The nature of leadership is changing
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1 INTRODUCTION

Education leadership is undergoing a significant change in the past five years as the goals of education are fundamentally shifting to preparing students, and teachers, for the 21st century. Yes, 20 years late, but better late than never.

Leadership has changed during the last decade. In Ontario when we worked on literacy, numeracy and high school graduation in 2003–2013, we learned a great deal about capacity building for individuals and groups. Such capacity focused on pedagogy, collaboration, spreading what works, and assessing impact. We learned about transparency in the context of relative non-judgmentalism. There was a lot to learn but the agenda was somewhat straightforward—capacity-building linked to results.

Since 2015, I have been involved in a new era of change through work across education systems around the world; where the world is more complex, non-linear, and the problems are deeper. More dynamic, interactive forms of leadership are required; more attention to developing leaders who can lead and learn in unpredictable situations has become imperative. The context has changed as more problems threaten the future of society.

My work has always been informed by working with practitioners, rather than drawing directly on research. Indeed, I would say that 80% of our best ideas come from leading practitioners. What have we been learning in such close partnerships with the field? As we grappled with student boredom and alienation of students—and of many teachers—in traditional schools, we began to notice some innovations that we have come to call "deep learning". Beginning in 2015, we developed partnerships with groups of schools in several counties that were interested in developing new forms of learning. We developed a framework that focused on new learning outcomes, and conditions that would support them. The resulting model is our deep learning framework that consists of: (1) six Global Competencies (character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking); (2) four learning conditions: partnership, pedagogy, learning environment, and leveraging the use of digital technologies; and (3) supportive conditions at the school, district, and policy levels (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, **2018**).

2 NEW LEADERSHIP

The most accurate concept for capturing the nature of new leadership within the context of deep learning is *Nuance* (Fullan, **2019**). Nuance is the capacity or set of habits that enables the leader to get below the surface, to see the details and eventually to be able to see both the trees and the forest. Effective leaders have always been experts in understanding context, but context has become so dynamically changing that this capacity stands out as crucial. In this think piece, I address four leadership components of new leadership: "experts in context"; "engaging in joint determination" throughout the process; establishing a "culture of accountability"; and becoming a "system player". In the conclusion I offer an overview of the new leadership.

2.1 Experts in context

When people take a new leadership position or move jobs, to a certain extent *they become de-skilled* . Presumably they possess certain skills for which they were hired, but by definition they cannot possibly know the new context in detail. Thus, they must become "learners of context". I think this is what Martin and Osberg (**2015**) mean when they found that effective entrepreneurial leaders had to be both "experts" (what they bring to the situation), and "apprentices" (what they learn from others in the context). It is clear that leaders must "participate as learners" in helping the organisation move forward. The leaders in all ten case examples discussed in *Nuance* (Fullan, **2019**), were experts at learning in context, whether on the level of a school, a district, or a state system.

2.2 Joint determination

The more complex the problem, the more people must be part of the solution. I think this is what David Cote, former chairman of Honeywell was getting at when he said metaphorically "Your job as the leader is to be right at the end of the meeting, not at the beginning of the meeting. It's your job to flush out all the facts, all the opinions" (Fullan, **2019**, p.16). Leaders may and should have good ideas that fit the situation, but they must jointly flesh out these ideas with people in the system at the outset, and all the way through the process of continuous improvement. This is not a new idea—Mary Parker Follett, the mother of American management thinking in the 1920s referred to it as striving for "unity of purpose", then she added semi-humorously, "don't expect it to last more than 15 s". Change dynamics are increasingly complex and unpredictable; thus, leaders have to be close to the action and be able to adapt and resolve issues. The process of unity of purpose is about joint determination and adaptability. All of the ten case examples of

success in *Nuance* show how leaders worked closely with all levels of the organisation, shaping and reshaping solutions.

2.3 Culture of accountability

Accountability has been the bugbear of educational change. Punitive or direct accountability has backfired, but the answer cannot be "replace bad accountability with no accountability". Richard Elmore was on the right track some fifteen years ago when he said that "no amount of external accountability can be effective in the absence of internal accountability" (i.e., internal to the culture). The question then becomes: how do leaders establish internal accountability? In successful cases, leaders have established what we and others have called "internal accountability". The latter consists of clear goals; collaborative cultures that generate collective efficacy; precision (but not prescription) of practice; transparency of practice and results; and a climate of non-judgmentalism. The leaders' job then is to build a culture where people come to embrace a focus on continuous improvement as something they have to do and prove to themselves and others. As internal accountability strengthens, schools can more productively connect to external accountability requirements. In a sense, internal accountability increases assessment literacy in two ways: one consists of "professional expertise" in terms of becoming greater experts in assessment, its meaning and how to use it for both internal and external accountability. The other concerns "political expertise" as in being able to account to external sources the progress being made or not. There is still the possibility of external intervention in the case of persistent failure or endemic problems, but by and large the vast majority of schools can operate effectively with a "culture of accountability" which, as I said above, meshes with overall quality performance.

2.4 Becoming a system player

I mean "system player" in a very specific way. We now see system change operating across three semi-autonomous levels: local, middle (district or region), and top (policy) (Fullan & Gallagher, **2020**). To be effective leaders at the school level, we have to "go outside to become better inside". Schools that are part of networks with other schools generally do better. School leaders need to see themselves as part of larger systems—either districts or states, or both—where they are both contributing to the bigger picture and benefitting from it. Systems do not improve unless leaders at all levels are engaged in system improvement as we have illustrated with Ontario (2003–2013); California (2012 to the present); and Victoria, Australia (2015-present) (Fullan & Gallagher, **2020**).

3 CONCLUSION

In the four ways just described, school leadership has changed fundamentally in the past decade. (1) Leadership is less linear; (2) requires incumbents to always be learning and helping others learn; (3) develops greater precision and efficacy with and through the group; and (4) contributes locally and more broadly. One overall way to think about leadership is that the job of the leader is to develop collaborative cultures and leadership of others to the point where the leader becomes dispensable!

In this think piece, I have suggested that new leadership must be conceived in terms of four components: experts in context, joint determination of solutions, a culture of accountability, and becoming system players. If we now think in terms of skills and processes of change, I see five domains of interactive leadership characteristics. Effective leaders are above all co-learners (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Open in figure viewerPowerPoint
New leadership. *Source* : Fullan (2019) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Overall, new leadership is both more demanding, more exciting and fulfilling. As society becomes more complex and non-linear, we need leaders who can achieve greater specificity on any given day, while having a system perspective, and being involved. Seeing the forest and the

trees, and cycling in and out, are skills that mark our new nuanced leaders. In a phrase, they are "leaders in a culture of change" (Fullan, **2020**).

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