Developing empathic leadership through self-transformation

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education
University of Tasmania

July 2007

Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

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Abstract

This thesis works to deepen my understandings of empathic intelligence in relation to leadership. It builds upon experiences I have had as an education leader and as a fellowship holder in the United States where I discussed strategy and practice with key theorists, visited and observed at selected schools, and interviewed students and teachers, as well as principals who uniquely led their educational communities. The professional relationships formed during this experience provoked questions about my own leadership style and practice as principal of a rural Tasmanian High School. From these experiences I have developed a thesis that excellent school leaders demonstrate high degrees of empathic intelligence. This work explores the theory of empathic intelligence and how it can elucidate understanding of teaching and leadership. This thesis is structured by five key intentions, which are to:

- unfold an understanding of empathic intelligence informed by Arnold (2005);
- explore how empathic intelligence might be understood and enacted in a Tasmanian high school;
- use these understandings to unfold a concept of effective leadership at a range of levels in the Tasmanian system;
- reflect upon how I might extend my ability as an empathic leader; and
- critique and deepen the theory of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005).

To inform this study and support my personal theorising of highly effective empathic leadership, I critique theories of intelligence and leadership developed by Duignan (2004, 2003, 2002), Arnold (2005), Gardner (2000, 1993, 1991), Blythe et al. (1998) and Perkins (1992).

I respond to my thesis intentions through processes of interpreting conversations (Davis et al. 2000; Van Manen 1990), narratives (Eakin 1999; Richardson 2000) and fictionalised letters (Ospina & Dodge 2005; Ellis & Bochner 2000). The processes of inquiry support me to: uncover four key elements of powerful empathic leadership (enthusiasm, engagement, expertise and, of course, empathy); deepen this theory by including the additional elements of trust and honesty; and suggest that links need to be developed through professional relationships.

The inquiry then uncovers new questions about how empathic leadership is enacted in a Tasmanian High School. This inquiry suggests how powerful empathic leadership might work at personal, school and systemic levels. The inquiry is drawn to a close as I unfold a set of new questions that reflect my deepened understanding of empathic leadership.

Dedication and thanks

This work is dedicated to my family who have provided enormous support throughout my writing and commitment. A special appreciation must be extended to my wife Madelaine and children Casey and Keely. Without their patience I would have been unable complete this major inquiry. As a family, they encouraged my ongoing pursuit to deepen my own learning in order to support others in their learning. In addition, I would like to extend my appreciation to my parents, Joe and Sue, and also to my grandparents, Joe Senior and Charlotte, who instilled in me the importance of working hard and aiming to further my learning at the university level.

Appreciation is also extended to my supervisors, Roslyn Arnold and Doug Bridge, who have listened patiently to my struggles and been there throughout the journey. I thank them for their guidance, leadership and friendship, and for their support in helping me to value the way I think. Both Roslyn and Doug are truly empathic leaders, gifted educators and wonderful people.

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Introduction to Section A
My lived experience

When undertaking an inquiry into empathic leadership with a focus on self-transformation it is necessary to unfold for oneself and the reader the current understandings that I, as inquirer, bring to this work. I use the metaphor of frames in Section A. I understand this metaphor through the work of Gadamer (2004) and his conception of pre-understandings. Gadamer suggests that all understandings emerge within the horizons of things we already know and have experienced. He further suggests that all understanding is self-understanding. The importance of interpreting pre-understandings to enable self-transformation has more recently been used by Lakoff (2005) when thinking about how values frame political debate.

In this Section, the frames that I am unfolding to help me to develop empathic leadership through self-transformation involve my professional lived experience, my reading, my understandings of a bureaucracy and my experiences as a Fellowship recipient in the United States.

CHAPTER 1

My lived experience

My frames

My working life, spanning close to 15 years, has been grounded in the Tasmanian Department of Education. I am immersed within this bureaucracy and have been offered many experiences and opportunities – some exciting, some stressful and many personally rewarding. I am poised to reflect upon recent past experiences, anticipate new ones and create – within my professional expertise and complex sense of identity – the conditions to be a very effective leader. Teaching students and adults, leading a school community and mentoring colleagues allows me to develop an inner sense of satisfaction. I believe every educator in every school should aim to be a teacher, a leader and a learner, but what do those words mean to me? I live and work each day, have hopes to be happy and make a difference to my life and the lives of others. Do we all share these hopes and dreams? For me, life continues to be a journey, a constant examination of my identities underpinned by a firm commitment to be the best educator and leader that I can be.

Each day I hope to make a difference to staff and students by leading a school where informed decisions have a positive impact on teaching and learning. In other cases, by asking probing questions, supporting staff and developing leaders within our school, I intend to empower and develop highly effective teachers and leaders. However small the difference I make may be, what is important is not what I get out of being a school principal, a parent, a husband or an academic inquirer – it is what I become that is truly important (Beistegui 2005; Gadamer 2004). To enable me to achieve these goals, I have committed to a course of inquiry, study, professional reading and writing to internalise the values, processes and insights most likely to inform my practice.

Like Davis, Samara and Luce-Kapler (2000), I believe narratives of experience are both important goals and powerful means for learning. I wonder how my life would have been without such a rich and wonderful opportunity to travel and visit so many schools in the

United States as a recipient of a prestigious Hardie Fellowship,[1] which supported five months of learning. These experiences allowed me to have many rich conversations with academics, teachers and students, with principals and superintendents. I carried out school and class observations and established important professional friendships.

For me, each day is an opportunity; each day presents many doors opening to many new experiences enabling me to develop self-understanding and wellbeing. I find myself wondering, isn't it always our goal to search for experiences and positive feelings within ourselves? Csikszentmihalyi (1990) represents this positive feeling as 'flow', and describes it in his studies of people's optimal experiences:

> ... every flow activity, whether it involved competition, chance, or any other dimension of experience, had this in common: It provided a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality. It pushed the person to higher levels of performance, and led to previously undreamed of states of consciousness. In short, it transformed the self by making it more complex. In this growth of the self lies the key to flow activities (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, p. 74).

Frames of others

I consider Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) conception of a fluid self to be parallel with my own understanding of identity. A key frame for my theorising empathic leadership resonates with the work of Van Manen (1990), with its centering on the importance of lived experience. I am really interested in what other people have to say about their lived experience of the classroom, about how they understand their relationships (in schools and classrooms) with a particular focus on the empathic relationships they might form with students. As Mackay (2005) suggests, all social inquiry is based on indirect experience, borrowed data and people's accounts of what they are thinking and feeling.

The broad aim of this inquiry is to understand what empathic leadership actually may look like, to reflect on my own leadership with the ultimate outcome of becoming an empathic leader of a Tasmanian High School. All of these experiences have provoked in me the desire to explore the relationship between empathic intelligence and leadership, to uncover what it looks like in a Tasmanian context, and to examine my own leadership. Here, qualitative inquiry processes suit my interests and offer an appropriate response to the kinds of questions which emerge from inquiring into a phenomenon like empathic intelligence

[1] The Hardie Fellowship is offered through the Department of Education, Tasmania (http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/awards/hardie). All teachers and principals are eligible to apply for the fellowship, which is chosen by a selection panel.

(Denzin & Lincoln 2003, 2005). How can I gain this data and be sure that it is trustworthy? I am interested in inquiring into our emerging meanings and understandings about the relationships we have in our classrooms and in schools because I believe these relationships are linked to empathic leadership. I believe that interviewing is a powerful process to support this inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln 2003, 2005; Hatch 2002; Burns 2000; Oppenheim 1999; Kvale 1996; Seidman 1991). I can make connections between my own lived experiences and other people's stories of experience to deepen my understanding.

Framing my thesis

This inquiry is a story, a reflective process through which I continue to learn. Like Richardson and St Pierre (2005), I understand writing as a method of inquiry which involves moving through a series of successive stages of self-reflection. The written representations flow from my experiences as an inquirer in the United States and as a teacher and principal in Tasmania. I emerge, I believe, as a better empathic leader, better able to understand and reflect on my behaviours and thinking. A recent search for inspiration uncovered the paper, 'How to Change the World: Lessons for Entrepreneurs from Activists' (Kahane 2001). This paper illustrates that to make any significant change, first it is important to change yourself and your own thinking. It was not just the title that jumped out at me, but also the way the paper finished:

> Let me end and summarize ... When he had changed himself, his family changed. And when his family changed, his neighbourhood changed. When his neighbourhood changes, his country changed. And when his country changed, the world changed (Kahane 2001, p. 25).

Professional frames

This simple statement resonates with the work of Gadamer (2004), who suggests that the only understanding we can have is self-understanding. My interpretation of making a difference offers the occasion for everyone (teachers and students) to reach their full potential. I bring my unique frames of being an educator and school leader. My current profession as an educator and school principal started in a rural Victorian high school where, as a student, I began to chase a dream to teach people and to make a difference. Moving forward 20 years from being this Grade 10 student to working as a school principal in a rural Tasmanian High School my core values are still the same: to work hard, to make a difference for others and to be the best that I can in everything that I do. I use inquiry and reflection to

search for understanding and personal excellence (Palmer, 1998; Postman, 1979; Harvey, 1996).

This inquiry is underpinned by exploring and extending the values which shape my life. Some of these include equity, social justice, tolerance, honesty, integrity, connectedness, resilience, achievement and responsibility. Some of these values resonate with those values within the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Curriculum Framework[2] which are connectedness, resilience, achievement, creativity, integrity, responsibility and equity. Some of my values link with those suggested in the work of Arnold (2005), including hope, trust, resilience and the love of self and others, intelligent caring and empathy.

It is these values that inspired me to seek a position of principal in a school located within a youth detention centre. The opportunity to work with very marginalised students foregrounded the importance of empathic leadership. Before departing for the United States on my Fellowship in 2004, my experience as a principal of that school, a facility catering for the needs of students aged 11-18 who had been remanded or sentenced in custody, was one of continual reflection on the needs of those students.

A frame of disempowerment

Brett,[3] for example, was a student of mine within the youth detention centre, who at 15 years of age was about to be released after serving three months in detention. His case management plans were arranged, dad was going to meet him at the bus stop in Hobart, and he was to have a youth justice worker on the outside to help him to reintegrate into the community and school. However, upon release, Brett was not met by dad, he walked home only to find dad drunk in the lounge room. The fridge was full of beer and little food. When Brett decided to head into his bedroom he noticed that one of his dad's friends was asleep in his bed. No food, no bed, no-one to meet him at the bus stop, and a dad who was intoxicated – where was Brett to go? Within 12 hours Brett re-offended and was remanded in custody, back to the youth detention centre. I might suggest at this point in his life the detention centre was the only place he called home!

[2] Tasmanian Essential Learnings Framework has a set of values and principles underpinning the curriculum.
http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/curriculum/elscurriculum/valuespurposes.pdf accessed 27/04/06.

[3] All student, teacher and principal names throughout this inquiry are pseudonyms. In addition, all school names, with the exception of Stafford High School, are also pseudonyms.

The experiences of working with Brett and others like him allow me to reflect on the needs of all students irrespective of socioeconomic status, race, class, ethnicity, gender, rurality, Aboriginality, as well as those students with special and/or additional needs.[4] I remember that although routines at the youth detention centre were a strong part of our daily and weekly programs, new challenges were inevitable. There may have been an influx of new students who were remanded, a student may have been released without any planning, or a new student would bring new challenges to the life of our school. My life as a principal was far from boring! Here I came to understand that positive relationships were important and trust was crucial; it was critical that I clearly understood the boundaries for behaviour. My students needed to know through my actions and conversations that I was working in their best interests, that I was genuine. I quickly learnt that positive relationships underpin every moment of every day. Perhaps it was here, with these rich experiences, that I began to understand my sense of being – of being true to myself and, as Duignan (2002) suggests, of becoming an authentic leader. Duignan (2002) implies that authentic leaders generate a rich portfolio of experience as they treat others with dignity; treat them as 'spiritual assets', rather than as just economic commodities, investments or capital.

It was this principalship that, above all else, reaffirmed a strong belief that all students ought have every opportunity to access, participate in and achieve through an educational program that is engaging and purposeful. As a principal, I value the idea that there is no such concept as a bad student, but sometimes students make bad choices. A good education enables students to understand and modulate the influences upon their choices (Dewey 1997; Gardner 1991; Whitehead 1961). The better able I am to understand my values and experiences, the better positioned I am to help others to do the same (Radnor 2001; Elmore 2000). Throughout these experiences it was important to treat others the way I would like to be treated – the fundamental ethic of the Golden Rule. In my situation, I wondered how my moral and spiritual understandings influenced my leadership and might redress a frame of disempowerment.

An American frame

These experiences as principal of a school inside a youth detention centre inspired me to further my professional learning. I had a new passion: to understand empathic intelligence. Arnold's (2005) strong research around empathic intelligence was a primary motive for me to examine this from a leadership perspective. I wanted to deepen my understanding of

[4]http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/policy_initiatives_reviews/national_goals_for_schooling_in_the_twenty_first_century.htm, accessed 29/07/2006.

leadership and effective teaching and thought that I could gain this through visiting schools overseas. Influenced by my academic supervisor, I decided to apply for a Hardie Fellowship.

The Department of Education, Tasmania states: 'The Hardie Fellowship provides a number of teachers employed by the Department of Education, Tasmania with the opportunity to undertake a period of research or study at an approved university or tertiary institution in the United States of America each year'.[5] In June 2004, I prepared an itinerary for the upcoming months. Some key decisions were made about which leading academic I would like to work with, which professional learning path I would like to pursue, and how this would all link with my own doctoral work.

In Tasmania, the Essential Learnings curriculum was underpinned by an effective framework for planning learning sequences,[6] which led me to seek out Harvard University Graduate School of Education researcher Tina Blythe, author of the *Teaching for Understanding Framework* (Blythe & Associates 1998). I thought it possible that all the schools I intended to visit, which I thought were linked with leadership and empathic intelligence, would be using the *Teaching for Understanding Framework.*

As a school principal and one with a passion for learning, I intended to use my experiences in the United States to shape my own doctoral work. I carried out extensive inquiries in five schools and had personal conversations with a range of leading educational scholars, all of which shaped my doctoral work. Each of the five school experiences enabled me to capture the philosophy of the school, its history and its educational fabric. I was able to examine each school and its relationship with the *Teaching for Understanding Framework* (Blythe & Assoc. 1998). For me, as my interest was with empathic intelligence, I was able to crystallise (Richardson 2000) my observations and thinking with that of empathic intelligence and leadership. It was here I formed a strong interest in an area called empathic leadership.

Present professional frame

Sitting in a small unit with my family in Salem, Massachusetts, we were all having dinner and talking about Tasmania. I remember making notes about my weekly school/university visits, I decided to peruse the Tasmanian Department of Education website to search for advertised principal positions. The experiences throughout the Fellowship were so powerful

[5] http://www.education.tas.gov.au/search?mode=results&queries_Contents_query=hardie+fellowship, accessed 08/06/2006.
[6] http://www.education.tas.gov.au/ocll/publications/essentiallearnings.pdf, accessed 23/2/2005.

and motivating, I knew that I needed to work in a larger school in order to really implement these emergent understandings in a new context. This thinking resonates closely with that of author Richard Florida, who as a Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University in the United States discusses the necessity of a creative economy. Florida (2005) argues that societies must invest more energy and opportunities to tap the full creative capabilities of every single human being. He further suggests that to move beyond a model of looking at society as creating opportunities *for* people, a truly creative society will flourish from the value of opportunities and ideas flowing *from* its people (Florida 2005, p. 248).

Using a creative, imaginative lens to permeate my thinking, an opportunity opened when the Stafford High School principal position was advertised in November 2004. I remember sitting with my family and discussing the opportunity and challenges involved in not only applying, but of relocating if successful. The town of Stafford is 70 km, or a one-hour drive, from Launceston, the second largest city in Tasmania with a population of just over 98,000.[7] Stafford is a rural town, the largest in the North East of Tasmania. The main industries are farming, agriculture and the timber industry. Putting possible relocation and travel aside, here was a school with 400 students, over 55 teaching and non-teaching staff and a very supportive community. For me, this was a challenge as I imagined a large field of applicants, the school was known as being very traditional, and the previous five principals had all retired from the school. The facts were: I was 33 years of age, full of innovative ideas and a wealth of professional reading, recent attendance at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education classes, and fresh from carrying out inquiries in a number of schools throughout the United States. After weighing everything up, I decided that this was a great opportunity and any challenge would be met on merit, through collaboration, consultation and decisions based on the needs of students.

After finishing my written application and visualising myself as principal of Stafford High School, I submitted my application from the United States. After three weeks passed, one evening (close to midnight) a telephone caller informed me that I had been short-listed for interview, to occur within the next week. I was then interviewed by telephone, which can be a disadvantage as I was unable to make eye contact with the panel, and it is hard to convey a sense of self by telephone (Davis et al. 2000). I was, however, pleased with the answers to the questions I provided. Two weeks later, while walking through an electrical goods store in New Jersey, the chairperson of the panel called with the news that I was the successful applicant. The following weeks were like a rollercoaster, emotions mixed, a great

[7] http://www.tourismtasmania.com.au/org/study_kit/factsheet.html, accessed 09/07/2006.

opportunity had just been presented and an opportunity to link my United States experiences with a new environment – Stafford High School. More than ever, I felt the need to understand deeply the events, experiences and opportunities impinging upon my professional life and its challenges.

Current understanding as a frame

As a leader, my practice is always to lead from the front, be a good listener, work well with others, and be caring, kind, supportive and visionary. Each of these qualities can test one's resolve at times, but they form an important constellation of attributes underpinning my practice. As the role of the principal is constantly being stretched with more responsibilities and more central office requirements, the days of having a hierarchical leadership philosophy are long gone. Perkins (2003), in his book *King Arthur's Round Table*, suggests that there is much to learn from the most familiar stories of Arthurian legend and the round table. He implies that the complexities of modern business require organizational collaboration where hierarchies are reduced, collaboration enhanced and interactions easier. Like King Arthur, Perkins (2003) argues that successful leaders must rely on the input and expertise of those around them, and that decision-making processes must be opened to anyone who can offer insight and wisdom. Similarly, Davis et al. (2000) foreground the importance of dialogue in processes of teaching and learning.

The challenges as a leader are always centred on relationships. Who can you trust? Who is the best to consult with on this matter? What skills and insights do others have within the leadership team? Who, on staff, but not having a 'leadership title' can I develop as a future leader and effective contributor now? One of the challenges I face is developing a shared vision that is research-based, futuristic, yet maintains those practices and processes that are important to our school. Balance is important, support for everyone critical. Hargreaves (2003) suggests that radical innovation starts from the future and works backwards. Interestingly, another bestselling author, Collins (2001), in analysing why some leading companies made the transition from good to great, presents a view that the key to effective transformation is getting the right people before planning change. 'The executives who ignited the transformations from good to great did not figure out where to drive the bus and then get people to take it there. No, they first got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figured out where to drive it' (Collins 2001, p. 41).

My experience of leadership, as a principal, resonates closely with the thinking of Collins (2001), where the right people in right positions are critical. However, the challenge in

schools in Tasmania, is that senior staff positions are usually already in place when moving to a new school. Hence, the immediate challenge is to understand each leader's, (and potential leader's) personal attributes, strengths and areas where they can contribute to school growth and enhancement. The irony of leadership is that to me it appears at different levels, places and times. As a principal, to be effective in such a rapidly changing educational world, I frequently have to critique and reconstruct the way in which leadership at our school level is conceptualised and practised.

I can no longer rely on philosophies, beliefs about leadership and management practices that were developed for schooling conditions of the early twentieth century. As I interact with many people within school on a daily basis, the challenge is to construct and reconstruct the reality of living and working productively, yet compassionately and empathically together each day. In the past, and perhaps in some schools today, there is still a passé focus on the principal as the sole leader or manager of the school. Duignan and Bezzina (2006) suggests that a contemporary view of leadership in a complex organisation, such as a school, requires the energy, commitment and contributions of everyone who works there. Duignan presents a view that leadership should be perceived as a shared communal phenomenon derived from the interactions and relationships of groups. These thoughts have helped me frame the intentions and questions that frame my inquiry.

Framing questions

From this set of frames, and in looking inward, a set of questions around what it means to be an empathic leader emerge. In many ways, effective principals start by asking questions and see themselves as being able to ask the right questions to generate the right answers. What is important for me in developing leadership is breaking down the perception that leaders have all the answers, in favour of the more dynamic view of leaders being able to ask guided, probing questions. In general, when I think about questioning, I find it hard not to reflect on the contributions of the genius Leonardo Da Vinci. In examining Da Vinci's extraordinary works, Gelb (1998) argues that the Seven Da Vincian Principles may appear obvious to leaders but need to be developed, remembered and applied. These principles offer a way of challenging leadership behaviour and performance, starting with oneself and moving to the interconnectedness of other people and systems. The Seven Da Vincian Principles, in Leonardo's native Italian, are:

1 *Curiosita* An insatiably curious approach to life and an unrelenting quest for continuous learning.

2 *Dimostrazione* A commitment to test knowledge through experience, persistence, and a willingness to learn from mistakes.
3 *Sensazione* The continual refinement of the senses, especially sight, as the means to enliven experience.
4 *Sfumato* (Literally 'Going up in smoke') A willingness to embrace ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty.
5 *Arte/Scienza* The development of the balance between science and art, logic and imagination.'Whole-Brain' thinking.
6 *Corporalita* The cultivation of grace, ambidexterity, fitness, and poise.
7 *Connessione* A recognition of and appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things and phenomena. Systems thinking. (Gelb 1998, p. 9)

In many ways these principles might be seen as connected in some way to Arnold's (2005) empathic intelligence. For example, the principles of curiosity, ambiguity, interconnectedness, balance and imagination all resonate with empathy, engagement, enthusiasm and expertise. For me, leadership attributes are shaped by context. Different leadership opportunities provide me with an opportunity to further develop as a person, a way of inner knowing.

Framing my inquiry

So, my lived experience leads to my inquiry with five intentions; they are to:

1 unfold an understanding of empathic intelligence informed by Arnold (2005);
2 explore how empathic intelligence might be understood and enacted in a Tasmanian high school;
3 use these understandings to unfold a concept of effective leadership at a range of levels in the Tasmanian system;
4 reflect upon how I might extend my ability as an empathic leader; and
5 critique and deepen the theory of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005).

From these five intentions the following questions emerge:

- Do all leaders see effective leadership as leading through questioning?
- What/who do leaders bring to leadership and leading?
- What/who do you become by leading?
- Do you become a better person by leading others?
- Who am I leading?
- Am I leading for learning?

CHAPTER 2

Making connections

Philosophical and theoretical framings

This chapter inquires into empathic intelligence, links with *flow*, and also leadership. The inquiry is a search towards understanding of empathic intelligence and its relationship with teaching and leadership. As I reflect on my role as a principal, each week appears to be getting busier and busier, but the irony is that the busier I seem to be, the more content I am with my responsibilities and, of course, with the many people I have interactions with each day.

Empathic intelligence is taken to mean a sustained system of psychic, cognitive, affective, social and ethical functioning derived from an ability to; differentiate self-states from others' states, engage in reflective processing, mobilise a dynamic between thinking and feeling in self and others and commit to the well-being and development of self and others (Arnold 2005). For the purposes of this inquiry project, and to operationalise it, this broad definition of empathic intelligence is used.

Let us begin by looking inside the formal places where traditionalists believe student learning occurs – the classrooms. Classrooms are complex places where instruction occurs in an ongoing negotiation of roles between students and teachers, involving lesson content which evolves during a lesson and which is also ongoing over time. The term 'intelligence' has evolved over time, moving from a singular measure of cognition to a more complex interaction involving a number of 'intelligences'. As scientific understanding of the human brain has developed, so have models defining intelligence.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the term 'intelligence' and extends into a relatively new concept, that of empathic intelligence. Globally, schools and teachers are implementing what they believe is the most effective curriculum for students to prepare them for the future. Much literature has posited views on effective pedagogy and planning to assist in deepening understandings (Gardner 2000, 2004a; Perkins & Blythe 1994; Perkins 1992). However, what appears lacking is the importance of creating energy between thinking and feeling and

emphasis on caring environments. This chapter explores the concept of empathic intelligence as another 'intelligence' as it correlates with a teacher's or leader's ability to maximise learning outcomes.

The purposes of this chapter are to:

1 investigate the concept of intelligence and discuss two models;
2 develop a surface understanding of brain-based learning;
3 investigate the concept of 'empathic intelligence' and also its relationship with transformative education;
4 discuss what an empathically intelligent organisation, such as a 'community of schools' may look like; and
5 develop an understanding of recent reviews on leadership to examine links with 'empathic intelligence', and so present a new form of leadership – empathic leadership.

Frames of intelligence

Intelligence is a notoriously difficult concept to understand. The way we understand intelligence can lead us to (positively and negatively) valued differences. Davis et al. (2000), unfold the complicated ideas about intelligence and link concepts of intelligence to particular understandings of education, psychology and being human. Like Arnold (2005), they suggest that intelligence is far more than those factors captured by intelligence quotient assessments. They foreground the importance of language and the relational in understanding intelligent behaviour in the twenty-first century. In the Collins (2003) dictionary, intelligence is 'a quality of being able to understand, learn and think things out quickly'. This definition is limited and ideas or concepts do not always need to be thought out quickly by an individual to define them as 'intelligent'. Two models or theories of intelligence which this thesis discusses are Gardner's (1995) theory of 'Multiple Intelligences' and Sternberg's (1995) 'Systems Model of Intelligence'. Both theories are somewhat broader than conventional theories of intelligence that focus predominantly on cognition (thought). I uncover some of the more historical views of intelligence in future sections of this chapter.

The intelligence quotient (IQ)

In France in the early years of the twentieth century, a psychologist and a physician, Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon designed tests to identify 'mentally deficient' children who would not benefit from schooling (1980). They went on to develop the Binet Simon Scale (1916, in Bergin & Cizek 2001) using tests to differentiate intellectual performances among

'normal' children. These tests (the bases for the still popular Stanford-Binet IQ tests) were based on the premise that intelligence is innate, stable and inherited, and could be objectively (or scientifically) measured. The concept of an intelligence quotient, or IQ, was one product of this mechanistic and reductionist 'scientific' view. This view posited a limited and microcosmic interpretation of intelligence. Khalfa (1994, p. 17) suggested that the IQ concept of intelligence as a single dimension along in which to judge children and adults is among the most personally and socially damaging ideas of the twentieth century. This reductionist paradigm is congruent with other educational approaches based on behaviourism (see, for example, Skinner 1976), like task analysis and isolated skills training, which were often used as a justification for isolating students with high support needs. This interpretation of psychology as science has fostered a negative view of difference, and entrenched and legitimised differences between groups and individuals.

There are different ways of approaching psychology as a science. At one extreme is the reductionist, rationalist, mechanistic approach which is characterised by theorists like Terman (1916) and Skinner (1976), at the other is a more relational, holistic, ecological approach characterised by theorists like Piaget (Wadsworth 1996).

Gardner (1995) sought to broaden human potential beyond the confines of an IQ score. He questioned the validity of determining one's intelligence by taking a person out of their natural environment and asking them to perform a test of which they would probably not complete again. Gardner (1995) suggested that intelligence has more to do with an individual's capacity to solve problems and 'fashion products' in a context-rich and naturalistic setting. He suggested that every individual has a range of intelligences, originally seven (now eight) and that individual's possess intelligence in all eight areas, some more developed and evident than others. Gardner (2000) suggests that individuals possess different kind of minds, featuring different blends of mental representations and as such will approach tasks differently. For me, Gardner's suggestions have added an important dimension of complexity to notions of intelligence and the ways students learn.

Bennett and Rolheiser (2003) further explore the concept of multiple intelligences suggesting that the eight intelligences ought not to be viewed as 'the list', but a way of capturing the kinds of abilities valued by a variety of cultures. A common view is that each individual possesses each of the eight intelligences and can develop each of the intelligences (Bennet & Rolheiser 2003; Gardner 1995; Sternberg 1995). They further suggest that all intelligences work together in complex ways and each allows for a variety of ways to be

intelligent within it. Gardner's model of eight intelligences is illustrated in Table 1 (Bennet & Rolheiser 2003, p. 342).

Table 1: Gardner's (1993) model of *Multiple Intelligences*
(Bennet & Rolheiser 2001, p. 342)

Intelligence	End-states	Core components
Logical-mathematical	Computer Programmers Mathematicians Tax auditors	Ability to effectively think with numbers; Classify information and make inferences/reason
Linguistic	Novelists Speech pathologists Politicians	Ability to use words effectively when speaking and writing; sensitive to the power, meaning and flow of words.
Musical	Composers Piano Tuners Music Teachers	Ability to appreciate and play with rhythm, pitch; appreciation of musical form/expressiveness
Spatial	Architects Choreographers Athletes	Strength in visual spatial reasoning: sensing patterns and orienting the oneself or thinking based on those patterns
Bodily-Kinaesthetic	Athletes Dancers Physiotherapists	Ability to sense, interpret and create patterns involving the whole body
Interpersonal	Comedians Educators Social Workers	Ability to interpret and accurately respond to the moods/behaviours of others
Intrapersonal	Psychologists Counsellors	Understand one's own feelings and the ability to act on that understanding to guide behaviour
Naturalistic	Biologists Park Rangers Naturalists	Ability to make sense of nature's complexities, to classify aspects of nature and sense the relationships between those patterns.

Another model of intelligence posited by Sternberg (1985, 1988) is that of a *triarchic theory* of human intelligence. Whereas Gardner (1993) emphasised the separateness of the various aspects of intelligences (Table 1), Sternberg (1985, 1988) discussed the interaction and connectivity through which they work together. Sternberg's intelligence model, or ' triarchic theory', comprises analytic, creative and practical abilities. Triarchic theory also correlates

intelligence as a relationship with: a) the internal world; b) experience; and c) the external world (Sternberg 1995, p. 395). This model acknowledges that people may apply their intelligence to many different kinds of problems.

Gardner's (1993) and Sternberg's (1985, 1988) models of intelligence have commonalities. Both acknowledge an intelligent person as someone who does not necessarily excel in all aspects of intelligence. Rather, they both suggest, intelligent people know their strengths and weaknesses and find strategies to develop these qualities. Sternberg (1995) presents a view that both models are somewhat broader than conventional theories of intelligence, as they include all aspects of intelligence. He further suggested that a future trend would be toward a broader, rather than narrower interpretation of intelligence. This is supported by educational thinkers like Davis, Samara and Luce-Kapler (2000). My reading of Arnold (2005) supports my understanding that in many models of intelligence, the emotional and empathic is not foregrounded. Yet, we all know our emotional states affect our being.

Brain physiology as a frame

Arnold (2005) leads us to understand that emotion and cognition are inextricably linked through empathic intelligence. The Phineas Gage event which occurred in the mid-1800s was a catalyst for inquirers making a scientific link between emotion and cognition. The event involved a construction foreman receiving brain damage through a railroad accident which damaged an area in his prefrontal cortex. This type of damage – called Phineas Gage Syndrome (Rosenthal 2002, p. 15) – results in a changed personality and behaviours, such as an individual becoming rude, insensitive and boastful which can lead to problems with personal relationships. Damasio (2000) and LeDoux (1996) suggest that a complex relationship exists between the cognitive and emotional parts of our brain. Arnold (2005) further posits the view that educators need to respect that student motivations and feelings should be respected just as much as learning content. Furthermore, it is not just *what* we learn but *how we feel* about what we learn, which counts in the future. When one cares about a learning experience, it tends to engage us and influence us more strongly, than if one does not care or sees no relevance whatsoever.

In recent years there have been many curriculum reforms globally that aim to engage students and encourage them to think critically and reflectively. One of these curriculum models places thinking at the centre of all essential learning outcomes in Tasmania.[8] Here students are encouraged to think deeply when working through problems and activities.

[8] http://www.education.tas.gov.au/ocll/currcons/, accessed 26/06/2004.

Andrade (1999) discusses the importance of using rubrics to promote thinking and understanding. Here, she suggests, rubrics allow students to be actively involved in the assessment process by clearly identifying assessment criteria, grading scales and collaboratively developing the various elements within the rubric. The rationale behind engaging students in the process up front, in developing a rubric, is an attempt to place students in the heart of education.

Empathy as an important frame

As global citizens we often hear that there is too little 'caring' in the world today (Noddings, 1992). Educationally, schools aim to be supportive school communities, which are in essence safe and caring places where learning is optimised. Often students refer to a teacher as 'a caring teacher' or a class as being a subject where everyone, including the teacher, 'cares' for each other. It is difficult to define caring in this context; however, one aspect of caring is empathy. Empathy is a complex multidimensional construct. Piaget (1932) conceptualised empathy as a cognitive process involving one's ability to role take. Other psychologists (Eisenberg & Strayer 1987) conceptualised empathy as an affective phenomenon that touches emotional facets that in turn lead to prosocial behaviours and actions. Hoffman (1987) posited a view that a more rigorous and thorough understanding can be found through the study of the contributions of both the cognitive and affective aspects.

Given this complex and multidimensional view of empathy, there are understandably few instruments to measure it. Davis (1980) developed a 28-item questionnaire, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, which incorporates both cognitive and affective dimensions. In trialling the IRI with 201 males and 251 females, Davis (1980), using a five-point Likert scale, identified four major factors. Two factors were cognitive (perspective taking and fantasy) and two affective (empathic concern and personal distress). The cognitive factor of perspective taking included an individual shifting from a 'self-oriented' reaction to others' distress to an 'other-oriented' reaction. Fantasy, as a cognitive factor, can be seen as an individual's ability to use imagination to experience the feelings and actions of characters. The affective factor of empathic concern was seen as an individual having sympathy or regard for another person's feelings. Personal distress resonates with the experience of another person's distress as if it were one's own distress. There are few other instruments that measure empathy. Using the IRI does allow for an insight as to the term or concept of empathy as perhaps one aspect of caring.

Empathic intelligence as an emergent frame

Building on the examples presented in this chapter, there appears room for greater understanding and models of explaining intelligence. Goleman (1996) argues for a new intelligence – emotional intelligence. He suggests that a person's emotional intelligence includes the ability of a person to 'be able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathise and hope' (Goleman 1996, p. 34). His concept of emotional intelligence suggests a link between cognition (thought) and emotions (feeling). While Goleman (1996) recognises that emotion and cognition have an effect on each other, what appears lacking is the unity between the two. For example, if what one thinks affects how one feels and vice versa, where does the ability of an individual to not only operationalise this for themselves but to imagine this relationship in others? Resonating with this very concept, is a new intelligence advocated by Arnold (2005), that of empathic intelligence.

In recent years a lot has been written about effective teaching and classroom pedagogy (for example, Stronge 2002; Darling-Hammond 2001; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock 2001). Perkins (1992) discusses the concept of 'smart schools' where he suggests that schools should be reconceptualised to foster deep learning and understanding. Blythe and Associates (1998) take the notion of 'smart schools' further by exploring new ways of teaching for understanding. Both these scholars hold the view that there is a link between increased student understanding and high quality pedagogy/classroom environments. Hattie (2003) and Berliner (2002), through empirical inquiry in classrooms, further conclude that teachers make a difference on student learning outcomes. The area that resonates with these views on teaching for understanding, which is posited strongly in their literature but appears deficient, refers to the *inner qualities of the teacher*. This area, which correlates with Gardner's (1993) intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences but appears much richer and stronger, is that of empathic intelligence.

Arnold (2005) suggests that empathic intelligence is not the same as emotional intelligence or cognitive intelligence, as it is centrally concerned with the dynamic between thinking and feeling and how each contributes meaning to a situation. Furthermore, while the literature from Gardner (1993, 2000) and Sternberg (1995) discusses a range of intelligences and knowledge and that one may be stronger in some intelligence, Arnold (2005) suggests that these intelligences can be brought to and derived from, empathic intelligence. It may be

possible for one to critically question the nature of empathy and its validity in terms of empathic intelligence. The next part of this chapter explores the concept of empathy and attempts to provide by definition, an understanding of empathic intelligence.

Schlesinger (1984, p. 187) suggests the term 'empathic' has several interpretations. It can be used to characterise a person of whom we approve as an 'empathic person'. This usually means the person has a sensitive regard for others, likes people, is aware of and accommodates others' needs and is sympathetic with their causes and alert to how they are feeling. In many cases empathy refers to a *position* from which the analyst interacts with another person. An important concept by which empathy could be scaled or measured in a psychoanalytic environment is proposed by Schlesinger (1984) who suggests that this scale is like a continuum, at one end *alienation* with the patient, the other *identification.* He argues that the space in between the two ends of the continuum is a conflict-free area of empathy where the analysts can move freely towards and away from the patient, but positively enabling identification and alienation throughout the experience. Applied to a school environment, principals or teachers have, on a daily basis, situations where they move between the two poles of alienation and identification. It is through this movement between both that the principal or teacher can draw on an inner quality to effectively manage[9] the situation.

