Fostering hope: A leader's first and last task

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Fostering hope: a leader's first and last task

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the article is to call upon educational leaders to consider the forces that hinder hope-giving and to consider viewing their work as inspiring warranted hope among their constituents in situations of well-defined reality.

Design/methodological/approach – The author argues that hope is an essential component of leader agency which when unhindered and defined in a multidimensional fashion may be used to transform the experiences of learning communities.

Findings – The author argues that leaders who foster warranted hope in constituents will gain transformational leverage to improve educational practice and the experiences of learners and their communities.

Practical implications – The author provides leaders with an overview of the utility of a reality-based notion of hope that may serve to legitimate and focus constituent energies and make sense of key organizational challenges.

Originality/value – Provides a unique framing and synthesis of the multi-dimensional concept of hope into the context of educational leadership, association with relevant allied constructs, and the challenges of education in the twenty-first century.

Keywords Leaders, Education

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

It was a privilege to provide this oration in honor of the memory and significant pioneering contributions of William (Bill) Walker. Many of you reading this article will have known Bill directly and experienced the benefit of his presence, wisdom, initiative and friendship. Others of us have had to rely on reading his work, standing in the shadow of his influence, and having conversations with those who had his first-hand accompaniment.

I begin by thanking the ACEL organizers for the invitation to present the William Walker oration. It was a genuine privilege. I thought about what I might say to lead the Brisbane 2005 Conference participants in their remembrance of Professor William Walker and to provoke our practice, consistent with the spirit of critique, constructive, and transformative efforts undertaken by Bill Walker.

The first and last task of educational leadership: inspiring hope

In his classic book, *On Leadership*, the late John Gardner (1990), asserted that "the first and last task of a leader is to keep hope alive. Never denying the difficulties, they must keep confidence unimpaired" (p. 195). He said:

> We need to believe in ourselves and our future but not to believe that life is easy. Life is painful and rain falls on the just [and the unjust]. Leaders must help us see failure and frustration not as reason to doubt ourselves but a reason to strengthen resolve (p. 195).

I find this to be a provocative, inspiring, and instructive statement for leaders; but, also, one grounded in reality and impatient with light, fatuous optimism, and pixie-dust-like notions of hope (Tinder, 2001). We are not here simply trying to "sweeten the sour apple" (Freud cited by Smith, 2001, p. 38).

In a few paragraphs I will indicate why my topic, "hope-fostering," is, at the same time, both a simple and a difficult one for us to consider. I have neither the time nor space here to be comprehensive in my treatment but I trust you will be satisfied to merely witness the raising of the "hope flag," see the possibilities for what we might call "warranted hope," and agree that this is a subject worthy of the deliberate consideration of educational leaders and their diligent conduct.

For continuity sake, I will first make some connections with two recent ACEL publications, one by Patrick Duignan and other, by Brian Caldwell. Duignan (2004) has recently reminded us of Bill Walker's visionary and paradigm-challenging ways: Bill implored us to critique our unhelpful theoretical addictions, to rethink the doctrine of objectivity, along with dualistic and binary thinking, and to confront our propensities to imitation, holding rigid values and to deal with our incessant control obsessions. Bill encouraged those coming under his influence to carefully examine the structures, systems and strategies they employ to see if they hold up to robust scrutiny and to look beyond the common habits of perspectives and interpretative paradigms that might limit us. Similarly I will join with Bill and others to broach some common fetters or hang-ups in our thinking that I feel keep us from being all we might hope to be as inspiring and generative educational leaders. I believe these systemic pathologies, subtle tendencies, and problematic frames can be hazards that hinder hope and have kept us from giving hope its due place.

Second, I turn to the recent ACEL Monograph by Caldwell (2005), who challenged us to re-imagine the transformation of schools through: personalizing learning; re-writing the scripts for what schools are to look like and do; developing synergistic partnerships, amidst complexity; deliberately engage collective sagacity (apply our practical wisdom to challenges that face us and our constituents); innovating our means and approaches to knowledge transfer; and creating situated, then global, epidemics of educational excellence. I could not agree more with each of Brian's persuasive points. His perceptive articulation of these elements is most helpful. I, too, believe that multilevel transformation is necessary for those of us in the education sector and that we need to forge new habits of heart and mind to predispose us to reality-based transformation. I am simply riding on his momentum by adding hope-fostering as a crucial element to our re-imagining the transformational frames and functions that we must undertake for the outcomes we wish to attain.

After some reflection on the analyses and prescriptions of these two expert, I suggest that we must step up our attention to re-imagine ourselves as thoroughly

human beings (distinct from machines) and to develop educational eschatologies and ontologies that provide well-considered platforms for our personal and organizational transformations. As Professor Caldwell has aptly said:

> At the heart of the case for re-imagination is that henceforth the unit of organization is the student – not the classroom, not the school and not the system – and that the self in self-management is the student.

I would ask you to consider – what better, more useful, gifts might we offer our students than hope, meaning and purpose. I, too, believe that our hope is in persons and that a focus on those persons who are the school, who are the community and who are the human system is the right place to start for leaders. Our work needs to be about people. My exposition is directed to professional educators and educational leaders who are the progenitive agents of students' flourishings.

Implementation is the hardest part of the transformation challenge; as vision is almost always easier said than done. We so easily get hung up on – even fixated on and infatuated with method and means – thereby loosing sight, again, of the ends. Personally and organizationally we can and do get stuck and become beleaguered (May, 2001). When this happens I think we need to pause and reflect. I suggest we need a teleological disposition – a bias to ends, to the *summum bonum* (the greatest good), and to making a significant difference in the world. Take note that you will never see a "science of the *summum bonum*." Sheldon identified a huge human craving – that is "deeper and more fundamental than sexuality, deeper than the craving for social power, deeper even than the desire for possessions, there is a still more generalized and universal craving in human make up. It is the craving for knowledge of the right direction – for orientation" (William Sheldon in Smith, 2001, p. 26).

If Gardner is to be believed – that fostering hope is the first and the last task of a leader, then I think it would be helpful for us to consider what might hinder or quench our experiences and attention to hope, as students, staff, educators, and members of communities. Along with some general observations, I will suggest that our propensities to control by boundary setting and our tendencies to deal with ideological conflict with tribalism and idiocy constitute examples of hindrances to hope. We must also consider what it is that we are to keep alive and foster (what is hope?) and why this hope is so important for us. Finally, most of us will want to know what practical difference an application of this monograph might make on our "Monday mornings." In other words, "so what?" How does hope contribute to the transformation we seek to generate, at individual, organizational, and societal levels? What must our leading, living, learning and language look like if we are to be purveyors of hope? It is be my contention that diligence, mindfulness, and confidence on the part of educational leaders are of the utmost importance as we seek to engender hope. We need to be able to identify our habits of mind, language and actions that tend to displace or retard hope and we need to be conscious of best practices in hope-giving that help us to lead others into lives of learning, flourishing and celebrating life.

Hindrances to hope in our times
Before we define hope I want to say a few words about why this maybe a rather difficult topic for us. I suggest that there will be some who immediately dismiss the topic as "soft," "too basic," "taken-for-granted," out-of-order for public discourse, too

mystical, bordering on the "religious," beyond the scope of legitimate topics for educational leaders, irrelevant to the "real-life" challenges of educators, and issues of the day, too personal, unknowable, indefinable, or too philosophical to entertain. I can appreciate these concerns.

It is likely that most of those who read these words will resonate with my own profound awe when I think of the people associated with education, people we have been privileged to serve with. So often at the end of the day, I reflect on the best experiences with students and given thanks for each of them and their families. I have recalled the stellar character of secretaries, caretakers, teacher assistants, teachers, administrators, and others who have literally given themselves to the one and the many in the classrooms, hallways and grounds of our schools. I could name the hope-givers in each school where I have worked – and I am sure you could too. Somehow these people have said "hope is important and we must not let anything divert our energies from giving hope to all who will receive it."

With the examples set by these hope-givers, I want to claim that educational leadership is more than bureaucratic finesse, more than social-psychological know-how, more than sophisticated rational-technical response to problems and challenges and more than merely being a "good leader." I mean to say that it does require orderliness in the context of chaos; effectiveness towards accomplishing purposes; expertise and cogent explanation in problem solving and the resolution of challenging issues; and it is about leaders of sterling character operating in the very best interests of all their constituents, especially students and their families. But these, it seems to me, are minimal features of educational management and leadership. The performance of these requires great commitment, character and competence but may still fall short of what I would suggest is excellence in educational leadership. I believe leaders need to be hopeful and out of their fullness, they need to be able to foster this hope in others. They do this in spite of the complexities of our times, the rigidity of our thinking, and the deadlock and tensions of our diverse values and aspirations.

