❖ Introduction ❖

Sustained School Success— What We Know, What We Don't Know, What We Need To Know

> *Without a clear focus on "capacity," a school will be unable to sustain continuous improvement efforts or to manage change effectively. That we know.*
>
> —David Hopkins and David Jackson (2003, p. 87)

Concern for capacity building has been a somewhat controversial topic of inquiry in educational research for more than a decade. The reason for this concern is well captured in our opening quotation by eminent British researchers Hopkins and Jackson.

But what, exactly, is "capacity"? Why is it important? How is it created? How is it sustained? And what forms of leadership underpin it? These questions have, until very recently, been unresolved. Now, fortunately, concrete, encouraging answers are becoming apparent. Taken together, the answers suggest that the education community now possesses the insights to ensure that school leaders can have a greater sense of strategic purpose during the next decade than was possible for the most part during the past decade.

In this introductory chapter, we outline briefly what is known about school capacity building. We also provide an up-to-date summary statement regarding distributed leadership, which is widely accepted as necessary if enhanced capacity is to be achieved and sustained. These tasks completed, the stage is set for the presentation in Chapter 1 of our response to the capacity-building challenge: the COSMIC C-B model.

SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL CAPACITY—WHAT WE KNOW

For the past two decades, educational researchers across the globe have expended massive effort attempting to uncover the school improvement equation. Literally hundreds of innovative approaches to school improvement, development, and revitalization have been created and implemented, encompassing the following range of widely used and well-known improvement approaches:

- Action learning, involving collaborative learning techniques, action research, and various forms of collegial learning circles
- School reculturing, involving values clarification and the development of school vision statements
- Coaching and mentoring, involving external experts and train-the-trainer strategies, usually in relation to school implementation of systemic priorities
- Cluster-based networking, involving district teams of school representatives sharing successes and needs
- Infrastructural design and reconstruction, involving the implementation of new facilities, technologies, and learning spaces

Some notable revitalization initiatives have in fact incorporated aspects of several of these approaches. Consider, for example, the ROUNDS Project (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009) in the United States; Manitoba School Improvement Project in Canada (Earl, Torrance, Sutherland, Fullan, & Ali, 2003); Improving the Quality of Education for All Project (Hopkins, West, & Ainscow, 1996) in the United Kingdom; and the IDEAS Project in Australia (Crowther, Andrews, Dawson, & Lewis, 2001). All are laudatory for their originality, comprehensiveness, and clarity. All have been methodically developed, comprehensively implemented, and systematically evaluated. And yet, as Levin (2010) has stated recently, their influence on school achievement has been disappointingly limited, with the focus of many schools and systems still on maintenance, not improvement. And why, one might ask, would this not be the case? After all, school improvement as currently construed provides no guarantee of a return that is commensurate with the effort expended and no assurance of sustainability, even if short-term success is achieved. The resultant frustration for school leaders is understandably and predictably debilitating.

Which leads us directly to the concept of capacity building . . .

It was probably Peter Senge who first introduced capacity building into the organizational and management literature. In attempting in 1990 to demonstrate a logical link between the concepts of knowledge society and

organizational development, Senge asserted that two conditions must be met in the work of 21st-century organizations: first, the notion that the professional learning community must become accepted as integral to organizational development and, second, professional learning communities, once in operation, must accept that their core purpose involves the creation and sustainability of significant "new knowledge."

It was out of these dual premises that the concept of educational capacity building was born. For, according to Senge, when the professional community of an organization such as a school creates significant "new knowledge," and sets in place processes to ensure the ongoing refinement and dissemination of that knowledge, the organization's "capacity" to achieve and sustain success is greatly enhanced.

In the two decades since Senge's pioneering thinking, capacity building and its two key subordinate concepts—knowledge creation and professional learning community—have become fundamental organizational constructs. In education, the sequence of development as we see it can be linked to six key milestones.

Milestone one—1995—The idea that a school's "capacity" influences the nature and quality of student learning was introduced into the educational literature in 1995 by University of Wisconsin-Madison researchers Fred Newmann and Gary Wehlage. Subsequently, Bruce King and Newmann (1999, pp. 1-4) undertook nationwide research that enabled them to assert that a school's capacity to affect the quality of instruction in classrooms comprises four "dimensions":

- Teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions
- Professional learning, focused on (a) a concentration on student learning, (b) collaborative planning and decision making, (c) sustained effort, and (d) teachers learning as a community
- Program coherence
- Technical resources

Newmann and Wehlage's model is unique in the emphasis it places on teachers' use of the four dimensions to enhance their core work—their pedagogy.