Being empathic can contribute constructively to practice through the teacher's ability to recognise a teachable moment (Schoorman, 2002). Olney-Friedrich (2001) discusses a teacher who had a bald spot appearing on her head as part of *alopecia areata*, a disfiguring auto-immune condition. One student asked the teacher, 'Do you wear a wig?' Rather than adopting a defensive stance, the teacher decided to share the truth with her class. The resulting part of the lesson and subsequent lessons allowed for rich discussions about students being able to empathise with their teacher and each other. The simple discussion about her condition provided students with the opportunity to reflect on how their words can affect the way others see themselves. Students were able to understand other people's situations and feelings, whereby students realised they were not alone in dealing with bullies and negative comments made to others. Olney-Friedrich (2001, p. 61) was able to use this example and story to summise that 'Unless empathy is taught and modelled, students may never realise that many feelings and anxieties are shared by everyone'.

[9] 'Manage' in this case taken to represent effectively responding to situations inside and outside the classroom, not as clear cut and always obvious. The principal and teacher can effectively 'manage' a situation by being able to diffuse or simply progress to another pedagogic process or response to lead to a desired outcome for both teacher and student.

Definition of empathic intelligence

This chapter has introduced two models of intelligence, defined empathic as an emergent frame and provided an uncovering of empathic intelligence. So, how does one know and understand, by definition, empathic intelligence? Arnold (2005), through many years of empirical inquiry and personal reflection, has provided one definition of empathic intelligence.

Arnold (2005, p. 9) states that empathic intelligence is a sophisticated system of psychic, cognitive, affective, social and ethical functioning that is derived from an ability to:

1 differentiate self-states from others' states;
2 engage in reflective and analogic processing to understand dynamics;
3 mobilise a dynamic between thinking and feeling and feeling in self and others;
4 work creatively in tacitly felt, but yet unrealised ways, guided by resilience and adaptive capacity; and
5 commit to the wellbeing and development of self and others.

This definition allows for self-reflection and knowledge about the ways people learn and process experiences and reflects an educator's view of the world. It allows the development of empathic intelligence to be both affective and cognitive. Arnold (2005) further argues that empathic intelligence can be used to explain the phenomenon of the way some people can influence others through their capacity to engage, employing their enthusiasm, empathy and expertise. Empathic intelligence functions in a dynamic way as people engage with one another, for example, the way some teachers relate with children in their classrooms, principals with their staff and school communities, and students interacting with students.

The four Es of empathic intelligence

In defining empathic intelligence, Arnold (2005) describes four super-ordinate and essential characteristics:

1 *Enthusiasm*: A personal energy conveyed to others, motivated by belief and hope.
2 *Engagement*: An ability to attract and hold students' attention through centred, purposeful interactions.
3 *Expertise*: Theoretically informed and effective in practice.
4 *Empathy*: An act of thoughtful, heartfelt imagination.

It is assumed that either an individual or an organisation, such as a school, which exhibits these four characteristics, can be viewed as empathically intelligent. In fact, within this inquiry, I explore the concept of empathic leadership – those leaders who are empathically intelligent. Principals or teachers who demonstrate three of these characteristics, such as enthusiasm, engagement and expertise, but without empathy, may well be effective teachers or leaders but not empathically intelligent. Those organisations or schools where all four characteristics are prevalent would be great places to be. They will be conducive to learning and transformation, which will is discussed in more detail towards the end of this chapter.

Arnold (2005) implies that empathic intelligence can mobilise new meanings and potential from the experience and engagement between individuals. The release of the Department of Education *Atelier Report* in July 2004,[10] provides a framework and reform of education in Tasmania where a key recommendation allows 'communities of schools'.[11] In Tasmania, within a 'community of schools' there could be a structure where increased funding into these communities could enable principals who demonstrate empathic intelligence to be perceived as empathic leaders. Such a proposition resonates with Fullan (2003, p. 76) who suggests that, designing systems which provide additional resources to schools allows leaders in one school to learn from leaders in other schools.

Though Arnold's (2005) empathic intelligence is an important theoretical framework of my inquiry, I can bring some critiques to her work in relation to understanding leadership. Arnold (2005) does not discuss the specifics of leadership; this is where I bring Fullan (2003), Yukl (1994) and Leithwood et al. (2004) as some leaders who fill the gaps.

Leadership as a frame

Before providing a link between empathic intelligence and empathic leadership, it is important to crystallise an understanding of leadership. At the heart of most definitions are two primary functions: 'providing direction' and 'exercising influence.' Each of these functions can be carried out in various ways, and such differences will separate many models of leadership from one another (Leithwood et al. 2004, p. 20). There is no doubt that leadership is a highly complex concept. Yukl (1994, p. 3) suggests that leadership influences '... the interpretation of events for followers, the choice of objectives for the group or

[10] http://www2.education.tas.gov.au/hrh/Docs/Final%20Report%2029%20June.pdf, accessed on 17/07/2004.

[11] 'Communities of schools' refers to a group of schools where the criteria for grouping schools into communities is as yet unknown. These groupings could be based on demographic, sector or similar educational needs index (ENI) or a combination.

organisation, the organisation of work activities to accomplish objectives, the motivation of followers to achieve the objectives, the maintenance of co-operative relationships and teamwork and the enlistment of support and co-operation from people outside the group or organisation'.

Discussion centred around the effects of school leadership on student learning can be justified by looking at three different kinds of research. Firstly, one source of evidence is the qualitative case study that is usually conducted in exceptional school settings. These are settings that are seen as contributing to student learning quite considerably above or below expectations (Leithwood et al. 2004). A second source of research evidence about the effects of leadership, they suggest, refers to large-scale quantitative studies. Hallinger and Heck (1996, 1998) conducted several research reviews and concluded that the combined direct and indirect effects of school leadership on student learning outcomes are small but educationally important. The third type of research about leadership's effects is also large-scale and quantitative in nature. However, rather than inquiring about overall leadership effects, the inquiries focus more on the effects of specific leadership practices. As I write this chapter, I am trying to think about the qualitative nature of empathic leadership, knowing that the nature of my inquiry is focused on people's stories and relating the interpretations to my own lived experience. I am seeking a theory that both explains my practice and offers the possibility of challenging and extending my practice. I seek a theory that is dynamic and responsive to the circumstances within my sphere of influence as a leader, and sufficiently robust to support my sense of identity and purpose.

A lot of research about the various types and effects of leadership is becoming increasingly cognisant to the contexts in which leaders work and how, in order to be highly effective, leaders need to respond flexibly to their contexts (see, for example, Davis, Darling-Hammond et al. 2005; Elmore 2000). Significant inquiry has been aimed less at unpacking the development of specific models, and more at discovering how such flexibility is exercised by those within the various leadership positions. To me, an empathic intelligent leader, in order to be as effective as possible, has the capacity to be able to adapt their leadership style and approach to the situation. Hallinger and Heck's (1996) research lends itself to support this claim, suggesting that school-level factors other than leadership explain the variances in student achievement including school mission and goals, culture, participation in decision making and relationships with parents and the wider community. All these are variables on which the school leader has considerable potential influence. It is here I see a correlation between empathic leadership and the ability to influence the many conditions outlined by Hallinger and Heck (1996).

Throughout my reading, the common underpinning of leadership is that successful teacher leaders develop their schools as effective organisations that support and sustain the performances of teacher leaders and teachers. That is, in schools there is a synergy between the performances of teachers, leaders and students. My own experiences capture this thinking and value the powerful effect of distributing leadership across the school. Leithwood et al. (2004) suggest that highly successful leaders develop and rely on leadership contributions from many others in their organisation. This concept of distributing leadership overlaps with shared, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership concepts. Supporting this connection, Fletcher and Kaufer (2003, p. 22) imply that distributed leadership assumes a set of practices that 'are enacted by people at all levels rather than a set of personal characteristics and attributes located in people at the top'.

Elmore (2000) argues that for an organisation to benefit from the capacities of its members, the members must capitalise on the range of their individual strengths and develop, among all organisational members, a fuller appreciation of interdependence and how each individual's behaviour affects the organisation as a whole. I concur with this thinking and share a firm view that in the area of teamwork, distributed leadership provides a great opportunity for leaders to learn from each other. Gronn (2002) suggests that with holistic forms of distributed leadership, solutions are possible which would be unlikely to emerge from individual sources. It is here, at the heart of holistic discussions of leadership where I think empathic leaders and empathic organisations become visible.

Duignan (2004, p. 8) also posits a view that leadership capability is complex, primarily concerned with expanding people's capabilities so that they can lead valued and meaningful lives and, in so doing, make a significant difference in the lives of those they touch. Duignan (2004, p. 2) also argues that effective leaders, first and foremost, must influence 'self' through the habit of reflective practice before they can improve themselves and other educational leaders. It appears that effective leaders not only should be good managers and efficient practitioners, but they need to be holistic and connected people. Kelly (2000, p. 19) puts it this way, 'In this respect it is not a matter of knowing something, but becoming someone, not just a matter of knowing relevant things, but of becoming a relevant person.'

In my experience as a school leader, I am confronted with external and internal challenges and expectations, demands on time, expertise, energies and emotional resources. Duignan and Bezzina (2006) suggest that, as a result of corporate management values and strategies, there is a persistent feeling among many educators of being used and devalued as people.

Leading a school as a principal involves leading many people in many partnerships. Duignan (2006) suggests that at the very heart of leadership – in this connected way – are issues of values and ethics. As a school principal I am faced with dilemmas, paradoxes or tensions that are people-centred, involving the contestation of values and/or ethical contradictions. It is the relational that is important. How can I as a leader address the contradictions that are associated with the complex relationships that are a vital part of working in a school community?

Educational leadership, then, is obviously a very complex endeavour. Being able to make sensible, informed and balanced decisions when faced with difficult situations or tensions requires internal framing. Duignan and Bessina (2006) suggests that leaders in contemporary society require frames of reference that can assist them in managing situations of uncertainty, ambiguity and paradox. English (1995) prefers to regard paradox as a tension that is mainly described and understood by relationship and complementarity. Rather than recommending that leaders understand and respond to dilemmas and paradox situations in terms of contradiction or polarity, English (1995) suggests that a relationship that encompasses both competition and complementarity is the preferred approach.

In this thesis I am unfolding my framing for you, as reader, and for me, as inquirer, in the hope that I can come to deeper understandings of myself and of leading empathically. English (1995) further understands the framing which influences leadership through the metaphor of a double-headed arrow. In this thesis I unfold a number of situations in my school that evidence the tensions involved in leading. Each of the situations involves contradiction, competition and complementarity. They are a double-edged sword. I have to think about the balance between the individual and the common good. In thinking about leadership through framing tensions, I can resonate with the model and, conceptually, can appreciate that, while there is not always the one answer or response which will please everyone, the one which I as leader can make, using such internal framing, provides a multidimensional way of internalising leadership paradoxes and tensions. Understanding and accepting ambiguity can be an emotional support in times of tension. This thesis finishes with some examples of resolving tensions through self-reflection.

Searching the Tasmanian context

There are many empathically intelligent schools and leaders within our own professional circles and communities. The challenge within education in Tasmania has been with the

implementation of the *Essential Learning Framework* and *Atelier Report.* Within the recommendations there exists a unique opportunity for a number of schools to collectively work towards being empathically intelligent. As the concept stretches and is embraced, there are opportunities for all stakeholders to develop both personally and professionally. This inquiry explores examples where the concept of empathic leadership is visible through reflection and stories.

This chapter has examined the concept of empathic intelligence, intelligence, brain-based learning and leadership. I have attempted to describe what an empathically intelligent organisation/school or 'community of schools' may look like, in practice. While the role of the principal is essential in this model, empathic intelligence when developed in all individuals and schools may result in the development of everyone's abilities and understandings in professional learning communities. To conclude this chapter with a vision, I quote Arnold (2005) who states:

> It is fundamental to quality teaching and learning that there be opportunities for students to experience the caring, informed attention of expert educators who know how to engage students in purposeful and enjoyable activities. The outcome of such activities is not only learning about the external world through engagement with it, but also mutual pleasure in the experiences of developing one's abilities and understanding in learning communities (Arnold 2005, p. 5).

To deepen my understanding of the nexus of empathic intelligence, leadership and 'empathic leadership', this dissertation is an inquiry into the search for an understanding of empathic leadership. In order to assist this inquiry, I examine my own leadership, unpack my experiences of schools and leaders while in the United States, and use qualitative inquiry to crystallise my thinking. Future chapters discuss the various inquiries as strategy, in order to examine each of Arnold's (2005) four superordinate components of empathic intelligence. Each of the narratives and letter sequences that emerge throughout the dissertation is in fact a co-construction of meaning for me, as author. These narratives and letters are centred around ethical and values-based tensions of the sort outlined by Duignan (2002). This chapter has provided a theoretical understanding that will act as a watermark, allowing the flourishing ideas and personal understandings to emerge.

CHAPTER 3

Professional framing

Why use interviews?

This chapter examines why I chose interview as a way of connecting and shaping my understanding of Arnold's (2005) theorising about intelligence. My inquiry is cited within a qualitative inquiry frame (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). As the nature of this inquiry involves making meaning from students' and teachers' lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990), I seek information from people's experiences and their interactions within their worlds. Like Polkinghorne (1992, p. 150), I see this construction of meanings from people's experiences in schools and classrooms resonating with constructivist theorising (Vygotsky 1978). With Polkinghorne (1992) I suggest that human knowledge is not a mirrored reflection of reality, but a construction built from processes and interactions with the world of others and self. Like Mackay (2005), I have to admit that my thinking on the construction of understanding involves some doubts:

> a bit of subject truth: when I undertake social analysis, I wrestle with doubts with the authenticity of what I am doing. Not the reporting of what people say; that's easy enough to get right. But the account of what is really going on; whether it means anything much; how might it contribute to our understanding of human experience (Mackay 2005, p. 2).

Despite these doubts, I believe that using interviews allows me to reveal some trustworthy understandings of what is going on in a classroom and of empathic leadership (Clandinin & Connelly 1998). Interview provides a method to hear people's stories, values and beliefs. Interview allows the various world person interactions to be unfolded and opened to re-interpretation. Although there is diversity in our life patterns, there are also experiences that are common to us all (Polkinghorne 1992, p. 150). Interview as strategy allows these patterns and experiences to emerge and understandings to be co-constructed through structured dialogue. These dialogues become data that I re-interpret for my inquiry. This form of data is rich information not easily quantifiable through numbers or statistics. This means that I cannot claim generalisable findings from this inquiry, but I do aspire to a rigorous and trustworthy inquiry that will deepen my own understanding of 'complex classrooms' (Denzin & Lincoln 2003).

The emotional nature of this inquiry relates to my enthusiasm and commitment to empathic intelligence within the school context (Pryer 2001). I am seeking teachers' and students' stories about their lived experience; therefore quality, not quantity, is important. The stories, however, are chosen as starting points for personal leadership growth and transformation. Inquiring into these stories I hope will lead me to a deeper understanding of my personal values and to an understanding of how I can make a difference in the lives of everyone who is connected to the school of which I am principal. Duignan (2003) states:

> Leaders require creative, intuitive frameworks based on in-depth understanding of the nature of human nature and of the ethical, moral, even spiritual dimensions inherent in human interaction and choice. Above all, they need sound judgment and wisdom derived from critical reflection on the meaning of life and work (Duignan 2003, p.19).

Similarly, this thesis is evidence of my own critical reflections.

Interview as strategy allows me, as inquirer, to locate knowledge not 'inside' or 'outside' a person, but within the relationships between people and their worlds. The relationships that are the focus of this inquiry are those formed within schools and classrooms (Kvale 1996). There are inquirers who claim that objectivity cannot be found within qualitative inquiry. For example, Shipman (1997) represents the controversy surrounding the 'validity' of qualitative inquiry like this: 'It is easy to detect subjectivity in social inquiry. It is impossible to confirm objectivity' (p. 18). I celebrate my subjectivity, the relational and dialogical, I make no absolute claim to validity or objectivity, but I do claim to be able to crystallise my understanding through re-interpreting interviews (Richardson 2000).

Hatch (2002) also suggests that for inquirers working with a constructivist perspective, multiple realities exist which are inherently unique and shared across social groups. Furthermore, the epistemology of a constructivist paradigm aligns the inquirer and participants in a process of co-construction. Hatch (2002, p. 15) further implies that it is impossible and undesirable for inquirers to be distant and objective.

I use empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005) as a strategy to inquire into the relations between students and teachers in the classroom. While in the United States on my Hardie Fellowship, I used interview as a method for interpreting how empathic intelligence was manifested in five classrooms in five schools. Arnold (2005, p. 23) sees empathic intelligence as related to enthusiasm, engagement, expertise and empathy. The schools where I carried out inquiries allowed the exploration of links between empathic intelligence and the scholarly work of

Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences* (1983, 1993, 2000) and the work around *Teaching for Understanding* (Blythe & Assoc. 1998; Perkins & Blythe 1994).

My United States experience

Framing the data sets

In reading literature about 'understanding' and 'thinking' (Blythe & Assoc. 1998; Gardner 2000; Perkins & Blythe 1994; Ritchart 2002; Stone 1994) as well as the emerging area of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005), I decided to visit Boston, Massachusetts to conduct further investigations into the practical application of empathic intelligence theory. As four of these prominent educators were based in Boston, it was the chosen destination. The five prominent inquirers were:

1. Professor Roslyn Arnold,[12] who posited empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005).
2. Professor Howard Gardner, who posited the notion of multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983, 1993, 2000).
3. Professor David Perkins, who is a leading academic at Harvard University and has worked extensively in the study of thinking and understanding (Perkins & Blythe, 1994).
4. Tina Blythe, who has posited the Teaching for Understanding Framework (Blythe & Associates 1998) as well as new and innovative ways of looking at student work.
5. Professor Theodore (Ted) Sizer, who was instrumental in the formation of Coalition of Essential Schools in the United States and founder and Principal of one Charter School, which will be explored in this inquiry.

Schools were selected through opportunistic sampling, though it emerged that they shared characteristics with the following criteria:

- their association and deliberate congruence with the inquiry posited by one or more of the above educators;
- the availability of the school principal to meet and ensure that he/she was comfortable with his/her school's involvement with the University of Tasmania Human Ethics Consent Forms and investigation procedures; and

[12] Although Professor Roslyn Arnold is my supervisor and the author of *Empathic Intelligence*, I am also working with another supervisor with a different inquiry approach to provide an appropriate critical perspective.

- the identification of one teacher/leader who met the criteria of being 'empathically intelligent' according to the four empathic intelligence super ordinate behaviours (Arnold, 2005).

The five schools I visited from Kindergarten to Grade 12 were correlated with one or more of the educators as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Representation of schools visited for inquiry and alignment with educators

School	Type	Alignment with educationalist
Crockett Elementary School	Multiple Intelligence Academy	Howard Gardner – Multiple Intelligences Roslyn Arnold – Empathic Intelligence
Valley Charter School	Charter School Grades 9–12	Ted Sizer – Coalition of Essential Schools movement Roslyn Arnold – Empathic Intelligence
Potter High School	Urban High Grades 9–12	David Perkins – Thinking and understanding Roslyn Arnold – Empathic Intelligence
Oaktree Middle School	Urban Middle Grades 6–8	Roslyn Arnold – Empathic Intelligence
Smiling Elementary School	Rural Elementary Grades Kinder–6	Tina Blythe – Teaching for Understanding

Framing my conversations – learning through meeting people

The following is an account of my involvement with each of the educators. Professor Roslyn Arnold was the Dean of Education at the University of Tasmania who pioneered empathic intelligence and whose work inspired me to establish a link between this intelligence, *Teaching for Understanding* (Blythe & Assoc. 1998) and leadership. I wanted to explore the link between empathic intelligence and leadership with a view to understanding *empathic leadership*. Before departing Australia, I had scheduled a meeting with Professor Howard Gardner to discuss his work in multiple intelligences and his view that the brain is not one single entity where intelligence is generalisable, rather that everyone possesses a range of intelligences (Gardner 1983, 1993). Following this initial meeting, I was fortunate to attend his bi-weekly lectures at Harvard University on the subject of Mind, Brain and Education[13]. Similarly, after contacting Professor David Perkins I was able to attend his weekly lectures

[13] http://my.gse.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?course=gse-ht100, accessed 31/03/2005.

on Cognition: The art of instruction[14]. This complemented and deepened my understanding in the areas of 'understanding' and 'thinking'. Perkins and Gardner reaffirmed my thoughts on the capacity to develop student learning through focused teaching. As I reflect on metacognition, it was reassuring to hear them both suggest that their research recommends that in schools we should not adopt a one size fits all approach to learning; rather the different ways that students learn and demonstrate their learning to others is important.

Theodore (Ted) Sizer is the founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools movement across the United States (1984) and former principal of a charter school in Devens, Massachusetts.[15] I visited this school (Valley Charter School) to meet with him and also carry out inquiries related to my study. The final educator I met was Tina Blythe, who was my initial contact and who, through weekly meetings, allowed me greater understanding of her work. I attended her classes at the Boston Architecture Centre, which focused on Teaching for Understanding.

It was through meeting these educators and listening to their stories that I was able to reflect on the field of education as I know and co-construct my own meanings. Within these insightful conversations we discussed global trends in education, and Tasmanian educational reform. These conversations provided a welcome opportunity to reflect on my own position as both an inquirer and educator. As well as meeting these highly respected educators and leaders in their field, the United States experience provided a timely opportunity to meet outstanding principals and teachers.

Chapters 6–9 explore, through a series of letters, imagined conversations with principals of each of these schools. Each principal has been selected, within the letter series, as having some resonance with one of Arnold's (2005) superordinate behaviours of empathic intelligence. Principal names and schools are pseudonyms. These four principals are:

Chapter 6: Amelia – principal of Crockett Middle School in Tennessee. Through conversations and observation I formed a clear perception that Amelia was very *enthusiastic* about learning, leading and life in general. To develop a deeper understanding of enthusiasm, it seemed appropriate that I interpret and reflect on the rich conversations with Amelia. The meetings in which Amelia chaired as principal were stimulating and thought provoking. She was very focused, yet enthusiastic in presenting issues, working with staff and working for

[14] http://my.gse.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?course=gse-t540, accessed 31/03/2005.
[15] http://www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces_docs/about/org/execboard/ted_page.htm, accessed on 27/03/2005.

the overall benefit of improving student learning outcomes. Never did I see her angry or lacking any motivation or personal energy. It was here that I started to really see how influential an enthusiastic leader can be towards others.

Chapter 7: Tim – principal of Potter High School in Massachusetts. Tim presented as a scholar on leadership, able to sustain rich conversations where he could articulate research with his current practice. In addition, Tim was actively keen in the area of developing leaders within his school, and his views on empowerment and distribution of leadership were encouraging. In our conversations Tim revealed a genuine sense of *expertise* about his staff, as teachers and as people, which was very impressive. He was able to discuss not only the areas of expertise of individual teachers, but also a story about each as a person. Here, I formed an impression that expertise as a leader is actually very much holistic and involves qualities that are far more than just working with people. Consequently, the development of empathic leadership starts to resonate with this level of holistic leadership.

Chapter 8: Mike – principal of Oaktree Middle School in Massachusetts. Mike really had the capacity to *engage* with others. Working as a principal of an inner-Boston school where students from many diverse communities attend is a daily challenge. However, some of his processes towards engaging not only students, but parents and teachers too, have resulted in significant positive changes at the school. Initiatives such as providing after-school structured advancement classes, prior to co-curricular football/basketball/music/dance programs, places learning as important before these optional activities. One idea of a leadership structure I have implemented at Stafford High School is that of a curriculum leadership team. This team has primary responsibility for curriculum planning and coherence across all Grade teams. My experiences as a leader in a school were similar to Mike's and hence the notion of a team responsible for curriculum transformation, including professional learning, teaching and assessment, was powerful.

Chapter 9: Frank – principal of Valley Charter School in Massachusetts. It was not empathy as a single behaviour that Frank seemed to demonstrate in his leadership that led me to constructing a letters series with him, rather the way the school was structured, which appeared *empathic*. In fact, Frank's examples of leadership and commitment to education, developing students and teachers, as well as working with people to achieve common goals, were inspirational. Whole school transformation is difficult, yet to develop a structure where students have connections and reflections each day, and creating a 'space' for students to express their emotions and talk as though they were among a family was impressive. It wasn't the cost that deterred Frank and his school from implementing such a program, called

'connections', but the fact that this was actually living their ethos of being a caring school. Here I started to make some genuine connections with leadership, with rethinking the importance of schools as having the potential to be some children's safer family. Here, a principal was living empathy through his leadership. My memory of these rich experiences continues to inform my reflections and strategic thinking about the nature of empathic school leadership.

Summary

In summary, I have unfolded and elaborated on the pre-understandings that I bring to interpreting. These frames emerge from my lived experience. They include my working life, my reading, my theoretical understandings, my experiences in the United States, my understandings of intelligence and leadership and, importantly, my understanding of empathic intelligence. I further unfold my experiences in the United States, collecting a range of ephemeral and hard data which form the core of my interpretation. These pre-understandings, these frames, predispose me to narrative and writing as a form of inquiring (Eakin 1999; Richardson & St Pierre 2005).

The following section, therefore, elaborates my strategies for inquiring which both emerge from and transform my pre-understandings.

Introduction to Section B
Ways of Inquiring

Strategies for inquiring

Historically, anthropologists have been interested in people's stories as a way of understanding their cultures. Davis et al. (2000) suggest that one's sense of self, unfolds continuously through the recursive and reiterative processes of representing and interpreting one's identity in relation to persons, objects, events, sexuality and so on. Seidman (1991) also implies that such an approach in education has not readily been widely accepted. The strength of interview is the notion that interviewing allows people to tell their stories. Stories are a way of knowing. Seidman (1991) further suggests that in order to provide details of an experience a beginning, middle and an end exist, requiring people to reflect on their experiences. Therefore he developed the three interviews approach that probes history, current understanding and reflections, and possible futures in relation to specific phenomena. Adalsteinsdottir (2004) neatly implies that each time we enter into a new social situation or relationship, we learn by watching, asking and listening. For me, interviewing was a process enabling me to self-construct meaning and understanding.

This inquiry uses rigorous methods of acquiring understandings, including interview, observation, self-reflection and writing. As inquirer, I see myself as a respected teacher and principal within the Department of Education, Tasmania. Evidence that others see me this way include the professional experiences of observing in my school, my colleagues' classes, student behaviour and parental expectations, along with the experience of mentoring colleagues and working with peers as preparatory to my understanding within this kind of inquiry. The deliberate selection of qualitative data gathering methods to address the inquiry questions along with the investigation of teacher/leader behaviours have resulted in the selection of qualitative approaches.

I make no claim to universality within my inquiry. The transferability or generalisability of the findings in this inquiry relate to the inquiry findings or emerging theory offering

resonance from one context to another. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 114) suggest that when facts form generalisations or cause–effect linkages, they can be used efficiently with prediction. This inquiry acknowledges that while taking a predominantly qualitative approach, findings may have significant relevance or resonance with other settings. The possibility of transferability exists, provided discernment is exercised around similarities and differences (Hamilton, 2004, pp. 380-381).

Framing my inquiry

Within this inquiry, I use the terms trustworthiness, credibility and transferability/generalisability to nuance the concept that narrative as inquiry can be taken seriously. In interpreting my qualitative data sets, contexts, purposes, the nature of responses and the individuality of respondents must be honored. My understanding of empathic leadership evolves to include rigour, trustworthiness and honesty (Richardson 2000). Using reflective thinking about interpretation in this way allows me to use the terms differently for different purposes throughout the inquiry. Davis et al. (2000, p. 167) suggest that senses of self, while coherent and ongoing, are always changing as the self is fluid and specified. What does this mean for trustworthiness and honesty in leadership? For me, framing this inquiry using a qualitative approach enables me to deepen my understandings, and to pose reflective questions.

The trustworthiness of this inquiry can be maintained if I, as inquirer, become a more reliable and sensitive interpreter and thinker. Burns (2000) suggests that ways of improving trustworthiness include 'triangulation', that is reporting any biases by investigator and through employing an audit trail. Data will be authenticated and decisions made about categories by involving supervisors who are external to the inquirer. The purpose of triangulation is to test whether or not data are interpreted by more than one inquirer. It is always possible that all inquirers are inaccurate in their observations or responses; triangulation provides only one way of assessing the robustness of interpretations to, ideally, deepen its significance. Triangulation can be defined as 'the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour' (Burns 2000, p. 419). However, Richardson (2000) suggests that triangulation itself is not enough. Rather she uses the metaphor of 'crystallisation, which, for me, permits bringing in many more points than those available through triangulation.

One way Richardson (2000) describes crystallisation is by writing as a form of inquiry. Here she suggests that just as crystals grow, change and alter, so do our interpretations of the

world. In fact, Richardson (2000, p. 934) suggests that what we see depends on the angle and direction in which we are looking. Crystals are prisms that reflect external events and refract within themselves. In such a metaphor, writing is a process of discovery. There is no single way of writing; however, by learning alternate ways of writing, our repertoires for writing to different audiences and for different purposes expand. I write because I want to learn about myself. By writing fictionalised letters as a key part of my inquiry, I am learning about myself, my leadership, and my increasingly complex role as an educational leader. To assist me to crystallise my understanding, I use more than one method of gathering and interpreting data, including observation, interviews, self-reflective processes and writing. This inquiry gathers data from a number of schools and people across the United States, data that are re-presented in the form of fictionalised letters.

The inquiry uses a number of approaches for interpretation that the inquirer to interpret data from more than one standpoint. I unfold my own values and positions including my own standpoints. Burns (2000) indicates that triangulation is important to any inquiry investigation as reliance on one method may bias or distort the inquirer's interpretation of what is being investigated. Crystallisation in this inquiry contributes to the trustworthiness of the inquiry by providing the opportunity to not readily accept my initial impressions or those of others. Often, throughout this inquiry, more than one approach is used to provide a more holistic view for interpretation. Neumann (1997) suggests that multi-data gathering methods, along with multi-person analysis and multi-school gathering processes, are integral to crystallisation, which supports the development of confidence in interpretations.

Designing my inquiry

My inquiry focuses on people and their behaviours, specifically principals and teachers, and on interpreting their understanding of their empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005). Adalsteinsdottir (2004) uses a similar inquiry process when exploring teachers' interpersonal behaviours and practices in the classroom. Her approach, like this inquiry design, is suited to the fields of education, which resonates with the Essential Learnings[16] and Project Zero[17] models, based as they are on teaching for understanding.

The proposed inquiry methodology is also influenced by Grounded Theory approaches to interpretation (Corbin & Strauss 1990). Grounded Theory allows for data to come from a variety of sources and allows the inquirer to build a conceptual model that is grounded in the

[16] http://www.education.tas.gov.au/ocll/publications/essentiallearnings.pdf accessed 31/3/2005.
[17] http://pzweb.harvard.edu/ accessed 31/03/2005.

data directly obtained from participants in a study. Charmaz (2000) suggests that grounded theory methods have come under attack because they are 'grounded' in the inquirer's experience as much as in the lived experience of the inquiry 'subjects'. In contrast, along with Richardson (2000) and Van Manen (1990), this inquiry is deeply embedded within inquiry experiences. Like Charmaz (2000), this inquiry is grounded in my experiences and the lived experiences of participants within the inquiry.

One key process for crystallisation in this inquiry is the development of a series of fictionalised letters between me as inquirer and key people whom I have met and worked with in the United States. These imagined letters form a dialogue through which I pose questions and deepen my own understanding of empathic intelligence and leadership. As I am inquiring into empathic intelligence as represented by Arnold (2005) and leadership, elements such as intelligent caring, mirroring and affirmation are central to the investigation. What may emerge will be a result of the representation of the interpretations collected through interviewing, observation, my own reflections and crystallisation used within this inquiry. I use the process of letter writing to interpret and reinterpret leading which might be understood as empathic.

This inquiry does not claim objectivity as the inquiry questions themselves are cited within the domain of behaviours, thoughts, affects and emotions; it does, through its approaches make claim to a trustworthy interpretation of the teachers'/principals' behaviours. Kincheloe and McLaren (1994, p.151) argue that despite the controversy of objectivity, to be meaningful social inquiry and interpretation must be rigorous. They further imply that the only way to produce 'valid' information is through the application of a rigorous inquiry methodology, whether 'qualitative' or 'quantitative'. Rigour here refers to the strong bonds between evidence and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

Interviewing as inquiry

Introduction

An emergent thoughtline when discussing inquiring through experience involves the epistemological notion that meaning is contained in the study of texts. That deconstruction is the primary focus of education, sociology, linguistics and other disciplines in the humanities (Clandinin & Connelly 1998, p. 153). It was my intention as an inquirer to join in and become an active participant in the construction of the culture to gain a deep understanding. One way to achieve this is through semi-structured interviewing.

This chapter explores interview as one way of inquiring within my inquiry. It will elucidate the forms of interview, unfold the advantages and cautions of interviews, and outline why I selected interview as an inquiry method to deepen my understandings of empathic leadership. Five key questions shape this section:

1. Why use interview to gather data ?
2. What forms might interviews take to provide rich data?
3. What are the advantages of using interview over other methods such as surveys?
4. What are the cautions around using interview?
5. How might I refine interview as method in the next phase of gathering and interpreting for my inquiry?

What forms might interview take?

Throughout this inquiry, it is always my intention to be an active participant with teachers and students, and together unfold the lived experience of an empathic classroom in the construction of meanings. Being immersed within the school setting and listening to stories is supported through processes of semi-structured interview (Fontana & Frey 1994). Gergen (1992) implies that postmodernism asks the scientist to join in the hurly-burly of cultural life and become an active participant in culture. Rather than simply 'telling it like it is', the challenge for the postmodern psychologist is to 'tell it as it may become' (Gergen 1992, p. 27). Mackay (2005) says it like this:

> ... I know I'm only getting broad impressions. The big picture is misleading in its simplicity and its appearance of rationality. The truth about people's lives is located in the miniatures of their personal stories, and that's where they generally prefer to remain (Mackay 2005, p. 2).

For me, the truths about people's lives are not located in personal stories alone; other people's stories and their interpretation also form part of an understanding about their lives (Eakin 1999). Interviewing provides a way of eliciting and listening to other people's stories. There are a number of different forms of interview, including informal, unstructured, structured semi-structured.

Informal interview

Unstructured conversations that take place in the inquiry scene are referred to as informal interviews. These interviews often take advantage of the immediate context. Inquirers need to be very good listeners as these interviews take the form of a conversation. Questions are often asked on the spot and rarely audio-taped or documented in the situation. Hatch (2002) suggests that informal interviews, if done well, allow the inquirer to quickly build rapport as people are generally flattered when asked to tell their story. Hatch (2002) also acknowledges that, although informal interviews can allow the inquirer to arrive at particular topics in planned ways, there appears opportunity for information to be lost or forgotten. The inquirer is relying on recall from the conversation – the trustworthiness of the information may not be possible. All these factors need to be taken into account against the purpose of the interview and expected outcomes.

Unstructured interviewing

This form of interviewing focuses around a conversation between inquirer and participant. Its primary objective is the participant's perception of themselves, of their environment and their experiences (Burns 2000, p. 425). In this type of interview there is no standardised list of questions, rather it is a free-flowing conversation around a set of implicitly or explicitly agreed themes. The strength of this interview is that the inquirer can probe very deeply to unpack responses as they occur. Fontana and Frey (1994) substantiate the concept of breadth and depth within an unstructured interview method. They suggest that, given the qualitative nature of inquiry, the open-ended or in-depth interview allows rich and deep information from the participant. Burns (2000) describes the major disadvantage of unstructured or open-interviewing being linked to the vagaries of the inquirer's interpretation and presentation of

reality. However, there is usually a guide to questions framework and some means of recording directly whether by using audio or notes.

Structured interview

Structured interviewing is used predominantly in surveys and opinion polls where quantitative data is required. Burns (2000) suggests the advantages of structured interview include the fact that the same questions are asked of each participant; all questions require a specific answer and coding is performed very easily. The disadvantages from a qualitative perspective are predominantly related to the fact that feelings, beliefs and values do not fit into a lock-key answer system. In addition, the inquirer may become detached and unfocused. The likely outcome is an impersonal approach, which can inhibit trust and reduce rapport building between interviewer and respondent.

The lack of flexibility for an inquirer is a major limitation within structured interview as method. Fontana and Frey (1994) suggest that because of the closed nature of structured interviewing it is difficult to interpret meaning from an answer. Few probes or prompts can be used and there is little opportunity to develop rapport with participants.

Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviewing provides the interviewer with the opportunity to ask questions within a broad structure. Oppenheim (1999) indicates that while interviews are preferable under certain conditions and not others, interviews containing open-ended questions such as semi-structured formats are important in allowing respondents to say what they think and do so with richness and spontaneity. Wiersma (1995) supports the advantages of semi-structuring interviewing, suggesting the questions asked in interview can greatly assist in capturing the feelings of the informants involved. My experiences of interviewing would support that contention.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviewing caters for age and learning abilities, allowing participants who may experience reading difficulties the opportunity to respond without barriers. I see this as an important consideration with semi-structured interviewing as it requires me to distinguish between the adult and child interviews. In addition, consideration must be given to make the necessary modifications to the interview schedule to account for age, experience, etc. Modifications, such as the length of interview, different questions and also strategies to gain rapport, were all important and were incorporated into my inquiry. For me, semi-structured interviewing was an important process for listening to people's stories.