Often these geopolitical and economic times are described as turbulent and uncertain. The fragile equilibrium of threat and fear, even terror, on one hand and unprecedented innovation and opportunity, on the other, surely require our due care and attention. While nations rage, the new economy adjusts, and world leaders negotiate, local educational leaders are left to navigate the challenges of transforming education in keeping with the demands, interests, goods and needs of the new Millennium. In his interviews with 40 CEOs from a wide range of organizations, Garten (2001, p. 33) said:

> ... I found them to be pragmatic and non-ideological. They are acutely aware of the changes sweeping over our society... they live in a world that includes too much unsifted information, multiple constituencies with different objectives, pressures to act with extreme speed in an environment of conflicting market signals and untested technologies. It is a world of tremendous uncertainty, where the trade-off between one course of action and another are almost impossible to quantify and require unusually high dose of instincts. Consequently, they place great weight on finding simplicities that work – following basic instincts, identifying first principles clearly and remaining true to them in good times and bad.

This description of multi-national chief executives is not far removed from senior educational leaders, principals, heads, and other professional educators. I believe that one of our basic instincts (as referenced by Gartner) is to hope and to renew our

commitment to basic principles. We tend to have confidence to the extent that we have credible responses to the major challenges that confront us. One expression of these major problems is offered by Smith (2001) who posits that human societies have always focused their energies on the quest for acceptable response to certain questions. He offers three basic questions that our students, their family members, our staff and all in our communities instinctively seek to answer:

(1) How to win food and shelter from their natural environment? Of course this can be a survival problem or a lifestyle question. For a student it might be understood as the question – how do I gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to access employment in order that I may take care of my family and myself? At another level, it becomes a question of the distribution of benefits and burdens amongst fellow citizens of the world. To others it is the problem of production capacity, sustaining finite supplies, and brokering conflicting demands.

(2) How are we to get along with each other; what is the nature and manner of our connectedness, mutual obligations, and relationships? Smith believes all societies need to deal with this social problem.

(3) How are we to relate to the total scheme of things? This Smith calls the metaphysical question because it concerns discerning the big picture; what are we here for – what is meaningful and to what purpose do we live, breath and interact?

The reason that I believe education is important is that it is inextricably linked and interwoven with these fundamental human quests. It is educational leaders' function to make ever-increasing space for these ongoing quests (Scheffler, 1990).

According to Smith, modernity, as expressed through science, technology and the market economy has made considerable contribution to our first problem – the survival question. However, modernity has over promised progress and offered precious little to the soul longings of human kind. Modernity asserts rigid bounds on what constitutes legitimate knowledge, value and experience. Postmodernism, too, has contributed much to our quest for answers (Sackney *et al.*, 1999). The second question (the social challenges) has been significantly helped by postmodernist's accommodation of diversity and deconstruction of longstanding tyrannies (Mitchell *et al.*, 1996). However, from a postmodern orientation, we are offered a world devoid of "grand narratives" – "a life without truths, standards, and ideals, we must take up a thorough going skepticism" (Bauman cited in Halpin, 2003, p. 3). This has brought about a diminution of citizenship, commonwealth covenants, and social cohesiveness. It has accelerated the rise of tribalism and idiocy.

Smith suggested that neither modernity nor post-modernity provide responses to the third basic human question – the metaphysical one. I want to suggest the third question fits squarely into the domain of education and we need to pursue its challenges with all diligence. I have a few more words to offer about the limits of modernity and post-modernity, together with the human quest for meaning that hope-givers must address at these current crossroads.

Rigidity in our thinking: offspring of modernity
Halpin (2003, p. 2) signaled that "a world of resignation to the status quo" is not what we want but that this is what we end up with when we are without social hope. Indeed,

he suggests that hope is indispensable to politics, education and leadership. I recently read of a 2000 year old custom which is still practiced in many European cultures: "beating the bounds," as they call it. On Ascension Day, local people walk around their farm, manorial, church or civil boundaries, pausing at landmarks (trees, walls, hedges) that mark the extent of the boundary and there they pray, exclaim, and ritually beat the landmark with sticks. In times when map-reading was uncommon, these periodic tribal strolls served to ensure that boundaries remained intact, were well-known by both locals (especially the emerging generation) and foreigners, and that these markers had not been impinged upon by neighboring landlords. Preventing encroachment, reinforcing power, asserting the rights of tenants, reminding succeeding generations of bygone allegiances, fixing land entitlements and property rights are seen as the benefits for perpetuating this "beating the bounds" custom (Walker, 2004). It would not be unusual to attend a service (even today in Britain) where at each pause beside a landmark, the priest would say:

> We declare this is the boundary of the parish [of such and such] …. Cursed be he who moveth the boundary."

I confess that my first response to learning of the beating the bounds practice was the thought "these people need to get a life!" Then I relented, "don't be harsh, this is an old outdated practice, not one experienced in this day and age." But sure enough, the practice continues. We, too, perpetuate certain confining ways of thinking. I think, our fortress building and moat dredging mentalities of may be a symptom of not having a larger or sufficiently inspiring shared hope in the future. There must be more worthy ends to put our lives into? We need robust, resilient hope to move us forward. The problem is that our one best way is not giving us a high enough of an adaptability quotient to address the most fundamental challenges of transformation. Our exclusive and rigid paradigms for what constitutes truth, reality, and value are bounds we need to transcend if we are to transform. I will name only a few of the factors that fetter our hope and place unnecessary bounds on what we can and can not call true, real, and valuable: scientism, consumerism, commoditization, injustice, rational-technical sophistication and control obsessions (Tinder, 2001; Halpin, 2003; Taylor, 1991; Dawn, 2003).

Quinn (2000) reminded his readers of Kurt Lewin's assertion that "we cannot really begin to understand a system until we try to change it" (p. 145), to convey the idea that individual and collective scripts stay hidden till challenged. In this same vein, Quinn calls for a responsible and purposeful "disturbing of the system." Like Kouzes and Posner's (1993, 1999) view that leaders ought to challenge the process, so Quinn encourages "provocative competence" and improvisation. He reminds readers that disruptions should not be toxic nor overwhelming but should be characterized by "a disciplined focus on achievement and a disciplined sensitivity to the needs of others" (p. 163).

I believe educational leadership needs what Buber (1949) called "an eschatology" or an unbounded view of the future realization of what we most hope for as a community (he called this "a vision of rightness" (Buber, 1949, p. 8), explaining this might be elemental (where people have a "significant and active share" in the determination of their preferred future versus apocalyptic (where events and circumstances unfold according to fixed or assigned fashion).

While we have made some progresses it is as Martin Buber aptly points out a common feeling, one "felt more and more profoundly . . . how fragile all our glories are; and in moments of clairvoyance we come to realize that in spite of everything we like to call 'progress' we are not traveling along the high-road at all, but are picking our precarious way along a narrow edge between two abysses" (p. xx).

Tribalism and idiocy in our relating: offspring of postmodernity

Provocateur, Guinness (1992), once suggested that challenging circumstances are typically addressed by three distinct value orientations: tribespersons, idiots and citizens. As critical decisions of public philosophy are called for, some people will respond as "tribes people" by seeking security in a form of tribal solidarity and intolerance of everything alien to themselves and their interests. Some will respond as "idiots," in the Greek sense of the private personal or career interests, who do not subscribe to any form or process of negotiated and chartered public philosophy. These people are oblivious to the importance of "civility," best interests, and the common good. Their "hope" has only self as beneficiary. Most people, I believe, will respond as "citizens," in the sense of those who stand for their local constituents' interests but who are also recognize their leadership responsibilities in a "commonwealth." These people appreciate the social values, relationships, knowledge and skills that underlie the best of educational communities. These are people of hope. Guinness advocates that the orientation of citizens provides the greatest promise for resolving deadlock, honoring diversity and sustaining super ordinate values, relationships and interests. In my view, our schools are mostly places of citizen-oriented leaders, least a place of idiots, and most threatened by the extremes of geographic, economic, and sector tribalism.

Certainly in times such as these, we have opinion leaders on educational issues, who declare their views on various challenges. It has been interesting to filter these utterances into the three categories. Is the person speaking from exclusive tribalism, from extreme individualism, or from a citizenship perspective? Of course all three responses will always be with us but we should aim to see citizens predominate the conversations. Leave the incessant beating of the bounds to tribes and idiots in the elsewheres. Citizenship means that I act as if this larger place were mine to create with others. Citizenship is about fostering hope for all; and most of all those predisposed by the circumstances of life to disadvantage.