Milestone two—2001—The notion of "spheres of capacity" was developed by Canadian researchers Coral Mitchell and Larry Sackney. Their model is based on three "spheres," which they assert must be developed concurrently if a school's overall capacity is to be enhanced. The spheres are

- the personal sphere—in which individual professionals establish connections among their practices, values, and knowledge, via reflection;

- the interpersonal sphere—in which groups and teams share knowledge about both good practice and how to build effective teams; and
- the organizational sphere—in which shared leadership, schoolwide collaborative practices, and associated supportive mechanisms are conceptualized, trialed, and refined.

Mitchell and Sackney's (2001) model is regarded by some authorities as the most comprehensive model of capacity building yet devised (Hadfield, Chapman, Curryer, & Barrett, 2002).

Milestone three—2001—The concept of "capital" was probably first introduced into the school improvement and capacity-building literature in a landmark publication by British researcher David Hargreaves in 2001. Hargreaves's model for building school success has four interrelated concepts:

- Social capital—the school's sociocultural (trust) and structural (networks) components
- Intellectual capital—the sum of the knowledge and experience of the school's stakeholders
- Leverage—the strategies that use teachers' invested energy to enhance the school's educational output
- Outcomes—the achievement of overt and unanticipated goals

Fundamental to Hargreaves's thinking is that an *improving* school increases its social and intellectual capital by using leverage strategies based on "what works." An *effective* school, on the other hand, uses leverage strategies that are grounded in evidence-informed practice. In either case, the enhancement of social capital, intellectual capital, and leverage strategies is asserted to facilitate the creation of better outcomes.

Milestone four—2003—The capacity-building model developed by British researchers David Hopkins and David Jackson is grounded in the rationale that capacity building is a plausible response to the fact of discontinuous societal change. Their capacity-building model contains five dimensions:

- Foundational conditions—creating both a sense of purpose and environmental orderliness
- The personal—constructing new knowledge and skills through reflective professional practice
- The interpersonal—working collaboratively and taking collective responsibility for learning and well-being

- The organizational—building, developing, and redesigning workplaces to create and sustain organizational improvement processes
- External opportunities—becoming entrepreneurial, creative, and resourceful in conjunction with external agencies and initiatives

The Hopkins and Jackson model is based on a conception of schools as organizations that are internally complex and externally interdependent. Hopkins and Jackson also assert the essential importance in capacity building of "dispersed leadership."

Milestone five—2005—The central role of the education system (as opposed to the individual school) in capacity building has been forcefully asserted by Canadian researcher Michael Fullan (2005b).

Fullan's concept of sustained capacity building incorporates eight system-level elements:

- Public service with a moral purpose
- A commitment to change as a multilevel process
- Lateral capacity building through networks
- Vertical relationships and intelligent accountability
- Deep learning
- A dual commitment to short-term and long-term results
- Cyclical energizing of staff
- The "long lever" of leadership (p. 14)

In placing the locus of capacity building outside the school, Fullan in a sense proposes radically new meanings for both "school" and "school leadership."

Milestone six—2006—Canadians Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink (2006) have made the somewhat provocative point that educational development should be regarded as inseparable from global trends toward sustainable lifestyles and ecological conservation:

> The prominence and urgency of having to think about and commit to preserving sustainability in our environment highlights the necessity of promoting sustainability in many other areas of our lives. Foremost among these are leadership and education. (p. 2)

One might ask how school-level improvement initiatives might contribute to global sustainability. Hargreaves and Fink provide a very pointed answer by discussing not "education" but "non-education":

> Our consuming obsession with reaching higher and higher standards in literacy and numeracy within shorter and shorter time lines is exhausting our teachers and leaders, depleting and making it hard to renew the resources pool from which outstanding educators are drawn and turning vast tracts of the surrounding learning environment in humanities, health education, and the arts into barren wastelands as almost all people's achievement and improvement energies are channeled elsewhere. (pp. 2–3)

Hargreaves and Fink then proceed to propose seven principles of sustainable leadership that they (and we) regard as an educational antidote to the sustainability challenge:

- Depth—Sustainable leadership matters.
- Length—Sustainable leadership lasts.
- Breadth—Sustainable leadership spreads.
- Justice—Sustainable leadership actively improves the surrounding environment.
- Diversity—Sustainable leadership promotes cohesive diversity.
- Resourcefulness—Sustainable leadership develops, and does not deplete, material and human resources.
- Conservation—Sustainable leadership learns from the best of the past to create an even better future.