It was important, as this form of interviewing requires the interviewer to be an empathic listener, able to seek elucidation if it deepens the significance of the information embedded within the story. Such empathic listening does require considerable energy and concentration from the listener/interviewer.

The preferred form for my inquiry

As my inquiry explores empathic intelligence and leadership, I deliberately ensured questions were open enough to allow participants to tell their stories in conversations with me (Kvale 1996, p.27). Using semi-structured interviewing in this way allowed people's stories to emerge within a broad framework of the intentions of inquiry. Students were able to share their stories and teachers were able to unpack their own understandings and reflections. As Jalonga (1992, p. 68) suggests, by sharing stories about their classroom experiences, teachers are able to not only gain insight into their own practice but also contribute to the storehouse of knowledge about teaching.

Interviews support my inquiry into understandings of a social context. Hatch (2002) suggests that qualitative inquiry aims to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it. Qualitative studies try to capture the perspectives of people and use these as the basis for their actions in specific social settings (Hatch 2002, p. 7). It was important for me to capture people's thoughts and understandings as these enabled me to construct fictionalised letters and reconstruct my understandings.

Semi-structured interviewing allows for the possibility that the interviewee needs to deepen and inquire further to the participants' response to a probe or question. As I am interested in perceptions of reality, this inquiry was structured using interviewing as a key strategy to collect data from the data sets. Hatch (2002) states that qualitative inquiry aims to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it. Qualitative inquiry tries to capture the perspectives of people and determine how these inform their actions in specific social settings (Hatch 2002, p. 7).

In particular, this inquiry is presented as a narrative inquiry, a subtype of qualitative inquiry. As the inquirer, it was my intention to relate observations and interviews to my own experiences and deepen my own understandings, through fictionalised letter series. I have used a number of strategies to achieve understanding of empathic leadership. Since this is a form of leadership based on complex theoretical concepts, including four superordinate behaviours (enthusiasm, empathy, engagement and expertise) and intelligent caring,

narrative inquiry allows some of this complexity to emerge both consciously and unconsciously throughout the inquiry. The fictionalised letters tapped my own biography as an educator and enabled me to gain insight into my professional history, while also providing evidence for understanding empathic intelligence in leadership. Contemporary narrative inquiry can be characterised as 'an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them' (Chase 2005, p. 651).

Hatch (2002) further implies that inquirers in the constructivist paradigm create a view that multiple realities exist that is inherently unique and shared across social groups. Furthermore, the epistemology of the constructivist paradigm aligns the inquirer and participants in a process of co-construction where Hatch (2002, p. 15) suggests it is impossible and undesirable for inquirers to be distant and objective. For me, knowledge is continually constructed, including throughout the processes of conducting this inquiry and writing it up as a research project.

What are the advantages of using interview?

The interview, although semi-structured, is advantageous because it is dialogical; it is close to an everyday conversation. Kvale (1996) suggests that in order to understand the lived experience of one's lives, the interview is conducted according to a guide focusing on certain themes, including suggested questions.[18] Semi-structured interviews do not have to be observational or clinical; rather they can be conversational and relaxed, provided the interviewee is alert to the fundamental purpose of the conversation/interview – that it is a form of data collection.

Burns (2000, p. 582) suggests that although semi-structured interviews may be informal and relaxed, there are numerous strategies for effectively interviewing and keeping participants attention on the task and within the broad intentions of the inquiry. He suggests that asking questions in a conversational tone and tape-recording allow the interviewer the opportunity to participate in the dialogue, as opposed to being focused on note-taking. At all times throughout my inquiry I used an audio tape-recorder to capture these rich conversations.

[18] Appendices A and B outline the 'Interview schedule' showing the emergent themes and their relationship with focused questions.

There are many advantages of using interview as strategy, including that it is: a very flexible technique, where the participant's perspective is provided rather than the perspective of inquirer being imposed; allows the participant able to use language which is natural to them rather than trying to understand and fit in with the language of the study; allows the participant to have equal status to the inquirer in the dialogue; and that it can be used along with other methods (Burns 2000, p. 425).

My inquiry provides examples of *semi-structured interview questions* (see Appendices A and B) that were used as a process of inquiry with both teachers and students. I was interested in deepening my understanding of empathic intelligence and extending my interpretation as there may well be other behaviours or attributes that contribute to empathic intelligence and leadership.

What are the cautions in using interview?

It is important to acknowledge the need for caution that in using interview as strategy. Primarily, as the interview occurs in an interpersonal context, the meaning of the interview is reliant on this context. Kvale (1996) suggests that because knowledge is obtained within one context it is not automatically transferable to knowledge within other contexts. Thus, it is crucial to recognise that the themes that emerge from multiple interviews become important throughout my inquiry. Also, as the themes emerge one tends to search for these in subsequent interviews.

Interviewing takes a lot of time, particularly in the transcription and validation of information. Janesick (2000) suggests that the inquirer must not only conceptualise this information, but establish access and make contact with participants, interview them, transcribe data and then somehow make sense of the information. She suggests that by having member-checking processes in place (where the participant validates the information), an inquirer is provided with the opportunity to review the interview and ensure the information is an accurate reflection of the inquiry process. Seidman (1991, pp. 11-12) suggests that the three-interview approach can generate deep understanding from participants. This approach involves:

Interview 1: focused life history – the purpose is to find out as much as possible about the participant's experience in context at that time;
Interview 2: details of experience – the purpose is to concentrate on the participant's present experience in the focus area of inquiry; and

Interview 3: reflection on the meaning – the focus is on the participant's intellectual and emotional connections between their work and life, as well as looking at the factors within these.

I would have liked to have used the three-interview approach in this series but rejected the idea due to the constraints of travel across many locations in the United States. In the case of school contexts, students and teachers are very busy and access to three interviews would have been difficult. Often, inquirers may be faced with the situation of having only one interview. As an inquirer, I often tried to include as many questions as possible to gather information from participants. I was able to choose a wide range of questions, but unable to adopt the three-interview process.

Despite these implied cautions, interviewing, as used in a qualitative approach, recognises and affirms the role of interview for generating data. It is also important to acknowledge that as inquirer, I was an important factor in the data collection as was the interview schedule. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that the human interviewer, who can be marvelously smart, adaptable and flexible, can respond to situations with skill, tact and understanding.

As well as recognising the different types of interview that exist, there are other cautions that must be considered, including deciding on the number of participants to interview. Different interview groups require different interview approaches. For example, the approach to interviewing an adult will be different to interviewing a primary school student. Kvale (1996) suggests that it is important to interview as many participants as possible in order carry out the inquiry. The number of participants will depend on the study's purpose. He states that if the number of participants is too small then it becomes difficult to interpret meanings between groups. Similarly, if the sample is too large it will become too difficult to interpret the results. For me, qualitative inquiry is involved with the quality of the investigation and interview, the relationship between an individual and the situation. Saturation may be an important factor in determining sample size.

Another caution is the time or length of interviews. Consideration was given to the age of the participant being interviewed – adult or child. Because of reduced attention span, a lengthy interview with a primary student is less appropriate than a series of shorter interviews. The complication with this is the time required for a series of shorter interviews. Seidman (1991) suggests 90 minutes is an appropriate time limit for an interview. He argues that in order to reconstruct their experience, put into context and reflect on their lives, anything shorter than 90 minutes seems inappropriate. There is, however, no magical time limit for any single

interview, but it is very important that the length of time is decided upon before the interview begins. This is likely to be dependent upon the length and complexity of the interview schedule. Most of my interviews with students were about 30 minutes, while with teachers they were about 45 minutes.

Interviewing in the United States

Interviews were carried out in five schools across the United States in accordance with the requirements of the University of Tasmania's Social Science Ethics Committee. Seidman (1991) puts the validity of inquiry upfront by implying that 'I interview because I am interested in other people's stories' (p. 1). The interviews facilitated with students and teachers/principals consisted of both open and set questions to maintain the respondent's attention as well as allow each to share their story about learning, teaching and education. Burns (2000, p. 582) suggests that there are numerous strategies for effective interviewing, such as keeping the respondent's attention focused on the task, asking questions in a conversational tone and tape-recording in order to ensure validity, and allowing the interviewer the opportunity to participate in the dialogue as opposed to be focused on note-taking. As interviewer, I needed to be empathically attuned to the participant stories in order to deepen my understanding.

Once the school and teacher/principal were identified by their relationship with teaching for understanding or connection with a leading international educator, I then made initial contact with each participant. This process involved a brief informal meeting where the nature of the inquiry was explained, an outline of the type of questions that would be asked was provided and a mutually convenient time was arranged to carry out the interview. This sometimes required several telephone calls to establish contact and then after the interview, the time to transcribe and seek verification by the respondent. This was a time-consuming but necessary process. Seidman (1991) recognises some of the cautions of interviewing as involving: the amount of time required, sometimes money, and an acknowledgement that the inquirer has to establish access and make contact with participants, interview, transcribe the data, and then work with acquired information and make meaning of the data (Seidman 1991, p. 5).

Despite these implied cautions, interviewing as used in a qualitative approach recognises and affirms the need for the approach, in this case, with me as inquirer. Interviewing was one approach to collecting information throughout this inquiry. Others included classroom observations using a schedule, literature review, self-reflection and writing letters. In fact, my unique stories and accounts of my own experiences related to empathic intelligence and

leadership are incorporated to strengthen the inquiry process. Reeves (2006) suggests that stories are a powerful tool for engaging people emotionally and intellectually and for leading them into the future. My stories, shared throughout this dissertation, allow for a level of engagement for the writer and for the reader.

How I framed the United States interviews

Data gathered in the United States primarily investigated the four superordinate behaviours of empathic intelligence: enthusiasm, engagement, expertise and empathy (Arnold 2005). The semi-structured questions (see Appendices A and B) were used as an instrument with both teachers and students and sought to collect information about the beliefs, values and practices of the participants. The semi-structured interview schedules were organised around 10 questions with biographical data as part one of the interview, and perceptions as part two.

The questions to teachers/principals

The questions asking teachers/principals for simple biographical data were:

1 What is your position at this school?

2 How long have you been teaching? How long have you been at this school?

The other eight questions to teachers are grouped below according to which of the four superordinate behaviours of empathic intelligence the questions focused on.

Empathy

4 Everyone has unique personal attributes. I was wondering if you could discuss your personal attributes or intra-personal qualities within the classroom.

a) Which of these personal attributes do you believe assist you in your teaching?

b) Can you explain how you arrived at this reason?

c) How do you know if these attributes contribute to students' deep understanding?

d) Of these attributes how did they develop?

9 Can you tell me about the classroom environment in which you teach? Particularly in relation to teaching for deep understanding. (While I asked participants this question, I found that 'deep understanding', a familiar concept to Tasmanian teachers, is not as familiar as I expected in US schools.)

Engagement

5 How do know if students are engaged in the classroom?

6 What sorts of signs do you look for in students to gauge if they are engaged and attuned within your classroom?

7 Do you believe your personal attributes/behaviours assist your capacity to engage students in your classroom?

   a) How do you know?

Expertise

3 I would be interested in hearing about why you decided to pursue teaching as a career. Can you tell me why you decided to pursue a career in teaching?

8 Do you consider yourself an effective teacher?

   a) What sorts of behaviours do effective teachers possess?

Enthusiasm

9 Can you tell me about the classroom environment in which you teach? Particularly in relation to teaching for deep understanding.

10 Okay, you have been very helpful. Are there any other thoughts or comments you would like to share with me to help me understand your teaching and particularly your intra-personal behaviours? Anything you would like to add?

Participants were also told of the five key intentions of this inquiry, that is to:

1 unfold an understanding of empathic intelligence informed by Arnold (2005);

2 explore how empathic intelligence might be functioning and understood in a Tasmanian High School;

3 use these understandings to unfold a concept of effective leadership at a range of levels in the Tasmanian system;

4 reflect upon how I might extend my ability as an empathic leader; and

5 critique and deepen the theory of empathic intelligence (Arnold, 2005).

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with teachers/principals and students, each having a separate set of questions (see, Appendices A and B). Both sets allowed participants to answer openly, within a framework designed to assist with cross-analysis and interpretation. All interviews were audio-taped and conducted in a quiet place outside the

classroom (such as in a library, an empty classroom or a quiet office). In meeting with teachers, I was able to establish rapport quickly through conversation about their school. Seidman (1991) acknowledges that establishing rapport is very important to interviewing, but expresses caution that this should be channeled from formality not familiarity. He suggests that common courtesies, such as holding a door and not sitting until the person is seated, are invaluable in establishing rapport.

Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 367) suggest that developing a close rapport with respondents opens doors to more informed inquiry. In my interviews, I was able to establish rapport in each school by focusing on conversations about the purposes of my inquiry and discussion about Australia. Each interview involved the use of general and non-directive probes to assist with deepening understanding. Some examples I used included: 'Can you tell me a little more please?' and 'Are there any other points you would like to make?' Reflecting on the pilot interview, I see the initial questions or biographical questions as important in ensuring the respondent was comfortable and able to start the interview without too much probing.

The semi-structured interview questions were broad to allow open-ended responses (see, appendices A and B). The decision to interview teachers/principals, using a semi-structured interview process, was made to support teachers, as identified by their supervisors, with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. Schools were selected in a purposive manner, as stated earlier, based on links to key educational inquirers in the United States.

Being the sole interviewer within this inquiry is seen a positive way of assisting with the internal consistency of interviewing. All transcripts of interviews were sent to each participant to ensure all information was an accurate account of the interview. Only one interview per participant was carried out, largely due to time restrictions. Seidman's (1991) three-step interview would have provided greater depth of responses over a spaced period of time. Learning from this experience, future interviews could follow a three-step approach, rather than a one-off interview. Data was interpreted in consultation with other inquirers (supervisors) to assist with analysis and interpretation. More than one person analysing the data assists with credibility and believability of interpretations (Burns 2000).

Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview, which assisted future directions of the inquiry. Hatch (2002) suggests that transcribing and analysing data as soon as the inquiry unfolds, while it takes time, can increase the chances of finding major gaps in the data set. Information was returned to each participant for verification either in person as a

print version or through email. It is also important to note that analysis occurs in, rather than solely just after, data generation.

To ensure trustworthiness, through member-checking, data was transcribed verbatim from each interview and provided to each participant within one week to read to verify that it represented a true and accurate account of the interview. Transcripts were verbatim accounts of the interviews, except that fillers (e.g. 'um', 'er', 'hmm', 'you know') were deleted so transcripts could be read more fluently. Seidman (1991, p. 88) suggests that interviewers who transcribe their own tapes can come to know their interviews better.

Design of the semi-structured interviews – a critique

My inquiry in the United States was designed to reflect on my values and experiences as an educator and school principal. The purpose of exploring my values and experiences was to develop an awareness and understanding of the tacit influences on behaviour and perceptions, in order to moderate those influences if necessary. My interviews in the United States were designed to understand the ways individuals construct empathic intelligence in their lives within school settings. While I was new to each participant, I was not necessarily foreign, as I could relate to many of the stories told and examples given.

As my inquiry evolved, I continued to learn through each experience. Part of developing rapport and allowing respondents the opportunity to answer questions honestly and in a supportive context requires careful consideration of questions. Seidman (1991 p. 63) implies that depending on how questions are phrased, semi-structured interviewing can provide insight by allowing the inquirer to gain a picture of reality. Oppenheim (1999) supports this notion, suggesting that when interviewers ask what something was like for participants, they are given the chance to reconstruct their experience according to their own sense of what is important. Lather (1994) when discussing interviews, suggests that the focus is on the development of a mutual, dialogic production of multi-voice, multi-centred conversation. Accordingly, the interview questions (shown on pp. 44–45) allowed each participant the opportunity to describe and reconstruct their own experiences and permitted the framing of possibilities rather than limiting participants into working with single responses.

This chapter has discussed interview as strategy. Interviewing can take many forms and serves many purposes. As a qualitative inquirer, I am interested in people's stories and their experiences. Interview as method allowed me to reflect on and critique my own pilot. As one source of data-gathering within my own inquiry, the semi-structured interview as method has

allowed me the opportunity to capture a picture of each school class, teacher and the perceptions of students. The crystallisation involved with gathering data from these interviews from teachers/principals and students, has allowed participants the opportunity to 'tell their story', which continues to be a critical part of providing insight into the inquiry questions and into my own meanings and understandings. The participant stories become, in an important sense, part of my story. Future interviews use the reflections from this process and aim to build stories that are deep and valuable. As Jalongo (1992, p. 69) suggests, 'stories about teaching enable us to organise, articulate, and communicate what we believe about teaching and to reveal, in narrative style, what we have become as educators'. Certainly the stories and reflections are shaping my self-concept as leader.

CHAPTER 5

Writing letters as strategy

Introduction

This chapter utilises reflective practices and writing for inquiry to understand my leadership style (Richardson 2000; Clandinin & Connelley 2000; Ewick & Silbey 1995). Reflective practice is defined as 'a means for engaging in professional activity, or even as the very essence of professional activity' (LaBoskey 1994, p. 6). To help me understand reflective practice, I suggest that 'inquiry' and 'leadership' are essential to each other. In this way I can combine my busy schedule as a school principal with my tertiary studies. Hence, I focus this through four guiding questions (Blythe & Assoc. 1998) related to the use of narrative inquiry. Each question provides a gateway to developing my own leadership capacity by unlocking and opening personal experiences using narrative (Van Manen 1997). The narratives are in the form of excerpts from fictional letters, which also represent a dialogue with key leaders.

The four guiding questions underpinning this chapter are:

1. How is narrative inquiry understood?
2. How do others use narrative inquiry?
3. How might I use narrative inquiry, such as letters, to contribute to my inquiry and my self-understanding?
4. How might writing, constructed as letters, contribute to deepen my understandings?

In this chapter I use five key words:

Reading I understand reading as the process of looking at and understanding written or print text. This is often referred to in narrative as reader response theory (Miall 2004; Miall & Kuiken 2002; Davis et al. 2000).

Interpreting I understand interpreting as a way of giving meaning to something (Radnor 2001).

Inquiring I understand inquiring as a process involving some type of investigation, reflection on and about ideas, questions and puzzles (Llewellyn 2002; Richardson 2000; Davis et al. 2000).

Writing I understand writing as a process to communicate my thinking and interpreting (Richardson 2000; Banks & Banks, 1998; Goldberg 1986).

Reflecting I understand reflecting to be a quiet, contemplative process where considerable and deliberate thought occurs (Davis et al. 2000; LaBoskey 1994; Schön 1983).

My own writing and inquiry is my own ongoing professional learning. Powerful professional learning should be long-term and frequent, have a strong school-based component, and enable teachers and school leaders to consider their own teaching in light of inquiry (McLaughlin & Talbert 2001). Modelling an inquiry approach within professional learning that enables ongoing reflection, allows me to look deeply into the daily and weekly actions, strategies and discussions occurring within our local educational community and to pose deep and critical questions (Traver 1998). For me, narrative assists in crystallising my understanding of leadership.

Cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner (1986) describes narrative as one of two distinct and complementary ways in which we order experience. Rather than using *logico-scientifico* inquiry – premised on logical proof, tight analysis and hypothesis driven discovery – use of narrative inquiry allows inquirers to focus on good stories that convince through likeliness. As an educational leader in a large rural high school I have responsibility for 400 students and 50 staff. I consider it important to model highly effective leadership practices to ensure achievement for all school community stakeholders.

Narrative inquiry is an approach that is not just about eliciting accounts that may be produced as text. Rather, what distinguishes narrative inquiry from discourse analysis and content analysis, for example, is the focus on narratives and stories told, implicitly or explicitly. To me, narrative can be understood as a story, having a beginning, middle and end. Narrative has emotional resonance and allows me to reflect internally on my thoughts and feelings. Stories which are told either by individuals or groups of people are critical to this process (Ospina & Dodge 2005). Accordingly, there are at least five essential characteristics of narrative inquiry:

1. They are accounts of characters and selective events which occur over time, each having a beginning, middle and end.

2 They are retrospective interpretations of chronological events from a specific perspective.
3 They focus on human intention and action, in this case the narrator/author as well as others.
4 They are part of the process of constructing identity.
5 They are co-authored by narrator and audience (Ospina & Dodge 2005, p. 145).

While Ospina and Dodge (2005) list five characteristics underpinning narrative inquiry, one of the limitations of their research is the fact that they fail to acknowledge the concept of emotional resonance. Ospina and Dodge's (2005) list, I believe, is incomplete because one of the key features of narrative inquiry is the significant place it allows for emotions to be expressed and modulated through story.

Weinbaum et al. (2004) suggest that although inquiry is an important part of the investigative process, reflection is not always built in. Reflection demands that teachers and school leaders avoid making immediate judgments about data under consideration, but rather take time to describe, analyse and interpret from a range of perspectives 'what is there' (p.18). I use reflection as a way of inquiring to assist me in looking-back on decisions and processes. Specifically, the key narratives I use are letters that enable me to reflect on my thinking and interpreting.

Inquirers use narratives in different ways in order to understand and answer questions. Ewick and Silbey (1995) concur with this thinking and suggest that all inquiry reports are accounts of the process and results of an inquiry and, as such, represent narratives authored by the inquirer. Within my inquiry I use narrative as a strategy to obtain meaningful information (thoughts and feelings) about my own leadership practice with a particular emphasis on empathic intelligence and leadership. The fictional letters allow me to deeply reflect on both empathic intelligence and my own leadership. They allow me to engage in a fictional role as an author creating my own identity and to create that important quality of crystallisation discussed earlier. Here I make the assumption that the use of stories conveys meaning about the world, in this case my own leadership through reflections. Ospina and Schall (2001) suggest that an inquirer may elicit stories about how people can understand leadership processes in an organisational context.

The epistemology and ontology of practice

Postmodernism and the psychology of practice have been the focus of two separate developments within educational inquiry, neither having any significant, direct influence on the other (Polkinghorne 1992). The psychology of practice emerges through the various performances and conversations of skilled practitioners about what they have found to be helpful to their professional practice. The psychology of practice helps me to understand narrative. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) imply that expert knowledge is dynamic and generates context-dependent understanding; this knowledge resonates with the concept of constructivism. Although there has been much debate as to the definition of an expert practitioner (Berliner 1994), there appears inquiry to support the notion that reflection is central to expertise (Schön 1983).

Reflective teachers are viewed as those who use new problems as opportunities to expand their knowledge and expertise (Sternberg & Horvath 1995). Although Berliner (1994, p. 167) states that 'experts rarely appear to be reflective about their performances', other scholars such as Hattie (2003) and Williamson (1994) refer to the larger, better-integrated stores of facts and experiences upon which experts can draw. These facts and experiences allow experts to reflect more richly in comparison to novices. Supporting this notion, Schön (1983) suggests that the capacity to reflect on action in order to engage in a process of continuous learning was one of the most defining characteristics of professional practice.

How I understand narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the process of gathering information for the purpose of inquiry through storytelling. With this information, the inquirer writes a narrative of the experience. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that the study of narrative is the study of the ways in which humans experience the world. In other words, people's lives consist of stories. Field notes, interviews, journals, letters, autobiographies, and orally told stories are all methods of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry can be viewed primarily as a process of interpreting and making meaning from experiences, as well as a way of sharing, a way of knowing and of deepening learning into a particular phenomenon such as leadership. Weinbaum et al. (2004, p. 148), suggest that when an inquiry stance is adopted, for example, to deepen understanding of my school context, there are a few basic questions. Each of these questions will underpin my own reflections as the processes that structure the inquiry, these being: Why do I do what I do? Why do I do it in the way I do it? How might I do it better? And how might others see and interpret what I do?

Narrative inquirers do not just construct meaning of the situation by reflecting on the past. There will be times where an inquirer, using narrative might ask, 'How might others see and interpret what I do?' This question will allow the inquirer to reflect on experiences, scaffold experiences and stories from much earlier times and then think about their actions. Clandinin and Connelley (2000) resonate with this notion suggesting that narrative inquirers operate in a 'three-dimensional narrative inquiry space' (p. 49). This space provides a framework where inquirers can travel inward/outward, backward/forward as well as being situated within a place.

Within the inward-outward dimension, the term *inward* refers to those internal conditions such as feelings, hopes, and moral dispositions. *Outward* refers to existential conditions, namely the environment. An examination of the backward–forward dimension looks at temporality such as the past, present and future (Clandinin & Connelley 2000). The third dimension 'place' provides entry into the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes. For me, I understand the term 'inward' meaning the feelings I have when I reflect, 'outward' meaning a school environment and its ambience. The terms 'backward' and 'forward' represent temporal location of the narrative (Eakin 1999). Finally, I interpret place as the specific physical place I am writing about, usually as a specific location such as in school, my car or another location.

The use of narrative inquiry within the three-dimensional space, allows me, as inquirer to become somewhat clearer as I learn about myself from the past, the present and the future. I understand narrative to mean writing interpretive stories, fictionalised letters. At the most basic level, a story is a story because of a plot, structure and temporality. Given the concept of three-dimensional space, it seems apparent that the use of narrative provides a framework for understanding ourselves and others. Telling stories allows us to author our lives. It is often these transformative moments that provide a sense of understanding ourselves and others.

I use fictionalised letters as a key to my inquiry. Rethinking and retelling narratives of myself in a particular situation allows me to experience deeper feelings (Eakin 1999). The process of writing fictionalised letters places me in a space that allows deep reflection, in both mind and body. It is in this space that I am able to experience a sense of kinaesthetic harmony. Flow or 'autotelic' refers to a state of high focus on the activity with which the individual is engaged. There are a number of characteristics of such experiences, including a whole body experience allowing an individual to not only to think about the experience but

also to internally feel the experience. This state of experiencing such a feeling is referred to as a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Eakin 1999).

The flow experience

Given that narrative inquiry provides a great vehicle to make meaning of a situation, to tell and retell stories from a three-dimensional landscape, it follows that we reflect on those positive experiences that can lead to an inner sense of satisfaction. While there will always be situations, events and experiences that individuals, upon reflecting, think could have been carried out differently, there are many optimal experiences. These are situations where we feel good and seek similar experiences through other future experiences. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests that everything we experience, joy or pain, interest or boredom is represented in the mind as information. He posits a theory that the optimal state of inner experience is one in which there is order and consciousness, when psychic energy is invested in realistic goals. He calls this 'flow'.

To seek this goal to experience 'flow' an individual must concentrate on the task at hand and momentarily forget about everything else. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) further suggests that these periods of struggling to overcome challenges are among the most enjoyable times in one's life. Whether a person is working on an assembly line in a factory performing day-to-day mundane tasks, it is possible for that worker to experience 'flow' through this process. However, this rests in activities that balance skill levels and challenge. Without this, either frustration or boredom can set in. For me, a sense of flow was experienced when I was writing the fictionalised letters.

I suggest that goals can be defined and a commitment made when an individual reflects. Narrative inquiry has great potential as a vehicle for an inquirer to experience 'flow'. Narrative inquiry can support an individual experience a feeling of 'flow'. Ospina and Dodge (2005) suggest that narratives can be used in different ways to advance the agendas of an inquirer. One agenda may be to use narratives to collect meaningful information about a topic of interest, using in-depth interviews and analysing stories collected. The assumption here is that stories elicit meaning about a phenomenon. Another contrasting agenda is that narratives can be used to express underlying, taken for granted assumptions that people hold about themselves and situations. For me, using stories in the form of fictionalized letters, as a way of eliciting meaning from a situation, provides the lens to inquire about experiences and 'flow' moments which assists me to understand my own leadership.

Unlike quantitative analysis where inquirers specify hypotheses to be tested through inquiry, narrative inquiry serves a different purpose. The exploration and interpretation within narrative inquiry happens from day to day, week to week and over many years as narratives are told, retold, and purposes and interpretations shift. It seems that narrative inquiry is a fluid process, constantly evolving, like ourselves. Clandinin and Connelley (2000) suggest that to become an integral part of the inquiry process, the inquirer must be in the environment long enough to be able to ask questions and to tell and retell stories. In my role as a school Principal, I always seek to build relationships within the school community. Relationships which are built on trust and honesty, where being a part of the landscape allows me the opportunity to ask questions, seek understanding and reflect by telling and retelling stories. Such relationships also allow me to draw more voices into the narratives of the school and its community. The attributes of trust and honesty are important and as such can deepen the definition of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005).

The letters that I construct can only be a partial representation of my understanding. As each letter evolves over time, so do my experiences with others, including parents, students, staff and community members. Within Tasmania, my position as principal lends a status of positional power. This may result in particular responses to me and my work and only accessing partial truths. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) suggest that while acknowledging the power/truth dilemma, as inquirers we cannot know absolutely and that truth can simply be equated with an effect of power. As a principal, my interpretations of my observations may not reflect a true representation of the context; participants may behave and respond in a manner which they believe they perceive a principal would like them to respond.

This sense of deep reflection, of imagining and internalising how someone else would respond is meaningful and connects me to my inner thoughts and feelings. Duignan (2002) refers to a term *gravitas*, which he suggests connects individuals to the inner wisdom built from experiences. Duignan (2002) suggests that length of experience is no substitute for depth of experience. Where depth of experience constitutes 'inner wisdom' for leaders, he suggests *gravitas* reflects the degree to which leaders reflect on, critique and even agonise over the meanings, implications and possible applications of their experiences. *Gravitas* 'engages with the ethical and moral dimensions of life as well as the cognitive, factual and rational' (2002, p. 8). Using narrative enables me to develop and appreciate *gravitas* and *flow*. Pleasingly, *gravitas* and *flow* provide a nuancing of significant aspects of empathic intelligence, including self-understanding as the necessary precursor for understanding others.

The narratives we tell are a representation of ourselves (Eakin 1999). We present others from our own stance and interpretations. The reader can attribute meaning to the characters and interpret them in the ways they are presented. Within the social science disciplines the use of narrative inquiry provides a lens for making meaning. In a political sense, narrative has been used to inquire into how populations generally are seen to be passive, to help understand the process of political development (Barone 2000).

The use of stories provides both the inquirer and reader with the opportunity to make meaning from a situation. Bruner (1986) advances a view that stories provide a way of knowing and have knowledge in them. For me, stories have embedded layers of meaning and affect created through chracterisation, the recording of events and the patterning of themes. In fact, a good story or article in the newspaper can draw my thinking inward, allowing me to draw similarities with the key concepts and my own experiences. As a principal, I use story telling as a way of educating students and staff on a key theme or issue. For example, rather than suggest that pride in a school is important because of public image and ownership of the school, I can tell a story at an assembly with a key concept as the focus. The process of my inquiry involves asking guiding questions allowing the audience to make meaning within our own school context. The types of stories I tell as principal – fables, parables, moral tales (including the use of significant people) that are important in my work – will be important in my inquiry. The other clever quality of stories is that they can be quite subtle in their meaning, and covertly didactic rather than heavy-handedly didactic.

Richardson (2000) articulates a process of inquiry that departs from standard social science practices, offering an additional and alternative inquiry approach. She articulates a number of approaches to writing; two of these, which are briefly discussed, are *metaphor* and *writing format*. Metaphor, a literary device, can be viewed as the backbone of social science writing. The use of comparison or analogy provides the reader the opportunity to make connections and deepen their understanding. Writing format refers to the structure inquirers use to establish their credentials in the introductory section and body of the text with appropriate referencing throughout (Richardson 2000, p. 928).

My inquiry uses a combination of structured writing and metaphor to tell my story, to write my letters. End-of-week reflection on events and experiences and evolving experiences deepen my understanding of both leadership and empathic intelligence. Polkinghorne (1992) suggests that experienced and expert practitioners create a body of knowledge, which primarily takes the form of cognitive patterns and models that are derived from practitioners own insights. This helps me understand narrative because it is here where I can construct my

own reflections as a cognitive model of my experiences. I can recall a situation when I was teaching a student with challenging behaviours and by drawing on my own experiences and reflections I was able to create a safe and supportive environment, leading to behaviour development. These insights can result through understanding of human behaviour as well as theories and models learned from exemplary experience.

Approaches to narrative inquiry

There are a number of approaches to narrative inquiry. Each is complex and clearly articulates the necessary creation of field texts where there is a direct relationship between inquirer and participant. Field texts need to be routinely and rigorously maintained. For me, my field texts include a reflective diary of my work as principal. The field of narrative inquiry allows the inquirer the opportunity to tell stories which may lead to change. Clandinin and Connelley (2000) suggest that field texts and notes need to be complemented by other narratives such as journal entries and inquiry entries. In my case, I use excerpts from fictionalised letters of my experiences as a teacher and leader in Tasmania to reflect on leadership and empathic intelligence. Within Clandinin and Connelley (2000), a case study is cited where an inquirer uses a three-dimensional narrative inquiry with great success. In this inquiry there was a definitive temporal shift from childhood, first teaching experiences to current participant observation inquiry.

This case involved a neat transition from childhood to current day teaching and reflection. Each phase involved the inquirer moving back and forward temporally for each participant. In phase one of the inquiry project the inquirer's autobiography has a temporal sweep. Phase two of the inquiry involved participants studying memory relationships over time. While in phase three, the participant observation study was compiled as a three-year study, where participants were engaged in autobiographical reflective discussions that took them, individually, across time (Clandinin & Connelley 2000, p. 97).

The field texts used within the study included: teacher stories, autobiographical writing, inquiry journals, oral histories, family stories, field notes, conversations, inquirer letters to participants, participant letters, stories of families, and documents. Each helped shape my own thinking and reflecting. Each assisted in the deepening of my own understandings throughout my writing.

Clandinin and Connelley (2000) provide a great account of each of these approaches within narrative inquiry. Each provides the inquirer with some strategies and tools to reflect and

acquire rich information to assist in deepening understandings. I will briefly discuss each of these as worthy strategies (Clandinin & Connelley 2000).

Teacher stories: one of the first things narrative inquirers do is to position themselves 'in the midst', writing stories about one's own experience is one way of achieving this positioning.

> May 2005: This week I was sitting at the back of the class in B block. Students appeared very noisy in Miss Fox's lessons this week. Perhaps something was not right, maybe a new topic or a new approach to learning. Mathew and Nathan appeared unsettled, agitated and behaving in a way to call for teacher attention. They turned and saw me sitting in the class, slowly turning, whispering something to each other, their behaviour improved. I wondered what they said, I wonder if they were thinking about changing their behaviour because the Principal was in the back of the room, the consequences, or to focus on their learning. Today I thought I should resist the temptation to make comment, to support the teacher by taking notes on the lesson. I wonder what the students Mathew and Nathan were thinking today, to change their behaviour. I wonder how they will behave in the next class or tomorrow.

Reflecting on this account, it would further deepen my understanding if Miss Fox would agree to journal this lesson. To compare my reflections and journal entries with Miss Fox's would provide a useful comparison.

Autobiographical writing: an example includes poetic writing where the inquirer can write about the whole context of a life. While a story is a very small slice of one's life, autobiographical writing can provide more insight, depending on the self-awareness of the author.

Journal writing and inquiry journals: writing daily journals provides an opportunity for teachers and leaders to document experiences and feelings. The author needs to trust whomever reads the journal. If the journal is for the purposes of self development/reflection, then an individual is likely to be fully open to writing feelings in an open and confident manner. However, if the audience moved to be one of colleagues, then depending on the trust between the author and the reader, the journal entry may not be a full and accurate account of events and experiences. An example of my first day as principal of a large high school can be expressed as a journal entry, often used to reflect on issues and events of the day.

> Feb 14, 2005: I remember arriving at school ready for the first day with all staff. Today was different to the previous weeks as the whole staff was in the one place at the one time. Today everything I said would be monitored, so too the way I

> walked and interacted with staff. I was careful and methodical in the way I had planned the day and clear to ensure that all interactions with teaching and non-teaching staff were positive and genuine.
>
> The staff meeting at 9:00 sent a shudder up my spine; this would be the biggest and most important start to my principalship in this school. I knew it wasn't the content on the data show PowerPoint presentation that they would be taking in, rather how I talked, how knowledgeable I seemed and how I came across to the staff. I could hear the questions staff would have internally prior to the meeting, with my knowledge of summer events and my appointment.

Questions such as:

He is a young principal I wonder if he will cope in our environment.

Hope he doesn't want to come in here and change everything, I wonder if he thinks we need to change?

Here we go, another outsider who is loaded with educational jargon, this means little to me, and this may be an interesting year?

At last we have someone who can listen to our voices and hopefully we can move forward, how will I know where I fit in his new plans?

> After the presentation a colleague said to me, 'That was excellent, I think staff would really be feeling positive now'. This put my mind at ease and slowed my heart rate, the start of a long journey but the first hurdle was over. I remember walking through the school later that day, at the end of the day when all staff had gone home for the day, looking at the internal structures of the school. Thinking to myself that there is so much work ahead of me as Principal here ... Then I looked and thought about the possibilities, the vision and what the school and ambience could look like in three years time. I closed my eyes and thought about a school where staff were all happy, students relating in purposeful ways with their peers and staff, where the physical environment was pleasant and refreshed ... Thinking about the school as a mirror of community and thinking about the possibility of not only leading a school through transformation into the future but equally contributing to the community transformation. The one-hour drive home to Launceston that evening, in daylight, was pleasant, looking outward across the green paddocks of the countryside I was happy and accepting of the position. Knowing that there will be days and travel where there will be hurt and disappointment today was a good day and each day brings a new opportunity. Will I feel the same in 4 weeks? In 4 months? In 4 years? I hope so, challenges bring opportunities and opportunities bring the capacity to be successful and to achieve.