Tribes often congregate around ideologies and I would like to suggest that these ideologies are rooted in dreams or hopes for the future. There are four political aspirations that reflect our highest hopes for good schools and a good society. These meta-values are at the root of numerous tensions and engender legitimate debate. You might consider these "high-hopes in tension." I see it as the responsibility of all hope-fostering leaders to engage in dialogue with those who hold slightly different dreams of what constitutes a good school or a good community. These hopes are often expressed in terms of liberty, equality, efficiency, and community. Reasonable people will say that each and all of these aspirations are important but may disagree on which should be emphasized in particular times, circumstances, and political positions. These hope-values are often expressed in complex fashions and the instruments for asserting or emphasizing a particular value may vary with circumstances or preferences. It is the educational leader's responsibility to help mediate and navigate these tensions and to do so ethically. There is an incorrect tendency to see these political values as either-or

values but this is unhelpful. It is best to see these in a both-and fashion. Mature leaders will be able to see that people of good will who disagree on a particular issue are doing so as advocates for different senses of the balancing of these four dreams for a good school and/or community. It is a major challenge to bring a resolve to deadlocks and stuck hope-polarities (as people take opposite and opposing views on issues). Wisdom is surely needed to navigate through ambiguous and alternative choices for action.

These different viewpoints, polarities, or positions may be seen as competing dreams or hopes. Thinking the best of the people who differ with them, it is possible to see some of the ideological or political conflicts as the result of competing dreams. How does the leader encourage the healthy diversity of dreams and yet avoid the deadlocks or escalation of debate into destructive and exaggerated conflict (Sanga and Walker, 2005)?

Hope for liberty. Some people place the political ideal of liberty or personal freedom as the top aspiration to be established, sustained or used as the trumping criteria for policy making. This is a worthy ideal but one that supports minimal government, deregulation, competition, individual independence, laws that protect political and economic liberty, merit-based decision making, innovation, entrepreneurial excitement, and rugged individualism.

Hope for equality. Some people of conviction who place the political ideal of equality as their higher-order hope or dream. These people are conscious of social costs of unregulated development, disparities of wealth, opportunity, and power amongst people. Equal access to education, security, health care, and social consideration, exploitation of marginalized and disadvantaged persons and groups provide urgent motivation for their decision-making. Those who value quality for all want to reduce or eliminate the risk of having winners and losers in the state systems, organizations, and institutions. People concerned with equality want to recognize and even compensate for the fact of natural inequality.

Hope for efficiency. Some people of conviction who place the political ideal of efficiency as their number one hope for our schools. These people believe that maximizing efficiency in all activities must be the chief goal of governance and decision-making. The energy one exerts must result in the greatest results possible. Wastage of time, talents, and resources is to be carefully avoided in production or performance activities. How can we lower the costs, maintain the quality, and create greater margins of profit or benefit from each act or decision? Those who hold this position are looking for optimal and unequal allocation of resources, where quality is produced for less.

Hope for community. Some people of conviction place the political ideal of community as their highest hopes. Such people are concerned about the common good and the enhancement of high and long-term quality of life for all persons. They are convinced that short-term benefits should be weighed against long-term consequences. They argue that technology, industry, and profit should never cause the sacrifice of human wellness. These people advocate for the responsible management of the environment, conservation of natural and renewable resources, respectful uses of technologies. Community-oriented people believe in the shared good life and are not inclined to see individuals benefit to the detriment of the common good.

In transition times, situations and decisions that deal with political or ideological values must never to be confused with or be allowed to undermine ethical principles. All four hopes are important and must be advocated with conviction.

Hope at the crossroads: our quest for meaning

Having a sense of purpose or meaning that is personally significant has the power to grant the possessors hope. Hope is deeply woven into our humanity.

> Our spirits were made for hope the way our hearts were made to love and our brains were made to think and our hands were made to make things (Smedes, 1998, p. 7).

Perhaps others will resonate with the words of Wheatley's (2005, pp. 261-262), as I did:

> As the world grows even darker, I've been forcing myself to think about hope . . . How is it possible to feel hopeful, to look forward to a more positive future? . . . In the past it was easier to believe in my own effectiveness. If I worked hard, with good colleagues and good ideas, we could make a difference. But now, I sincerely doubt that. Yet without hope that my labor will produce results, how can I keep going? If I have no belief that my visions can become real, where will I find the strength to persevere?

Her thoughts place her at a crossroads. In 1943, Jacques Maritain (1943) wrote a little book entitled, *Education at the Crossroads*. He immediately reminded his readers that:

> The word 'education' has a triple yet intermingled connotation, and refers to any process whatsoever by means of which [a person] is shaped and led toward fulfillment (education in the broadest sense), or to the task of formation which adults intentionally undertake with regard to youth, or, in its strictest sense, to the special task of schools and universities (pp. 2-3).

He asserted that "education is an ethical art" and that "every art is a dynamic trend toward an object to be achieved . . . [that] there is no art without ends, art's vitality is the energy with which it tends toward its end . . . " (pp. 2-3).

Interestingly, given the time of his writing, he said, that the weakness of education "proceeds from our attachment to the very perfection of our modern educational means and methods and failure to bend them toward the end" (p. 3). He lauded what he saw as the progress in pedagogic means, its outstanding progress, but sometimes the ontological is lost in the over attention to the methodological. In other words, when we become overly means, methods, and measures-oriented, it is possible to forsake or recast the "project" without paying attention to soul-oriented work of awakening students' potentials, as persons; facilitating their autonomous formation; and supporting their best interests, as aligned to their deepest longings and aspirations (Scheffler, 1990).

As I write, the title of Maritain's book, *Education at the Crossroads*, reminds me of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah's lament:

> I've got something to say. Is anybody listening? I've a warning to post. Will anyone notice? It's hopeless! Their ears are stuffed with wax – deaf as a post, blind as a bat. It's hopeless! My people are broken – shattered! – and they put on band-aids, saying, "it's not so bad. You'll be just fine." But things are not "just fine"! Do you suppose they are embarrassed over this outrage? No, they have no shame. They don't even know how to blush. There's no hope for them. They've hit bottom and there's no getting up. As far as I'm concerned, they're finished. . . [then the message comes that he is to pass on to his audience]. "Go stand at the crossroads and look around. Ask for directions to the old road, the tried and true road. Then take it. Discover the right route for your souls." But they said, "Nothing doing. We aren't going that way." I even provided watchmen for them to warn them, to set off the alarm. But the people said, "It's a false alarm. It doesn't concern us." (Jeremiah 6:10-18, Message Bible).

A careful study of this ancient text points to the frustration of the prophet-leader, as he struggles to have people listen to him, to face reality, and to go beyond superficial, patronizing, obdurant, and minimizing responses from the leaders of his day. His contemporaries were unmoved by his call for more meaningful resolution to the angst and soul hungry condition of the people. They were content to delimit the quest to problem one and/or problem two (as expressed by Smith, 2001) but refused to give attention to larger question of human purpose, meaning, connection to the larger scheme of things, and the potential that they might otherwise experience. They were encouraged to find distracting activity, quick fixes, to accept offers of vacuous words, and were carelessly directed to drink from empty cisterns to quench their thirst. I am not suggesting we overtly nor consciously do this in the education sector, but I do believe we must heighten our attention for the formation of the whole student (body, heart, mind, spirit, and their reciprocal relationships). Sergiovanni (2005) said:

> Perhaps the most important and perhaps the most neglected leadership virtue is hope. One reason why hope is neglected is because of management theories that tell us to look at the evidence, to be tough as nails, to be objective, and in other ways blindly face reality (p. 77).

The challenge to help define life, one grounded in reality, and to meet the abiding and deep needs of our students, and other members of the learning community, is even more complex with the sense that the terra firma is no longer as firma. Educational professionals make every effort to hold together their learning communities, hold on to that which is valued and to relinquish or jettison all else. Using a different metaphor, Giddens (2000) offered his observation that:

> Everywhere we look, we see institutions that appear the same as they used to be from the outside and carry the same names, but inside have become quite different . . . They are what I call "shell institutions." They are institutions that have become inadequate to the tasks they are called upon to perform. . . (pp. 36-37).

I think Giddens has painted a haunting picture for us. The work of educational transformation is aimed at displacing any truth that might be in Gidden's observation. I believe hope displaces fear, despair, despondency, and discontinuity.

What then is hope?
Certainly the immensity of the word "hope" keeps some of us from trying to understand it. I will just get us started so we have a shared and general understanding of what is in mind here – so we can proceed to my fundamental thesis. I will leave more complex and nuanced definitions to others.