Each of these six highly credible research teams has made a vital contribution over the past decade to our understanding of school-based capacity building. But there is little of commonality in the six models, as is indicated in Table 1, where we indicate what we have borrowed from each model in creating our own capacity-building framework.

Table I.1 Key Contributions of Six Internationally Acclaimed Capacity-Building Models to COSMIC C-B

Model	*Context*	*Key contributions*
Newmann and Wehlage (1995) and King and Newmann (1999)	U.S.	• The concept of professional learning community is the central agency in school capacity building • Successful 21st-century teachers are both highly proficient individuals and collaborative professionals

Model	*Context*	*Key contributions*
Mitchell and Sackney (2001)	Canada	• Capacity building happens when personal, interpersonal, and organizational development intersect
D. Hargreaves (2001)	U.K.	• The generation of significant outcomes depends largely on the existence of high levels of social capital and intellectual capital, as well as leverage strategies
Hopkins and Jackson (2003)	U.K.	• Discontinuous change can be managed if capacity building processes are in place • Dispersed leadership is fundamental to successful capacity building
Fullan (2005b)	U.S.	• The basis of successful capacity building is systemwide supports, leadership networks, and incentives
A. Hargreaves and Fink (2006)	U.S./ Canada	• Sustainable capacity building in schools is inseparable from values associated with global sustainability and quality of life

LEADERSHIP AS A DISTRIBUTED QUALITY—WHAT WE KNOW

We indicated earlier that it was probably Peter Senge who introduced the concept of capacity building into our thinking and also into our vocabulary. But while immense progress has been made by educational researchers and thinkers since Senge's pioneering endeavors two decades ago, many questions remain unanswered. One question of particular importance is that of leadership: *What forms of leadership are needed to ensure success in school improvement and school capacity building?*

In our efforts over the past year or more to chart a leadership pathway for successful school improvement and school capacity building, we have been guided by our own inestimable confidence in the notion of teacher leadership, by our belief in the integrity of a particular form of distributed leadership that we call parallel leadership, and by compelling research from around the globe. Four insights appear to us to be irrefutable.

First is the establishment of a direct relationship between leadership as a distributed quality and successful school improvement. Traditional constructions of educational leadership, focused on the principalship, are now almost universally regarded as totally inadequate for processes of organizational

learning, knowledge creation, and sustainability. In contrast, researchers such as Raelin (2005, p. 18) and Solansky (2008, p. 334), have asserted that constructs such as "team leadership," "leaderful organizations," and "we the leaders" are not only suited to sociocultural values associated with modern liberal democratic life but are justified for school applications on grounds of research into school effectiveness. There is also compelling evidence that distributed leadership can contribute to enhanced school outcomes by nurturing the development of pedagogical quality through highly the activities of professional learning communities. Mulford (2007), Harris (2004), and Timperley (2005) are leading international scholars who support this important conclusion.

Second is the lack of established clarity regarding what "distributed" leadership actually means in school affairs. Hopkins and Jackson (2003, p. 97) have noted that

> Despite more than two decades of writing about organizational learning . . . we are still in a position of needing to develop understandings about what leadership really involves when it is distributed, how schools might function and act differently, and what operational images of distributed leadership in action might look like.

In similar vein, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) have cautioned that distributed leadership has a variety of meanings and seems to have a variety of vague descriptors, including "devolved," "dispersed," "shared," "teamed," and "democratic." Consistent with this theme, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006, p. 202) have asserted that

> One slice of the educational literature seems mostly to be about "leadership by adjective"; a new qualifier is added to the term leadership at least annually, creating the misguided impression that something new has been discovered.