Field Notes: in narrative inquiry, field notes provide an important way of recording daily notes, full of the inquiries we have in the field. Combined with journals, field notes provide a reflective balance. Clandinin and Connelley (2000, p. 106) suggest that in narrative inquiry, photographs are often used as a kind of field note. In my own experiences in the United States on a Fellowship, I used digital photographs to keep records of schools and individuals

in order to retell the stories of the context, place and space. Letters as field text may also be authored by participants. There was one occasion where taking digital pictures represented for me, two stories, one of an innovative high school, the other of two unique principals. Both these principals remind me of my own learning experiences, passionate and immersed in constantly adapting the school environment to improve student learning outcomes. My thinking resonates with their views on understanding and improving classroom conditions in order to ensure that students feel safe, trusted and valued. I was able to embed their stories, their thinking and their professional dialogue throughout my letter writing.

Conversations: Conversations involve listening. Human interactions involve far more than attending to words spoken – conversations are complex and involve speech patterns, subtle body movements, freedom to explore and mutual improvisation. Sometimes the conversations can be audio-taped or the key concepts can be recorded as a field note or journal entry. More structured conversations lead into interviewing techniques where transcription becomes important. Similarly, conversations with those not normally seen as participants, such as the canteen staff, grounds person, and administration staff, are all important.

Oral history interview: one of the most common approaches in narrative inquiry, ranging from structured questions to simply allowing participant's to tell their own story.

Family stories: passing down across generations about family members and family events.

Documents: there is a range of documents in any field of inquiry. As inquirers we need to ascertain which of all these documents is necessary and relevant to the particular inquiry. Examples include; Government policy documents, school files, emails, media reports, school association reports and minutes and other sources.

All of these examples of narrative inquiry approaches provide a rich source of making meaning of a phenomenon and inquiry topic. In my own study I use a combination of approaches, all of which assist me to construct fictionalised letters to deepen my own leadership and reflective practice.

Crystallisation

Using fictional letters allowed me to synthesise meaning from very disparate sets of data. Some data used to construct the letters were ephemeral, for example, remembered

conversations. Other data were more formal, for example, recorded interview transcriptions. Here, Richardson's (2000) conception of crystallisation is enacted as I draw on many stories and sets of data to data to develop my understandings.

Narrative inquiry and professional learning

Interest in narrative and story was strong in fields such as in the development of methodologies and also in psychology (Bruner 1986). Once anthropologists discovered the use of narrative suited the field work in studying people and places, educational inquirers also started to study schools and teachers onsite (Jackson 1968). Recently in Tasmania there has been some doctoral inquiry where the use of narrative has been the backbone of the dissertation (Moss, 2003). Narrative is like critical biography as explicated by Barone (2000, p. 102). Where he also suggests that we adopt an empowering view of ourselves as willing and able to educate the public through powerfully crafted, accessible stories about school people and the conditions under which we live and work (p. 201).

The workload of a principal of a high school is demanding. There are times when the role of a principal is like an island, alone and isolated. The purpose of using narrative inquiry as a process of making meaning of my own work allows self-reflection, combining inquiry and daily work, which become inseparable and complementary. Murray and Lawrence (2000) recognise that practitioner-based inquiry provides an opportunity for teachers and practitioners to gain a coherent understanding of their own professional practices. Furthermore, viewed in this light, narrative inquiry can provide the vehicle where I and other teachers/leaders may aspire to transform, remodel and recast practices and experiences in order to achieve personal goals that are known and clearly expressed.

Like all inquiry approaches, narrative does have its critics. For me, using narrative inquiry has great power as it allows me to reflect on and interpret my experiences. Because there are no single causes, nothing predictable, open-endedness permeates all information. Conle (2000) acknowledges this open-endedness, but also suggests that an inquirer or writer is driven to understanding the whole picture; this involves tensions between the particular and our desire to generalise. The concept of tension is important, on one hand there is tension in the way an audience is considered, on the other hand there is tension as we reflect internally. Duignan (2003) suggests that the tensions that are inherent in many leadership challenges today call for qualities, mindsets and dispositions which help leaders form creative frameworks for choice and action that transcend competencies and management skills. While

tensions are important to acknowledge, I particularly like the way Wolcott (1973) uses inquiry to deepen his own understanding and reflect on his position as principal. His use of script, discussion and reflection is a neat insight into his own inquiry and one which I model in my own context.

Clandinin and Connelley (2000) acknowledge the importance of recognising tensions which exist in narrative inquiry. Specifically, they suggest that inquirers using narrative cannot focus too heavily on literal voice and trying to capture our experience with participants. Rather, they suggest that as an inquirer it is important to consider the audience and sense of meaning the inquiry might have for them. It becomes apparent that a narrative inquiry should not focus too heavily on the past, on the field or texts. Rather, inquirers must also consider the future, the audience and social and personal implications of the work. In my inquiry, by focusing on my experiences from within the United States and as a leader of a rural high school, I reflect not only to the experiences of the moment, but also the audience of the inquiry and the political, educational and social impact the inquiry may have on them.

Clandinin and Connelley (2000) suggest that narrative inquiry allows personal understanding by the use of voice from participants. Using narrative inquiry, the writing of fictionalised letters as a formal strategy, one where readers can see the key concepts, rather than a reductionist approach where narrative can be reduced to themes. An inquirer should be able to balance one's own voice with the voices of participants.

Readers may ask the question, how do I know what I am reading is real and not a fictional story? My stories are fictional; they are constructed on my interpretations of observations, interviews and personal reflection from my own experiences. As inquirer, my stories are a way of sharing my deepest feelings to unlock my inner capabilities, which sometimes can be restricted by habitual ways of thinking and doing. Duignan (2004), in discussing leadership formation, states that, 'A challenge for all organisational members is to create conditions that foster mutual growth and creativity' (2004, p. 11). My own creativity has been enhanced by the story-telling technique. Ellis and Bochner (2000) further suggest that stories can give life a structure it does not have, and, therefore fictionalise life. Atkinson (1997) also has reservations around the use of story, suggesting that if a writer becomes a storyteller rather than a story analyst then the goal becomes therapeutic rather than analytic. In my inquiry, I appreciate and acknowledge the therapeutic possibilities of narrative.

Despite these criticisms, story and the use of narrative provides a way of attempting to mirror the events of life. Stories provide inquirers the tool to rearrange, redescribe, invent,

omit and also revise life's experiences. Van Manen (1990) suggests that unlike quantitative analysis, the human science involves description, interpretation and self-reflection as we try to understand our lived experiences. Personal narrative provides me with an opportunity to tell and retell stories from my own life, to reflect on the memories of the past and to anticipate possibilities of the future. Ellis and Bochner (2000) provide a neat description of the big questions and opportunities that inquiring though narrative provides:

> So the question is not, 'Does my story reflect my past accurately?' as if I were holding a mirror to my past. Rather I must ask, 'What are the consequences my story produces? What kind of a person does it shape me into? What new possibilities does it introduce for living my life?' The crucial issues are what narratives do, what consequences they have, to what uses they can be put (Ellis & Bochner 2000, p. 746).

Qualitative inquiry although having its critics and its limitations, underpins this inquiry. As the nature of my inquiry aims to make meaning from students and teachers experiences, I seek understanding of people's experiences and interactions with their own world. I see the construction of meaning from people's experiences in schools resonating with constructivism. My letters allow me to interpret and scaffold my own understandings. Polkinghorne (1992, p. 150) suggests that human knowledge is not a mirrored reflection of reality, rather a construction built from cognitive processes and interactions with the world of others and self. Knowledge and understanding is socially constructed through the many interactions and interpretations that I experience every day.

As I progress through refining my inquiry questions, each within the broad areas of leadership and empathic intelligence, I ponder how the story may evolve. The experience from within the United States where considerable inquiry was carried out in five schools provides a platform. Principals and teachers interviewed and observed form part of the characters within my letters, I see myself as a key central character throughout each letter, reflecting on experiences within each of these classrooms and schools as well as in my current role as principal. Using narrative and the many forms of data gathering, my fictional letters are constructed.

Summary

Section B has discussed narrative inquiry in considerable detail. The use of narrative inquiry resonates with the process of reflection and professional development. As a school principal and inquirer it makes sense to combine the two, where both practice and inquiry compliment each other and provide a crystallisation of my own experiences and understandings. The

term crystallisation is used here, rather than triangulation, as making meaning does not always result from a rigid, fixed, three-dimensional process of pin-pointing a single position. This chapter suggests narrative inquiry as operating in three-dimensional space, inward and outward, backward and forward and in place.

Crystals themselves are three-dimensional, they grow, change, alter and refract within themselves. They create multi colours and patterns depending on the directions in which one looks. Crystallisation provides me as inquirer an opportunity to acknowledge that there is no single truth, topics are complex and deep (Richardson 2000). Narrative inquiry provides a special opportunity through which I can crystallise my experiences and deepen my understanding as I strive to do my best, as a leader, inquirer and person, seeking greater insight into the what, why and how of my experiences and interactions and their effects on others. I see this as trying to experience inner feelings where mind and body are in harmony, in 'flow' and in 'gravitas'. In the inquiry the conception of crystallisation is enacted through fictional letter writing and the re-interpretation of these letters to develop empathic leadership through self-transformation.

Introduction to Section C
Interpreting my inquiry

The interviews conducted have been interpreted as a series of letters. Having discussed inquiry as a process and narrative as a strategy in sections A and B, the next four chapters in this section will be shaped using a series of letters. The effective and creative use of imagined letters serves as a process for responding to the intentions of the inquiry. Each of Chapters 6,7, 8 and 9 focuses on a series of letters between me as principal of a Tasmanian high school, and four other principals, with whom I formed a strong professional friendship described in Chapter 2.

These fictionalised letters are a process for representing and interrogating my own understandings through imagined dialogue with other professional principals. They are a way for me to unfold my questions and to synthesise my understandings of empathic leadership and to reveal new questions that might interrogate my understanding. There is a tradition of developing imagined documents and recollections as a form of narrative inquiry, such as *testimonio*. Beverley (2000, p. 555) defines *testimonio* as 'a novel or novella-length narrative, produced in the form of a printed text, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events she or he recounts'. Each of the letters crystallises understandings from disparate data sets and provokes new questions. Each of the letters links my experiences in the United States to my local context. Finding connections between my context and the United States contexts is a powerful way of deepening my understandings of empathic leadership. Each of the following chapters deals with one of the four superordinate domains of empathic intelligence: Chapter 6, enthusiasm; Chapter 7, expertise, Chapter 8 engagement; and Chapter 9, empathy.

Each chapter has a similar structure. Each begins with a quote from a relevant theorist. Each has a brief discussion of the superordinate domain addressed in the letters. Each chapter then has four letters from me to a United States professional friend. The first of the four letters is

an introduction to a problem or issue related to the domain being explored. Letters two and three in the sequence are about strategies I am trying, or intending to try, to address empathic leadership issues. The fourth letter in the series offers a critique, an analysis and new questions about that domain of empathic intelligence being explored. At the end of each chapter, following the four letters, I make some comments, analysis and synthesis of ideas which evidence my deepened understanding of empathic intelligence and leadership. The sequence of letters represent a fictionalised dialogue, a sequenced argument about practice through which I come to understand my ability as an empathic leader and deepen my theorising of empathic intelligence.

Each of the Chapters 6 to 9 has 'excerpts' from letters to particular professional friends in the United States who, through my interviews, I considered to be particularly knowledgeable about one of the superordinate domains of empathic intelligence. Amelia, the principal of Crockett Middle School in Tennessee, focuses on enthusiasm in her letter sequence. Tim, principal of Potter High School in Massachusetts, focuses on expertise; Mike, principal of Oaktree Middle School in Massachusetts, focuses on engagement, and lastly, Frank, principal of Valley Charter School in Massachusetts, writes letters focused on empathy.

In each letter in the series I constantly question the superordinate element being explored. Each letter is reflective and has layered meanings, building on the questions and issues developed in the previous letter. The letters are not written in a way where questions are posed and answers given; rather, what evolves through the letter narratives are new questions and interpretations but also leadership strategies which I might try or have tried. For me, the letter writing process is educative and allows me to interpret and reinterpret my thinking. I share Duignan's (2003) belief that

> The starting point for the formation of a capable authentic leader is personal transformation leading to a deeper understanding of personal values and a passionate conviction about one's capability to make a difference in the lives of all who are connected with them (Duignan 2003, p. 22).

In each letter there may be references to recent literature and studies. Each letter series also addresses a real issue from my school context, enabling me to explore how empathic intelligence might be understood in a Tasmanian high school. Because the letters are fictional, I have excluded the extended salutations, closures and 'dross' of conventional letters. The 'extracts' contain only the body of the conversations.

CHAPTER 6

Enthusiasm: Letters to Amelia

> The curious mind is constantly alert and exploring, seeking material for thought, as a vigorous and healthy body is on the qui vive for nutriment. Eagerness for experience, for new and varied contacts, is found where wonder is found. Such curiosity is the only sure guarantee of the acquisition of the primary facts upon which inference must base itself.
>
> (Dewey 1910, p. 31)

Introduction

In the teaching profession, enthusiasm plays a significant role. One might hear the words, 'She is such an enthusiastic teacher!' or ,'He is always so enthusiastic in the classroom' as evidence of good and valued teaching. But, what does enthusiasm actually mean? What contributes to enthusiasm? Let's begin by drawing out some understandings of the term *enthusiasm.*

Dewey (1910) recognised the significance of enthusiasm. Arnold (2005, p. 22) suggests that 'enthusiasm is a personal energy conveyed to others, is motivated by hope and belief, and is a cousin to passion and desire'. For me, enthusiasm is closely aligned with a feeling of inner happiness; it is a representation of inner experience of connection and happiness. It is difficult to 'define' something which is not easily consciously, 'controlled'. This internal state of happiness and enthusiasm can be understood in happiness as a state of 'flow'. For me, there is a synergy between this interpretation and that of Arnold's (2005). Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 6) suggests that we all have capacity to experience *flow* – an optimal state of inner experience which is 'there as order in consciousness'; he implies that people make a conscious choice to achieve this flow experience. I wonder if we all have the ability to make a conscious choice to be enthusiastic, and to live out this enthusiasm in the classroom. I wonder if enthusiasm is part of the *whole person*, something which is not

consciously always triggered 'on' and 'off', but rather something that emerges from our lived experience and the context that we inhabit. Or, is it a sophisticated combination between these two aspects of being?

Arnold (2005) suggests that 'enthusiasm' may be a superordinate element of empathic intelligence. She suggests that enthusiasm assists us in our relationships with others. I wonder how our relationships with others provoke us into being enthusiastic! What does this mean for my leadership in a Tasmanian high school? It is this need for relatedness/relationship, the need to love and be loved and to care and be cared for that Carl Rogers, Edward Deci and others (Deci & Flaste 1995, p. 88) attribute to the 'fully functioning person'. While some early motivation theorists (Freud 1984; Lacan 1979) focused on the sex drive as a strong motivator, Deci and Flaste (1995) argue that what was neglected in their theorising was the psychological desire for relatedness.

The letters in this chapter – between me and a principal of Crockett Middle School in the United States – focus on the concept of enthusiasm. Each letter builds sequentially upon the previous letter and the ideas about enthusiasm it represents. The letters offer layers of thoughts and threads related to enthusiasm, and provide an analysis of other possible attributes which may strengthen empathic leadership. Enthusiasm is the emergent theme throughout the letters, other themes and concepts may emerge to the inquirer.

The Amelia letter sequence: enthusiasm

The first letter in the sequence unfolds some emergent key issues and reflections on enthusiasm and relationships that I pose to Amelia. The second and third letters discuss strategies to put in place, with Amelia guiding my thinking, and further interrogate the idea of enthusiasm as it poses questions for me.

The lens of the letter writing is an examination of enthusiasm, as one superordinate element of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005) and an examination in practice, both from observations in the United States and also here in Australia. My quest is to focus on enthusiasm, although other themes may emerge to the inquirer, and discuss in letter format examples of students and teachers from my experiences in the United States. For me, these experiences assist me to crystallise the thoughts expressed in the letters with my experiences in Tasmania.

Amelia – letter 1

Dear Amelia

I remember with pleasure your enthusiasm for learning, for developing children as learners and your enthusiastic support of your staff. I think your enthusiasm was manifested in many ways; you always had a smile on your face and nothing seemed to worry you!

Unlike me at the moment, it has been an effort for me to maintain my enthusiasm as I walk around my classrooms here at Stafford. I'm having difficulty smiling. I have been walking around my classrooms here in Tasmania lately trying to smile, but because of a few problems, I sometimes have difficulty smiling. When I walk into one particular teachers' classroom, Stuart for example, I am puzzled as to how someone paid a good salary is not enthusiastic about his class and his teaching.

By enthusiastic I mean passionate and motivated to ensure each student achieves to their fullest, energised when a student submits a piece of work or shows a new understanding, being genuinely excited about his students and his role as their teacher.

At the end of one long day Stuart came to see me, duplex photocopier box in hand, claiming it was his marking. Ensuring my back was straight, knees bent and object close to my stomach, I went to shift his box from my table. I expected it to be heavy because he has 28 students in his class. I noticed something strange – the box was incredibly light! This was not the anticipated 28kg of marking I was expecting. 'Stuart, is this your marking for tonight?' he turned around and smiled, 'Yeah, I always take work home to mark.' Compare this with Fiona who also teaches the same grade in our school, drags home a case on wheels full of student work at the end of each week. Each Monday morning I look forward to talking with Fiona, in the staffroom casually sharing snippets of student work she finds intelligent, creative or imaginative.

For me, this is evidence of enthusiasm. How I wish Stuart would gallop into the staffroom one Monday morning, excitedly waving the essay/project of just one student who he thought had extended themselves beyond expectations. This would be a pleasant surprise in comparison to Stuart wandering around long-faced with a half-empty coffee cup.

I am writing because I am not sure how to maintain my enthusiasm with Stuart! Sometimes I would like to strangle him, but I am looking to a more constructive response from you. My initial thoughts are to look at the timetable and have him in a team-teaching and positive mentoring role where he can work alongside and see for himself an enthusiastic teacher. To this end, I am thinking of pairing Stuart with Fiona. Do you have any other ideas that I could try to develop enthusiasm among teachers?

Regards

Steve

Amelia – letter 2

Dear Steve

Developing highly enthusiastic and motivated teams of teachers is not easy. In fact, I would be lying if I said it was. At Crockett Middle School we don't have a full staff of highly enthusiastic teachers either, and I have to admit, we have our own Stuart! What I will say is that whenever all staff are at school we have a belief that enthusiasm is contagious and that we all play a part, then this enthusiasm will in fact resonate with others. In our school, which has a representative cross-section of the Tennessee population, we have to work very hard to get students to submit high quality work, to demonstrate learning and understanding in new and innovative ways, but without a doubt enthusiasm plays a large role.

I enjoyed your description of Stuart, though I hear the deep concerns behind your humour. In fact, in my first few years as principal here at Crockett we also had a teacher who demonstrated such apathy and low-level enthusiasm. This in fact, brings me to an important point, that of understanding if there are any other underlying reasons for the lack of enthusiasm. You might undertake an analysis of Stuart's classroom practice, planning, capacity to develop relationships and so on. Perhaps you should think about a few questions that I had to ask myself when trying to manage a similar situation. In fact, I must say that even though we as a school community invested a lot of energy into our Stuart, in the end he ended up resigning and changing careers. I hope it wasn't that we contributed to his resignation. Rather, in reflecting on the situation, we probably activated the real reason behind his lack of enthusiasm. Given the personal circumstances, teaching at that time of his life was not best for him or the students.

Here are some of the questions we developed to unpack our failing teachers' lack of enthusiasm in the classroom. These may assist you in your thinking about how you might support Stuart.

1. Is his lack of enthusiasm situational or generic? In other words, does he lack enthusiasm in his classroom, in staff meetings with colleagues or both?
2. Is there a place in the school where he is enthusiastic?
3. Has there been a sudden drop in his enthusiasm over the past weeks? months? Perhaps we can discuss his work ethic with his previous principal.
4. What exactly are we measuring his enthusiasm against? What do we mean by an 'acceptable' level of enthusiasm and who is to judge?
5. How can we support grow and stretch his enthusiasm? In fact, can we assist or is it something intrinsic, situational or extrinsic?
6. How does the teacher feel he is performing?
7. Are there any health issues or personal circumstances which are contributing to his lack of enthusiasm?
8. Is performance management an option?
9. Who does he relate well with on staff? Are they a good role model? Would they be prepared to mentor, buddy and support him through this period?

10 Is he happy being a teacher at Crockett Middle School? What are our core values, where does enthusiasm sit within our values and how can we collectively name up the issues, without personalizing this situation so we all share responsibility?

This matrix of questions may provide some clarity and it may be a good starting point for you. This is a sensitive area and there can be some subjective bias involved. I hope you don't mind me asking, but how do you really feel about Stuart? Do you communicate dislike or ambivalence towards him?

I have no doubt that you have read some of the recent literature around teacher expertise and where enthusiasm sits, as this may be important if you are considering performance review. Some of the current literature around enthusiasm, effectiveness and leadership, which in fact you are referring to, teacher-leadership and effective-teaching can be found with Hattie (2003), Berliner (2002), Fullan (2001) and Goleman (1996) to name but a few. In fact, Berliner (1994) postulates that of his 13 prototypic attributes of effective teachers, a display of more passion for teaching was one key. While each of these authors is discussing expertise, it is the enthusiasm that I believe you are interested in.

I would be interested in hearing from you again if you can ascertain the answers or understanding postulated by the questions I have posed. Perhaps after you have greater understanding it may be obvious to you as to the preferred approach. I have deliberately used the word 'preferred' here, rather than 'best', as there may not be a 'best' approach for you, rather one which is natural or seems right at the time. After all, you know the person a lot better than I do.

It is important if you are considering pairing or buddying him with another teacher to ensure that he is comfortable with that teacher and vice-versa, and that the skill mix and personalities are compatible. Stuart must be comfortable receiving honest feedback, and the buddy must be respected by Stuart and able to provide honest feedback which is both supportive and critically constructive. The buddy/mentoring process is powerful but needs to be carefully constructed by you. Perhaps you could use Fiona as an ideal person to mentor Stuart so he can see such an enthusiastic and powerful teacher working in action.

There are, of course, times in a teacher's or leader's life when they do appear to lack enthusiasm. We need to be careful that we don't react too early when we make these observations or inferences, because there are times when people have lots of personal issues, their emotional bucket is full. As leaders and principals, here we are talking of the art of leadership, the art of knowing which level of support and intervention is best, knowing our staff and genuinely caring for our students.

Yours truly

Amelia

Amelia – letter 3

Dear Amelia

Thank you for your honest and lengthy response. Your questions about my professional relationship with Stuart really challenged me. Don't we have to be so careful to reflect on how we might be involved in using empathic leadership? Please excuse my slightly ironic example of Stuart. I really appreciated your feedback on positive interaction and your suggestions about buddying and mentoring according to skill mix and personality. I took your comments onboard but unfortunately this was not as effective as planned as I believe Fiona was feeling overwhelmed. I think it was unfair of me to expect an already effective and busy teacher to take on this mentoring/support role.

Often in schools I see examples of (and can actually say that I am guilty of this myself) placing too much responsibility on those teachers who are highly competent. I am working hard on distributing leadership and stretching mentoring across the school. One of my strong beliefs as a principal is that effective schools require the collective efforts of all, hence our motto; 'Everyone a teacher, everyone a leader and everyone a learner'.

We have both discussed mentoring and coaching in our letters, both implying these are important. As a school we have just implemented the GROWTH coaching model (O'Bree 2003). This coaching process involves identifying a goal, what is happening now with a firm commitment from the person. The acronym GROWTH represents goal, reality, options, will, tactics and habits. I have paired Stuart up with another teacher, Mark, who he likes and talks to socially, who I believe is also a competent and enthusiastic teacher. Because coaching and mentoring is a whole school focus, this mentor pairing provided a natural opportunity for formalise what was a real issue. In fact, classroom observations were something I discussed with all staff and involved role-modeling and 'acting' the coaching process. There is no doubt that Stuart has lost his enthusiasm for teaching.

When Mark approached me one morning, his concerns became obvious and synergistic with my own concerns and understandings. Mark raised information in relation to Stuart's lack of enthusiasm, lack of preparation and task design which appeared disjointed and not engaging or extending students and so on. The issue which was particularly of interest, although part of a whole package, was his apparent lack of genuine passion within the classroom. Some elements of his performance that were identified as of concern include his whole body language and tone of voice, lack of preparation which was clearly below peer expectations. Mark indicated that Stuart rarely smiled with his class, his voice was monotonous and it was as though it was a chore for him to be present in the class.

When I asked Mark if there was anything else I should know about Stuart, such as any changes in his personal life, health and so on there didn't appear to be any change. This lead me to the assumption that Stuart is just unmotivated with his work, but, to me this is unacceptable given the students are watching and the students are not being extended to their potential in the best possible way. So, I decided to reflect on this as I know reflective practice is one key dimension of being an expert (Schon, 1983). Starting with a whiteboard, I brainstormed all the possibilities of support of addressing this issue. Then I realised it is probably best for me to 'name up' the issue with Stuart and have him identify how he thinks we can solve the problem. This strategy relies on Stuart accepting that he has a problem!

Looking at the timetable schedule, I noticed that Stuart had a relatively lighter teaching day on the Wednesday, and thought this would be a good time to talk with him. In setting the 9:00 am meeting, I simply indicated to Stuart that I would like to discuss some educational issues with him, he should bring along his planning and preparation, and we'd have a chat. This provided Stuart with only one day's notice but enough time to start thinking about his responses. In the meeting we discussed the mentoring process and some concerns that had been expressed by some parents and students about his lack of enthusiasm, but more importantly the perceived lack of opportunity for students to achieve to their fullest. To be effective, I asked him how he thought he 'was traveling' as a teacher. We examined his planning and it was here that I indicated that his peers had raised some concerns about his decreased enthusiastic attitude and the fact that they (as well as parents and students) felt that we needed to take some action to address these issues.

During the productive meeting, we identified a few areas which he needed to improve. Stuart acknowledged that he had become stale in his approach to teaching. One of the options we discussed was taking a period of leave or, that we examine his current teaching load and work together to document some strategies. He agreed to trial some of these strategies (including peer observations), and that weekly meetings would be a good starting point, he also indicated that he would be happy for me to formally critique his lessons and he would read professional articles that we felt might be of assistance.

I remember some comments made by teachers in the United States about their reasons for teaching and their genuine enthusiasm. One teacher I observed, Bruce, at Potter High School, was teaching Science. I was amazed by his enthusiasm in the classroom, evident in his planning and the positive effects on students. In one class, rather than just handing out a revision sheet to his students about what they need to learn, he decided to entertain his class by singing – not just any song, but a carefully reworded one that students could recognise, but with the message of revision. In fact, Bruce distributed the words to each member of the class and then started singing. Sitting at the back of the classroom observing Bruce throughout his classes, I noticed him making good eye contact with students, leaning towards students, smiling and showing warmth. He was constantly asking students questions with genuine interest, making hand gestures (thumbs up), displaying a clear sense of humour and laughing. In his classrooms, he displayed not only enthusiasm, but his students had respect for him, he was honest with them, they trusted him and he had developed very powerful relationships with them.

The words of his science song were:

> You don't have to be beautiful to be an or-ga-nis-m,
>
> You just need some cells, baby, to gain life's rhythm,
>
> Don't need experience to respond to stimuli,
>
> Just take in some energy, this will show you how to have a good time,
>
> You don't have to be rich to be alive,
>
> You don't have move to have some jive,
>
> There's no particular time for attitude, I just want you all to know about .....THIS
>
> You go to not get dirty baby when writing hypotheses,

> You can't vary too many (momma), I know about science proceeze,
>
> I want to make an experiment, one variable at a time,
>
> You just leave it all up to me, we'll get data that's just fine
>
> You don't have to be quick to analyze, just have to test to rea-a-lize,
>
> In not particular rhyme with attitude, I just want you all to know about....THIS.

It appeared that Bruce's enthusiasm was contagious. An interview transcript with Nelly, one of his students, confirmed some thoughts I had sitting in his classroom. When asked what she thought of Bruce, her comments resonated with my observations.

> He is just really fun, but he also loves what he does. He makes it pretty clear that he loves what he does. He is enthusiastic about biology, about science altogether. He is really funny, he makes it so that you understand the work (Interview, Nelly, Grade 9 student).

I wonder if this enthusiasm is something that Bruce has learned, practised or a combination of learned and something in his character – perhaps biological or innate. You see, I believe this is part of intelligence (Arnold 2005; Gardner 1983). I noticed at your school this was part of the whole culture. It was as though everyone seemed very happy, energetic and enthusiastic. This was evident in the classrooms, staffroom, corridors and also outside. How did you develop this culture? It appeared a culture built on trust, honesty and relationships. This would be great to assist a teacher like Stuart and also provide a positive way of celebrating the positive contributions of Fiona, but it must take time!

Do you remember the book I purchased in the US titled What the students say about their great teachers? I bought it thinking it was an academic book; however, it is actually a children's book, font size 48! I have broadened my library beyond this and recently read The Children are Watching (Sizer & Sizer 1999), a fascinating read showing how mentoring and support can assist teachers in the school environment, discussed through the eyes of students.

Regards

Steve

Amelia – letter 4

Dear Steve

It sounds as though you have some strategies in place to address the underperforming staff member. I like the enthusiasm of Bruce, singing a song to his class. I know our students are lucky here at Crockett. We have teachers who are so diligent and thorough in their planning so.

It was a good strategy to adopt – naming the issue upfront. Often principals and leaders in school are supportive of their staff they just touch on issues in a delicate way. While I recognise performance is a sensitive issue, I am a strong believer in putting issues 'on the table', discussing them and then working together on a support plan. The fact that you suggested weekly meetings, have worked out a suitable mentor and also guided professional readings will be important. Often we hear that principals' see themselves as highly effective leaders, premised on some clearly defined vision. The processes you are modeling in your own context resonate with the principles of transformational leadership. In fact, Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999, p. 9) describe eight aspects of transformational leadership as: school vision, establishing school goals, provision of intellectual stimulation, individualised support, modeling best practice and organisational values, demonstration of high performance expectations, creation of productive school culture, and the creation of structures to participate in decision-making.

It sounds as though Stuart has committed to listen to feedback and improve his performance. This will need a lot of attention from his mentor and you. To be effective, I believe you must be committed to him not only now but over a period of time. Here at Crockett we developed a clear vision collectively and went as far as documenting, through discussion, several key indicators of performance under several headings, one was effective teaching. This was powerful in that all teachers had collective ownership of what effective teaching looked like and the key indicators, perhaps this is something that you may also consider as a staff. In fact we discussed other areas such as principal leadership, supportive school community, equity, inclusion and community involvement as other emergent issues. You discuss trust, honesty and relationships as being part of our culture and important; there is no doubt that, in my opinion, these must be a core part of every school and certainly something we value. In fact, developing supportive and dynamic teams where enthusiasm can become contagious is part of our focus.

I think it will be a worthwhile exercise to conduct a school audit to ascertain where you are positioned at present and then work together as a school community in identifying areas that need additional support. In relation to the key focus – enthusiasm – my experiences as both a teacher and a principal see this as both innate and able to be developed. Some people to me just are so negative and lack enthusiasm about many things, but what is important is if they are of this appearance across all things in life. I believe that effective teachers are enthusiastic, but also there is a whole range of other attributes that contribute. Some of these include expertise, sense of humour, professionalism, willingness to learn, caring, and love of people to name a few. Of course, relationships are important everywhere in the school context and this is where trust and honesty become equally important.

Having good role models on your staff will be critical, and celebrating the achievements of all staff (teaching and non-teaching) regularly is so important. As you would know, finding time to say 'well done' and 'that's great' means a lot to everyone. I know of one superintendent who gives a 'hats off' award to staff across her district every month. She attends a staff meeting and makes the presentation to a teacher or leader, with some very supportive comments.

It appears that you have a good support model in place and as you support Stuart and all staff there will other avenues to assist with continuing to build on the expertise you will have both as a principal and those on your staff.

Regards
Amelia

Comment

The letters have opened up some emergent issues around enthusiasm, expertise, effective leadership, honesty, trust, relationships, humour and commitment. Another issue discussed in the letters was that of school culture. There is a growing amount of literature around the area of school organisation and restructuring schools. Johnson et al. (1996) suggest that by improving school conditions and restructuring schools it is possible to support individuals, groups and organisational learning. In fact, they suggest that developing professional cultures and creating such things as truly supportive school-based induction programs requires time and money. Changing cultures is one of the hardest tasks. Equally difficult is changing ingrained attitudes.

Examining the concept of organisation further, it is apparent that school capacity is critical to success. Newmann, King and Youngs (2000) suggest that school capacity is a key to success in schools and is underpinned by five components: 1) teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; 2) professional community; 3) program coherence; 4) technical resources; and 5) principal leadership. In fact, rather than asserting that individuals themselves must change professionally, Newmann, King and Youngs (2000) suggest that schools must focus on creating schoolwide professional learning communities. Duignan and Bezzina (2006) further support this thinking, suggesting that today's schools require leadership that is shared and conditions that influence teachers' attitudes to sharing. In their model, 'the key emphasis is on learning together, sharing and creating processes and conditions that encourage everyone in the school community to be effective learning resources for each other' (2006, p. 5).

The exchange of letters between Amelia and me unveils her attempts to build such a sharing school community.

Leithwood, et al. (2004), in a major study exploring how leadership improves student learning, were critical of literature that does not identify leadership practices that are successful in improving conditions in the classroom. They suggest that schools ought to focus energy on empowering others to make significant decisions and give greater voice to community stakeholders. By reorganising classrooms and schools, student learning outcomes can be supported and sustained. Applying this theory to the letters in this chapter suggests that shifting the focus of leadership to quality teaching and providing coaching/support, might provide a framework for student improvement.

In schools today, teachers need to be both leaders and learners in order to manage the complexities of their role and responsibilities. In fact, the motto I discuss throughout this dissertation – everyone is a teacher, everyone is a leader and everyone is a learner – resonates with the interpretation of the letters. Here, the Amelia letters have focused primarily on enthusiasm. When I reflect on the inquiry I conducted in the United States there were a few emergent themes/patterns that were imminent. In the interpretation, I see these as being categorised into physical and verbal attributes. I made several comments and notes while observing teachers who were viewed as enthusiastic, acknowledged by their principal and students.

There are four key ways that the teachers I observed physically expressed their enthusiasm. First, *movement* – enthusiastic teachers moved around the room regularly, sometimes at the front, sometimes sitting, often literally sitting alongside the students. I observed enthusiastic teachers leaning towards students when talking, nodding their head and smiling often, which was transferred throughout the classroom. Second, I observed *animation* – even when I was standing in the classroom as an observer, enthusiastic teachers demonstrated animation through gestures and a lot of facial expression that matched both the content and the affective feel or ambience of the room. Third, there was evidence of *responsiveness/mirroring* – between the look of a teacher, the stance of the teacher and what is going on in the room at the moment, enthusiastic teachers responded to student needs. And, fourth, they appeared *relaxed* – they were calm and reassuring, as opposed to teachers I have observed in other schools, who were most comfortable standing at a podium giving a lecture.

In relation to voice or verbal attributes, there were also four key areas that resonated with behaviours of enthusiastic teachers. First, *modulation* – their voice was not monotonous, not flat, in fact there was tonal variation in teacher voice throughout the lesson. Second, *enthusiasm* – enthusiastic teachers sounded genuinely interested in teaching and being in the classroom. Third, the *affective feel of a voice* – a teacher was able to talk softly when teaching or dealing with something that was perceived as sensitive or profound, so the actual tone of the voice matched the affective feel of the room and was sincere. Finally, there was *very little tone of certainty.* The teacher presented as confident, but still able to invite others into a dialogue. They questioned frequently, expressed a lot of wondering and seemed genuinely interested in hearing others' responses. This attitude cannot be faked but derives from deeply ingrained beliefs about the nature of pedagogy.

Unpacking and interpreting enthusiasm as a dimension of empathic intelligence, I offer a link to leadership. For me, there must be a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between highly effective leaders and enthusiasm. Each of these letters views teachers as teacher leaders. Fullan (2001, p.7), in discussing effective leadership characteristics in times of change suggests that 'energetic-enthusiastic-hopeful leaders' are able to naturally build relationships and bury themselves in change. Effective leaders make people feel that even the most difficult issues and problems can be tackled productively.