The hope that is to be our first and last task has to do with an expectation of something desired and a confidence in relation to the future. As a verb it is a wish for something (I'd hope for better results from our school improvement efforts), an expression of confidence and anticipation (I hope to see you in Brisbane and that the conference refreshes and encourages you). As an adjective (I am still hopeful) and adverb (she works hopefully with those precious learning-challenged children). Substantive hope is an empowering force in our lives as persons, and as communities. Hope validates, enriches, and supports the present yet this hope is always forward-looking. MacKinnon (2003) saw hope as the belief that the future can be different than the past. If the future were known, hope would be without meaning.

A definition of hope

From the many definitions and expositions of hope, my current preference defines hope as "a multidimensional dynamic life force characterized by a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving a future good which, to the hoping person, is realistically possible and personally significant" (Dufault and Martocchio, 1985, p. 378). If you do not have your own definition, consider using this one until you find another one the suits your understandings better. I am sure many will relate to hope as a way of feeling that propels you and your learning community forward; a way of thinking that enables people to plan, to imagine ways to attain goals, to challenge difficult circumstances, and, a way of relate to self, to those you particularly care about and to the world (Farran *et al.*, 1995). Because of the influence leaders carry, they have the opportunity and privilege to enable the people such that they learn to feel, to think, and to behave in a hopeful manner. As transformational leadership expert, Burns (1978) stated:

> Hopes are closely influenced by leaders who arouse or dampen them (p. 117).

In addition, Koestenbaum (1991) stated:

> A leadership mind is characterized by hope …. What is needed is hope, the realistic perception that there is a way out, that there is a future, that there is a solution …. The leader has the capacity and the will to take charge of generating hope (p. 65).

A model of hope

In my opinion, one of the better and most comprehensive models of hope has been constructed by Dufault and Martocchio (1985), from clinical data. I think it would serve our purposes if we spend a brief time elaborating on the dimensions of hope to show that we are dealing with a substantive construct. Again, this is a relatively straight-forward articulation of the hope complex; one from an array of alternatives. These authors characterized hope as a multi-dimensional experience involving interpersonal relations, rational thought processes, motivation, and a spiritual/transcendent dimension. As illustrated in Figure 1, we can understand hope as comprised of two spheres, generalized and particularized hope, with six common dimensions operating simultaneously (Roset, 2004).

The quality of a person's sense of hopefulness is dependent upon the strength of each of these two spheres. A generalized hopefulness entails a disposition that ignites the desire to persevere with life's responsibilities and challenges in spite of being deprived of particular resources. Are there any educational leaders who cannot relate to such circumstances? Generalized hopefulness keeps one from despair, focuses one on the meaningfulness of life, and empowers people to work for something because it is significant, not just because it stands a chance to succeed. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) theorized that generalized hope "gives a broad perspective for life and thought that includes flexibility and openness to changing events" (p. 380). A hopeful disposition extends beyond the person's best interests to the interests and good of those within the wider community. As Fromm (1968) wrote:

> Hope is the decisive element in any attempt to bring about social change in the direction of greater aliveness, awareness, and reason (p. 6).
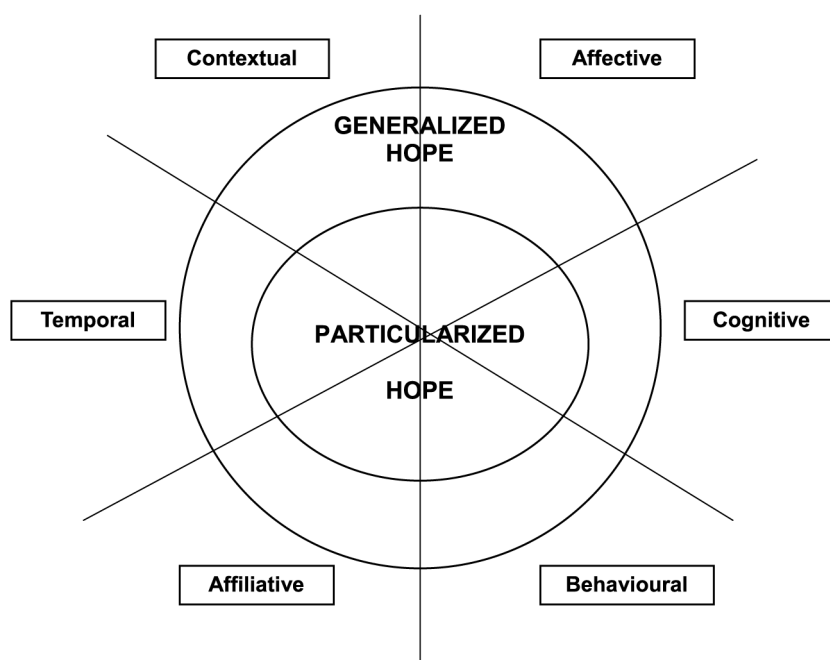
Source: Dufault and Martocchio (1985, p. 382)

Generalized hope. This hope provides the genesis for perseverance, tenacity, and a sense of the possible. Shade (2001) maintained that the chief value of generalized hope is "its capacity to sustain us and keep hope alive when our particular hopes fail" (p. 21).

Hopeful persons and communities falling with this generalized sphere are willing to learn, to understand, to persevere, and to experience most possible realities.

With reference to leadership, generalized hope provides the predisposition or frame through which a leader perceives and acts to seek answers or resolutions to transformational challenges and patiently tolerates the inevitable mysteries, synergies, and synchronicities of their learning community. This hope is a "key element in the capacity of people to mobilize energies to confront life's challenges" (Carter, 1996, p. 1). Hope enables the leader to envision, dream, and anticipate possibilities, rather than despair, within an unknown, challenging, and ever-changing future.

Dufault and Martocchio's construct of particular hope focuses on the leader's energies spent on some specific goal or end-state in the future. The objects of such hope may be concrete or abstract, explicitly-stated or implied. They say "particularized hope clarifies, prioritizes, and affirms what a hoping person perceives is most important in life" (p. 381). The particularized hope sphere is characterized by expectations that what we have can be improved upon and that the desired circumstances and end-values are possible to attain and experience.

Particularized hope. This hope calls upon persons and learning communities to commit themselves to transformation and to fine-tune their energies in a way that leads

to whatever the object of hope might be. Learning communities are able to say "we are different, better and more like we hope to be today than we were yesterday. Tomorrow we hope to again transcend our yesterday's in the direction of our preferred future." Snyder *et al.* (2000) defined hope in terms of both will power (agency) and way power (pathways) for goals. The determination of a person to do whatever it takes to achieve goals is expressive of will power. The leader who generates workable alternative routes, in case of obstacles, is exercising way power. Through personally significant goal-related pursuits, members of the learning community are invited to define what is meaningful to their lives and to be encouraged in this quest (Snyder, 1994).

As indicated, Dufault and Martocchio depicted six dimensions of the hope process – the affective, cognitive, behavioral, affiliative, temporal, and contextual. Depending on learning community context and aggregation of perceptions, these dimensions operate conjunctively and even concurrently.

The affective dimension. This dimension focuses upon the variety of our sensations and emotions – both positive and negative – that are a part of the hoping process. Hope has been considered to be an emotion (Averill *et al.*, 1990; Bloch, 1959; Snyder *et al.*, 2000). When people see evidence that their hope is supported, confidence increases and they report feelings of trust, optimism, assurance, happiness, and strength of belief (Dufault and Martocchio, 1985, p. 383). Positive emotions give persons a sense of control, rekindle the spirit, create new energies, increase the quality of life, and set the stage for new growth (Farran *et al.*, 1995, p. 5). Hope as a positive emotion of expectation leads to action (Bloch, 1959).

Interestingly confidence and uncertainty reflected different dimensions of hope and can coexist in the hoping person. The uncertainty aspect of hope may bring about feelings of "anxiety, nervousness, doubtfulness, uneasiness, tenseness, vulnerability, and sadness" (Dufault and Martocchio, 1985, p. 383). Fear has been regarded as the opposite of hope and is reflected in the saying, "fear can hold you prisoner. Hope can set you free" (Aikman, 1995, p. 170). Bloch maintained hope is not only an opposite emotion to fear, but a superior one. Fears cause people to become immobilized where they no longer think rationally or productively in the attempt to attain their goals. Experiencing fear has ramifications for cognition, emotional health, and social interactions. Both fear and hope share the same elements:

> The ability to project into the future, to plan, to use imagery, to elaborate scenarios, and to use verbal capacity for internal storytelling serve the process of worrying and the work of hoping (Breznitz, 1993, p. 93).

