. It is within this sense of community that all stakeholders may be supported and sustained in their efforts to engage in curriculum leadership. When talking, then, of professional development for teachers, we should really be talking about the development of all stakeholders and the release of their potential to engage in curriculum leadership.

Our work in curriculum leadership (See Brooker, Aspland, Macpherson, Jenkins, Woods, Elliott, Proudord & Kemmis, 1996) provides a way of describing and understanding the unique mix of factors operating at each teaching/learning site. Such description and understanding, in turn, provide a way of creating space for stakeholders within the uniqueness of specific sites and within the broader contexts of societal trends, educational policies and systemic priorities.

At this stage, it looks as though the following propositions are being reflected in a variety of ways in the exploratory research investigation data and reflections on these data; and they appear to be worth further investigation and ongoing action. We must be aware, however, that these propositions are very tentative.

The propositions are as follows:

REGARDING PLACE IN CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP

RE AWARENESS AND DESIRE, it is proposed that:

Stakeholders are aware:

that curriculum leadership is a shared phenomenon within the community of a teaching/learning site;

that they can use the mix of contextual and personal factors associated with curriculum leadership to understand the unique character of curriculum leadership at a particular site where they may have some place in it; and

that an individual stakeholder's desire to become involved is nurtured in an inclusive manner by those who currently have the power (and are willing to share that power) on the basis of an awareness and understanding of curriculum leadership.

RE ACCEPTANCE AND LANGUAGE, it is proposed that:

Individual stakeholders (some of whom may represent dissonant voices) have a sense of acceptance by those who currently have the power and to have access to a language whose meaning is shared in order for reciprocal communication to take place about curriculum leadership and their place in it.

(See Dana, 1992; McConnell, 1991; Roberts and Dungan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994 and 1996.)

REGARDING READINESS TO ENGAGE IN CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP

RE COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE, it is proposed that:

Individual stakeholders build on their growing sense of awareness, understanding and acceptance; and develop a sense of competence to engage in curriculum leadership as an ongoing conversation with other stakeholders. A competence to engage brings with it a confidence to become involved.

RE PARTICIPATION AND ESTEEM/WORTH, it is proposed that:

Individual stakeholders who have the opportunity to participate will develop a sense of esteem and worth when they see that their voices are being heard and heeded (ie. when they are accorded a place in curriculum leadership and when they have space to demonstrate a readiness to engage in it).

RE REFLECTION AND DEFENSIBLE POSITION, it is proposed that:

Individual stakeholders reflect upon their participation in curriculum leadership in ways that are critically and contextually informed and educationally defensible.

(See Mellencamp, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994 and 1996; Keedy and Drmacich, 1991; and Rosaen, 1993.)

REGARDING POTENTIAL TO HAVE BOTH PLACE AND SPACE IN CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP

RE RECONSTRUCTION AND EMPOWERMENT, it is proposed that:

Individual stakeholders are supported and sustained in their participation so that their potential to engage in curriculum leadership is realised in ways that are reconstructive and empowering.

RE RECOGNITION AND EMPATHY, it is proposed that:

Individual stakeholders retain their individuality, but at the same time, see themselves as part of a wider community with a common purpose. The balance here is managed by a sense of empathy that the most appropriate community decision/action at any given time may not be their individual perspective.

(See Gitlin et al, 1991; Roberts and Dungan, 1993; and Covalleskie, 1994.)

Propositions like these, of course, raise more questions than they provide answers. They may not be reflected entirely or to the same degree in the current reality in each of the three cultural contexts; but they do seem to capture the mood of both what the relevant literature and these stakeholders would like to happen and what the rhetoric of current policy statements is espousing.

They are not universal "laws"; but they are signposts for considering approaches and strategies which individual teaching/learning sites may implement within the uniqueness of their own local and broader societal contexts. And this is where Action Research, in its fuller sense, fits in!

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION AND PRACTICE

The research question introduced at the beginning of this paper, and used as the basis for the exploratory research reported above has begun to elicit and elaborate a number of propositions concerning places and spaces for teachers and other significant stakeholders (especially parents and students) in curriculum leadership.

It is our belief that ongoing and larger-scale research investigations in this area will be worthwhile (in terms of creating networks for professional sharing, advocacy and action across sites and current policy contexts which emphasise partnerships in education) generally; and in curriculum decision-making and school-based management initiatives in particular - worthwhile because they will provide rich and detailed descriptions and reflections from the stakeholders' perspectives. Such descriptions and reflections, we believe, will provide the platform for supporting stakeholders and sustaining their efforts to engage in curriculum leadership.

Curriculum, then, as it is experienced by significant stakeholders and as it produces learning outcomes as a basis for ongoing learning in the lives of those involved is not understood alone by a reading of the cultural- and policy-driven artefacts such as curriculum legislation, curriculum frameworks, syllabi, work programs and the like. Rather, the lifeworld perspectives of significant stakeholders (briefly represented in the three reflections) demonstrate the potential to provide us with narrative and conversational insights to the real world of curriculum decision-making in schools and classrooms. These reflections, along with the propositions, are like windows. As we look through them, we are able to capture generative insights and understandings about the ways in which significant stakeholders might have space (or be meaningfully supported in having voice and authentic inclusion) in curriculum leadership action. For example, teachers with their professional expertise; students with their knowledge of youth culture and its intersection with their perceptions of the present and future world; and parents who have a desire to be partners in the education of their children together bring rich insights to the world of curriculum. But the questions are: how ready are these stakeholders to give voice to these insights and to be authentically included in curriculum decision-making and curriculum leadership action? and how conducive are the contexts within which these people to a sharing and a circulation of power?

It is not enough to accord these stakeholders a place in curriculum leadership at the levels of theory and policy. There must also be space for them to make their place a lived reality.

The theorised position which frames, and the research approach which was used in this exploratory research investigation combine to form a way of mapping and understanding the curriculum leadership landscape (Clandinin, 1997) and of discovering space for (or appropriate and distinctive means of supporting and sustaining) significant stakeholders in

curriculum leadership action within the unique nuances of each cultural context and each teaching/learning site.

As research investigations continue into considerations of space for significant stakeholders in curriculum leadership, implications for ongoing work as a praxis of research, development and action in the area of curriculum leadership will no doubt be identified as a basis for continuing the conversation. It is hoped that a continuing conversation will seek to enhance and advance both the emerging living educational theory about space for significant stakeholders in curriculum leadership; and the rigour and applicability of an action research approach in having an impact at the levels of both local practice and wider educational policy. The propositions offered in this paper, and your comments about them, are simply the beginning of such a continuing conversation.

It is this sort of research in education that has the chance of counting, and we are reminded of and encouraged by Stenhouse's (1975) timeless view that it is teachers who ultimately will change the world of both schools and the multiplicity of learning environments by understanding them through being active researchers and practitioners within them.

In fact, we would extend Stenhouse's view and say that it is teachers, with other "on-the-ground" stakeholders, who will change the world of learning environments (including the ongoing transformation/reconstruction of the curriculum by:

understanding it;

developing a sense of empowerment to engage in the processes which shape it; and

engaging this sense of empowerment in collaborative actions which are contextually aware, theoretically and critically informed, educationally defensible and professionally accountable.

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