Fullan (2001) implies that a leader's enthusiasm and confidence are, in fact, infectious and infectiously effective. This resonates with the importance of teacher leaders having an ability to naturally create positive relationships with their classes and students, working towards a common goal or purpose. In effect, there appears synergy with the notion that a leader who is enthusiastic can mobilise an environment where everyone is a teacher, everyone a leader and everyone a learner.

In this chapter, an analysis of enthusiasm has provided a lens through which to examine attributes of teachers and leaders. What has emerged through the inquiry is that there are other factors that impact on the effectiveness of teachers and leaders. Enthusiasm is a necessary attribute of effective pedagogy, but not sufficient on its own. Another attribute is expertise, which is discussed in the next chapter. Perhaps enthusiasm is contextual and co-exists with other key attributes or conditions. We might ask questions about the importance of trust and honesty. In fact, we might ask questions about the importance of creating and sustaining positive relationships.

CHAPTER 7

Expertise: Letters to Tim

> Effective teachers invest in their own education. They model to their students that education and learning are valuable by taking classes and participating in professional development, conferences, and in-service training. Additionally, they discuss their participation in these activities with students in a positive manner. Effective teachers learn and grow as they expect their students to learn and grow. They serve as powerful examples of lifelong learners as they find ways to develop professionally.
>
> (Stronge 2002, p. 20)

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Introduction

The primary goal of all educators is the attainment of positive student learning outcomes. It makes sense that in order to achieve this, all educators (teachers and principals) need to 'perform' at their best. The question of what it means to be an 'expert' teacher has been the subject of much research in recent years (Berliner 2002; Sternberg & Horvath 1995; Shulman 1987; Hill 2001; Hattie 2003).

How might we define 'expert' or effective? There are many problems associated with defining 'expert'. For example, the acquisition of experience in a workplace or at a job does not automatically reflect expertise (Berliner 1994). Hill (2001) prefers using the term 'effective' rather than 'expert' teachers. He suggests that effective teachers are those who develop and implement structured teaching and learning programs, and who have detailed understandings of how children learn. He further suggests that 'effective' teachers have the ability to motivate and engage students using a range of classroom strategies and practices that link to enthusiasm.

The Tim letter sequence

The letter sequence of this chapter involves correspondence between Tim, Principal of Potter High School in Massachusetts, and me, principal of a high school in Tasmania. A similar dialogue and letter series will unfold as occurred with Amelia in Chapter 6.

The focus of the letters in this chapter will be *expertise*, one superordinate domain of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005). My aim is to unpack and deepen my understandings of expertise, using my experiences, observations and interviews in the United States to shape and crystallise my understanding of empathic intelligence informed by Arnold (2005). Although the lens of the letters will be expertise, other issues and themes may emerge. The letters will also enable me to understand my own leadership in a Tasmanian high school.

Tim – letter 1

Dear Tim

I have many fond memories of your school, its 900 students, three levels of buildings, impressive security and the many keen teachers I met in my frequent visits. I must say that, as yet, here in Tasmania we haven't the level of security that you have! I remember the one main entrance that all students, teachers and parents enter, welcomed by a security guard. Here, we have many doors open and in many ways we are exposed and open so that parents, students and teachers can enter. Perhaps we should think about tightening our security here in light of global security events. Anyway, irrespective of all the buildings and sophisticated technology your school has, it was the conversations we had which inspired my thirst for learning. Of all the schools I visited in the United States, yours seemed to have the highest number of great teachers. The purpose of writing to you is to unpack some of the discussions we had around teacher expertise and to clarify my thinking. There are a few key ideas that we discussed that I would like your feedback on, given your leading role and the passion you have for the topic.

It was great to observe Bruce, one of your Science teachers, in action and also to interview him and some of his students. He was not only enthusiastic but seemed to have a deep knowledge of Science. I wonder if expertise and enthusiasm are in fact connected or if they co-exist. Perhaps the one thing which stood out, above everything else, was the positive relationships Bruce had with his students. He appeared to have the respect of students. In one of our conversations, we discussed relationships and agreed that they are critical to the importance of teaching and learning. I am wondering if you can share some ideas and examples of how Bruce develops positive relationships with his students. From my

classroom observations, I feel I am restricted in the overall picture. Perhaps there are other core values that contribute to Bruce's capacity to engage others and also contribute to his expertise.

I'm interested in the attribute of expertise, a term that I see as synergistic with 'highly effective' in an educational arena. I am interested in the contribution of professional learning to teacher and leader expertise. In my own school in Tasmania, and across the Tasmanian educational system, all schools have structured opportunities for professional learning. However, unless of course a teacher is underperforming, there does not appear to be a clear set of processes for teachers to observe others. In your role as a senior school principal can you explain the processes you have in place at your school, such as the teacher portfolios and PDPs (professional development points) you mentioned as part of ongoing teacher monitoring?

The Department of Education here in Tasmania needs a clear system and process to raise teacher performances in order to raise student learning outcomes. This wouldn't require throwing vast amounts of money into professional learning for staff, rather a more widespread and internal performance framework is needed. Perhaps a combination of: the identification of skills (personal strengths, personal areas to improve, personal goals, school, cluster, branch and departmental[19] priorities); in-school observations; cross-school observations; peer-evaluation/coaching; forming close partnerships with the University of Tasmania; targeted professional learning (including reading circles); and an examination of other government agencies where expertise is demonstrated.

This last point reminds me that there are personnel with expertise working in training and education in the areas such as forestry, health, police and other government agencies with whom it would be great to form inter-departmental links and focus groups aimed at improving practice and performance. As principal, I have lots of these ideas but the perennial issue of teacher workload and resources becomes a barrier. Your thinking and our dialogue will assist me in clarifying my understanding from your side of the world!

Regards
Steve

[19] In the Tasmanian Education System schools are divided into geographic 'clusters' and each cluster is part of one of three branches. Each 'branch' is located in the three areas of Tasmania – Northern Branch (North), North West Branch (North West) and Southern Branch (South), see www.education.tas.gov.au.

Tim – letter 2

Dear Steve

I too enjoyed our discussions about educational issues and the various comparisons between our countries and educational systems. Your letter contained several issues, one thing that I must say from the outset is that expertise, in my opinion, does not exist in isolation; rather it coexists with other behaviours and attributes. I think expertise has many elements, including enthusiasm, trust, honesty, genuine sense of caring and a capacity to develop and maintain relationships to name a few. As you alluded to in your letter, Bruce has many talents as an educator, particularly the way he relates with students. You raised several important issues in relation to expertise; I will try to respond to each of these from the point of view of our school, district and system needs here in Massachusetts. My responses will not be limited to just expertise, but include some other emergent attributes – as I mentioned earlier, expertise doesn't just happen in a teacher or principal!

I'll start with the questions of how Bruce builds relationships with his students. Bruce, like many of our staff, has an ongoing commitment to the care and welfare of all students at Potter High School. We have a focus as a school and district within supportive school environment policies; do you have similar policies in Tasmania? Bruce has a genuine interest in students' learning and really works hard to develop positive relationships. He shows a lot of interest in what students are involved in, both across the school in a co-curricular sense, as well as outside of school. Walking through the corridors on duty I often hear comments such as, 'Great game last Friday night, I think you ran and received well ...', while talking to a wide-receiver on the high school football team. This comment also shows that he was present at a game in his own time, not a compulsory requirement of the teaching award. Other times he may ask students how their parents are, having had meetings with them at a parent–teacher evening. Or, it may be as simple as asking them about their weekend – genuinely showing an interest. I guess this is similar in many ways to the way we, as principals, talk with our own staff.

Another one of your emergent issues/themes involves that of improving teacher effectiveness/expertise, a very important issue in education across the world. I think effective teachers not only know their subject well, but have a sound understanding of how students learn, are able to reflect on their teaching, as well able to mange their classrooms effectively (including behaviour and all the necessary administrative tasks). I agree with your point that Departmental responsibility for professional learning is correlated with expertise. I was interested in reading about some suggestions you put forward around peer observations, inter-departmental observations and portfolios. Here in our school, district and State system

it is a requirement that all teachers and administrators maintain a professional portfolio, with copies of professional development involvement, and also must accrue a certain number of professional development points each year. Some professional development programs carry a weighting of 20 points, others 5 points. Basically, each teacher must attain 75 points over a two-year period. In addition, teachers must also collect evidence of planning, innovation and student work which demonstrates ongoing competence. Some teachers are very creative and professional in the of work they put into compiling their professional portfolios.

Furthermore, at Potter High we are working on a model where teachers have time to observe each other in their normal teaching routine – a process where dialogue can happen after the class and both teachers can grow together, simply by discussing teaching, ways to improve and the ongoing reciprocal learning involved. The restrictions we face are time and teacher workload. Perhaps if we were resourced from the State in better ways, we could grow the model. Such a model requires a developed sense of trust, honesty and respect. I like the idea of inter-departmental learning and observations – we haven't explored that model. I see merit in some agencies, such as our police or health departments, where personnel are seen as truly outstanding, offering education personnel valuable examples, as well as education personnel providing similar exemplars. In fact, maybe even some of the staff who work within the 'impressive' security industry at the front of our school!
Could I ask you to expand on the ideas you touched on in relation to peer coaching and observations? Specifically, can you explain what you think would be a good model of growing teacher expertise in a complex high school setting such as Potter High? There is no doubt that expertise has many dimensions and many interwoven attributes – it coexists with engagement, trust, honesty and enthusiasm. Having the capacity to develop and maintain relationships is very important but doesn't just happen. Relationships need to be worked at; they also need a certain level of trust, honesty, integrity and mutual respect.

Regards
Tim

Tim – letter 3

Dear Tim
I was very interested in reading about the various ways Bruce and other teachers build relationships. The little incidental conversations mean so much to students. I wish all teachers really knew how important these conversations are to teaching and learning. In my interviews with teachers in the United States I remember a Grade 2 teacher, Jean, at Smiling Elementary School. She discussed the importance of making connections with students and the way she commented on engaging others was brilliant. She said:

> I find myself gathering student work and looking at it and asking 'what does this tell me about the student and where should I take them next'. Also about in their interpersonal relationships ... I need to find many opportunities to make the connections. Even the small things, like today a student came in – 'Can I help you set up the chairs in the room?' We were having a conversation about how he needs a private office. I used that as an opportunity to have a conversation, 'Hey did your mom and dad have an opportunity to talk to you about taking a private office?' He responded by saying, 'Yeah, they told me I could take a private office whenever I wanted to.' (Interview, Jean, teacher)

This transcript from an interview with Jean suggests similar ideas to those we have been discussing. Seeking every opportune moment to really connect with students is so important. But it also resonates with your idea that expertise doesn't exist alone, rather it coexists with other behaviours and attributes. Jean brings in the dimension or attribute of engagement. Another concept that is so important is the need to differentiate instruction. Tomlinson (2001) suggests that differentiated instruction is proactive, more qualitative than quantitative, rooted in assessment, student centred and is a blend of whole-class, group and individual instruction. This view of understanding differentiating instruction is more powerful than viewing the approach as not chaotic, not just another way to provide homogenous grouping and not just tailoring the same suit of clothes to all students.

The same teacher, Jean White at Smiling Elementary, also mentioned the strategy of differentiating with books in the classroom, so that students go can go with their interests. "We are not all just reading the same thing, there is wide variety – mystery, poetry and non-fiction –all kinds of things for you to read so that you can be happy as a reader, which teaches kids to be their own good teacher" (Interview, 2004).

Knowing students well and differentiating instruction is important. In reflecting on your comments about relationship building, I think it is important to remember that knowing students well has in fact been identified as one of the key attributes of expertise (Stronge 2002, p. 15). In fact, teachers who I consider to have expertise know students both formally and informally.

In relation to the issue of professional portfolios, I believe that your system is more advanced than the system here in Tasmania. To me, yours makes sense and allows greater accountability for both teachers and administrators. Although I like the idea of all teachers being required to attain a certain number of professional development points, one would hope this is tailored to need and desire. As a principal, you probably will also have some

teachers who need professional development in some areas but will not participate because they do not acknowledge being deficient in these areas.

In Tasmania, we have teachers who will repeatedly attend the same type of professional development because it is familiar to them and within their interest, and in many ways seen as a reunion! We have one teacher here, Eugene, who is in desperate need to learn computers applications, including the need to send and receive emails with attachments, basic Word and Publisher, but he is simply of the opinion he is too busy. Deep down I think the issue is that he is afraid of participating and probably of looking inferior to others. He is experienced but not computer proficient. We have tried to have him participate, but he is ill on the days the professional development is organised. We need the 'Eugenes' of our school to actively participate in professional development where immediate improvement is needed as well as building on their strengths. Overall, I think our school is moving forward in having individual teachers identify their skills, needs and desires in a team environment, and also involving them in a coaching process. We are able to identify areas of improvement needed and have in place a formal process of upskilling teachers through purposeful professional learning. Do you have any Eugenes on your staff and how do you handle their learning?

Growing the coaching/mentoring model further, we both acknowledge that time and teacher workloads are two barriers. This is an important issue and one which Education Departments must plan for strategically. There is always an ongoing discussion of reducing class sizes in schools. Teachers will always call for smaller class sizes, but I know some teachers who, even if they had only 12 students in their class, I wouldn't be confident of huge improvement in every student's learning outcomes! I think more energy ought to be used to improve teacher effectiveness, but not at the expense of other important parts of the budget. If schools like ours were funded for a staffing component that allowed teachers freedom to observe others' practice and time to discuss and reflect in staff meetings, this might be one step forward, but it would require a deliberate strategy, linked to a clearly identified plan.

You asked me to elaborate on a model for growing teacher expertise. This is a complex task but the key parts of the model might include:

1. Creating a system in schools where teachers are in triads. That is three staff with a combination of skills. Principals and leaders grouped among teachers.
2. Giving each triad the opportunity to discuss their practice regularly as part of staff meeting time and, where necessary in other times throughout the school day.
3. Each staff member building on their portfolio, and including a strong emphasis on reflection and colleague comments. This feedback to be incorporated and re-evaluated.

4 Each triad to focusing on an emergent educational issue in relation to improving student learning outcomes and all triads in the school list their topics. This means that across the school a number of topics can be covered as mini-reading circles, summary papers etc. The end result is all staff having many vignettes (as all staff are busy) growing their expertise through reading.

5 Peers evaluating and observing each other. School-wide, a model be used to ensure consistency and that each staff member has the opportunity to not only be observed but to observe and provide feedback.

6 Accessing professional development – targeted, specific, spaced and shared with peers. This professional development aims to extend the learning of teacher/leader and improve student learning outcomes.

7 The Education Department recognising the importance of time release in-school and providing a budget model that is over and above existing funding models to schools. This is important as it doesn't make sense to strip schools of current funding models to allow coaching.

This letter has covered many of the emergent themes of expertise – relationship building, differentiated instruction and school-wide models growing expertise. I'm aware there is a range of other factors linked to teacher expertise, like the personality of the teacher, their values such as integrity, professionalism, honesty, trust and sense of humour – but space is limited!

Regards
Steve

Tim – letter 4

Dear Steve

Yes, we have a Eugene! It's Trevor and I'll discuss him more later. But first, I agree that there is no doubt that the issue of expertise is complex. Our dialogue has been around the themes of expertise, enthusiasm, relationship building, differentiated instruction, professional development, collegial support and school-wide and system-wide reform. Not a bad list of educational issues, but there are a few other points we should mention in relation to teacher expertise, namely thinking and understanding the teacher as a person. First, from my experiences around our school, I think the way teachers plan, set up their classroom, actually teach and move within their classroom and demonstrate their commitment to the profession are all very important. Expertise for me isn't something that 'happens'. It doesn't

exist in isolation, rather there are many connected attributes that coexist, as you mentioned and I will further discuss.

At Potter High we have a number of teachers whom I would place in a category of expert or having expertise in teaching. Not only do students achieve positive results, but they enjoy their learning. They are engaged in their learning, they enjoy attending these classes and they really seem to connect with the teacher. When I visit the classrooms of the teachers I consider as expert, there is a special atmosphere or mood which I think underpins achievement. The classrooms are filled with questions, discussions and yet appear relaxed and inviting. Room colours are bright, not too bright but yellow/peach; there is lots of natural light entering in; desks are set up in pods or clusters rather than in lines; students have responsible jobs where all are involved and the teacher is truly a facilitator for learning.

When I interpret the teacher attributes in these classrooms, there is a sense of professionalism of the highest order. Each of the staff are neatly attired, nothing over the top like a double-breasted suit, but well groomed. Some people may suggest that the way a teacher presents to school cannot be directly linked with expertise; but I believe it is a small, yet important, component in the eyes of a student, parent or colleague! The way these teachers talk with students and their colleagues is professional, always focused on supporting each other and trying to turn negative moments (and we do have these), into positive learning experiences. The room is filled with positive energy, students are taking risks and all are keen to learn. When I focus on the teacher he or she moves around the room and genuinely tries to keep students on task, often questioning, praising, redirecting and challenging. Their interactions with students and colleagues are underpinned through a genuine appreciation of trust, honesty, sense of humour and integrity. Of course, there are days when students are disruptive, but in my observations and talking with students and parents, there are far more good days than bad!

I think your ideas around growing teacher expertise from an individual, school and system level are sound. However, I do have some initial thoughts which I think would need to be covered to progress your ideas into practice. Initially, I think the whole reform and growing of support has merit, but in terms of people within our system and schools gravitating to the model, we would need 'buy-in' on their behalf. For this to occur we would need a commitment from principals and superintendents that the additional resource would be specifically linked to the model and not be absorbed in other parts of the school or system budget. In addition, I would like to see a working group or steering committee in each school established to see how best the model can be grown. In other words, the establishment of task forces or focus groups may be useful.

I guess the most important thing I find with some of our teachers, who I believe have expertise as teachers, is the fact that they really love teaching. It is their passion for learning and willingness to grow their own expertise that brings positive student outcomes. I can see from the way the room is set up, their pedagogy, which is personalised and differentiated, allowing all students to be extended, through to their capacity to build relationships with students, peers and parents. Expertise incorporates a whole range of factors. I honestly believe the teacher as a person and their personality plays an important role, for example, I think an expert teacher not only knows their discipline thoroughly, not just able to manage their classroom well but really needs to like people and genuinely want to help others.

Finally, let me also share the story of Trevor, our Eugene! He's a teacher within our manual arts department who has rarely had the need to access a computer; in fact his teacher-in-charge has indicated that he doesn't want to work with computers so he doesn't look silly and because he is only a few years from retiring. This was always going to be a challenge for us, so we started by having a chat with him – just Trevor, Jonty, the teacher-in-charge of manual arts, and me. We started talking about professional development and also the fact that by the end of the school year, all assessments will be entered electronically. We indicated that we needed him to be part of this process and wanted to work closely with him to ensure he learned the necessary skills to be an active participant. After some initial edgy questions from Trevor, we started talking about support, buddying and after hours professional development. We presented a few models of what we thought would assist him, including sessions after school with Jonty, participation in an adult education class in the community and also working with some teachers who had similar requirements from other schools in our district. In the end, we went with the latter and after about six two-hour sessions he developed the required skills. It was here that Jonty was able to provide ongoing support, and, although Trevor will never be a computer programmer, he can complete the school requirements and is very proud of what he has learned!

Anyway, good luck with your attempt to build a comprehensive overview and framework for growing the expertise of teachers in your system. To have a school full of teachers with expertise will be a great moment, one I very much will continue to work toward here at Potter High.

Regards
Tim

Comment

The letters with Tim have seen discussion around some emergent issues including expertise, engagement, enthusiasm, leadership, honesty, relationships, humour and a commitment to professional development. In addition, within these letters there appeared a genuine need for school, district and system analysis and review of processes to grow and develop teacher expertise. Most researchers in the area of expertise agree that there are problems in identifying 'expert' teachers, as there are many varying criteria for judging (Bucci 2003). As represented within the letters, expertise appears to coexist with a range of other factors. It seems as though there is no clearly defined set of standards from which to judge 'expert' or 'non-expert' teachers (2003). Sternberg and Horvath (1995) suggest that 'expert' teachers do bear a resemblance to one another and it is this resemblance that allows the categorisation of 'expert'.

Having concluded that there are problems with defining 'expert', it might support our developing understandings of the term to understand it from particular contexts, and with particular purposes. Perhaps expertise is contextual. 'Expert' is a term with varied meanings and a multiplicity of interpretations (Bucci 2003). For this reason this chapter has focused around interpreting a prototypical view of the 'expert' teacher. A prototype may be viewed as a central tendency of feature values across all valid members of a category (Sternberg & Horvath 1995). This is a more inclusive view of 'expert', which enables an understanding that a set of general factors can be categorised into teaching expertise. The features that make up a category prototype may in fact occur together and hence be correlated (Sternberg & Horvath 1995).

Glaser (1996) discusses the idea that the learner teacher depends on other teachers and professionals initially, and with time relies on self-mechanisms and on self-judgment as they become competent teachers. Berliner (2002) supports this concept and further suggests that although the novice teacher begins at the novice level, there is not necessarily a linear movement throughout a career towards 'expert' status. In fact, some teachers may never acquire the label of being an 'expert' teacher. There does, however, appear to be widespread support for the concept that experience as an educator does not necessarily lead to a novice progressing to expert teacher (see, for example, Hattie 2003; Berliner 1994, 2002; Glaser, 1996; Shulman 1987; Williamson 1984).

While these perspectives may help us illuminate the construct of expertise, a more analytical approach would be to compare expert teachers with teachers who, although experienced, may be non-experts. An analysis of performance and expertise against a common set of criteria (for example, characteristics of expert teachers), observing the performance in the classroom of a range of teachers with a range of experiences, would perhaps provide a clearer picture of expert versus non-expert linked with experience in teaching.

In discussing the prototype dimensions of expert teachers, Berliner (1994) outlined five specific stages of teaching status, or expertise from what he defined as 'novice' to 'expert'. He reminds us that teachers do not move through these stages in a linear fashion. These five stages are; novice level, advanced beginner level, competent level, proficient level, and expert level.

Furthermore, Berliner (1994) postulates thirteen prototypic features hypothesised to be held by 'expert' teachers, including: better use of knowledge, better problem solving strategies, better decision making, greater respect for students, display of more passion for teaching, better monitoring of learning and feedback to students, better classroom climate, extensive pedagogical content knowledge, better adaptation and modification of goals for diverse learners and better perception of classroom events. So, it appears that the concept of expertise is quite complex as has been acknowledged throughout the letters with Tim.

Shulman (1987) identified seven knowledge bases for 'expert' teachers: content knowledge, general pedagogic knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogic-content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts and knowledge of educational ends. Both Shulman (1987) and Berliner (1994) agree that many characteristics of expertise exist, including characteristics such as effective management of student ideas and students within the classroom. Similarly, both agreed that expert teachers possess deep content knowledge and pedagogic skill which enables them to construct learning experiences that are more flexible and pose questions in qualitative ways to generate deep and rich student understanding. While Berliner (1994) indicates that when things are going smoothly experts rarely appear to be reflective about their performance, Shulman (1987) believes that reflective practice is embedded in expertise, particularly in pedagogical reasoning, basing his findings on empirical shadowing and observation of one expert teacher with 25 years of experience as part of a continuing study of experienced teachers. Berliner's findings were not based on empirical research, rather a comprehensive review of literature on expertise.

In comparing expertise from empirical data-gathering techniques and literature reviews in education, there appear commonalities across other domains. Gignac-Caille and Oermann (2001), in studying clinical educational expertise, suggest that 'expert' or 'effective clinical instructors' possess: clinical competence and subject knowledge; interpersonal relationships with students; teaching skills; evaluation strategies; and personal characteristics. However, whilst some inquirers, such as Shulman (1987), who does not discuss evaluative practice as characteristic of expertise, others including Gignac-Caille & Oermann (2001) view this as key attribute. This view links with earlier citations since content knowledge, pedagogic skill and evaluation/reflection are all viewed as characteristic of expert teaching, but a strong case can be made for personal characteristics and knowledge of education to be considered equally important.

While there may be parallels between the clinical instruction and classroom teacher expertise, Gignac-Caille & Oermann (2001) could have generalised more by focusing on classroom teaching expertise. Williamson (1994) adopted a view on expert teaching which was similar to that proposed to clinical education in nursing. In exploring the view of teacher quality, Williamson (1984) reviewed a range of policies and documents, particularly views expressed in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development activity report. Williamson's view was characterised by five qualities or dimensions of quality teaching. These dimensions were content knowledge, pedagogic skill, reflection, empathy and classroom management. Hattie (2003) identified 16 prototypic characteristics of expert teachers which can be grouped into five major dimensions of excellent teachers as those who can: identify essential representations of their subject (*content knowledge*), guide learning through classroom interactions (*pedagogic skill),* monitor learning and provide feedback (*reflection)*, attend to affective attributes (*empathy)*, influence student outcomes.

The integration of Williamson's (1994) five dimensions was seen as important, rather than understanding each of them as independent. This integration was perceived as the mark of an outstanding teacher. Williamson (1994) outlines certain variables which can impact and alter the desired mix of these dimensions including national and local contexts, the problematic nature of teacher supply and the local school environment where students' backgrounds, parental involvement and school culture can lead to movement throughout each of these dimensions.

Williamson (1994) further suggests that other factors such as educational policies and implementation strategies may devolve decision-making and hence restrict the capacity of quality teaching within these dimensions. Newmann and Wehlage (1996) state that

advancing the intellectual quality of student learning requires a definitive approach of teaching for understanding within the classroom as well as nurturing a professional learning community within the school. Encouraging this to occur depends on a complex interaction of cultural and structural conditions (Newmann & Wehlage 1996).

Berliner (2002) cited the five stages of expert teaching based on his research and synthesis of extant literature in the area of teacher expertise. It may have been more valid for him to base these stages on empirical evidence, such as classroom observations, analysis of classroom transcripts and structured interviewing of expert teachers. To take his literature a step further, Berliner could have ascertained whether or not there was congruence between what the literature states and what, in practice, occurs. Analysis of expert attributes based on literature supported by classroom observations would have resulted in a more valid generalisation of expert teacher attributes. Berliner (2002) is meta-reviewing empirical research and one can extrapolate some points, all of which are relevant to this qualitative inquiry.

Hattie (2003) was able to reflect on data that was gathered through classroom observations, teacher interviews before and after lessons observed, from posing scenarios, and through conducting student interviews. The scope of evidence-gathering presents strongly crystallised data to support Hattie's findings, which appear far more reliable and contemporary in comparison to Berliner's (2002).

The common characteristics of 'expert' teachers

What are the common prototypical characteristics of 'expert' teachers? Although there appears to be difficulty in defining an 'expert' teacher (Bucci 2003), the literature hints at least five common characteristics of expert teachers. Influential studies such as Williamson and Galton's (1998) develop a framework for conceptualising the qualities or attributes of the expert teacher. The five domains in which expert teachers excel are: content knowledge, pedagogic skill, reflection, empathy and classroom management. Following is a more detailed exploration of each domain.

The first domain of expertise is that of *content knowledge.* Expert teachers have deep knowledge of the subject matter to be taught (see, for example, Berliner 1994, 2002; Hattie 2003; Williamson & Galton 1998; Borko & Livingston 1990; Sternberg & Horvath 1995; Gignac-Caille & Oermann 2001; Cleary & Groer 1994; Shulman 1987.) Content knowledge refers to deeper representations about teaching and learning and is more selective for experts

in their use of information during planning and interactive teaching (see for example, Hattie 2003; Berliner 1994; Borko & Livingston 1990; Shulman 1987). Expert teachers can adopt a problem solving stance to their work and are more flexible in their repertoires when compared to novices (Hattie 2003; Berliner 1994); they can anticipate, plan and improvise as required by the situation at the time and make better choices in determining what decisions are important as opposed to those less important (see, for example, Hattie 2003; Berliner 1994, 2002; Borko & Livingston 1990).

Possessing deep understanding of content knowledge includes understanding the subject matter being taught, the classroom context and the physical and psychological characteristics. Shulman, (1987) regards these are the key attributes of the expert teacher. The second domain of expertise refers to *pedagogic skill.* The characterisation of pedagogic skills, which Shulman (1987) referred to as pedagogic reasoning, are the process of transforming subject matter knowledge or content 'into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students' (Shulman 1987, p.15). Some other behaviours as discussed by Borko and Livingstone (1990) discuss pedagogic skill or expertise of expert teachers as different to novices. Experts are more selective in their use of information during planning and interactive teaching and make greater use of instructional and management routines. Finally, when compared to novices, expert teachers have a more complex array of pedagogical concerns and are more certain about the most appropriate action to take in the classroom depending on situations (Cleary & Groer 1994).

The third domain of expertise refers to *reflection.* Dean (2000), discussing key teacher attributes, argues that teachers need to constantly reflect on their work, align aims in relation to outcomes, be open-minded and make judgments about whether the activity of a particular lesson was the best possible way of helping children to learn, and summarises by implying that reflection should lead to action. In support of reflection as a key characteristic of the prototype of an expert teacher, reflective teachers are viewed as those who use new problems as opportunities to expand their knowledge and expertise (Sternberg & Horvath 1995).

Although Berliner (1994, p.167) states that 'experts rarely appear to be reflective about their performances', other scholars (see, for example, Borko & Livingstone 1990; Williamson 1994; Hattie 2003) refer to the larger, better-integrated stores of facts and experiences upon which experts draw, enabling them to reflect. In comparison to novices, it is these characteristics which experts develop automatically that enable reflection. Schön (1983) suggested that the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous

learning was one of the most defining characteristics of professional practice. He argued that the model of professional training, which he termed Technical Rationality, was one of charging students up with material in training schools so that they could apply it when they entered the world of practice.

The fourth domain of expertise relates to *empathy.* Empathy is considered to be an essential element of the developmental process of an individual and can be broadly defined as putting oneself in the other's place (Demos 1984). Another definition of empathy as cited in *A Glossary of Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts,* refers to empathy as a 'special mode of perceiving the psychological state or experiences of the other person ... Empathy establishes close contact in terms of emotions and impulses' (Moore & Fine 1967, p.38).

Hattie (2003) discussed experts as 'attending to affective attributes', as having a high regard for students and respecting students as people, and demonstrating care and commitment for them. Similarly, Williamson (1984) suggests that empathy is important as it relates to the affirmation and dignity of both colleagues and students in pursuit of cognitive and effective outcomes. While mentioning empathy, Williamson (1994) does not offer a definition to illuminate his concept of expertise. Being able to interpret student feelings more often, as a cue to change the way the expert teacher was teaching, resulted in Berliner (1994) concluding that 'experts are more sensitive to the task demands and social situation when solving problems' (Berliner 1994, p.171).

Shulman (1987) warns that as a profession, education must be careful that a knowledge-base approach does not produce an overly technical image of teaching and that teaching must be student focused. Alluding to medicine, he discusses the fact that the person must be the focus as he states, 'the serious problems in medicine and other health professions arise when doctors treat the disease not the person' (Shulman 1987, p.20).

The fifth domain of the prototype of the expert teacher refers to *managerial competence.* This incorporates classroom management strategies. Sternberg and Horvath (1995) found that expert teachers, when compared to novices, were able to emphasise the definition of discipline problems and evaluate alternative strategies, whereas novices appeared to be solution-oriented and less concerned with developing an adequate discipline model. Classroom management not only refers to discipline problems, but also being able to be proficient at creating an optimal classroom climate for learning (Hattie 2003). Furthermore, Hattie (2003) suggests that expert teachers are effective scanners of classroom behaviour. Their repertoire of skills, experience and ability to deal with the multidimensionality of

classrooms combined with being more adept at monitoring student learning problems and providing feedback, greatly assists them with their classroom management.

This chapter has examined of one of Arnold's (2005) superordinate domains of empathic intelligence, that of expertise. It has continued to deepen my understanding of empathic intelligence, to explore its interpretation in my own situation in a Tasmanian high school and to question if the theory can be deepened. It appears as that expertise doesn't exist in isolation; rather it coexists with other factors, such as engagement, enthusiasm and relationships, and it is contextual. This chapter has also presented some strategies as to how leadership can be developed from a school, district and system level. The example used has been that of growing teacher expertise and models of professional development that could be used across the education system.

Expertise through liking people

In examining the teacher as an expert or having expertise, it was agreed there are many factors. Both Tim and I agreed that relationship building was certainly a key factor in the development of expertise, room ambience, and commitment to targeted professional development, and also to high quality pedagogy that is personalised and differentiated.

The last letter from Tim mentions the personality of a teacher as important. There is a lot of merit in this notion. It makes sense that in order to be an expert when one works with people, one must in fact genuinely model this in one's self. In my experience in a Tasmanian high school, I see some highly effective teachers who love helping people. At times it is only their pedagogy that needs fine tuning, and this can be achieved through professional development and also good peer mentoring processes. Stronge (2002) suggests that an effective teacher must like the person first and the student second, which certainly correlates with my experience as a school principal. Often, building trusting relationships with others is critical. Furthermore, other factors such as empathy, managerial competence, reflective practice, pedagogic skill and deep content knowledge have been identified as critical to teacher expertise. Duignan and Bezzina (2006), like my colleague Tim, suggest that the key elements of expertise extend way beyond an expert understanding of a discipline, or of a management model, into expertise in knowing yourself as a whole person. Tim, in his conversation about Bruce, suggests that Bruce is far more than an expert science teacher, he connects well with his students. I suggest that this ability to connect with students is consonant with an ability to understand one's self.

Extending Arnold's (2005) superordinate behaviours there is an emergence of other inter-related factors supporting empathic leadership and teaching. Some of these are trust, honesty and a capacity to build and maintain relationships. The letters have created an opportunity to reflect on my own understandings of expertise as both teacher and leader. The next chapter will explore engagement, which has been mentioned in the letters to Tim, and provide an understanding of those attributes of teachers that allow them to engage with students. Is engagement linked with enthusiasm and expertise? Why do some teachers have this capacity to engage with others and some are unable to do so? Why do some leaders have a capacity to engage their colleagues and how can this be developed?

CHAPTER 8

Engagement: Letters to Mike

> Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness ... As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together ... Teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in the mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge-and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject ... When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life – and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well. When I do not know myself, I cannot know my subject – not at the deepest level of embodied personal meaning.
>
> (Palmer 1998, p. 2)

Introduction

This personal reflection examines the nature of knowing oneself. I believe that in order to really engage students in the classroom it is important to reflect inwardly, to identify those elements that engage me. I interviewed Lyn at Oaktree Middle School in the United States. When prompted with the question, 'How do you know if students are engaged in the classroom?' Her response was:

> Their conversations are on topic; they will be writing, responding or thinking. The less informal cues, we all learn differently. Some students will need more thinking time than others on a topic. When they are not talking about issues other than school, when they are on task, asking questions about the topic (Interview, Lyn, teacher).

In the teaching profession, without a prescribed definition of engagement, students and teachers will provide different interpretations and examples of the ways teachers and leaders can engage others. I believe that motivation plays an important role in engagement. Goleman (2002) suggests that workplace motivation is often taken for granted – there is an assumption

that people actually care about what they do. He posits that the truth is more nuanced, that where people gravitate to in their work role indicates where their real pleasure rests. What follows is that pleasure itself is motivating (Fullan 2006, p. 42). Can the same level of thinking be applied to students in a classroom in relation to what helps engage students in their learning?

Arnold (2005, p. 23) suggests that engagement is an ability to attract and hold students' attention through centred, purposeful interactions. For her, engagement refers to a capacity to mirror others in order to enhance communication, as well as ability to channel teacher power/authority/charisma for the benefit of students' learning. Furthermore, Arnold (2005) suggests that engagement involves an ability to communicate a vision beyond the here and now. For me, as principal of a Tasmanian high school, to engage others refers to the capacity to connect with staff, students and parents. It is not only the connection that is important, but also the ability to build a sense of confidence and trust which is truly valuable. From a leadership perspective, trust in this context refers to everyone perceiving that the school is progressive and moving forward.

How wonderful it would be if in every class, every student was passionate about their learning, and always engaged! My experiences suggest that this is idealistic, not realistic. The challenge we face as teachers and leaders is to find ways that we can work towards engaging as many students as possible, as often as possible. As a leader, I know that there are genuine challenges in engaging our communities. The changing political agendas and directions challenge the opinions and beliefs of teachers, principals and members of the wider school community. Erickson (2001) broadly defines passion as an antithesis of boredom and as boundless enthusiasm, zeal, interest and excitement.

Passionate learners share their interest and enthusiasm in a number of ways, including a beaming face and glistening eyes as the students hold up their work, as well as other ways. In fact, Erickson (2001, p. 212) suggests that passionate learners have three key characteristics, including a love of learning, inquisitive minds and a sense of self-worth. In this context, Erickson suggests that a love of learning requires a realisation that information brings interesting ideas; that new information can be connected to prior information to solve problems and make discoveries. Developing inquisitive minds, Erickson (2001) suggests, requires attitudes that seek to know answers. Finally, in reference to self-worth, she suggests that passionate students care about themselves and value their personal thoughts and ideas.

The Mike letter series

The letter series in this chapter are between Mike, principal of Oaktree Middle School in the United States and me. The focus of the letters here is *engagement*, another of the superordinate domains of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005). My quest is to unpack and deepen my understandings of engagement, using my experiences, observations and interviews in the United States to shape and crystallise my understanding of empathic intelligence. Although the lens of these letters is engagement, other emergent issues and themes may emerge. The letters also enable me to understand my own leadership in a Tasmanian high school.