So, then, the range of feelings within the hope process ebb and flow – from fear and uncertainty to hopefulness – according to one's experiences and perceptions. I believe what we might say about an individual person's uncertainties, hopes and fears may also be features of collective experiences; just as despair and cynicism can become group diseases.

The cognitive dimension. This dimension of hope gives attention to our processes of reflection, examination, and assessment. We look with rational eyes at our resources and limitations as these affect our desired ends. Hope is "reality-based from the perspective of the hoping person" (Dufault and Martocchio, 1985, p. 384); that is, persons hope until they can no longer ground their hope in reality. The cognitive dimension focuses on "the processes by which individuals wish, imagine, wonder, perceive, think,

remember, learn, generalize, interpret, and judge in relation to hope" (p. 384). Hopeful people consider realistic possibilities, recall past and present experiences, and use imagination and thought processes to attain their goals. It is here where people construct and reconstruct their visions. Leaders may intervene and parry the constructs and understandings of their constituents towards hopeful ends.

The behavioral dimension. This dimension involves the psychological, physical, social, and religious actions taken "to directly effect the desired outcome or to achieve a hope" (Dufault and Martocchio, 1985, p. 385). Hopeful people tend to display a high sense of mental energy (Korner, 1970; Snyder, 1994; Stotland, 1969). Their hope catalyzes actions (Farran *et al.*, 1995; Marcel, 1951; Smedes, 1998) which further reinforces their sense of hopefulness (Cutcliffe, 1997; Snyder, 1994). Hopeful persons and communities incorporate coping strategies within their stress-filled contexts (Breznitz, 1993; Smith, 1983; Snyder, 1994), and tend to attain goals because of resilient dispositions (Seligman, 1990; Snyder *et al.*, 2000; Werner, 1984). Hopefulness strengthens the personal and collective sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Farran *et al.*, 1995; Lange, 1978) which, in turn, enables confidence and risk-taking (daring). Religious actions are those related to a belief in a higher being or God. Philosophers and theologians have long maintained that hope is inseparable from faith. For many faith cannot be sustained without hope, and hope has no base with out faith (Fromm, 1968, p. 14). Jevne and Miller (1999) maintained:

> When you stay hopeful, you remain open to the possibility that there is more than just this physical world and more than just this present moment. You grant that something greater may be at work around you and even within you. And that something greater may be something greater (p. 55).

Such a belief may be rooted in faith and/or transcendence, as former President Havel (1993), stated:

> [Hope] is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out. It is hope, above all, that gives us strength to live and to continually try new things, even in conditions that seem hopeless (p. 68)

The affiliative dimension. Meaningful relationships beyond self – with God and others – are components of this dimension, including components of social interaction, mutuality, attachment and intimacy, other-directedness, and self-transcendence (Dufault and Martocchio, 1985, p. 386). It is a common understanding that hope is born, nurtured, and sustained in relationship. Marcel (1951) stated, "hope is always associated with a communion" (p. 58); it can not be experienced a part from relationships. Smedes (1998) concurred and wrote:

> Substitute hopers can keep hope alive until our own hopes have a revival …. Everybody needs somebody who can be a vicarious hoper (pp. 101-105).

Through presence, by communicating positive expectations, and by exhibiting a confidence in an person's ability to overcome difficulties, one person can influence another's hope. Jevne and Miller (1999) stated:

> Voices of hope say things like "I believe in you," "you have it in you," and "Yes, you can." Such voices offer assurances that are grounded in truth. The person who's speaking really does believe, really does see the possibility (p. 21).

She goes on to say:

> The strongest voices of hope come from people you respect and people who respect you (p. 21).

I see the educational leader as one such person bringing strength and encouragement to many. Through the affiliative dimension, people experience a sense of belonging and interdependence.

The temporal dimension. This dimension of hope is directed toward the future but is also influenced by past and present experiences (Bloch, 1959; Cutcliffe, 1997; Fromm, 1968; Marcel, 1951; Slater, 1987; Snyder *et al.*, 2000). Jevne (1991) believed hope was set in the context of time:

> [Hope] draws on the past, is experienced in the present, and is aimed at the future (p. 150).

Hope is not ahistorical.

The contextual dimension. Finally, this dimension of hope reflects the life circumstances of one's experience. Hope is most recognizable within the context of confinement, tension, or challenges (Pruyser, 1963; Marcel, 1951). The person who decides to hope bases it on his or her view of reality. That reality is an intellectual commitment to "a philosophy of life, a religion, or an ethos that rings true to the tenor of one's experiences to date" (Pruyser, 1986, p. 127). When hurt, pain, injury and suffering is experienced, recovery is needed, or adjustment is required, as the sufferer and their empathizers become candidates for hope. In Marcel's words:

> Hope is situated within the framework of the trial (p. 30).

Similar circumstances may occasion different levels of hopefulness within different people.

> Some hope where there is no ground for hope, and others despair where they might hope (Hunter and Morris, 1897, p. 2541).

Of course the implications of this is that how one fosters or discovers hope will be unique to each person and each community. I like to think that our severest challenges make us candidates for the grace of hope. The school's culture, including its taken-for-granted assumptions, its stories, its values, its memory of change and critical events are all important to the hope quotient of the learning community.

Packer and Howard (1985) asserted:

> For hope is a basic human need. We live, very much in our hopes and invest much of ourselves in them, and it would be soul-destroying in the most literal sense to have all hopes taken away. We say, "while there's life, there's hope"; equally true, and equally basic, is the reverse statement, "while there's hope, there's life.' (p. 82).

Hope, then, encompasses looking forward with both confidence and uncertainty to something good. It is multi-dimensional and constructed socially. There is so much more that might be said about hope (conceptually) but this heuristic provides us with a window through which to imagine something of the depth and breadth of hope and its relationship to our personal, professional, and collective lives (Roset, 2004). Again, fostering hope is the first and last joy of the educational leader.

Hope and its capacity building allies

As many will agree, we need to find ways and means to increase personal, organizational, and community capacity for learning excellence in education. In addition to other means, I believe we will do this to the extent that we acknowledge and then operationalize the dynamic contribution of hopefulness and its related constructs into our local circumstances, one person and one day at a time. This is the trajectory of true and sustainable transformation. My own assessment is that we "do-well" but we still fall short in our efforts to give attention to the "be-well" aspects of living/learning and to our "dare-quotients." To do, to be and to dare more fully – we must hope and foster hope in others. Together we could each easily recite story after story of hope-fostering behavior and initiative. This is where Gladwell's (2001) "tipping point" notion comes into the discussions. For the epidemic of transformation in learning communities, that Caldwell (2005) has called for, we require a critical mass of technical, pedagogic, social, spiritual, and psychological pieces to come together, in each learning community, and in the lives of each learner and each leader. We may have heard that "if better is possible then good is not enough," better is possible and to stand still at these crossroads would be to regress. Enlarging our capacity for transformation is possible through our diligent, mindful and adaptive engagement of the allies of hope.

Transformational learning needed to foster hopefulness

Fullan (2001) contended that the educational leaders of the future have to be agents of cultural change, persons attuned to the big picture, and sophisticated conceptual thinkers. For him there are five essential components that characterize leaders in a knowledge society: moral purpose, an understanding of the change process, the ability to improve relationships, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. Moral purpose and coherence making are the two elements most closely allied with the hope-fostering task that I am commending as our priority leadership mandate. I believe that educational leaders need to be mindful of their schools' cultures and enabled in their own learning processes, intentional in their engagement of people in capacity building efforts, and that they need to be superordinately teleological in their general professional orientation. In other words, they need to be constantly and coherently thinking about the future, the Ends, the greater good, the best interests, and larger purposes of each activity taking place in the learning community. In addition to being diligent and mindful sense-makers, educational leaders must be persistent in the development of adaptive confidence in themselves and other members of the professional learning community (ever moving individual efficacy towards collective efficacy).

Paying attention to the little things and to sense-making

I am sure we would all join with Drucker (1994, pp. 53-79) in our call for continued and concerted efforts to "think through education – its purpose, its values, its content." As we do, I commend including the fostering of hope in these processes. In a retrospective interview, Peter characterized his vast consulting experience with a departure conversation he had had with a CEO who declared to Professor Drucker – "you haven't told me anything we didn't already know." Peter commented that this had almost always been the case (cited in Smith, 2001, p. 65). He saw his vocation as helping people to see what they have been dismissing as incidental and taken-for-granted evidence. I

think hope and its allied concepts are too often assumed, despite their powerful influence. Perhaps this is the message of the ancient Chinese saying – "as the burden of the cart increases, the ox bows its head to the road." Perhaps our heavy loads and constant states of urgency and emergency are keeping us from the important? Perhaps it is because hope is so basic to us that we do not give it the explicit attention that our desires to mature, transform and transcend call for? Perhaps, like the CEO, many of us in education are keeping a pace and attending to inputs, and through-puts so much that we have lost site of questions of purpose and ends? In all our hurry and with all the demands and diversity, it is not uncommon for us, as educational professionals, to experience goal displacement, distraction, discontinuity, and a dimming sense of "what our core 'business' is meant to be". We need to pay attention to the "little things." It is just as natural to forget, as it is to remember and our self-limiting ways of seeing the world can narrow the scope of what we consider to be relevant factors in our leadership. I have discussed this earlier. I could easily commend the notion of hope as a self-evident construct but I think there is a need to bolster our attention to hope and not assume that it will take care of itself.

Mant (1997) reminded his readers that "most of us are very sensitive about the subject of 'stupidity'" (p. vii) but against our natural avoidance we must deal with systemic stupidity lest dysfunctional systems render leaders incompetent. Jinkins and Jinkins (1998) concur with their metaphor of the "unarmed prophet in peril" (pp. 31-39). They say that a healthy dose of thoughtful political realism is necessary to bring lasting effect to an organization and its purposes. These authors said that leadership is "always grounded in a particular time and place" and that intelligent leaders will "acquire a sense of smell" (p. 62). Together with their "community of discernment," the educational leader needs to sense, to apprehend, and to feel how leadership needs to be carried out in a particular situation. The leader's intelligence will "sense the pulse of a community, comprehend the dynamics of identity, public trust and moral purpose among people – what they hope, what they desire, and what they fear" (p. 65). Jinkins and Jinkins said that:

Catastrophe awaits those [stupid enough] who ignore or scorn reality (p. 193).

They said that:

The ultimate purpose of leadership is not our own survival but the transformation of the communities, the societies, and the institutions or organizations we serve (p. 193).

As we know, Weick (1995) identified several properties of sense-making. Sense-making is grounded in identity construction: it is the discovery of who I am and what I think. Retrospective sense-making is derived from an analysis of the meaningful lived experience. Sense-making is enactive of sensible environments; it is a reciprocal process of creating environments and environments creating the communities. Sense-making is an ongoing social process to find the plausible and to express it as a story. Weick contended that there are various occasions for sense-making. When individuals reach a dissatisfaction threshold with current conditions, they experience shock and initiate action to resolve the dissatisfaction. Sense-making occasions are constructed and become the platform for further constructions (p. 85). Information load, complexity, and turbulence become issues for environmental uncertainty. Ambiguity and uncertainty are components of sense-making occasions, while interruptions take

attention away from sense-making. The act of hope-fostering is the act of sense-making and staying on track towards predetermined ends in the context of well-defined realities.

Diligence needed to foster hopefulness

What do I mean by diligence? I mean purposeful, wide-awake, imaginative, competent and fully engaged leadership. The concept of diligence implies that the education leader highly values and esteems their responsibilities and relationships. To the extent that an educational leader is diligent they will take delight in their carefully and consistently pursued efforts with people and purpose. The implication of assiduous service, industry and ethical choices accompany the notion of diligent leadership. In law, reasonable or due diligence obliges that the level of attention and care be commensurate with the situation. This situated heedfulness and careful attention is to be anticipatory and proactive as the diligent leader makes choices to act that are preemptive of unnecessary risk and cautious in bold acts so that fiduciary and contractual interests are protected. Interestingly, the etymology of diligence also calls forth the qualities of efficiency, speed, persistence and earnest efforts, with enthusiasm. Diligence is focused, careful hard work that delights in its obligations to make decisions, embraces attitudes and conducts actions that are both value and purpose-driven. Diligent leaders work not only for the common ground but the higher ground. They give significance to transcendence, rather than a narrower view of reality. Diligent leaders guard and generate warranted hope.

Greene's (1978) exceptional essay on "wide-awakeness and the moral life" begins with a quote from Henry David Thoreau who said:

> Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep … to be awake is to be alike …. We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn (p. 42).

A hope-filled thought. Habitual activities, domination, feelings of powerlessness, indifference, drift, impulses of expediency, vaguely apprehended relativism, bland carelessness, and self-doubt are some of the reasons Greene gives for a lack of wide-awakeness, where it exists. She was concerned that unless educators are wide-awake, then students will suffer an inferior learning experience. She said:

> I am convinced that, if teachers today are to initiate young people into an ethical existence, they themselves must attend more fully than they normally have to their own lives and its requirements; they have to break with the mechanical life, to overcome their own submergence in the habitual, even in what they conceive to be the virtuous, and ask the "why" with which learning and moral reasoning begin …. Fundamental to the whole process may be the building up of a sense of moral directedness, of oughtness. An imaginativeness, an awareness, and a sense of possibility are required, along with the sense of autonomy and agency, of being present to the self. There must be attentiveness to others and to the circumstances of everyday life … There are no guarantees, but wide-awakeness can play a part in the process of liberating and arousing, in helping people pose questions with regard to what is oppressive, mindless and wrong … (pp. 46-51).

Emerson apparently would have agreed with Green, judging from his view that "the whole secret of the teacher's force lies in the conviction that [persons] are convertible, and they are. They want awakening to get the soul out of bed, out of her deep habitual

sleep" (cited in Smith, 2001, p. 88). I think both Green and Emerson were calling for educators to "seize the day" and to do so with all diligence and hope.

Mindfulness needed to foster hopefulness
In order to improve schools, Hoy (2003) contended that schools need enabling structures (rather than hindering structures) and mindfulness (rather than mindlessness). Enabling structures include: fostering trust, valuing differences, learning from mistakes, anticipating the unexpected, facilitating problem-solving, encouraging innovation and flexibility (p. 92). Like Green, he claimed that individuals and organizations become "seduced by routine ways of doing things ... indeed habit itself can become mindless" (p. 94). Hoy (2003) indicates that "schools need structures that enable rather than hinder" (p. 90). He says "mindfulness is hard work because it requires flexibility, vigilance, openness, and the ability to break set" (p. 96). A learning organization is both mindful and enabling; whereas a coercive organization is mindless and hindering (pp. 100-101). He hypothesizes that:

> If collective mindfulness enhances collective efficacy, then it follows that organizational mindfulness working through collective efficacy and perhaps independently, also influences student achievement ... (p. 104).

Mindfulness, according to Weick and Sutcliffe (2001), is:

> The combination of ongoing scrutiny of existing expectations, continuous refinement and differentiation of expectations based on newer experiences, willingness and capability to invent new expectations that make sense of unprecedented events, a more nuanced appreciation of context and ways to deal with it, and identification of new dimensions of context that improve foresight and current functioning (p. 42).

Weick and Sutcliffe suggested that leaders need to be alert to the condition of mindfulness and the effort it takes to increase one's "mindful moments." Consequently, if educational leaders are to be agents of educational transformation they have to be more mindful of the things they may have missed, of unforeseen vulnerabilities, of foreshadowing new consequences, and "seeing old things in new ways" (p. 42).

Adaptive confidence is need to foster hopefulness
In a flourishing learning community all are learners and all are educators, each member is encouraged to participate in the knowledge network. Leading the learning community is not merely about the formal school leadership; rather, it is about "leaderfully" (Raelin, 2003) building the confidence of those who constitute the learning community. Educational leaders need to ensure that the strategies, structures, processes, and systems are in place so that educators are touched with inspiration and mobilized to form relationships and thereby transform the school into a learning community. Adaptive leaders are able to engage the entire learning community in transformative knowledge transactions and authentic learning, and to do so with an infectious confidence (Heifetz, 1994).

Confidence is undoubtedly a construct related to hope. Rosabeth Moss Kanter said that:

> Confidence consists of positive expectations for favorable outcomes ... [It] influences the willingness to invest ... Confidence determines whether our steps – individually or collectively – are tiny and tentative or big and bold (p. 8).

Confidence entails having trust in the power of the community to do the right thing because they embrace, in common, higher ground and noble purposes. Kanter (2004) declared:

> We look to leaders to deliver confidence ... leadership is not about the leader, it is about how he or she builds the confidence of everyone else. Leaders are responsible for both the big structures that serve as the cornerstones of confidence, and for the human touches that shape a positive emotional climate to inspire and motivate people (p. 325).

A strong statement of confidence comes from Havel (1997):

> Let us finally take a direct, calm, and unwavering look into our own countenances: our past, our present, our future. We will only be able to escape their ambiguity when we understand them. Let us try to delve into the core of our doubts, our fears and our despair, to come up with seeds of ... self-confidence of those who are not afraid to look beyond – horizons of their personal and community interests, beyond the horizon of this moment (p. 54).