Mike – letter 1

Dear Mike

I really treasured the fact that you were happy for me to base myself at your school for the duration of my time in the United States – it is a great school. Your circumstance – in an inner-city middle school with a population of about 450 – is similar to mine here in Tasmania, in terms of number of students and staff. In your school, I picture the three-story high buildings, the many different cultures and perceived unity among your staff. One very clear difference is that your school is surrounded by roads and high-rise buildings, my school is surrounded by a golf-course and mountain views. I noticed many interesting things at Oaktree while observing and interviewing teachers and students, as well as our during our conversations. I am writing now because I am interested in the theme of engagement and anything else that you feel relates to effective teaching and leadership. Specifically, I am hoping that through these letters, I can deepen my own understanding around what it is about some teachers and leaders that allows them to engage and connect with others. As a fellow principal, I know that there are a number of reasons why teachers cannot engage with students; I also know a number of principals who cannot engage with their staff, and I hope to examine my thoughts about these reasons through narrative.

I find the key to engaging students and staff somewhat difficult to identify as each teacher/leader has their own personality and their own pedagogic skill, experiences, strengths and ideas. It seems, from my own experiences, that engagement may be a product of the combination of an individual's personality, expertise and ability to take risks within their own environment. Does this notion resonate with your experiences as both a teacher and as a principal?

The capacity to engage students and enable them to be attuned to the teacher as a person and the content of their lesson must encompass additional characteristics. Science teacher, Bruce, in an interview I did with him at Potter High School, suggested that randomness and a sense of humour are both important characteristics, illustrated in this story of his:

> Yesterday we were trying to understand the two terms 'stimulus' and 'response', so I had a kid in the front of the room with a cup of water on his head and I took a ball and was trying to hit the cup of water off his head. Every single kid was completely engaged in the activity. The end result was that I was trying to come up with a definition of stimulus and response. What was the stimulus in the situation, what was the response? Even after the event students were asking questions, 'If I throw the ball, will I get the response?' Everyone was engaged, I try and do little stunts like that, to perk the interest, because sometimes when you are up at the board you are losing ... a handful of your kids. So, it is ... this randomness. A student said yesterday, 'Boy, Mr Newton you are so random.' Whether it is just telling a nutty story – I tell the kids I used to be 7'2" and I jumped out of the plane and the whole lower part of my legs got smashed. So they keep throwing all these questions when they're trying to understand growing and developing ... to catch me to see if they can catch me with a lie, but I always have something to come back at them with, and I just keep feeding off their questions. I also use humour a lot. Humour is a big thing. In addition, fun and enjoyment are important, you need to have a lot of fun. I love coming to work. I find it so energising – such a difference when you get to know students over four years in a family type role.
> (Interview, Bruce, teacher)

In this transcript, it is evident that there are other emerging factors important in engaging others, such as having a sense of humour. When I interviewed Thomas, a Grade 11 student at Valley Charter School in Massachusetts, I asked 'Who are the best teachers you have had, and why?', he responded:

> Sense of humour, fun, like people, students should be able to form a bond with the teacher. They tend to like people [with a] good sense of humour – enthusiastic, passionate – it makes you want to produce higher quality of work to make them (teachers) happy. As students we have respect for that quality (Interview,Thomas, Grade 11 student).

What else is important in engaging students? Do you have some teachers who can inspire and engage students and peers regularly? What is it about them that allows this process? Similarly, there may be some teachers you know that do not have this capacity. Why not?

How is their practice different? The issue of engaging others is so important but, from what I can ascertain, the strategies are not well researched.

Regards
Steve

Mike – letter 2

Dear Steve

The issue of teacher/leader engagement is important and also complicated. Let me begin by saying that as I reflect on my own leadership style as principal of Oaktree Middle School, I believe I have the capacity to engage others. Since reading your letter and before replying, I started making some notes and gathering evidences which I believe supports my thinking. However, there are times at faculty meetings when I sense I am not engaging my colleagues and it is here that I am also keen to deepen my own learning.

As I reflect, I think about the times when I attend professional learning, a seminar or conference. Thinking this way allows me to reflect on what I would like to be doing that will intrinsically motivate me to enhance my own learning. I am trying to visualize what would engage me and what wouldn't. I like being actively involved in the process of learning, seeing the value related to my teaching and leadership, as well as being able to discuss the emergent concepts/ideas with others. Some of the best professional development which has engaged me has had all these elements, plus a dynamic, positive and personable presenter. Often I think this last point is overlooked. I receive lots of papers across my desk from companies from across the US discussing why their PD program and conference will be great and full of inspiring quotes from people who have attended. It is not only the topic, though, which draws my attention, but the name and reputation of the presenter. For example, if a keynote presenter such as David Perkins[20] was to present professional development on a topic such as thinking, then his reputation as an expert in this area, combined with his reputation for engaging the audience would be positive. Hence, to engage me the concept of expertise of the presenter becomes important.

Reflecting on this in relation to my own leadership, I think I actually can engage and disengage. Obviously I don't deliberately seek to disengage! When I present at faculty meetings, local principal meetings or at conferences, there are times where I feel I have 'lost' the audience. If the topic I am presenting is seen as important to the audience, then I think

[20] http://www.pz.Harvard.edu/Pls/DP.htm, accessed 08/04/06.

that contributes to holding their attention –the information will benefit them. But, if my style of presentation is mundane, including not varying my voice, not warm in terms of my approach (verbal and non-verbal cues), or just talking to the audience without any opportunity to for discussion, then I can lose the audience.

Translated into the classroom, in my observations at Oaktree I see disengaged students in some teachers' classrooms. They are not inspired, nor inspiring, and not interested in some parts of the curriculum. There is no doubt that there are correlations to my own reflections as a leader and experiences in the classroom. I mean, who likes sitting down and listening for 90 minutes without any opportunity to discuss ideas and thoughts with those around them? The most inspiring and engaging teachers and leaders have students and teachers active in their learning process. They have participants sitting in groups within the rooms, they vary tasks, their voice is inviting to learning and their task design stretches the learners. If you remember Dee, one of our teachers, you will recall our conversation about her motivating lessons and the way she energizes her peers, as one of our school leaders. Her presentations at faculty meetings are great, they inspire and they engage our staff.

When you mentioned the concept of having a sense of humour, I initially thought that this is critical; however, I am not fully convinced that this is a pre-requisite. For example, we have some teachers who are exceptionally great teachers and get brilliant student results on the National and State tests, but as to their sense of humour, I am not so convinced. Other teachers I know have a great sense of humour, they can give and share a joke, but in the classroom there is need for a lot of improvement and ongoing support. What I do know is that the teachers and leaders who can build trusting relationships with others are successful.

Yours truly,
Mike

Mike – letter 3

Dear Mike
I like the way that you discussed engagement with your own reflections as a principal. By writing and reflecting I am able to unfold and deepen my own understandings of effective leadership at a range of levels in schools. Your thoughts make a lot of sense; however, there are a few comments that I wish to make in response.

As a school principal here in Tasmania, I find it amazing that despite our efforts to model best practice in terms of leadership, we often get caught up in trying to present information to

staff, forgetting the link between the approaches to learning that both students and our peers require. While I try and present papers and ideas to all staff in an engaging way, I do at times neglect basic principles. Specifically, I sometimes feel as though I am overloading staff with information and assuming they are well advanced in their own understandings. While always giving people a voice, I think I could actively engage my staff in more 'hands on' learning. Perhaps I could plan the staff meetings in the same way as a dynamic teacher plans a 100-minute class – presenting to everyone as a collective audience, then breaking into small subgroups and ensuring all suggestions are solutions-focused, as opposed to problem-centred.

Your letter mentions Dee, a teacher in your school as someone able to engage students through a combination of approaches. You suggested that her personality and also her effective planning and teaching contributed to her ability to engage others. When I visited Oaktree I observed Dee in class on several occasions. When I examine my observational notes there were a few emergent themes.Her classroom learning routines were clear and provided an opportunity for each student to know the 'what', 'where' 'when' , 'how' and 'why' of the lesson. The 'how' and planned learning experiences were engaging and challenging for students, aimed at extending each student's learning. These routines were also supported with effective classroom management routines and verbal and non-verbal teacher attributes. I decided to break down my observations of Dee into 'routines' and also 'classroom management'.

In my 'routines' notes it is evident that Dee greeted students pleasantly; used lights in the classroom to gain attention rather than raising her voice; had all students sit in a circle at the beginning of the lesson to provide the lesson goals and plans; wrote up the lesson schedule and goals on the whiteboard; and has students read quietly for 10 minutes, followed by paired reading for 10 minutes. Her movement and encouragement between groups was evident. She had individual spelling lists for all students (students complete individually, then in pairs), and she had planned project work for students to work in small groups of 3 or4. In Dee's classroom, students were engaged, her planning was personalised and, although students worked on the same class project or topic, she incorporated various learning styles and had students working co-operatively.

Dee did not raise her voice at all throughout my observations. To gain student attention, modify behaviour, and ask students to listen or share student/group successes, she would either turn lights off, clap her hands twice or verbally cue students, 'OK class, stop, and look and listen please'. Her classroom management processes were very positive and effective.

It wasn't just these strategies that had the class engaged with their learning; it was also a combination of the personal attributes of the teacher. While walking around, Dee was

smiling, listening, leaning forward when talking to students, glancing around the room regularly and using other powerful non-verbal cues that set a positive scene. Students genuinely seemed to be enjoying learning. There was student work on display throughout her classroom and also on neighbouring corridor walls, a feature throughout the school. Her capacity to engage with her students was evident in the way the students responded, both in their attitude towards learning and also in the way students talked with each other and interacted with Dee.

I wonder if such a culture of learning takes a long time to develop in a school. Do new teachers take time to embrace such a culture, or are there positive induction processes in place? In my school here in Tasmania, we have moved to a team structure, having four grade teams as opposed to secular, fragmented teachers of subjects. Within this structure we are trying to embrace a really strong collaborative learning process, one in which everyone is a teacher, everyone a leader and everyone a learner. I believe that leadership needs to constantly be developed, developing best in an environment which supports leaders. It is early days but so far feedback has been good. Of course, we have experienced a few minor hiccups such as teachers being transparent with their planning and thinking and getting used to working as a member of a close team. As you know, teams don't just happen, they need to be developed and they need to work through problems and differences of opinion. Similarly, some leaders have taken some time to adjust to having added responsibilities and opportunities. Critical to the engagement process is quality task design and a differentiated curriculum, but the teacher is also central to the engagement within the room. A bright teacher who plans well is just not enough; they need to be able to connect with students and their peers. It is hard to describe, but I think they genuinely need to want to be there, to really love teaching and, in our case, love leading.

Leading schools here in Tasmania is very complex; we have lots of changes within our Department of Education. We are challenging the beliefs and values that teachers have held for many years. We are asking teachers to change and some are very reluctant. To lead a school community and to ensure we are moving in the right direction, supporting those who are reluctant to change their thinking requires new processes and understandings. Sometimes I genuinely believe that a transfer system, used strategically, can support teachers, schools and principals. There are times where a teacher would benefit from a few years' experience in another school to learn new processes and practices.

Regards
Steve

Mike – letter 4

Dear Steve

Life here at Oaktree School has been very busy in recent weeks. Although our Department of Education hasn't introduced anything that will create too much unrest in recent years, we are always governed by our student results and the external publishing of our school's performances. After our last letter exchange I decided to look through my library and found a great little book called *Teaching as Story Telling* (Egan 1986). This book discussed how the use of story by teachers can really engage students. There are many issues you alluded to in your letter that I will attempt to address.

Talking about your observations about Dee, there is no doubt she is a highly skilled and caring educator. Her classes are usually stimulating places to be and her celebration of student achievement is always evident. As you mentioned, as a school we try and showcase a lot of student work. Did we develop all these attributes, or did she bring these when she joined Oaktree? Well, there is no doubt our school culture has helped Dee, but there is so much about her personality that she brings and would bring to any classroom. All teachers and leaders have their own personality and attributes, and I guess this is what you were referring to when you discussed your dilemma as to whether there are parts of the person which are innate. Dee is a fabulous person, not only in the classroom but with her colleagues and also has respect in the wider community. Her personality is such that she is always a positive thinker, extremely hard-working, professional and caring. In fact, apart from some probably being jealous of her achievements, Dee is someone everyone likes. All schools have 'green-eyed monsters', who like to knock down the achievers, don't we!

In connecting Dee's personality with our school culture we have a perfect match. As a school, we work hard on our school ethos. We ensure we 'walk the talk'. Often we have to look back at our core beliefs and values and see how we are performing. This keeps us on track; student achievement is the finest part of our own report card! We made a promise to each other that we would work collaboratively, work through the hard times that we all experience and always celebrate the achievements of not only students, but of staff. Our district superintendent has a 'hats off' award where she asks all principals for nominations and personally presents a card to one staff member each month at the faculty/staff meeting.

Leadership is very important; I have seen some leaders have a huge impact across the school through their caring and genuine approach. This is very important, as there is a culture of expectation, not a pressure, but a sense of everyone wanting to work hard for each other and for the school. As a principal, I apply for teacher and school system awards of excellence as well as giving my own 'hats off' award to teachers who are performing well.The 'hats off' is followed with a morning tea and a few appreciative words.

Developing a feedback culture is critically important to our school. This requires everyone being respected and able to provide feedback to their peers, which can form the basis of discussion. This needs a positive example being set by me as principal. I need to work on giving feedback to staff on a regular basis and aimed at improving instruction. Elmore (2000, pp. 20-21) implies that learning requires modeling where leaders must lead by modeling and live the values and behaviours that represent collective goals. Leaders should be doing, and seen to be doing, that which they expect or require others to do.

In relation to engagement and planning, the curriculum and pedagogy are fundamentally important. You are right in that task design is fundamental to engaging students, but this is not the whole package. I think that effective task design, encompassing curriculum differentiation, is very important, but the attitude and approach taken by the teacher is equally important. My experiences here in the United States are that students learn teachers first and subjects second – meaning that students who really respect their teachers will work hard for them and then achieve positive results within their class. As a school, we do a lot of work on ensuring relationships are developed and constantly maintained between students in the class and also between the teacher and his or her students. Sometimes these break down but such is life. We then provide the framework to repair and develop students' social and resilience skills. As principals we have similar responsibilities among our staff, especially where staff sometime have problems with each other. For me, as principal, relationships based on mutual trust, respect and honesty are best.

While I like your thinking that everyone is a teacher, a leader and a learner I think you ought to have clear processes in place when some may feel they do not receive leadership opportunities. The key is to ensure they are all leaders in the classroom. Often, my best classroom teachers are promoted out of the classroom into administrative positions. This is the same across all districts in Massachusetts and probably across the country. The important thing is to use my administration to foster leaders in the classroom, to shadow teachers, to provide suggestions and positive feedback to contribute to the growth of others.

Taking on board that everyone learns in different ways and has different strengths – Gardner's (1993) multiple-intelligence theory illustrates this phenomenon – somewhere along the line there must be a causal link between an individual's intelligence (however you define this) and their classroom teaching/leadership performance. I'm interested to know how this relates to the capacity to engage others and how it can be developed.

Regards
Mike

Comment

The letters have opened up some emergent issues around leadership, intelligence, task design, expertise and school culture, where all may be linked to engagement within a classroom. In a study in 12 schools across England, Day et al. (2000, p. 39) identified that in all of the schools that had consistently raised student achievement levels, leadership from both the principal and teachers was recognised as being instrumental to that success. In fact, Day et al. (2000) suggested that the vision and practices were organised around a number of core personal values concerning the modeling and promotion of respect. For individuals, these included fairness and equality, caring for the wellbeing and whole development of students and staff, integrity and honesty.

Engagement in the classroom means significantly more than just having students working 'on task'. In my interviews across the United States, when prompted with the question, *What signs do you look for to gauge if students are engaged within your classroom?* Bruce, a teacher at Potter High School responded:

> If they are actively taking down notes in their book, questions that they ask, questions that are geared toward the lesson. The funny thing is that it's not always just the lesson. Sometimes what might happen is that when I'm ... when it's interesting – talking about material up on the board and I might give a little side comment or tell a brief story – someone else will raise their hand and they may ask a stupid question (a question that isn't to do with the information) but it's related to maybe a story that I had told, so they are engaged in the class. Not sure if they are in fact engaged as to what is going on with the information, but they are engaged with the classroom. So it is a totally different way of seeing if they are engaged, that they are definitely in the classroom, not in space, that they are there that they have some energy with it. But it is a matter of getting that student refocused on the question ... This is sometimes the risk, sometimes I get them right on task but sometimes get them right off task (Interview, Bruce, teacher).

This interpretation of students being engaged opens up fresh ideas and insights, through the eyes of a teacher. Here, engagement means a lot more than just students being on task, it involves the questions being asked, discussions but being engaged within their classroom. The power of story is mentioned, this was also mentioned in a letter from Mike. We shared an understanding that often the best teachers are promoted out of the classroom into administrative positions. Systemically, I wonder why the best teachers leave classroom teaching in search of a career as an administrator. Is it the salary? Is it the perception and willingness to assist other teachers to improve their own practice? Perhaps it is the capacity to develop others as teachers and leaders.

Kelly (2002), in examining a pilot teacher advancement program in Arizona and also in South Carolina, found mixed results in linking salary increases of up to $7000 per year for those classroom teachers who are recognised as master teachers. This program was focused on having master teachers in the classroom half the time and conducting in-school professional development the remainder of the time. Evaluative interviews of the study found that while such programs sound good, many argue that they should also be judged by how well they affect student learning.

In 1977, respected American cognitive-psychologist Jerome Bruner suggested the motives for learning must be based as much as possible upon the arousal of interest in what there is to be learned, and they must be kept broad and diverse in expression. Bruner (1977, p. 80) further implied that advance planning can help, and such planning and the research to support the planning should be given high priority. Close to 30 years forward and we have schools that, in many cases in Tasmania, strive towards collaborative work cultures. Bryk et al. (1998) suggests that after 10 years of monitoring the results of school reform, systems that allow teachers to have a broader say in school decision-making may also lead to teachers beginning to experiment with new roles, such as working collaboratively. This broadening fosters the development of a professional learning community where teachers feel more comfortable exchanging ideas, and where a collective sense of responsibility for student learning outcomes is likely to emerge.

In my observations across the United States, each of the five schools where I conducted inquiries had a sense of professional community where teachers and leaders openly shared ideas. It appeared as though there was much more than planning that engaged students in the classroom. Gardner (2000) suggests that the art of teaching consists precisely in resisting formulas. The teacher's job resembles that of a master conductor, someone who is able to keep the whole score in mind and yet home in on particular passages and players. Gardner (2000, p. 209) presents a view that a teacher should come up with questions, units, performances of understanding that fit together, these should engage students and ultimately aid the vast majority of the class for all to achieve a deeper understanding of the topic. While this ensures the curriculum and pedagogy are important, my observations and interviews in the United States suggest there is more than these two dimensions. The human element or capacity to engage must be embedded in our thinking. Leaders must have this humanness, to connect with their colleagues, students and parents.

I argue that by developing the teacher as a person we can improve the teacher's ability to engage students. Similarly, I argue that by developing a principal's empathic leadership, a

culture is created which enhances the potential engagement of the staff and through a process of modeling, mobilises their own empathic abilities. While there has been a traditional view that extracurricular involvement, such as camps, sports teams, stage productions, debating, music lessons and extra tutoring, provides great opportunities for students to make good social connections with peers, current research implies this is not the most important process. Osterman (2000) suggests that studies provide evidence of both the need for a sense of belonging and acceptance – from both peers and teachers – as two important facets of a related phenomenon that are both critical for student engagement. Connell and Wellborn (1991) posit a view that academic engagement has been established as a reliable predictor of student success. However, adopting a broader perspective, Beatty and Brew (2005) suggest that it is very important to understand the inter-relationship among the students' sense of belonging with peers, teachers in classrooms, in extra-curricular environments and throughout the school community. My experiences as a principal allow me to think that effective leaders have the ability to develop strong relationships with many people within the school community.

My observations across the United States focused on student and teacher perceptions about various elements contributing to improving student learning outcomes, engagement in the classroom being one of the attributes. Teachers ultimately make the difference. Hattie (2003) suggests that teachers contribute up to 30 per cent towards student achievement, the single highest contributing variable apart from the student alone (50 per cent). Osterman (2000) further suggests that teacher support has the most direct impact on student engagement, that how students feel about school is, in large measure, determined by the quality of the relationship they have with the teachers in specific classes. This agrees with my observations in Tasmania that many students choose subjects based on who will be teaching the subject.

So, can the attributes of engaging teachers be learned or are they part of sub-intelligence? What actually enhances a teacher's capacity to engage students as both people and learners? My own experiences suggest that school leadership is important to providing necessary support to teachers, which will, in turn, support students. Silins and Mulford (2002) suggest that teacher support of students is affected by the level of support that they, in turn, receive from their leaders (principals, assistant principals etc.). They imply that teachers cannot create and sustain the conditions for the productive development of children if those conditions do not in fact exist for teachers (Silins & Mulford 2002, p. 562).

This chapter has provided a series of letter exchanges, centred on student engagement. This letter sequence suggests, as does Duignan (2004, p. 5) that 'leaders require more than

leadership knowledge and competencies to engage in developmental and empowering ways with colleagues in order to create purposeful, meaningful and capable individuals, groups and organisations'. What is required is the generation of shared or distributed approaches to school leadership. The research cited throughout has exposed a range of other impacting variables, all inter-related and contributing to a teacher's capacity to engage. This inquiry continues to analyse empathic intelligence and this chapter has opened up our thinking into this intelligence. There appears that there are a number of other relational factors other than effective planning, school environments and classroom environment which engages students and also teachers. The teacher, as a person, plays a significant role. The question is to what extent and whether this is cognitive, behavioural or a combination. There appear to be other factors beyond engagement that assist in developing effective teachers and leaders, including relationship building, expertise, trust and a sense of humour. The next chapter examines empathy to determine whether or not, like the capacity to engage others, it can be learned or is innate.

CHAPTER 9

Empathy: Letters to Frank

> In order to empathise you need to be aware of how other people see you. You may believe that you are the most sensitive being on the planet, but none of us can ever really know how we are coming across to others. We can only do our best, and the reality may be that our own evaluation of ourselves falls short of how others actually perceive us.
>
> (Baron-Cohen 2003, p. 21)

Introduction

The quotation above by Baron-Cohen (2003) suggests that although some may have an awareness of their own empathising skills, we never really know. He posits a view that empathic behaviour involves spontaneity and a sense of natural tuning in to another person's thoughts and feelings. This chapter presents a series of letters that allow a deep understanding of empathic behaviour, taken from experiences in the United States and connected to my own experiences in Tasmania. I am exploring how empathic intelligence might be understood in a Tasmanian high school and how I might extend my ability as an empathic leader. The fictional letter series are between Frank and me. Frank is a principal at Valley Charter School, with a student population of about 400 from Grades 7-12, in Massachusetts.

Empathy is considered to be an essential element of the developmental process of an individual and can be broadly defined as putting oneself in the other's place (Demos 1984). Another definition of empathy, as cited in *A Glossary of Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts*, refers to it as a 'special mode of perceiving the psychological state or experiences of the other person ... Empathy establishes close contact in terms of emotions and impulses" (Moore & Fine 1967, p. 38).

Hattie (2003) discussed experts as 'attending to affective attributes', a key attribute of the expert teacher as having a high regard for students and respecting students as people and

demonstrating care and commitment for them. . Similarly, Williamson (1984) suggests that empathy is important as it relates to the affirmation and dignity of both colleagues and students in pursuit of cognitive and affective outcomes.

Being able to interpret student feelings more often, as a cue to change the way the expert teacher was teaching, resulted in Berliner (1994) concluding that 'experts are more sensitive to the task demands and social situation when solving problems' (Berliner 1994, p. 171).

Shulman (1987) warns that as a profession education must be careful that a knowledge-base approach does not produce an overly technical image of teaching and that teaching must be student focused. As cited in Chapter 7, Shulman (1987) discusses the fact that the person must be the focus by analysing medicine as he states, 'the serious problems in medicine and other health professions arise when doctors treat the disease not the person' (p. 20).
The letter series uses empathy as a lens, while acknowledging that other topics and themes may emerge.

The Frank letter series

The following letter series is between Frank, a principal of Valley Charter School in Massachusetts, and me. Frank's co-educational school comprises some 400 students from grades 7–12 who are drawn from up to 30 local elementary schools. His school is unique – it was established as a 'charter school'. Charter schools in the United States are nonsectarian public schools of choice that operate free of many of the statutory and regulatory requirements that apply to traditional public schools[21] The United States Public Charter Schools Program supports the planning and development of these schools, which aim to provide parents with a choice of education for their children. Charter Schools are held accountable for improving student academic achievement, where the shift of thinking is away from rules-based governance to performance-based accountability[22]

The focus of these letters around empathy arises from my observations in the United States and reflections on my own context here in Tasmania as a school principal. I am interested in empathy as it relates to schools' maintenance of and commitment to support for students and staff, and in ways that I might extend my ability as an empathic leader and contribute to models at a range of levels in the Tasmanian system.

[21] http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/o/index.htm, accessed 08/10/2006.
[22] http://www.ed.gov/programs/charter/index.html, accessed 23/04/06.

Frank – letter 1

Dear Frank

The interviews I had with teachers and students at Valley Charter School were memorable and have shaped my own leadership and decision-making processes here in Tasmania. Certainly I have lots to learn as a principal, and it is through conversations with other principals that I am able to bounce similar ideas off them and pose questions. I am very interested in empathy, and its link with high-performance teaching and leadership.

So that we begin with a common understanding of empathy, I include a definition here. Arnold (2005) suggests that empathy is

> an ability to understand your own thoughts and feelings and, by analogy, apply your self-understanding to the service of others, mindful that their thinking and feeling may not match your own. It is a sophisticated ability involving attunement, conjecture and introspection: an act of thoughtful, heartfelt imagination (Arnold 2005, p.23).

This definition will ensure we are talking about the same view of empathy, which is underpinning my doctoral inquiry. I am writing to you, Frank, because as I reflect on my experiences in the United States, your school stands out as demonstrating a caring and empathic school environment. The picturesque surroundings and genuine passion shown by teachers and students was truly amazing. I formed this opinion by sitting in on the 'connections' and 'reflections' programs, being in classrooms, walking through corridors, meeting with teachers and talking with students. With 30 feeder primary schools, you have done wonderfully well to build such a caring place for students and adults. Here in my high school in Tasmania we attract students from only five primary schools, so for Valley to have such a wide feeder area and develop a rich culture for learning is admirable.

I am interested in exploring empathic intelligence and leadership, looking to unfold a deeper understanding and then connecting these understandings to unfold effective leadership programs at a range of levels here in Tasmania. I want to reflect, not only from the point of view of a school principal and the processes I have in place at my school, but as a leader: how I can further grow as a leader, leading a school in the midst of exciting change? I am interested in working on a model of leadership development – empathic leadership – that I am hoping will be valuable to many emergent leaders within the Department of Education. This leads me to thinking about our conversation and my interviews with some of your students. Specifically, I remember interviewing one of your grade 12 students, Tucson, who, when asked about the best thing at Valley Charter School, replied:

> It's the teachers. Every single year that I have been here that's the thing that sticks out most. I live in a town where kids go to a high school with classes where

> teachers stand up in front of the class and just talk. They may be good teachers, they may not be good teachers, but what separates those teachers from teachers at Valley is that they're not always there for help and one-on-one assistance. The teachers here really do know their students. Ever since I was in seventh grade, teachers have known my name, they have known the activities that I do outside of school, the things that I like to learn about. As you get older, and you go through the grades here, you keep in touch with the teachers that you had when you were younger, and at the same time you get to form stronger relationships with your new teachers. So I still have teachers that I had in seventh grade come up to me and say 'nice soccer game', or 'how is your senior project going?', even though I had them when I was much younger. They can still come up to me and ask me how I'm doing. They care about how I'm developing throughout high school. It's so nice (Interview, Tucson, Grade 12 student).

This response by a Grade 12 student captures the feeling, the ethos I felt while in your school. Teachers are perceived as the best thing about the school, seen through the eyes of students. How terrific! With this at the forefront of student perception, I am interested in what encouragement, development and planning you have in place as a school, which contributes to teachers being seen as making a real difference. How have you developed such a rich group of teachers who genuinely care about <u>all</u> students, both inside and outside of school? Can you provide me with some example of how your teachers and other staff develop an empathic approach to their teaching? When you interview to recruit teachers, are there specific questions that you ask? Are there unique attributes that you see as teachers requiring to be a dynamic part of Valley Charter School?

I noticed a few interesting approaches to curriculum, timetable, and also the daily routine, at Valley that are unique. I use the term unique here implying that I haven't experienced some of these approaches in Tasmania. In fact, our education system could learn a lot from some of your school's approaches, including 'connections' and 'reflections' as part of every day. It's great that your school has seen the importance of splitting each class teacher group in half, assigning teacher aides with a teacher and also allocating 15 minutes at the start and end of each day for this pastoral care purpose. I was amazed how open and caring students were with each other in these smaller groups.

They could discuss things that were important to them, personally, locally and globally. The groups operated in trust, and the level of personal debriefing that was occurring represented such a caring approach to each other. I remember one student who talked about her family problems and that school was such a safe and important part of her life, enabling her to deal with her home problems. The level of detail and emotion she was

expressing, combined with the level of compassion and empathy shown by her peers and teachers, was phenomenal.

From a principal's perspective, Frank, how do you monitor the school-wide approach to ensure everyone is as compassionate and caring as they can be towards each other? My own experiences in Tasmania allow me to form the view that empathy is a key element of true communication. It goes beyond the caring and effective listening, to a new level. We have a smaller version of your pastoral care model but we only meet once a term in mentor groups, you meet twice daily!

As a school we are trying hard to continue to ensure all people (staff, students, parents and volunteers) feel a sense of belonging at our school. In some ways we are operating by structures and routines, which I know are important, but we need to go beyond this and ensure that all conversations are in a sense empathic. This seems so distant, yet so important. I have posed a few questions to you, as I know your school has made huge inroads into this challenge of creating a caring and empathic school, one that has indeed provided me with a model I can use to deepen my inquiry.

Your story will assist me to gain clarity, pose questions and challenge my own thinking and that of others in my school. For me, Valley Charter School was different, it had a different feel and I left feeling it was by far the most caring of all schools I visited in the US.

Regards
Steve

Frank – letter 2

Dear Steve
Thank you for your comment suggesting that we were probably the most caring of all the schools you visited in the US. This is certainly a huge wrap and one that I would love the US Department of Education to recognize. We pride ourselves on being a school that resembles a loving and caring family.

Our school community aims to be compassionate and caring as much as possible in everything that we do. I am sure you noticed that as you look around our school, in corridors and in all classrooms we proudly display student work, famous quotes, and our behaviour expectations, which students largely have developed and constantly revisit. In fact, we believe that student voice underpins all that we do, from having students on our management team and our school council to policy development and implementation. After

all, it is the students who are our number one priority. Our journey has taken time, it has resulted from a highly visionary principal who had a view that all staff who are recruited must have, or develop, a sense of living our caring goal. It is with this long-term vision that our school lives and breathes.

That principal has moved on, but his thinking is instilled within our school. The 'connections' and 'reflections' were brought about after we as a school community responded to the question: How can we create opportunities for students to have a small group of peers and one significant adult at school, where they can touch base each day? From here we talked about the curriculum, about mentoring and priorities. In the end, after much discussion we decided that if this was so important to us all, then we must find ways to support the thinking. We had to shift our thinking away from worrying about money informing our decisions, to one where we designed our ideal model and then asked for money to support our needs. We needed to create a 'space' where students can be in groups no larger than 10 students to1 adult, ensuring our legal responsibilities are met (one teacher in every classroom) and that time at the beginning and end of each day is important.

We called this 'connections' at the beginning of the day as students connect with their group, and 'reflections' at the end of the day where students and teacher or teacher aide could reflect on the day and also allow students the opportunity to share their thoughts on the day. This has been successful for many years and valued by all across our community.

In your letter you mentioned the concept and process of recruitment of teachers. Yes, we are very lucky to have such a caring and committed team of teachers, but this doesn't just happen overnight. We believe that because we put students first, everyone must live this belief. When we have Grade team meetings, the focus is on students. Gone are the days that students are not to be talked about in private – students are discussed, their wellbeing and their learning. Similarly, all staff support each other.

As a staff we celebrate birthdays and special events and mirror this thinking in the classrooms and in the mentor groups. Our newsletter is filled with achievement, good news stories, interviews with students and staff and birthday celebrations (although not all staff ages are revealed). When interviewing prospective teachers we say up front, that we are a caring school and that staff will be required to adhere to our agreed values and goals. It is important that teachers can be attuned to students' feelings and able to assess a student's emotional barometer. Usually this comes through when we interview, I often think that this is innate in some way, as well as able to be developed, if you know what I mean. We ask a lot of hypothetical questions at interview, and having a student on the selection panel assists our thinking. We actually have two students walk around the school with the applicant, not only showing them our buildings but asking questions, this allows the students to give us

some feedback before we interview. So, there are really two interviews – the one where they walk around with the students and the one with the formal panel.

As a school we try and always look for ways to celebrate the achievements of all, and in times of loss or grief try and show compassion and sympathy as a school. Obviously, there is a fine line in assisting those who are grieving, but our daily approach to students naturally assists us in this area. Some schools in the United States appoint adjustment counselors who prepare students when their grades slip; we use this state resource to support our pastoral care connections/reflections program. In times when formal counseling is required we have the services of a full-time school welfare officer who provides confidential and professional services. As you indicated in your letter, empathy is at the heart of effective communication. Everyone at Valley feels valued, there are times when we don't communicate as well as we could, but, on the whole, we treat students like adults and the reciprocal trust and communication is very good. We are a school where students call staff by their first name, which many schools simply will not even contemplate.

Building a school focused around high-levels of student support does take time. If the education system appoints teachers to your school, then you have limited control. Is this the case in Tasmania? We are lucky here because we can appoint and have complete autonomy over staffing. Like everything, developing rules/behaviour expectations and trust takes time and requires lots of consultation and revisiting. Everyone needs to be committed to the school ethos. Does your school have a motto? Does everyone live the motto? What examples of behaviours by students and staff are evidence of living the motto?

These questions will allow you time to think and reflect on your current practice. Is there anything specific about our curriculum that you would like to know that may assist with your inquiry? It was good to listen to your stories of what it is like to be a principal in another part of the world, in many ways we are similar yet in others we are very different.

Yours truly
Frank

Frank – letter 3

Dear Frank

I must admit that after reading your letter I decided to walk around the school and ask students and staff about the culture of our school. It was interesting to note that quite a few teachers and students could name our rules and our motto without too much deliberation. Our school motto is 'Be your best'. We try and reinforce this is in grade assemblies, whole-school assemblies and in daily conversations with students. There is no doubt that the past two years have been a period of transition and transformation. We have moved from a school that, architecturally, was secular, isolated and fragmented. Many shared a belief that this was a school organised around the needs of teachers and subjects. Teachers operated out of offices that were rarely shared and were adjacent to book storerooms. Some classroom windows were covered with plywood boards to prevent students looking in and out; some teachers genuinely believed that students walking past might be a distraction.

In addition to the fragmented architectural designs and placement of teachers, classrooms were cold and uninviting. This was a school in desperate need of a whole new make-over. My challenge was thinking of a way to convince the Department of Education that we desperately needed a redevelopment, and soon. The curriculum was organised around subjects, and timetables reflected mass distribution around the school, across all grades. There was little opportunity for teachers to build any team ownership, the environment was not as empathic as I would have liked and significant change was needed. My journey of transformation started by building a shared vision, talking to superiors within the Department of Education – the initial result was a few million dollars towards whole-school redevelopment. A planning team set about visiting other schools in Tasmania, looking at structures and focusing on the connection between architecture and student learning principles. Our entire school community worked through a process of identifying ways of reshaping our physical infrastructure and timetable.

I started my second year as principal of the school with great enthusiasm. Our timetable was modified and developed around supporting grade teams; staffrooms now house grade teams of 4–5 staff; there is carpet in corridors, brighter corridors and a deliberate link for transdisciplinary planning and teaching. The morale appears to be high and the numbers of students on suspension is well down, 40 per cent less than at the same time the previous year. Most of staff thinking is on ensuring that students are our number one priority. Staff work hard to plan in teams, discuss students rather than their subjects, and the use of technology in classrooms is significant.