Quinn (2004) contended that:

> The practice of adaptive confidence means that we are willing to enter uncertain situations because we have a higher purpose and we are confident that we can learn and adapt as we move forward (p. 148).

Learning is about change, adaptation and transformation. These processes can be frightening to experience. The challenge is "to be both adaptive and confident ... because we have a higher purpose" (p. 151).

The Zeigarnick Effect is the indicator of a leader's capacity to stay open to possibilities, engage new ideas, and pick up on opportunities right up to the last moment. When "Zeigarnick" is zero, the leader has a real urge to get things over with, follow the schedule and ignore any synchronicity, synergy, symbiosis, and serendipity within their sphere of experience and influence. The higher the stress the less adaptable leaders can be without Zeigarnick; we tend to stay with the familiar and incrementalism or "muddling through" replaces any curiosity or sensitivity to other peoples' ways of knowing and doing. Comfortability, orthodoxy, complacency, and mediocrity are the offspring of zero Zeigarnick. High levels of opportunity sensing produce resilience and transformation beyond imagination, but with attendant risks and failures. Hope fostering leaders of leaders motivate others to move off their zero Zeigarnick, with adaptive confidence.

Tschannen-Moran *et al.* (1998) connected confidence with their view of self-efficacy. They said:

> Future-oriented belief about the level of competence a person expects he or she will display in a given situation. Self-efficacy beliefs influence thought patterns and emotions that enable actions in which people expend substantial effort in pursuit of goals, persist in the face of adversity, rebound from temporary setback, and exercise some control over events that affect their lives (p. 210).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) said that:

> A principal's sense of efficacy is a judgment of his or her capabilities to structure a particular course of action in order to produce desired outcomes in the school he or she leads (p. 573).

They said:

> A robust sense of efficacy is necessary to sustain the productive focus and perseverance of effort needed to succeed at organizational goals (p. 574).

I would simply suggest that we foster hope as we make a way for collective efficacy to form and that we model hope as we confidently embrace the challenges of transforming our educational institutions and practices. When things are routinized and repeated there is no need for mindfulness. From time to time, we lurch into wide-awakeness, just in time to take notice of the world around us; we adjust and adapt; we catch up or slow down; we doff and don habits; and, eventually, we get back into the rhythm of living the good life. As I have jotted down these few thoughts I have wanted, simply, to offer the familiar and oft-repeated viewpoint that in these moments of our history we need to shift our focus from "beating the bounds" to exiting the boxes that once served us well and embracing new ways and means of continuing to do well where it matters, in ways that guard what we all cherish. This will take courage. We need to agree together on what must be held onto and what we should let go of. As we exit yesterday and today, we take with us that which is working, a cognizance of those least served, our most prized shared values, and a sense that our collective efficacy is high but realistic.

From another perspective, when we act as if we are in control when everything is within our comfort zone, professional understandings arise from conditional confidence (Torbert, 1987). Unconditional confidence arises by our unwillingness to discard inaccurate assumptions and strategies that do not work. For some this is not easy. As leaders we demonstrate adaptive confidence when we are humble enough to learn from our mistakes and failures and when we make room for other members of the learning community to do the same. As Quinn (2004) stated:

> Adaptive confidence is the capacity to walk naked into the land of uncertainty and build the bridge as we walk on it (p. 153).

Does this not sound like what being a part of a transformational movement must feel like? Educational leaders need to serve as role models of adaptive confidence if they are to create the conditions for a learning community to develop. To this end, their leadership in the knowledge exchange and engagement of each member of the learning community is key to the fostering of vibrant collective and reciprocal learning.

Hope as leverage to build the capacity of learning communities

To this point in this article I have proffered the claim that the educational leader's first and last responsibility is to be a hope-giver, a person who champions a warranted hope in each and all of their constituents. Our worldviews can both drive and delimit the human questions we are able to answer. Modernity, post-modernity and their offsprings may have hindered our consideration of hopefulness. I have argued that we are at the crossroads in education and that we need to embrace our fundamental need for hope. I have offered a definition and model of hope, knowing that there are alternative and complimentary definitions and models. And I have attempted to connect the notion of capacity building to hope through a brief exploration of the allied concepts. "So what," you might ask? "What does this look like in the real world of education and our schools?" I would suggest we may answer this question by taking a

careful look at learning communities where student, classroom, school and communities are transforming. In these exemplary schools, we have seen hope happening. I will give an example of one set of studies pointing to factors that are keys to living and learning with hope. Second, I conclude with the prescription that part of the responsibility of hope-fostering leaders entails moving from deficit language to asset-based or positive language.

Our living out and learning about hope: a key to transforming educational practice
During the past three years we have been studying schools that build capacity as learning communities (Sackney *et al.*, 2005a, b). I will not detail these studies here, but want to say that from our studies we have deduced a number of factors and practices that assist in building capacity for learning and that hope-giving leadership is a pivotal component of that process.

Shared understanding and responsibility. In the high capacity learning community schools, the staff had a shared understanding of teaching and learning, by sharing their most efficacious instructional strategies, by taking collective responsibility for student learning, by focusing the school vision on student learning, by taking risks and engaging in action research, and by taking generative leadership roles focused on enhancing student learning for the purposes of a better and richer tomorrow. In a few words, these were hopeful servants of leaders, leaders of leaders, advocates of education and stewards of educational resources.

Reflective practices. It was commonplace in these schools for teachers to reflect on their practice and to examine educational alternatives. Their reflections and research efforts were informed by their tendency to collect a wide array of classroom and school-wide data and to project what might work better today than yesterday. A constant habit of transcending, moving on, and improving by tinkering. The effective practitioners were both retrospective and prospective. In other words, they cast their gaze not only on past performances but on future possibilities and potentialities. In a word, these were reflective hopeful leaders of professional learning communities.

Organizational resources. These schools had adequate technological, curricular and library resources, as well as numerous opportunities for professional development. The investment in professional development was seen as a direct investment in educational agents (teachers and administrators) and an essential investment in the future. In a word, these were hope-focused learning facilitators and stewards.

Currency. School staff kept current on the latest research on teaching and learning. Staff were active learners who constantly read new material and talked about what they had read. Dialogue on what from today might be taken forward to tomorrow was evidence in the most flourishing learning communities. For example, what hopeful intervention for this particular student might be multiplied or re-worked for tomorrow's efforts? What was the root cause of our progress today that can be carried forward to future engagements. In a word, these were life-wide and high currency learners who were constantly leaning into the future with hopefulness.

Learning opportunities. In the high capacity learning schools there were greater opportunities for staff, students and parents to learn to teach and to learn some more from each other. Staff saw failed initiatives as learning opportunities and their learning was supported and encouraged by the principal. The difficulties encountered today are transmuted into expectations of improved approaches through wise responses for the

future. What and how can we learn from our current experiences to increase the surface area of our effectiveness in the days to come? Teachers sought ways of "hooking" students on to learning. Students and staff experienced what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) referred to as "learning flow." Every day they were getting better at learning. In brief, these were active, hope-driven leaders of learning.

Interactive instruction and learner engagement. Teachers collaboratively sought ways of improving the teaching and learning experiences of their students. They created authentic curricula to enhance student learning. Student engagement (cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally) in these schools was high. Perfunctory content and stiff role-based acting was replaced with living and purposeful knowledge exchange and meaningful, interpersonal engagement. In a word, these were hope-generating servants of future leaders.

Community of leaders. Leadership in these schools was distributed. The principals were the architects for the success of these schools. These leaders were good at obtaining consensus around the school vision and purpose, on the desired culture and the focus on teaching and learning. As one teacher related, "She talks to you about an idea and before you know it, it was your idea and you were prepared to do something about it." These leaders were good at building trust and quality relationships. In a word, these leaders were hope-convenors.

Parental and community involvement. These schools were able to obtain high parental and community involvement in the learning process. Professional leadership played a crucial role in this effort. Education becomes understood as a banner under which the future is to be forged and the entire village has a part in this endeavor. In a word, these educational leaders were hope-galvinizers.

Coherence. There was coherence to the work of these schools. The intensive emphasis on education issues kept teaching and learning at the top of the conversational agenda. These leaders were able to build capacity at the individual, interpersonal and organizational levels and they brought coherence to the school's efforts. In a word, these mindful and diligent leaders fostered hope that made sense of the daily efforts and future potential of each student, each activity, each decision, and each interpersonal interaction (Sackney and Walker, 2005).

I simply suggest that as we study circumstances where transformational learning is taking place, we find hope-giving activities and attitudes. One test of any innovation or initiative towards enhancing learning might be the response to the question: does this inspire hope where we need it?