Our school is working through transformation, but some still have a very long way to go! Having coached many sporting teams and played many team sports myself, I believe some of the other staff are not used to working in a team environment. Perhaps I should have spent some more time at the beginning of the new year discussing teams and leading grade teams through scenarios where teams succeed and fail. In fact, I think I will do this next year so that potential problems among teams can be resolved at the team level without too much interference by senior staff. This leads me to think about your school environment and the caring, empathic culture. For me, schools must be caring places with clear boundaries. Leaders must be able to set boundaries and processes where resource allocation is transparent and always supportive of improving student learning outcomes. There needs to be high levels of trust within teams and throughout all areas of the school. Changing a school culture takes time and energy. I believe that sometimes leaders can focus too much on the change process itself, of which many are external to the individual, rather than paying more attention to changing the self. Here in Australia, Professor Patrick Duignan (in Duignan & Bezzina 2006, p. 11) suggests that 'All significant change begins with self-change'. This sentiment is supported by others (see Cashman 1998; Wildblood 1995; O'Toole 1995) who suggest that collective change in schools requires individuals, especially teachers, to change from the inside out.

There is no doubt that my school has made huge inroads to personal, team and school development. However, not every member of staff has embraced the concept of changing from the inside out. For example, our staff member, Ivor, is a great teacher in terms of the learning outcomes his students complete, but there are many examples of behaviour which I believe are not empathic, and sometimes I think he lacks empathy. I am hoping our school culture around developing empathic behaviour and having students always as our focus may assist him in his own development. Ivor works hard, is enthusiastic and knows his particular discipline area well; I just don't think he really understands the 'whole game'. There are times when he will be asked to go and cover the class of a colleague who may be distressed at the time, and the response from Ivor will be piqued or resentful, such as, 'Well I can, but I was going to be spending the time completing ...' and, 'Don't we have any relief teachers available to cover?'

There is more to Ivor, of course, than these two examples; in the classroom his work is methodical, sometimes bordering on obsessive-compulsive. But I find it hard to understand why a comment is necessary, as though it is a huge imposition on him to help others. After I thanked him for his assistance in covering a class, there was still a non-compassionate feeling in our conversation. In explaining that there were some personal, emotional reasons why the staff member needed some support at that time, and that there are times when we all may need someone else to cover classes to

enable our emotional buckets to be manageable, he was still focused on his own needs and thoughts.

This is certainly not unique to Ivor; there are times when teachers will treat students in ways which are not fair. When I communicate with staff about these concerns I often say, 'How would you feel if your own child was treated like this by a teacher?' It is by shifting the focus to a teacher's own thinking, at their own family level, in some occasions that I am able to tap into their empathic understanding. I shouldn't focus just on these shortfalls; there are many examples where empathy is displayed by teachers, students and our school community as a whole.

Perhaps one of the best examples of someone who I believe models empathic behaviour almost every minute of every day is our school chaplain, Rosanne. Apart from offering a counseling support service to our students, Rosanne attends camps and interstate excursions and leads a school breakfast program. In fact, she is always available. It is not only the students who flourish by talking and interacting with Rosanne; teachers and parents also have positive interactions. She is able to listen, is non-judgmental in her dialogue and always appears to genuinely want to help us all. Rosanne has a presence, a smile and a heart where everyone knows there are no hidden agendas. I often wonder if it would be valuable for teachers to spend time shadowing Rosanne and watching the way she behaves as she is such a caring and empathic person.

Our curriculum planning has shifted from one that is methodical and content-driven, to one that is negotiated and concept-driven. Students work in small groups/teams, with teachers as facilitators/coaches, and at the end of a particular unit students can demonstrate their learning publicly. The way students in teams often assist others who may have differing intelligence strengths and styles is warm and encouraging. To watch a culminating group performance, with parents invited and students sharing their presentation and learning, is wonderful. But as principal, I feel this is not consistent throughout all grades and all classrooms. Yes, I can dictate and suggest this is the way we should be moving, but I want the teams to really want to be caring, genuine and supportive of student learning and their own personal and collective growth. Did this process take long at Valley Charter School? Were you, as principal, didactic in communicating this dimension of learning?

The last sentiment I would like to mention is in relation to your question of teacher recruitment. Unless we are advertising a permanent position, and this entails a bureaucratic process in itself, principals have limited control of staffing lists. A teacher can apply for a transfer into our school – they may have poor interpersonal skills and a

poor discipline background – and if they are eligible (years of service), then they are transferred and onto our school's staffing list. This is frustrating as I have some wonderful temporary teachers, who all work over and above their required hours, whose futures are determined by the transfer list. With greater autonomy, I'd love the opportunity to hand pick my staff and build stronger teams. We would be able to attract teachers who share similar beliefs about teaching and learning, and, as principal, I would gladly accept full responsibility for student learning performances against benchmarks.

Regards
Steve

Frank – letter 4

Dear Steve
Your letter covers many issues. You are very passionate about your school, and it certainly sounds as though you have made significant physical changes supporting your thinking, and supporting the changing ways of education. I am sure you agree that it takes a lot more than physical changes to change the culture of a school, I have seen state-of-the art schools here in the US but the teachers are reluctant to change their teaching and inevitably student learning outcomes do not significantly improve. Changing school culture doesn't just happen overnight, it takes time and requires 'buy in' from teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, members of the community and, of course, students.

As a principal, I pride myself on open dialogue with all members of our school community. As a school we have developed a culture of trust, transparency and support. We aim to live our values. Everything from our planning, meetings and conversations all live our ideals and beliefs. Your motto, 'Be your best', is simple and powerful. Perhaps if you are thinking of expanding this further to embrace empathy, it may be reworded as 'Be your best – be kind, be considerate of others and be the very best learner that you can be'. Your school appears to be progressive and innovative. I am glad to hear that you are moving some teachers' ideas from thinking that schools are places based around the needs of teachers! In fact, I bet if I looked at your timetable I could make some preliminary diagnoses of this. Your example of Ivor is one type we don't have on our staff, but this is because of the groundwork we have put in place over many years in changing our culture.

As your inquiry is centred on empathy, I will try and offer some rich examples of where I see empathy lived throughout Valley Charter School.

Our students are encouraged to own their behaviour and treat our school like a caring home. It is important to us at Valley that we treat students like adults; this reciprocity enables open communication and fosters good working relationships across our school. As I said in my earlier letter, all our students refer to their teachers by their first name – we made this decision listening to student feedback. I know many principals, teachers and parents at other schools in our district would find this bizarre, but this is our culture and our approach at Valley.

I particularly liked the link to change starting from the inside out. This is a very important concept and one that all schools, in fact all people, should embrace. It is important that, as leaders, we allow those teachers who are resisting of change to focus on the issues that cause them frustration and discuss openly with colleagues their personal fears and insecurities. You mentioned the shift in curriculum planning from content-driven and methodical, to one that is concept-driven and negotiated. Here at Valley, in our curriculum we aim to negotiate with students as much as possible. We see this as an important factor contributing to our supportive school focus. I guess this is what you are talking about in relation to empathic intelligence!

Teachers really know each student's strengths, weaknesses and preferred learning styles and, so are able to stretch students to demonstrate their understanding in many ways. When I observe classes I see real energy between teachers and students, students and students and between teachers when they team-teach. This to me is real learning and the 'moment' of interaction, the smiles and anguish, followed by support and positive outcomes is impressive. I enjoy walking through all our classrooms and corridors. There is so much energy that you can feel.

At Valley, everyone cares for each other, everyone looks out for one another. Our school fosters a belief that learning takes place everywhere and our culture in relation to curriculum reflects our strong commitment to fostering a family-type environment. The role of the teacher at Valley is one of a facilitator and coach. Beyond the classroom, our connections and reflections model is used to support students socially and emotionally. Students often work hard to support each other both inside the classroom and outside. To be empathic, when discussing students and support required, we ask teachers to think of things from the students' perspective. There have been times when teachers have been disappointed with a particular student's assignment submission. However, when we discussed the student's work, the more we asked about the learner, the relevance of the task at the time, the more we realised that the student was not engaged. Our staff adjusted their planning and teaching

to reflect these interpretations. I guess the strong team environment we have created assists us in working through dilemmas and responding to changing circumstances.

I would suggest that you think very carefully about the team dynamics before placing teachers in teams. Think about the purposes and goals that you want from the team, individual personalities and also ways you think they will work best together. This is far better than placing teachers in teams and then working through possible problems and scenarios. A great teacher really needs to know each student well. They need to know the parents too, to be able to pick up the telephone and call them, to celebrate achievement and discuss their learning, their welfare. It is important that parents feel the same. Parents should be able to phone a teacher and openly discuss concerns, issues important to their child at the time, and with this strong partnership, aim to have a holistic 'wrap-around' plan to support each student. It sounds as though your chaplain, Rosanne, models the behaviours and approaches which you will be aiming for from all teachers – available, great listener, involved in many extra-curricular activities and also a support for all. Perhaps some examination of Rosanne, at a staff meeting, where she is praised, may be enough to spark some ideas among some teachers!

About teacher recruitment – I know your hands are tied from a whole-of-system perspective – but I really want to make some comments.. It appears as though you are trying to change the culture of a school with limited say over your staff. This is going to be a huge and difficult task unless you receive systemic support. Basically, I think that principals should be able to hire and fire staff, or recruit and transfer is probably the preferred terminology. If you have really talented teachers who are reinventing themselves and responding to school and system changes, then you ought fight very hard to keep them. However, if you have tired staff who have been in the school for many years, I think you should be able to have support to move them on into a new environment. From my experience as a principal, moving a staff member on who has been in the school for a long period of time may be the best thing for their career and also for another school. Why don't you suggest to your Department of Education to be a pilot school and seek to have total control over your staffing for two years?

In closing, the issue of developing empathy is one where we aim to be a supportive school. Everything from curriculum, pedagogy, conversations, student displays, meeting protocols and parent visits all need to be empathic. The challenge is how you, in your school context, will embrace this ethos? Perhaps one thing which we didn't discuss, which is very important, is imagination, we must always look to be imaginative and in doing so, we are maybe modeling empathic behaviour!

Kind regards
Frank

Comment

The letters in this chapter have opened up themes around communication, pedagogy, personality, team dynamics and school culture. Imagination is only touched on , but is regarded as essential to empathy and seen as a cognitive capacity. Leading academics (Arnold 2005; Greene 1995), share the view that imagination works best as a cognitive capacity when curiosity is involved. Arnold (2005, p. 70) suggests that curiosity is derived from both thought and feeling. Furthermore, she suggests that *speculative thought* is at the top of the scale of cognitive development, an interpretation I support.

Through inquiring, and through collecting information, analysing and searching for understanding, a series of questions, unanswered, will emerge that further probe the idea of empathic leadership. These new questions along with the processes of narrative as meaning-making will contribute to my understanding of empathic intelligence, its practice in a Tasmanian high school, and at a systems level. Perhaps my own reflecting and leading is in fact, deeply transforming? Duignan (2002), suggests that transforming leadership occurs when one or more individuals engage with each other in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.

Throughout the Frank letter series there appeared a genuine and selfless contribution to the wellbeing of others. The letters were not filled with answers, rather questions, ideas and thoughts. My experiences, both locally and in observations in the United States, have allowed me to place these questions into perspective. The unanswered questions that reflect my deepened understandings include:

> What would it be like if the roles were reversed – if I was the student sitting in class and the student was the teacher – would I be engaged?
>
> How will one of my colleagues respond when I inform him that he is being disrespectful to others? Is there a way I can convey the message as sensitively as possible?
>
> How can I ensure staff are supported and see me as really understanding their concerns with the implementation of assessment and reporting practices?
>
> What do parents think of the radical curriculum reform happening at present? Do they really understand? How do I know? What can I do?
>
> What does attending school and the importance of education mean for a student from a high poverty background?
>
> How do teachers really know what success means to everyone in every class?

CHAPTER 10

Re-interpreting: Deepening understanding of empathic leadership

> Humans are irrepressible theorizers. We can't help but note similarities among diverse experience, to see relationships among events, and to develop theories to explain these relationships (and that predict others). These theories – these ways of seeing – are necessary but limiting. We need them to make sense of a complex world. However, while enabling perception and interpretation, theory also determines what is (and is not) perceptible and comprehensible.
>
> (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler 2000, p. 52)

Introduction

My search for an understanding of empathic leadership has led me to believe that meanings are never fixed; rather they are constructed differently by us through our differing and shared contexts, our relationships and through our languages and cultures (Blythe and Assoc. 1998; Dostal 2002, Eakin 1999). Any inquiry involves concentration and a personal determination to seek understanding. For me, this inquiry has been lived as a journey between two countries, the United States and Australia. Acting as both an observer and participant in this inquiry, has enabled me to develop new understandings of myself as a leader and as a person. I have also developed understandings of how one Tasmanian high school might operate as an empathic school community. Eisner (1997, p. 268) suggests that an inquiry should provoke, challenge and question, as well as 'enrich and enliven the conversation'. I believe I have done both. Through sharing my thoughts, observations, stories and letters I hope I have provoked an enlivening conversation – between me, you – my reader, and the other participants in my inquiry.

This inquiry started with five key intentions. These were to:

1 unfold an understanding of empathic intelligence informed by Arnold (2005);

2 explore how empathic intelligence might be understood and enacted in a Tasmanian high school;
3 use these understandings to unfold a concept of effective leadership at a range of levels in the Tasmanian system;
4 reflect upon how I might extend my ability as an empathic leader; and
5 critique and deepen the theory of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005).

Through the processes of inquiry my understandings of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005), have deepened and changed. I consider Arnold's construct, though powerful, to be limited because it does not foreground conceptions like trust, honesty and relationships. My interpretations and reinterpretations of my experiences and interviews in the United States in the form of letters foregrounded the importance of these extra conceptions. The work of Duignan (2002, 2003, 2004) and Duignan and Bezzina (2006), suggests that the relational and self-reflective are key elements of leading empathically. Further thinking around these concepts, has changed my understandings of empathic intelligence and empathic leadership in a Tasmanian school. My renewed understandings are first presented as a diagram developed to model the interplay of the superordinate elements of empathic intelligence. I conceptualise an additional three elements from my inquiry and the work of Duignan (2002, 2003, 2004) and Duignan and Bezzina (2006). My deepened understandings are further evidenced in the form of new questions about empathic leadership and the links there might be between our individual and social being. This suggests questions such as: What role does language play in constructing these powerful links?

Through my lived experience as principal of a rural Tasmanian high school, and through my inquiry, I could reflect on how empathic intelligence informed and transformed my leadership and my learning, and how it offered possibilities to transform my school. My interpretations of my conversations with my colleague principals in the United States allowed me to reflect on my strengths and weaknesses to become more critical of myself as a leader. One example of my transformed leadership and learning is my increasing use of structured mentoring linked to empathic intelligence as discussed in my letters with Amelia, Mike, Tim and Frank. This has led me to think that a future leadership strategy might involve a growing number of key staff working together in engaging in, and reflecting on, empathic intelligence. I am required to ask: What is the personal cost to individual leaders as they work to transform individual schools?

In this chapter I work from the understandings gained through interpretation, to unfold a set of possibilities related to effective leadership at a range of levels in the Tasmanian education

system. I also address issues related to leadership programs, positions descriptions and associated data collection.

Through my processes of inquiry I shared problems with my principal colleagues related to my leadership, and in conversation with them uncovered some strategies to extend my ability as an empathic leader and to transform my school. For example, when discussing Stuart and his lack of enthusiasm I began to understand that I needed to think about my own motivations and be clear about them to myself before I could really help Stuart. I needed to put myself in his situation. How could someone become so disengaged as a teacher? I had to imagine what would disengage me before I could think of strategies to support Stuart and, through him, support our students. Seeing the world through someone else's eyes is critical and underpins empathic intelligence. It became a strategy I used to extend my ability as an empathic leader. How might I get Stuart to do the same?

The theoretical underpinnings of the inquiry and the readings I have undertaken (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Damasio 2000; Gardner 1983, 1991, 1993, 2000, 2004a, 2004b; Perkins 1992, 2003; Duignan 2002, 2003, 2004; Duignan & Bezzina 2006), have helped me to both critique and deepen Arnold's (2005) theory of empathic intelligence. Reading Csitszentimihalyi (1990) has enabled me to understand that emotion, empathy and cognition are intimate to one another and not easily separated. These authors also suggest to me that intelligence is fluid and malleable; it is not fixed, which gives us hope when thinking about how we might reflect on and change our own behaviour. This also gives me hope that my theoretical frame will open possibilities for improving my leadership and offers opportunities to transform schools into empathic learning environments and to suggest possibilities for change within the Tasmanian educational system. I wonder how my learnings might be transferable from my local context?

I can therefore make the claim as I reflect on this inquiry that each of the intentions for inquiry have been met. The interpretation and re-interpretation has led me to think differently about education, intelligence and leadership in schools. Key to my inquiry process was the act of writing; writing as inquiring has enabled me to be both an observer and a participant, and so enabled me to stretch my thinking and understanding to new levels. It made overt my processes of self-reflection.

Using qualitative inquiry strategies such as interviews, observations, letters and stories has allowed new thoughts to conceptualise and emerge as understandings. It has helped me to develop new ways of seeing (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler 2000). I have developed a new

theory of empathic leadership as a framework to interpret and transform my leadership. My theory offers hope, in that I can change, we can change. Through our school systems we may have the capacity change our societies. In Chapter 1, I quoted Kahane (2001, p. 12) who told the story of a rabbi who found that '...when he had changed himself, his family changed. And when his family changed, his neighbourhood changed. When his neighbourhood changes, his country changed. And when his country changed, the world changed'. Here I am provoked into asking: How can we encourage all teachers and leaders to face their shortcomings and to learn from them?

The findings from this inquiry are emergent and tentative, they open possibilities and opportunities, and they give us hope. For me, these new understandings present a series of new questions. Each question is not limited to this inquiry, but may provide the platform to conduct future inquiries and provoke conversation between people in universities, departments of education and schools. I make no claim that the findings throughout this inquiry will change the whole education system in Tasmania, but they have deepened my understandings, which makes me a more powerful leader, which, in turn, should support student learning outcomes in a rural Tasmanian high school. I wonder: How can we overcome the sense of disempowerment provoked by huge bureaucratic systems?

[These questions point to some of the ethical dilemmas associated with empathic leadership. For example, there are limits to self-disclosure and •••••••• with confidentiality. These issues are discussed later in the chapter as I unfold specific examples. All transformational leadership carries ethical tensions.]

Deepened understandings of empathic intelligence – personal possibilities and school transformation

The processes of this inquiry have created a heightened sense of awareness of my inner self. I have conceptualised a set of qualities for effective teachers/leaders, as well as uncovered some opportunities for change in my school. I also make some suggestions as to how the Tasmanian educational system might evolve. The possibilities that exist are exciting and present some real opportunities in which empathic leadership can assist with empowering educators/leaders and students. In fact, although not all people will gravitate to the work of empathic leadership, the process of reflection, using empathic intelligence as a lens to examine leadership has powerful possibilities. Duignan (2002, p. 12) places importance on transformation as a person, rather than as a 'position of responsibility' when considering

leadership. He focuses on developing leaders as people who engage with others in ways which raise them to higher levels of motivation and morality. I interpret this as developing the spiritual dimension of a person, not from a religious perspective, but rather from a relational perspective. My understandings of the relational and of leadership resonate closely with Duignan (2002) who understands leadership in this way:

> ... The ideal of authenticity is not about leaders behaving as saints, or pious, self-righteous people. It is about everyday full-blooded creatures who are politically and economically aware, credible, earthly and practical. Despite their human frailties, they strive to be ethical, caring and conscience driven in the real world. They don't always get it right but they try to live their values to the best of their ability. They make mistakes but they learn from them (Duignan 2002, p. 12).

Fullan (2001) suggests that highly effective leadership or transformational leadership consists of five dimensions or components, as illustrated in Figure 1, these being: moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making.

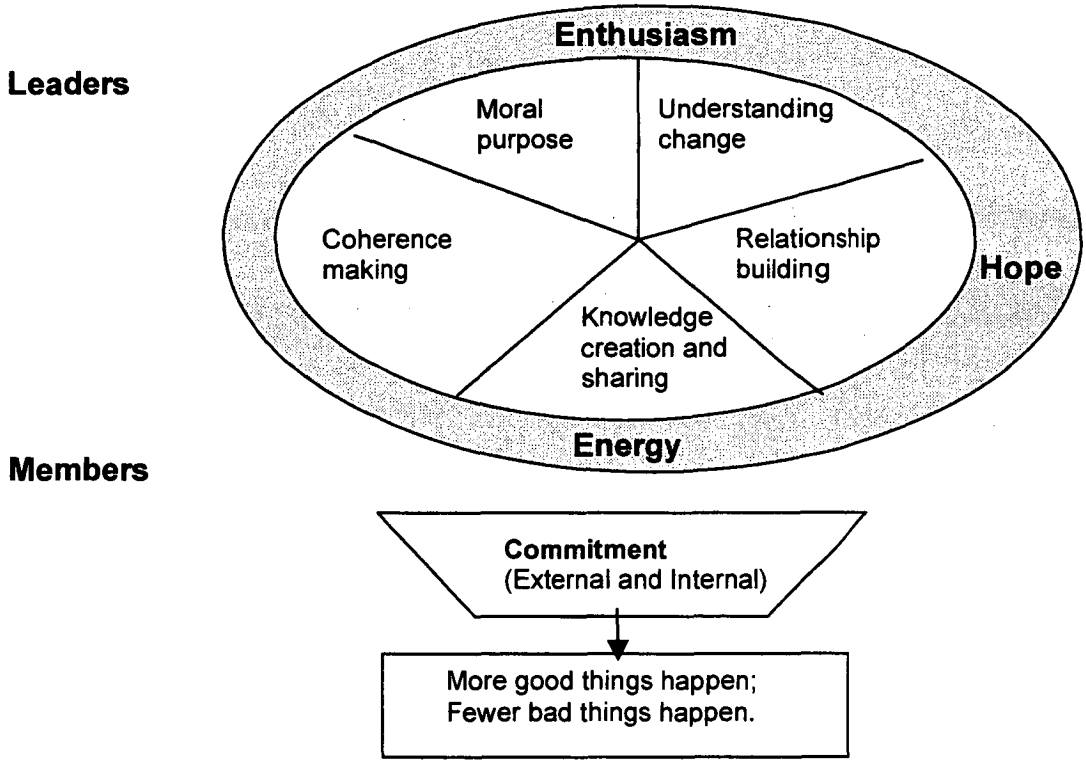
Fullan (2001, p. 7) also argues that these five components are non-linear, but that a stronger set of personal characteristics exists, a concept he refers to as *energy-enthusiasm-hopefulness*. It is this dynamic between both sets and the reciprocal relation which resonates closely with empathic intelligence. This set – energy, enthusiasm and hope – are essential personal characteristics of effective leaders because they manifest optimism. Fullan (2001) posits a view that the five components of leadership, working in congruence with energy, enthusiasm and hopefulness, have the capacity to increase organisational and leadership effectiveness. My inquiry also supports Fullan's contention that the relationship between energy, enthusiasm and hope are characteristics of empathic leadership.

Arnold (2005), Duignan (2002, 2003, 2004), Duignan & Bezzina (2006) and Fullan (2001) all imply that in order to be highly effective as a leader there must be some internal or personal characteristic present or developed. While Fullan (2001) posits enthusiasm and hopefulness, Arnold (2005) suggests empathic intelligence incorporates enthusiasm, engagement, empathy and expertise. Duignan (2002) adds a deep, inner-spiritual perspective to this set of characteristics. I appreciate and value each of these theorist's interpretations and, without judging any of them as right or wrong, I reinterpret them all and offer my own interpretations of empathic leadership.

In synergy with these three theorists, my inquiry suggests that enthusiasm is a key component of leadership. Fullan (2001) appears to focus on emotional components of the

personal characteristics; Arnold (2005) takes a more sophisticated and holistic perspective involving cognition, bringing in 'expertise'. Duignan (2002, 2003, 2004) and Duignan & Bezzina (2006) focus on internal self-reflection and the ethics and morality of leadership. My inquiry also suggests a holistic and complex interpretation of empathic leadership. Figure 1 outlines Fullan's (2001) framework for leadership. I claim that my inquiry in part supports this model, particularly with its focus on the relational, enthusiasm, knowledge and hopefulness.

Figure 1: A framework for leadership (Fullan 2001, p. 4)



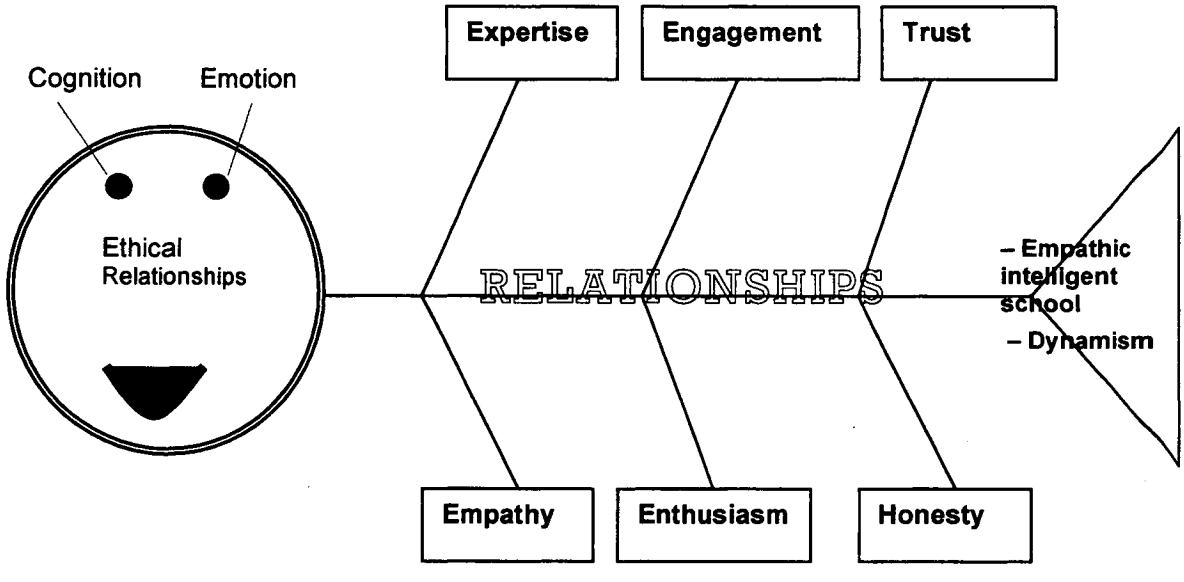
If I, as a leader, can claim to possess empathic intelligence, might I also understand a school community as sets of empathically intelligent relationships? What would such a school environment look like? Would all individuals in such a school be empathically intelligent? My inquiry suggests that Stafford High School might be the beginnings of such a transformed learning environment. It further suggests that in a distributive leadership model as outlined by Duignan (2003), each member of the school community should be striving to become an empathically intelligent leader.

My inquiry suggests that the Fullan model has inadequacies; there need to be additional elements. An empathically intelligent school requires teachers who possess all four superordinate characteristics of enthusiasm, expertise, engagement and empathy as well three other characteristics that have emerged from my inquiry: honesty, trust and relationships.

A renewed conceptualisation of empathic leadership

This inquiry has given me the opportunity to develop a personal conceptual framework for empathic leadership. This framework emerges from my professional conversations with my peers as represented through my letters, along with my readings of Arnold (2005), Duignan (2002, 2003, 2004) and Duignan and Bezzina (2006). My conceptualisation of empathic leadership involves a complex interaction between seven superordinate elements expertise, engagement, trust, relationships, empathy, enthusiasm, and honesty.

Figure 2: My conceptual framework of empathic leadership



I first constructed a visual representation of my framework for empathic leadership and its seven elements using a fishbone as a graphic organiser (Figure 2). In Western cultures there is a high level of agreement that the fish is representative of Christ and the Christian spiritual community. I have chosen the fish as a metaphor with this connection in mind. For me, a spiritual connection involves the relational, a deep understanding of self in relation to others. Though writing in an academic, catholic tradition, Duignan (2002, 2003, 2004) and Duignan and Bezzina (2006), too, unfold the spiritual in terms of the lived relationships with one another. My inquiry suggests that ethical relationships are the core of empathic leadership.

Hence, in Figure 2, relationships form the backbone of the graphic organiser. The metaphor of a fish is also important because it evokes the context in which this living creature exists. It suggests to us that empathic leading, too, is intimate to a particular culture and environment. This all suggests that it is important for leaders, for educators, to know where they stand on important contemporary professional and moral issues and act accordingly. Further, choosing a living organism for a metaphor for leadership focuses our attention on both the fragility and the dynamic nature of our quest to become empathic leaders.

The head of the fish suggests that empathic leadership also involves having the goal of developing ethical relationships among all people working in a school context. The head of the fish also suggests that in the mind of an empathic leader, cognition and emotion are inseparable and are required for intensive self-reflection. Thus, I have named the eyes 'cognition' and 'emotion'. To see the world clearly, cognition and emotion need to be in balance.

The bones of the fish are representative of the characteristics required of empathically intelligent teachers and leaders, and the backbone represents their relationships, critical for the fish to move forward and achieve its goals. Each of these seven elements show congruence within a framework where everyone (students, parents, teachers and leaders) is valued and encouraged to reach their potential, individually and collectively.

The tail of the fish represents an empathically intelligent school community. I have chosen to put this in the tail because I want to suggest that such a social organisation comes into being in the wake of the ethical relationships being formed. The empathically intelligent school is not a stable organisation, rather it is constantly evolving, and hence the word 'dynamic' is embedded within the tail. A fish is a living creature – empathic leadership is formed through rich, dynamic lived experiences (Duigan 2004).

I interpret the connectedness between the elements of the fish as a spiritual connection, as a living process of reflecting and understanding the connections between and within organisations and within an individual. The fish metaphor also represents the dynamic, fluid motions associated with our intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. Taylor (1991, p. 33) argues that no one individual acquires the language needed for self-definition on their own. The genesis of the human mind is not monological, not something each accomplishes on his or her own, rather it is dialogical and relational. For me, this metaphor reflects the livingness of our dialogical and relational being. Hamilton (2004, p. 376), outlines the importance of visual metaphors for teacher education and self-study. She suggests that the

metaphor of the cartographer allows the integration and presentation of complex ideas. I make the same claim for the fish. Developing the graphic organiser of the fish has allowed me to integrate professional knowledge, key readings and self-understanding to emerge new ideas.

Elaborating on the seven renewed superordinate elements

I am about to unfold for you each of the seven superordinate elements which constitute my understanding of empathic leadership. My difficulty here is that as I talk about each superordinate element, I might be implying that each is separate and distinct from the others. On some levels these elements can be separated out and explored; however, as the metaphor of the fish makes clear to us, no element can exist separately without the others. Duignan and Bhindi (1997) suggest that research from public sector organisations reveals a number of managers agonising over the ethics of management practice, and on the lack of meaning and purpose in their work lives. I suggest through the metaphor of the fish that there is interconnectivity between all superordinate elements. As previously stated, the fish visual metaphor for me represents the living, dynamic and connected nature of leading.

1 Understanding expertise

This inquiry suggests that a superordinate element of empathic leadership is expertise. Berliner (1994) outlined five specific stages of teaching status, or expertise, from what he defined as 'novice' to 'expert'. He reminds us that teachers do not move through these stages in a linear fashion. This inquiry supports Berliner's (1994) contention that these elements are interlinked and nonlinear. For example, Bruce at Potter High School was certainly working at an expert level, in comparison to Stuart who appeared to be working at the advanced beginner level, despite being more experienced.

Understanding expertise through Berliner's (1994) model

The five linked stages of expertise as suggested by Berliner (1994) are:

1. Novice level (deliberate) – for example, when I first began working with Stafford High School staff on empathic intelligence I know I made many mistakes and I frequently contacted my colleagues in the United States to ask for help.
2. Advanced beginner level (insightful) – for example, through my conversations with Stuart, he began to ask more and more questions about what a successful classroom teacher looks like.

3 Competent level (rational) – for example, Mike evidenced his competence through the structured processes developed in his school to ensure a shared understanding of curriculum
4 Proficient level (intuitive) – for example, I evidence my proficiency in empathic leadership as I unfold what it means for small teams and focus groups within my school.
5 Expert level – for example, it is my hope that I will become an expert empathic leader where the elements outlined within the fish bone graphic organiser above, are autonomous within me.

Duignan and expertise

Some further thoughts on expertise emerge from the work of Duignan and Bezzina (2006) and my letters to Tim. Through the letters to Tim, we came to an understanding that expertise also involved becoming expert in self-reflection and connecting with others. The key elements of expertise extend beyond being an expert in a particular discipline or management model into the development of an internal thought framework and willingness to know oneself as a holistic person, not just a principal.

Transforming my understanding of expertise through my experiences at Stafford High School

My inquiry suggests that empathic leadership is distributive leadership and requires that all the people in a school gain expertise in many domains. As a principal, I realised that our school literacy and numeracy data, along with feedback from students, staff and parents, indicated that in many areas we were not improving the learning outcomes of our students. The more school data sets I analysed with my staff, the more I realised that the data was much more complex to interpret than we initially thought.

I believed that my staff, too, found the statistical analysis of data difficult. To develop our expertise I brought in someone with statistical knowledge and we all became a community of learners as we reinterpreted the data that helped us pose new questions about what we were doing well, and badly, at Stafford High School. I chose to become a learner alongside my staff, modelling how we come to be experts and ensuring that expertise was distributed among the staff.

My conversations with Kelly, Georgia and Luke, all teachers in charge of literacy and numeracy, suggested that my colleagues appreciated that we were all developing shared expertise together. Before undertaking my doctoral inquiry I might have chosen to work one-on-one with the statistical consultant and then become the conduit of knowledge to my staff. This inquiry showed me that there is benefit about being unsure and uncertain in the presence of colleagues because it allows a situation to develop where we can gain expertise in a collegial way.

2 Understanding engagement

This inquiry suggests that empathic leadership at Stafford High School involves purposeful, focused interactions and partnerships. At our school such relationships are fostered through the use of flexible staff teams, which might include students, parents and staff as well as members of the wider community. In Mike's letter describing one of his teachers, Dee, he shared some unique processes for student engagement based on the use of small flexible teams and groups of students. Dee's work suggests that students are motivated through a sense of individual and collective wellbeing, valuing the efforts and contributions of others. I suggest that school staff are the same. Stafford High School is developing a vision for the future in partnership with the local community. Gaining 'buy in' into this vision should encourage a renewed sense of enthusiasm and engagement. This concept is similar to the development of *throughlines* posited by Blythe and Associates (1998) who see *throughlines* as broad, overarching goals running across and *through* the curriculum at all levels. We intend that the development of a Stafford High School vision statement will engage the community as they see how the vision links the school and the community of Stafford.

The schools in Stafford and six other communities, including two islands,[23] work as a 'community of schools' within the North East cluster, an area which covers the North East region of Tasmania. As a community of schools we have the power to address issues of regional importance. For example, there are plans in train to address career pathway planning and decreasing social capital within the community. Engaging cross-school and community teams of stakeholders allows us to work together to address these issues.

Duignan (2004) and Arnold (2005) and engagement

In the discussion of engagement in Chapter 7, I suggested that Arnold (2005, p. 23) understands engagement as an ability to attract and hold students' attention through centred,

23 http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/about/contact/school_education_division/branch_offices/northernbranch2006.doc, accessed 06/11/2006.

purposeful interactions. Duignan (2004) discusses leadership through a more holistic lens, a framework where leaders should engage with the ethical and moral dimensions of life. He believes that it is thinking about these ethical, relational issues that provokes us as adults into engagement with one another and with our work. Both Duignan (2004) and Arnold (2005) suggest that engagement refers to an ability to enhance communication, as well as an ability to benefit students' learning.

Transforming my understanding of engagement through my experiences at Stafford High School

This inquiry has challenged my understanding of engagement. Initially, at Stafford High School, I interpreted engagement simply as being able to get key stakeholders to 'buy in' to an idea or program. I understood that students were engaged in a teacher's classroom when they were all working, on task and behaving in responsible ways. What I have learnt through this inquiry is that engagement is not a separate attribute, that to understand engagement you have to understand the whole complex picture.

When I first began my principalship at the school I was anxious to promote the benefits of new school-based computer processes, such as an online communication tool. I believed that it would be simple to have my staff 'buy-in' to what I thought gave the school obvious benefits. I was surprised that most staff were reluctant to engage with this new technology. When I heard Kimberley say, 'Gee, Steve, I am working seven days a week now just trying to keep ahead of my assessments, and now you want to teach me online communication!'. I understood that I needed to listen to my staff. I had to go back to processes of self-reflection to come to the understanding that I needed to work with my staff as learners before I could expect them to engage in complex professional learning.

Six months later, with the benefit of this understanding, I worked with key staff members to develop a vision paper that might provoke staff engagement, get them thinking about key ideas and ethical issues related to schooling. Once my key staff members thought through their position, we, as a team, took the vision paper to the whole staff. What I decided to do was step away from directly pushing the idea of technology, and instead have people thinking about how their jobs can become more interesting, easier and more productive. The idea of technological support grew as a subset of these ideas. This strategy for engagement involved my stepping back, thinking of what it is like in the classroom, the pressures of assessment, the fears of change, and deciding to change more slowly. Engagement then was

achieved through thoughtful listening as I made it clear to my staff that I was really hearing what they said.

3 Understanding trust

My inquiry has suggested that trust is a key element of empathic leadership. By this I mean developing the trust of others, trusting yourself and a hopeful trust in the future. All of the letters presented within this inquiry involve some aspect of trust. For this reason I have made trust a key superordinate element in the fish graphic organiser. Reina and Reina (1999) argue that trust will not evolve through mere invitation, good will and expectation. Through research they developed a model of trust incorporating three components, each having subcomponents (Table 2).

Table 2: Three components of trust (Reina & Reina 1999, p. 82)

Competence Trust (Trust of capability)

- Respect people's knowledge, skills and abilities
- Respect people's judgment
- Involve others and seek their input
- Help people learn skills

Contractual trust (Trust of character)

- Manage expectations
- Establish boundaries
- Delegate appropriately
- Encourage mutually serving intentions
- Honour agreements
- Be consistent

Communications trust (Trust of disclosure)

- Share information
- Tell the truth
- Admit mistakes
- Give and receive constructive feedback
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Speak with good purpose

This inquiry suggests that empathic leadership requires the establishment of trustworthy relationships among everyone within the school community. Trust becomes the foundation where visions and goals are created and articulated to others. For example, Amelia discussed the importance of trust at Crockett Middle School when describing enthusiasm within her

school. At Potter High School, Tim makes a connection between trust and growing teacher expertise, while Frank at Valley Charter School discussed the importance of trust to assist with supporting students. These examples show how a trusting school culture is one where reciprocal feedback is provided between individuals, teams and schools. Fullan (2003), discussing the moral imperative of school leadership, validates the importance of trust as an individual and organisational requirement, implied in the following:

> At the level of the individual, there are two major implications for school leaders. The first is to take action consistent with the moral journey we are talking about; second to push for and be responsible to system opportunities to deepen and extend moral purpose (Fullan 2003, p. 63).

Transforming my understanding of trust through my experiences at Stafford High School

At Stafford High School I have developed a number of strategies that offer communication and feedback to foster a sense of openness and trust. I use my executive management team meetings to support me to trust myself. As an empathic leader I intend to ensure that leadership is distributed across the school. Further, I attempt to delegate appropriately, while empowering the development of future leaders and professionals working to achieve the goals and objectives of our school. The trust of all stakeholders will have at its core, an openness and responsiveness where student learning outcomes are at the heart of all our decisions. I remember an example where, early in my principalship, I received information about a few students and their use of illicit drugs. This put me in an ethical tension in relation to trust, the parent who told me about these students trusted me not to breach confidence, and yet I felt the responsibility of ensuring that our whole school community was safe. I resolved this ethical tension in a trustworthy way by requesting that our health and wellbeing curriculum had a higher level of focus in relation to drug use and harm minimisation. This was an action I could undertake without pointing the finger at any one student. At the same time I counseled the parents of the few students involved and supported them to connect with local community drug support programs.

4 Understanding relationships

This inquiry suggests that essential to empathic intelligence and leading is the importance of ethical relationships. I believe that all powerful professional relationships are deeply ethical relationships. I have suggested that the relational is core to empathic leadership and I have modeled it as the backbone of the fish in Figure 2. From my experiences, through interviews, and reinterpretation as fictionalised letters, I have come to understand that ethical

professional relationships are essential to transforming leaders into empathic leaders. I consider relationships to be the sites where all the other elements of empathic leadership are integrated.

The relational and relationships have been mentioned indirectly in all of the letters used for interpretation within this inquiry. The inquiry suggests that a school without positive relationships will never reach its potential, goals or aspirations, nor will a leader. In contrast, Frank, at Valley Charter School, unpacked how positive relationships throughout his school, using a 'connections' and 'reflections' model, enabled students to reach their potential. My inquiry suggests that professional relationships are often forged in small teams as empathically intelligent teachers work together to achieve common goals. Team dynamics are fluid, they will change as teams are reconstructed and their purposes change. This inquiry suggests that of particular importance to empathic leadership is an appreciation that all stakeholders have positive and professional working relationships with one another. The inquiry evidences that positive, ethical and professional relationships do not just magically occur, rather they are developed and sustained through empathic leading.

Duignan and relationships

Duignan and Bezzina (2006) acknowledge that the tensions and difficult choices leaders sometimes have to make require a special empathic set of skills and competencies. He focuses on ethical understanding and suggests that relationships are important for us in order to make choices that are creative and intuitive. An in-depth knowledge of human nature supports us to develop ethical relationships. He further suggests that an in-depth knowledge of ourselves, as individuals, is required before we can form ethical relationships with others. In order to develop leaders who have sound judgment, Duignan suggests that we should critically reflect on the meanings of life and work and says good leaders '... have to be people with heart who are emotionally mature enough to encounter others as well and develop mutually elevating and productive relationships' (Duignan & Bezzina 2006, p. 7). For me, the backbone of the fish metaphor captures the importance of relationships. Like the metaphor, without a backbone there is no movement from the fish; without relationships there is no empathic leadership.

Transforming my understanding of relationships through my experiences at Stafford High School

As a principal striving to lead empathically, I place importance on ensuring that decisions are shared, based on trust, transparent, equitable and taken in the best interests of all our

students. As an empathic leader, I try to manage ethically the inevitable conflicts which arise in a complex organisation like Stafford High School. Sometimes I use processes of open dialogue and other times I might just 'be there', in a non-judgmental way. Mike, Frank, Tim and Amelia all use these strategies in their roles as leaders.

As I have undertaken this inquiry I have come to understand more deeply the importance of every relationship we form as a leader in a school. For example, I remember the time when I a colleague, Shane, suggested to me that, 'You need to make sure you spend as much time talking with our non-teaching staff as you do with our teaching staff'. My initial response was that the advice was irrelevant because I believed that I did spend time listening to everybody. On reflection, I came to understand that I hadn't given as much time to non-teaching staff and their important roles inside our learning community. I now ensure that when I talk to any staff person, I don't cut short our conversation or diminish the importance of my interactions with them.

Recently, I was regrettably 20 minutes late for one of our staff meetings, and when a colleague later pointed this out to me, I was able to share with her my debriefing with a non-teaching staff member about the horrendous day that she had had. I was able to say that I was doing something equally important as attending the staff meeting. The 20 minutes spent with the meeting with Julie, a teacher assistant, has resulted in the development of an outstanding, positive relationship. I sense that Julie understood our spontaneous conversation that afternoon was empathic, warm, caring and genuine.

5 Understanding empathy

Like Borba (2001, p. 7), I understand empathy as identifying with and feeling other people's concerns. This inquiry suggests empathic leadership involves tuning into and supporting individuals and teams to work together with a focus on people's feelings (their own and others'). It involves shaping these feelings within an ethical framework (Hamilton, 2004). For example, Amelia had evidenced her ability to empathise with her staff on her regular classroom visits and casual corridor meetings. One of the things I learnt from Amelia is the power of casual and seemingly unplanned conversations in the corridor and school grounds. I have put this learning into practice as I walk around during lunchtime duty and 'bump into' other teachers and seize the opportunity to talk about issues of importance. My inquiry and lived experience suggests that empathy represents a congruence with empathic intelligence where cognition and emotion (the two eyes represented within the fish graphic organiser) are in synergy.

As principal of Stafford High School I try to foreground empathy through structuring reflective thinking time into our regular weekly meetings. Hamilton (2004) suggests that teachers should have strong understandings of ethics, caring and how these influence teacher judgements. She claims that '(t)he integrity and trustworthiness that teachers bring to classrooms and ways of being affect their students' (p. 394). This is quality time where teachers are able to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings about issues of importance that we need to address. Sometimes these are broad ethical issues related to the values and vision of our school and other times they are equity issues, such as thinking about strategies supporting students who are not achieving their literacy benchmarks.

I am trialing the strategy of including reflective thinking into school staff meetings as a component of empathic leadership. As principal I try to support the process of empathic thinking and behaviour through skillfully posing questions to increase our focus on others' perspectives and feelings. Garmston (1997, p. 2) suggests that staff development should involve 'operating outside our own comfort levels'. I hope my questions support this shift. Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006, p. 17) support the findings from this inquiry with their focus on *personalisation* as both contextual and relational – between the teacher, the student, the home, and the school. As represented in the Frank letter series, empathy is a very important superordinate element of empathic leadership. The ability and capacity to imagine the thinking and feeling of others.

Arnold (2005) suggests that empathy is

> ...an ability to understand your own thoughts and feelings and, by analogy, apply your self-understanding to the service of others, mindful that their thinking and feeling may not match your own. It is a sophisticated ability involving attunement, conjecture and introspection: an act of thoughtful, heartfelt imagination (Arnold 2005, p. 23).

Transforming my understanding of empathy through my experiences at Stafford High School

As a newly appointed principal a number of years ago, I remember going to the senior leadership team with a huge change agenda. I had portfolios for each staff member mapped out, key performance indicators, and an expectation that everyone was keen to change, keen to move on and to advance our school. I thought I understood what each staff member was thinking, but I didn't really understand how they were feeling. I remember Kyle saying to me afterwards, in private, 'Steve, I enjoy being a member of the senior leadership team, but I

don't know if I have the time to complete the tasks you allocated. My family rarely see me before 7 pm now!'

This example led me to sit downand think about the meaning of education, of work and of leading. I was so determined to change the school at the expense of individuals. Maybe Kyle was not alone with his concerns. I had to ask myself, is he the only one game enough to express his feelings to me? My process of self-reflection involved imagining what it would be like if I went home to my family at 7 pm each night, already loaded with folders of work to do, and then being asked to take on more! I would have felt shattered and I might have been putting at risk my relationship with my wife and my children.

Thinking like this led me to rethink the pace of change I was expecting at Stafford High School and the level of support that all staff would require to engage with change. I had to refocus on things that were really important and let go of those that weren't. At the most simple level, I understood that for Kyle to take on additional leadership responsibilities such as duty rosters, I had to free him from being a subject leader. At a more complex level, I had to think of ways of making him enthusiastic about change.

6 Understanding enthusiasm

I suggest that enthusiasm about any project or change is slowly built through teamwork. For example, in my inquiry, Crockett Middle School has a focus on developing teams that are enthusiastic and energetic. The individuals and groups that constituted these teams are imaginative, creative and lateral thinking. Their thinking allowed for thoughtful and reflective dialogue within the teams to open up possibilities for change. In the Crockett example, enthusiasm is evoked as the staff work in teams to improve student learning outcomes. Supporting this finding on a theoretical level, Goleman, Boyzatkis and McKee (2001, p. 24), under their conception of *resonant leadership*, claim that emotion is the glue that holds people together in a team and commits them to an organisation. They further argue that some leaders are able to inspire others through their intrapersonal and interpersonal behaviours as team members vibrate with the leader's upbeat and enthusiastic energy.

Arnold, Duignan and enthusiasm

Chapter 6 states that Arnold (2005, p. 22) understands that 'enthusiasm is a personal energy conveyed to others, is motivated by hope and belief, and is a cousin to passion and desire.' In that chapter I questioned whether enthusiasm was a distinct element or was it related to the whole person. Duignan (2003, 2004; Duignan & Bezzina 2006) reaffirms my thinking, that

leadership requires an understanding of the whole person. In fact he suggests that leadership is an influencing process, where effective leaders elevate the human spirit through actions and interactions that are ethical, moral and compassionate. Both Arnold (2005) and Duignan (ibid.) understand the importance of enthusiasm in connecting with others. So, I now believe enthusiasm is an important element of empathic leading as it is central to forming relationships.

Transforming my understanding of enthusiasm through my experiences at Stafford High School

Walking around the corridors of my school it is satisfying to see the classrooms where teachers are enthusiastic, where pride in their teaching is evident. They proudly display student work, talk constantly about the achievements of their students and really enjoy teaching. However, it is also walking through such energetic and vibrant classrooms where I came to understand the power of enthusiasm from a leader's perspective. One day, while walking through our school buildings, I approached our Grade 8 classrooms. In one of the rooms Kimberley was proudly walking around the room, talking with her students, helping and guiding the class. As I approached the door, Kimberley noticed me and came up, happy and proud of her students' efforts and learning. Rather than sharing in this moment of celebration, my concern about administrative issues led me to simply ask Kimberley if she would cover a recess duty. Of course, she said she would cover for a colleague, but it was at that moment when I looked at her face that I realised that I had deeply disappointed her, because I had not first engaged with her enthusiasm about her successful classroom.

Later that night while driving home, on my usual one-hour commute, I wondered why I didn't stop for a moment and share Kimberley's enthusiasm. I kicked myself for allowing a relatively unimportant aspect of school administration to overwhelm an opportunity to connect ethically and enthusiastically with a successful staff member. I remember the look in her eyes and the sudden disappointment in her principal. Now, I make a genuine effort to walk throughout the school a number of times each day. Administration questions can wait until the breaks, the core business of schools is quality teaching, learning and leadership. As I walk through classrooms I make a point of deliberately seeking teachers, asking them about their lessons, asking the students about their learning and taking time to just be present with my colleagues in their rooms and to share with them their enthusiasm. I also ensure that I engage with all teaching and non-teaching staff on a daily basis, if possible, with the focus on feeling their enthusiasm.

7 Understanding honesty

Linking closely with trust, I see honesty as an essential superordinate element of empathic leading. This inquiry suggests that we all need to be honest with one another. I suggest that ethical relationships are built on honesty. I further suggest that before anything else leaders need to be honest with themselves. Honesty in the school context includes being truthful, moral, open, genuine and sincere. This relates closely with the six other superordinate elements outlined in my model in Figure 2, as honesty is critical to maintaining positive relationships within schools, teams and the wider community. Honesty is important to the empathic leadership as it enables open dialogue.

Transforming my understanding of honesty through my experiences at Stafford High School

At Stafford High School, talking openly with Stuart about his strengths and weaknesses and being prepared to accept his honest critique of me, changed his classroom behaviour and provoked me into greater self-reflection. At Oaktree Middle School, Mikeand his leadership team strive to be honest with stakeholders so they can build a collective vision about protocols for disengaged students.

As Amelia wrote, '... You discuss trust, honesty and relationships as being part of our culture and important; there is no doubt that in my opinion these must be a core part of every school and is certainly something we value ...' At Stafford High School, honesty underpins everything I do as a leader. I remember a time, when I was asked to give feedback to a young teacher, Mark. Rather than give Mark some honest feedback about his teaching, I focused only on the positives and held back the feedback which may have really tested his strength, including some harsh feedback about his interactions with his peers. As I reflected on this meeting, I realised that I wasn't being totally honest with Mark. This led me to another ethical dilemma, if I had been totally honest in my feedback, I may have undermined Mark's self-esteem to such an extent that he was bound to fail. But, by not addressing the negative issues at all, I didn't give him the opportunity to grow as he faced his shortcomings. This has led me to ask about the relationship between honesty, enthusiasm and, perhaps, the requirement to sometimes stay quiet. Staying quiet might be a temporary strategy that allows you time to think through how you can give honest feedback in a critical way that is also supportive.

Another example I have in relation to empathic leadership and honesty relates to a paraprofessional staff member, Mario. I was concerned that Mario's work performance was way below that expected in our school community. He appeared disinterested in establishing relationships with staff and students and this was noticeably affecting his work. Here I provided feedback which was initially positive and then constructive. Mario, though based at our school, brought to the community discourses of clinical psychology, and so approached students in a way that fitted with his discipline. This led to a lack of communication between Mario and the school about students with very high needs. My way of addressing this was to talk with him about the different understandings we might have of students from an educational point of view, as opposed to the view of a clinical psychologist, and then to try to develop a strategy for communication about the needs of individual students. Mario found it difficult to break out of a clinical psychologist's framework and become a fully participating member of our school community. The most honest response on behalf of myself and Mario, in light of this ethical dilemma, was to suggest a change of work context for him. To be supportive, I helped Mario write job applications and put him in contact with schools that worked in a way that suited him.

My renewed conceptualisation of empathic leadership: some comments

This inquiry suggests that each of the seven superordinate elements (expertise, engagement, trust, relationships, empathy, enthusiasm and honesty) which constitute empathic leadership do not exist independently, rather they coexist and develop each other. Further, the inquiry suggests that empathic leadership is contextual. This inquiry has enabled me to deeply understand my leadership through a lens of empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005). My deepened understandings suggest that leading empathically is a pre-requisite to the kind of transformational leadership and growth outlined by Hargreaves (2003, p. 3): 'transformation implies a profound or fundamental change, a metamorphosis that involves some radical innovation, not just incremental innovation ... radical innovation starts from the future and works backwards'.

As I have interpreted and reinterpreted my interviews and fictional letters, I sense that an eighth element to empathic leadership might emerge. This element is humour. As I read the letters and interviews, I perceive a sense of gentle good humour, used my by professional colleagues as a strategy to foster powerful relationships and diffuse difficult situations. I am led to ask the question how does humour link with empathic leadership?

Duignan and Bhindi (1997) imply that there is an increasing use of the concept of 'spirituality' by leaders, not in a narrow religious sense, but rather in the sense of questioning the deeper purpose or meaning of their actions in light of values. I am further led to ask about the power of spiritual thinking in empathic leading. This element has a focus on our social conscience and aspects of justice within our community.

Opening possibilities for the Tasmanian educational system

This inquiry had the intention of unfolding a concept of empathic leadership at a range of levels within the Tasmanian educational system. The inquiry and the discussion in this chapter so far suggest three possibilities for systemic change which could almost immediately be implemented in Tasmania in parallel with some current Department of Education 2006/07 initiatives. The three initiatives involve: a formal leadership program, undergraduate and postgraduate work at the University of Tasmania, and the redevelopment of selection criteria for Department of Education leaders.

Possibility 1 – Strengthening an existing leadership program

Throughout 2006, the Department of Education, Tasmania initiated an emergent leadership program[24] . The aim of this leadership program is to develop coaching and mentoring skills in existing school leaders who may be future principals. The existing program is based on a mentoring model where five supervisors, identified by the participant, support the participant to question their leadership style. The questioning is structured through a series of questionnaires. Responses from the questionnaires are usually analysed and re-presented to the participant. In my review of this program, I have not been able to see conceptions of empathic leadership embedded in the questioning. Duignan (2003, p. 23) suggests that an understanding and appreciation of values, ethics, spirituality, art and great literature, as well as ongoing critical reflection on important daily issues, are all important resources for leadership formation programs. The current program does not include this kind of reflection.

Once the feedback from the questionnaires undertaken as part of the program has been analysed, that data underpins discussions between participants and an independent coach. My inquiry suggests that a problem with this model of professional learning is a lack of appropriate links between the participant, the mentor and their supervisor. The program relies heavily on coaching from professionals external to the Department of Education. Empathic leading should be modeled; the fact that this program occurs out of context is a

[24]http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/school_leadership/leadership_curriculum_progression_chart, accessed on 16/06/06.

weakness. Duignan (2003) suggests, that critical reflection on important daily issues is required to foster empathic leadership. This cannot happen where supervisors cannot be directly involved in the daily life of the participants' school.

There are obvious challenges to inserting conceptions of empathic leading into this existing program; however I consider they are worth overcoming. Such implementation could have a focus on how empathic leading is actualised in the school context. As with this inquiry, I suggest that any proposed leadership program should have, central to all planning, self-transformation of the leader. My inquiry suggests that the questionnaire, which is the basis of this program, could include some new items specific to empathic leadership, such as:

- How do you understand yourself to be an empathic leader?
- How do you involve senior staff and others in school transformation?
- How might leadership be shared across your school?
- How would you improve communication across the school?
- How might you use mentoring to extend your abilities as a leader?
- How do you model transparency and openness in decision-making to students, parents and your professional colleagues?
- How do you use data collection and research to support your decision-making and planning?
- How do you give critical feedback?
- How do you receive critical feedback?

I suggest that embedding these questions into the structure of the existing program might be a first step towards a focus on leading empathically.

Possibility 2 – Undergraduate and postgraduate work at the University of Tasmania

Hamilton (2004, p. 337), suggests that 'the self-study of teaching practices has emerged as one way to examine the experiences of teaching teachers within the academic setting'.
My experiences as a doctoral student resonate with the work of Hamilton (2004) which foreground for me the importance of academic study as a process for reviewing and rebuilding practical knowledge and theory to transform my identity as a leader. My experiences suggest that undergraduate courses could challenge pre-service teachers pre-existing knowledge about teaching and offer them new ways of thinking about how to be a powerful teacher–leader. My understandings of leading empathically developed through this

inquiry suggest that undergraduate and postgraduate programs at University should include work on empathic leadership as a strategy for developing competent teacher–leaders.

I suggest that Faculty of Education courses should be supported and strengthened[25]. In analysing the University's course outlines for the undergraduate Bachelor of Education program, it is apparent that students study a range of subjects; some have very broad descriptors enabling flexibility for negotiation between student and teacher. An example of one of these course descriptions, 2006 EPC453 Modes of Curriculum Inquiry B, states that the course:

> Enables students to explore in greater depth the contemporary curriculum developments and issues introduced in EPC451 Contemporary Curriculum Development B. The unit relies heavily on student's capacity to work independently and negotiate with staff when appropriate. Topics covered relate very closely to student's professional practice needs.[26].

I further suggest that when students undertake their practical experiences in schools, the students and their colleague teachers should have focused dialogue, not only about curriculum, assessment, behaviour management and other key topics, but also about empathic leadership in the classroom and in the school. Using empathic leadership, students and colleague teachers can have conversations that are powerful and focused, really incorporating the superordinate behaviours of empathic leadership that I believe underpin any successful practical teaching experience. Currently, the Bachelor of Teaching course has an assessment rubric for pre-service teacher's performance during teaching practicum[27]. My inquiry suggests that the simple inclusion of some criteria associated with empathic leadership into the assessment rubric could be easily achieved. I offer the seven following suggestions:

1. Demonstrates enthusiasm when interacting with students.
2. Demonstrates high level expertise within and across a range of discipline areas.
3. Evidences professional engagement with senior staff in school.
4. Empathetic understanding when enacting behaviour management protocols.
5. Incorporates colleague teacher feedback into future lesson planning and discussions.
6. Demonstrates the ability to establish and maintain powerful working groups within the classroom.
7. Clearly communicates educational aims and goals to parents and students.

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[25] http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/educ/educ/courses.asp accessed 17/06/2006 :0

[26] http://courses.utas.edu.au/portal/page?_pageid=53,33239&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&P_UNIT_CODE=EPC453, accessed 17/06/2006.

[27] http://www.educ.utas.edu.au/new-schoolex/everyone/Assessment_Criteria.pdf, accessed 28/11/06

I further suggest that the faculty offer national and international leadership scholarships that present opportunities for school leaders to reflect on and develop an ability to lead empathically, similar to the fellowship that I was fortunate to receive. My experiences in the United States and in Australia have enabled me to reflect and further strengthen this concept into empathic leadership. One example where a similar model exists is the *National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)*, facilitated by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) in the United Kingdom.[28]

Specifically, one of the core outcomes of such a leadership program is the development of self and others. Furthermore, the aim of the program is to develop leadership where a leader can develop a vision within a school which 'should express core educational values and moral purpose and be inclusive of stakeholders' beliefs and values' (NCSL 2004, p. 7).

Possibility 3 –Selection criteria for Department of Education leaders

Most education systems, including ours in Tasmania, seem to be adapting to continual change. Rolph (2006) suggests that schools, as learning communities, need leaders who are good organisational thinkers. My inquiry suggests that good organisational thinkers are also good empathic leaders. Rolph (2006, p.31) supports my assertion as he claims that good organisational thinkers have a focus on the relationships that are required to improve the learning of individuals and to foster the smooth running of an organisation like a school. My inquiry suggests that another way of embedding these conceptions of empathic leadership is to include them in key position descriptions advertised by the Department of Education, Tasmania. When reviewing the 2006 Department of Education selection criteria for the position of principal[29] I could make the assertion that all the criteria are underpinned by the seven key elements outlined in Table 2. The current selection criteria are:

1. Outstanding capacity to lead a school community in change designed to optimise student learning outcomes.
2. Within departmental policies and guidelines, demonstrated capacity and skills to plan, allocate and be accountable for the management of school resources.
3. Demonstrated high order interpersonal and communication skills, including evidence of excellent team building skills.

[28] http://www.ncsl.org.uk/programmes/npqh/index.cfm, accessed 17/10/06.
[29] http://sods.education.tas.gov.au/WBrowse_Client.asp?posthref=/SchoolEducation/Schools/GenericSoD%27s, accessed 18/06/2006.

4 Evidence of capacity to develop a supportive school environment based on ethical and equitable principles.
5 Capacity to work with the District Superintendent and the whole school community to achieve departmental and school goals.
6 Demonstrated high order skills of personal effectiveness, particularly in the practice of sound judgment.

I recommend that selection panels develop questions beneath these selection criteria that are specific about empathic leadership. For example, under selection criteria 3, 'Demonstrated high order interpersonal and communication skills, including evidence of excellent team building skills', a panel could ask probing questions like:

1 Provide a practical example of how your enthusiasm supported the completion of a difficult project at your school.
2 How might you deepen the expertise of staff in your discipline area teams?
3 You have a staff member at risk of failing. What strategies can you suggest to re-engage him/her with students?
4 A student complains to you that a staff member has treated them unfairly, what steps would you take to deal with this issue?
5 A number of students at your school are working below the national literacy benchmarks. How do you address this issue with parents and teachers?
6 Outline three strategies you might engage to provoke trust among your senior leadership team.
7 Unfold what you consider appropriate professional relationships within your school.

These additional probing questions may support the selection of a principal who demonstrates the ability to lead empathically. The leadership process is constantly changing, leaders and principals are faced with new challenges and must always grow to meet these challenges. Such tensions and complexities as exist require leaders who are able to change themselves, in the first instance, then their school culture. As Duignan (2002, 2003, 2004), Duignan and Bezzina (2006) and Arnold (2005) provide new ways of thinking about the types of human transformation required to be our personal best, the Department of Education also must change the way that principals are recruited and selected. I suggest the decades-old, process of writing against selection criteria, sitting through an interview and answering a few questions from a panel of supervisors is a flawed one. This process does not appear to take into account the human side of the applicant, nor focus on the applicant's capacity to be

reflective, or to be transformational. The process seems to work against selecting leaders who are empathic.

Commenting on this inquiry

The process of reflective writing and use of fictional letters and narrative used throughout this inquiry has strengths and weaknesses. My writing reflects a more sophisticated thinking and so is now far more complex and allows me the opportunity to engage with metaphor more readily. This complexity helps me provoke new questions about empathic leading, which seems to suggest that Richardson's (2000) concept of 'writing for inquiry' has some validity for me. The nature of questioning throughout this inquiry has supported me to engage in self-reflection and, through self-reflection, to experience a sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) and develop a sense of gravitas (Duignan 2003). So, I can claim that writing for inquiry has helped me to unfold my thoughts in a way that allows me to reflect on them and grow as a leader.

The strengths of reflective writing and using fictional letters have been outlined in Chapter 5 of this thesis. One great strength of this fictionalised narrative style, has been the ability for me to unfold connections between practice and theory. The concept of storytelling as a way of informing others and making meaning is certainly not new (Eakin 1999). Eisner (1997, p. 264) suggests that, 'humans have used storied forms to inform since humans have been able to communicate'. The ability to engage with stories throughout this thesis allows me to understand and appreciate ambiguity. I particularly like the way that Gardner, cited in Kouzes and Pozner (2003) puts it:

> ... It is stories of identity – narratives that help individuals think about and feel who they are, where they come from, and where they are headed – that constitute the single most powerful weapon in the leader's literary arsenal (Kouzes & Pozner 2003, p. 105).

This inquiry has enabled me to live authentically (Duignan2002), to live the journey of an empathically intelligent leader. As I interpret and reinterpret my experiences, my stories, I am more aware of myself as a person, and as a leader. I have realised that being a principal carries with it some truly difficult decisions requiring head power and heart power. My fish organiser puts a focus on integrating the rational and the emotional to become an empathic leader. Emotionally this journey has been stimulating, electric and, at times stressful. In many ways the journey has been like life, nonlinear, full of twists and turns and emotions that can be described as both the highs and lows of inquiring. Conceptually, this journey has been one of intellectual engagement, of synergy between thought and feeling that I have

experienced through my reading and writing, through the barriers, the tangential thinking and the fluidity of ideas.

This journey has enabled me to live out quintessential experiences of creating a dynamic between thinking and feeling, or, what I would be comfortable to say now, between inter and intra-subjectivity.

Given that this inquiry was aimed at understanding empathic leadership – and ultimately for me to gain a deeper understanding of my own leadership – it was essentially a self-study. This self-study has been a journey, a self-transformation. I have developed a clearer picture of who I am, as a leader and, as a person. This has allowed me to develop a leadership practice of intelligent caring (Arnold 2005) whereby I can support and develop empathic leadership in others. I am now positioned to know when to disengage and to allow leaders to lead and learn through their leading. This involves addressing ethical issues related to the individual and the communal, the autonomous and the dependent. As I have expanded my repertoire of writing genres to include narrative as inquiry, I have identified my own life as a 'work in progress'. The process of engaging with an authentic community of like-minded scholars through reading and the supervision process has challenged me, challenged my beliefs and understandings, and deepened my understandings of education, leadership and self. Such a dialogic process, both internally and externally with these scholars, enables me to become more deeply reflective and to evolve more questions, which I believe evidence my deepened understandings of empathic leadership.

What role does language play in forming the links between the superordinate elements of empathic leadership?
What is the personal cost to individual leaders as they work to transform schools?
Is empathic leadership transferable across contexts?
How might we encourage all teachers and leaders to learn from shortcomings?
How might we overcome the sense of disempowerment provoked by huge bureaucratic systems?
How does humour link with empathic leadership?
How might a sense of the spiritual be linked to empathic leadership?

The dialogical processes open up new experiences that expand our own thinking and feeling. The amalgam of thought (cognition) and feeling (emotion) is at the very heart of Arnold's (2005) empathic intelligence. The process of dialogue involves social learning, through interpersonal relationships with others and intrapersonal relationships with self. Dialogue

continues to be important to self-transformation and foregrounding the importance towards teaching and learning (see, for example, Burns 2000, Davis et al. 2000, Polkinghorne 1992, Taylor 1991). This focus on the dialogic process is linked to the first question above.

This inquiry as narrative, trades generalisation for particularisation, hence the findings of this inquiry cannot be generalised to a wider population. However, the inquiry has resulted in me deepening my own understandings and presenting a series of possibilities for future consideration. Caution needs to be exercised in generalising from the findings, however, there is evidence to support the emergent possibilities. The theme of this study was centred on empathic intelligence (Arnold 2005), and not all organisations or people will gravitate towards this work. Some scholars have indicated that empathic intelligence has synergies between the research of Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences, specifically his intra-personal intelligence. In fact, personal discussion with Gardner (2004a) indicated that although he has an interest in the concept of empathic intelligence, his intra-personal intelligence may, in fact, already subsume empathic intelligence.

However, Gardner (2004a) contradicted this view in a lecture, suggesting that, in fact, the human brain may have over 170 intelligences, 'But, for the purposes of writing and communication with a wide range of people, stating 173 intelligences and sub-intelligences wouldn't be appropriate. I further suggest that, the initial writing of seven intelligences was appropriate' (Gardner 2004a). The more I think about empathic leading, the more superordinate elements I could emerge. So I could end up in the same situation as Gardner!

Another limitation of this inquiry has been the fact that I am unable to measure the extent I am able to be empathically intelligent and whether or not this has improved my overall leadership as a principal. Although the process of narrative has enabled me to deepen my own understanding about my leadership, this is not crystallised by the observations and opinions of others within this inquiry. Hence, many opportunities exist for future inquiries emerging from this narrative, for leaders, schools and systems.

Final words and final questions

I began this chapter with a quote from Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2000) related to how theoretical perspectives might be both enabling and limiting. My thesis has outlined the enabling nature of the theory of empathic intelligence. However, I have to ask myself whether this theory might blind me or limit my ability to make sense of a complex, social organisation like a school. At the end of this inquiry, though I can claim a deepened

understanding of empathic intelligence, of my own leading, and of how to construct empathic schools, I can also say that I have some new and different questions about leading empathically which might evidence some limits to the theory.

My inquiry has had a high level of focus on the agency of the individual leader and his ability to transform himself and his school culture. Might there be circumstances where this works in the opposite way? Might there be situations where school cultures and bureaucratic structures transform the leader? How might my understanding of empathic leadership help in these situations? I have chosen not to understand leadership from this perspective as it might lead to a sense of hopelessness. It is with a sense of hopefulness that I would like to conclude this inquiry. This inquiry has tested my thinking about leadership and pedagogy and challenged me to be more empathically attuned to self and others. A journey of self-transformation is fundamental to the kind of leader I want to become. Such a journey positions me as an empathic leader and as a person.

What I can claim to have learned so far is expressed in the words of Wilkes (1998, p. 206):

> I have learned that Ruskin was right when he said that 'The highest reward for a person's work is not what he [she] gets for it, but what he [she] becomes by it'. I have learned that the key to reflection is not what we know about ourselves, but the continual quest for what we do not know about ourselves … . And I have learned that I cannot really know and understand my teaching without attempting to know and understand the other parts of my life as well.

Appendix A

Observational Schedule

Rating Scale: 1= always, 2= often, 3= sometimes, 4= seldom and 5= never

Body Attributes	**Behavioural Indicators** **Does the teacher .....**	**Comments**	**Ratings** **1 - 5**
1. *Body Posture*	• Exhibit tension or relaxation through body posture when talking with students?	*Measurement:* Relaxed / Tense	
2. *Physical connectedness*	• Make eye contact when interacting with students? • Lean towards the students when interacting? • Smile and show warmth when interacting? • Face the students with whom they are interacting with?	eye contact leaning facing students smiling	
3. *Facial Expression*	• Demonstrate interest and empathy for the student? • Demonstrate surprise and positive engagement when interacting with the student?	interest/ empathy	
4. *Availability*	• Model availability in terms of physical proximity to students? • Respond to student questions with enthusiasm and interest?	Closeness /distance	
Voice Attributes			
1. *Articulation*	• Clearly speak to students? • Evoke multiple responses from students to complex questions?	speaks clear /unclear interactive/ reflective voice	
2. *Use of voice*	• Communicate using various levels of voice to engage students?	speaking quietly softly little	
3. *Voice Expression*	• Use his/her voice to express major feelings such as interested? Angry? Sad? Bored? Enthusiastic?	Interested/ disinterested Angry Sad Bored Enthusiastic	
4. *Volume*	• Deliberately speak loudly/softly/quietly to engage students?	speaking loud/ quiet	

(Adalsteinsdottir, 2004, p. 100)

Appendix B

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Semi-structured interview questions for teachers/leaders

Introduction

Welcome and thankyou for agreeing to assist in gathering data for inquiry purposes. This interview is being conducted as part of my doctoral study which I am completing on teacher behaviours in the classroom. You have received a consent form to sign (Appendix 2.1), which indicates you consent to this interview. Should you agree to be involves with this study, this interview will be recorded for the purpose of my data analysis and full confidentiality is guaranteed.

1. What is your position at this school?
2. How long have you been teaching? How long at this school?
3. I would be interested in hearing about why you decided to pursue teaching as a career. Can you tell me why you decided to pursue a career in teaching?
4. Everyone has unique personal attributes. I was wondering if you could discuss your personal attributes or intra-personal qualities within the classroom.
   a. Which of these personal attributes do you believe assist you in your teaching?
   b. Can you explain how you arrived at this conclusion?
   c. How do you know if these attributes contribute to students' deep understanding[30]?
   d. Of these attributes how did they develop?
5. How do know if students are engaged in the classroom?
6. What sorts of signs do you look for in students to gauge if they are engaged within your classroom?
7. Do you believe your personal attributes/behaviours assist your capacity to engage students in your classroom?
   a. How do you know?

[30] The term 'understanding' is represented here to incorporate student learning styles, transference and improved learning outcomes.

8. Do you consider yourself an effective teacher?

   a. What sorts of behaviours do effective teachers possess (body attributes, voice attributes etc)?

9. Can you tell me about the classroom environment in which you teach? Particularly in relation to teaching for deep understanding.

10. Thankyou, you have been very helpful. Are there any other thoughts or comments you would like to share with me to help me understand your teaching and particularly your intra-personal behaviours? Anything you would like to add?

Appendix C

Semi-structured interview for students

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for agreeing to assist in gathering data for inquiry purposes. This interview is being conducted as part of a doctoral study I am completing on effective teaching and learning. Specifically, the study is looking at the empathic intelligence of teachers. This intelligence basically refers to the enthusiasm, empathy, expertise and capacity to engage students. You have received a consent form to sign (Appendix D), which indicates your consent to this interview. This interview will be recorded for the purpose of my data analysis and full confidentiality is guaranteed.

1. What's the best thing about this school? What's the worst thing?
2. What do you love/like about teachers? What do you hate most about teachers?
3. Who are the best teachers you have ever had? Why?
4. When you get stuck with a problem in class what helps you most?
5. I reckon the best teachers are those who make it great, really care about students as well as other things. Does this sound like Mr(s) .....? (Name of teacher observed)
6. What sort of things make a classroom a great place to be in and learn in?
7. Okay, you have been very helpful. Anything else you would like to say?

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