No condition need be permanent or forever limiting. Do we have hope to offer every member of the learning community? What are our stories of hope? Allow me a personal example. For over 20 years now my family has funded a special recognition award at a local high school in memory of my grandfather who was the school's founding principal. Year after year, the school faculty and staff consider who from amongst the 300-400 graduating students might be the recipient of the Drayton Walker Award. The criterion is simply that the student will have shown exceptional determination to overcome obstacles, difficulties or previous choices to complete their high school education. I could fill several monographs with the inspiring stories of these extraordinary young people, their resilience and the communities of families, friends, and professionals who have supported them, often against all odds. I never cease in my amazement when I hear the stories and join with other celebrants as these students are

recognized for their resilience, determination, coping, and hopefulness. These student stories inspire hope. Fostering hope is not a new concept – my grandfather exemplified hopefulness in high school settings, 40, 50, and even 60 years ago. Each of us could tell our own stories. Perhaps the fact that we have these stories says much about why we are here and see this work of educational leadership as a vocation.

As many have said, we need to hold our course of responding effectively to diverse learner needs through a variety of learning community settings and integrative services for our entire educational continuum. In this new economy, we need new resource allocation model for education (less complex, more transparent, flexible, efficient, and student focused). We need a disciplined strategy for building educational leadership capacity and we need the political will and means for driving systematic improvement and thoroughly supporting schools, human services agencies and learners as they flourish in their good works. We need to garner and galvanize our hope standing on the shoulders of those who have found ways and means that work.

Our language of hope: a key transforming educational practice

Of course, when we talk about fostering hope. We are only emphasizing its potency for capacity building and meaning making in our learning communities. In our work, when we frame what we do in hopeful terms we advocate the view that when we transform our circumstances through our language. This has been called the poetic principle (Fry *et al.*, 2002, p. 5). Much more could be said about this under the auspices of "positive organizational scholarship" (Cameron *et al.*, 2003). But our purpose here, in order to see the transformation we seek, there is a need to shift from a deficit discourse to one with a vocabulary of hope. A large part of the work of hope-fostering entails developing a language of hope.

Gergen (1994, pp. 148-155) said that our grammar of deficit in the disciplines of the social sciences has led to "cultural enfeeblement" and "progressive infirmity." If it is true that our vocabularies produce the way we define reality and organize ourselves. If it is true that our vocabularies produce the questions we ask – which in turn determine what we give attention to – then does not it make sense that we discipline and season our conversations with the language of hope.

Ludema (2001) asserted that we ought to "create textured vocabularies of hope – stories, theories, evidence, and illustrations – that provide organizations and communities with new guiding images of relational possibility" (p. 443). He proposed that nurturing cooperative relationships, fostering a hopefulness about human capacity to influence the future, and dialoguing together concerning our deepest longings and values will generate the catalytic vocabularies of hope that will add quantitatively, organically, and qualitatively to life and learning. He urges us to consider our need for linguistic resources to build new social architectures for transformation (p. 444). Ludema (p. 449) is most helpful in his view that maintains "there are four enduring qualities that give hope its power as a source of social and organizational transformation: it is (1) born in relationship, (2) inspired by the conviction that the future is open and can be influenced, (3) sustained by dialogue about high human ideals [ultimacy], and (4) generative of positive affect and action." He said that hope "serves as a binding force of community" because "it encourages exploration of values and ideals that people share in common" (p. 451).

If our schools are going to be transformed into vibrant communities, then, at the very least, our language must be transformed. For example, Kegan and Lahey (2000) have reminded us, when the language of complaint is transformed into the language of commitment there are a number of benefits, including: A shift from expressing what we cannot stand to what we stand for; feelings of frustration and impotence with vitalizing energy and a move from cynicism to hope.

We can easily see words such as optimism, efficacy, coping, caring, resilience, confidence, and enabling falling within the same family of constructs as hope. As we commonly understand it, cognitive capacity of optimism enables us to think about possibilities and behave in a hopeful manner. Self-efficacy is the perception that our strength, confidence, and competence can enhance a sense of hopefulness. In his delightful way Moltmann (1991) distinguished hope from optimism by saying "they do not strive after things that have 'no place,' but after things that have 'no place as yet' but can acquire one" (p. 25). Coping is the adaptive component of hope and it serves hope by sustaining an individual through the present trial. Caring is a nurturing way of relating to a valued other. It is a practical, outward working of hopefulness extended toward others. Resiliency is the capacity to rebound from difficulties, failures and conflict. Resilient people adapt, improvise, and adjust. Hope characterizes itself in resilient and active waiting. These constructs are rich in content and positive assets as we develop vocabularies of hope.

Ludema (2001, p. 443) cited Mumford who claimed:

> We can live three weeks without food, three days without water, and yes, we can even live three minutes without air, but we cannot live without hope.

Why is hope important, even vital, for those in our educational settings? Research has shown that hopefulness is positively associated with high academic, athletic and health outcomes (Luthans *et al.*, 2004). High-hope organizational leaders have significantly better work performance and retention of personnel than as their low-hope counterparts (Peterson and Luthans, 2003).

Hope, learning, and leadership go together. DePree (1997) suggested:

> Hope can be thought of in terms of the obligations of leadership. Hope encourages maturity and continuity and accountability (p. 159).

Learning communities are characterized by strategies that share the same elements of hope-fostering such as "visioning and purposing, team building, facilitating communication, encouraging experimentation and risk-taking, promoting rewards and recognition, facilitating staff development, reculturing, modeling self-learning, and creating time and space for learning" (Mitchell and Sackney, 2000, p. xvi). Cognitive maturity, psycho-social development, academic and sport achievement, motivation, and creative thinking are dependent upon the development of hopefulness (Curry *et al.*, 1997; Snyder, 1994). For example, Erickson (1968) maintained that cognitive maturation and psycho-social maturity are dependent upon the development of hopefulness. Hope is a necessary element for leaders since it has implications for action – visioning, planning, and the practical outworking of such plans – and for interpersonal relatedness and community building.

The literature indicates that hope-generating leadership generates positive images and actions directed toward possibilities of success in achieving personal and collective

endeavors, goals, and aspirations (Burns, 1978; De Pree, 1997; Gardner, 1990). De Pree (1997) stated that hope could be thought of in terms of the obligations of leadership. Palmer (1998) maintained that leaders share responsibility for creating the external world by projecting either a spirit of light or a spirit of shadow on others. He stated:

> We project either a spirit of hope or a spirit of despair, either an inner confidence in wholeness and integration or an inner terror about life being diseased and ultimately terminal (p. 200).

Carter (1996) affirmed the value of hope using the metaphor of a fulcrum, one which under girds a lever, to discuss hope in connection with leadership:

> Both hope and fulcrum are of a fundamental, under girding character – they ease the processes of action. Each determines the effect that the lever can produce when activated . . . Leaders can gain leverage in dealing with problems and issues through their underlying hope, and in choices of actions that nurture generative hope . . . Nourishing and drawing on hope, leaders can gain powerful leverage for lifting their organizations' performance (pp. 2-3).

Kouzes and Posner (1993) dedicated an entire chapter to the importance of leaders acting in ways that "uplift our spirits and restore our belief in the future" (p. 218). They said "leaders must keep hope alive" (p. 218) and "arouse optimistic feelings and enable their constituents to hold positive thoughts about the possibilities of success" (p. 221). At a later date, Kouzes and Posner (1999) described how leaders generate and sustain the hope of those within their organizations:

> Leaders keep hope alive when they set high standards and genuinely express optimism about an individual's capacity to achieve them. They keep hope alive when they give feedback and publicly recognize a job well done. They keep hope alive when they give their constituents the internal support that all human beings need to feel that they and their work are important and have meaning. They keep hope alive when they train and coach people to exceed their current capacities. Most important, leaders keep hope alive when they set an example. There really is nothing more encouraging than to see leaders practice what they preach (p. xx).

I am advocating a conscious development of communities of hope, with an accompanying language-in-use that consistently expresses itself in the cultural habitus of the transformed school. What I have described here already exist in many of our schools and school systems but I challenge myself and all professional educators to concentrate on explicitly working to develop all of our communities with this hope-fostering frame of mind.

Conclusion

I conclude with three simple questions for educational leaders: what hinders hope for your and constituents today? What are your hopes and the hopes of those you serve? And how might others be directly encouraged and brought to maturity in their hopefulness, with and through your leadership?

Emerson is purported to have said "what lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." I believe he had it right. May it be hope that fills us and energizes us for the sacred and crucial work of leading our dynamic and complex learning communities into tomorrow. For I say again to you, inspiring hope is the first and last responsibility of the educational leader.

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