It can only be concluded that the international research agenda in relation to distributed leadership in school contexts is far from complete. Nevertheless, we have previously taken the position that what we call "parallel leadership" is identifiable, definable, and defensible on the basis of authoritative school-based research. Our research-based definition is

> Parallel leadership is a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collaborative action to build school capacity. It embodies three distinct qualities—mutual trust, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression. (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann 2009, p. 53)

Our construction of parallel leadership was described in our publication *Developing Teacher Leaders: How Teacher Leadership Enhances School Success* (Crowther et al., 2009, pp. 57–58) as follows:

> In advancing parallelism as a professionally appropriate approach to school-based leadership, we acknowledge, first of all, its dictionary definition: "agreement in direction, tendency or character" (Macquarie Library, 1998, p. 1560). Essential to our developmental work, however, have been the rich and complex meanings of this concept in a number of fields of cultural and intellectual endeavor.

Consider, for example, the field of *music,* where parallelism connotes the harmony derived when two independent parts or voices within a musical texture move up or down by the same distance in tandem (e.g., parallel fifths). In *language,* parallelism is well known. For example, analogies allow new meaning to be constructed through correspondence between two different concepts. In the world of *mathematics,* parallelism refers to forces that mirror each other. Parallel lines, for example, sustain their individual identities while maintaining a common direction and an unwavering distance from each other. In *computer science,* parallel processing refers to the management of complex data through systems that operate in a complementary fashion. Finally, consider the discipline of *philosophy,* in particular metaphysics, where parallelism connotes a doctrine of mind and body interacting synchronistically while remaining independent.

Parallelism in these human endeavors suggests values of respect, harmony, purposeful direction, alignment, individual presence, and complementarity. The three specific qualities that we have attributed to parallel leadership—mutual trust, shared purpose, and allowance for individualism—are readily discernible in these broader constructs and have been generated from our research with them in mind.

As would be expected, the three specific qualities that define parallel leadership are also to be found in other manifestations of contemporary culture.

In sports, for example, the notion that "A champion team will always beat a team of champions" implies at least two of the three qualities that we attribute to parallelism in school leadership. In musical performance, the complex relationship between a conductor, orchestral heads, and specialist performers can be viewed as reflecting aspects of all three underpinning qualities of parallelism—mutualism, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression. The same is true in other performing arts, perhaps particularly dance, where ballet, rock 'n' roll, line dancing, and a preindustrial war dance may each be regarded as demonstrating particular forms of parallelism and manifesting

varying degrees of each of the qualities of mutualism, shared purpose, and individuality.

But the three qualities are, we think, more deeply meaningful in leadership for successful school-based reform than in other culture forms that we have explored. We therefore assert that parallel leadership is a distinctive educational construct that has the potential to decisively advance the cause of schools and the teaching profession in the 21st century.

Diagram 4 (Resource A) shows the product of our research in conceptual terms.

In essence, to enhance a school's effectiveness necessitates a three-pronged strategy by a committed professional community over an extensive period (two years or more, in our case studies). That is, the school's professionals must engage in shared learning, focused reflection, and in-depth problem solving (outer circle of Diagram 4) while refining and deepening the school's culture and identity (middle circle) and simultaneously designing and implementing school-specific pedagogical principles and associated strategies (inner circle).

The daunting nature of this multifaceted challenge should not be underestimated. But it is within the capability of the modern teaching profession to achieve, as long as parallel leadership is used to guide school development and revitalization processes.

Our six school case studies in the chapters that follow substantiate this very important point. But, in this book, in charting a leadership pathway for schools pursuing enhanced success, we take our earlier definition of parallel leadership to a new level of understanding and justification.

Third is the rapidly evolving international policy context for distributed leadership in school practice. Pont, Nusche, and Moorman (2008) have noted that, as a result of the ever-growing phenomenon of the school as a learning organization, global interest in middle management is spreading and teachers are taking on an increasingly wide range of roles and responsibilities for leading and managing in schools. They note (pp. 78–80) that in Spain, teachers with specialist skills are now provided reduced workloads to assume the role of leadership assistants; in New Zealand, teachers have access to senior practitioner roles with schoolwide functions; in Finland, teachers assume districtwide educational coordination responsibilities; in the United States, many jurisdictions have introduced "lead teacher" classifications as a way of facilitating schoolwide curriculum and pedagogical development and mentoring junior staff; and in Korea, "chief teachers" take responsibility for staff and program supervision. In Australia, meanwhile, a 2010 Commonwealth proposal for the future teaching profession includes official designation of a "lead teacher" classification, with both classroom and schoolwide professional and pedagogical functions.

In this rapidly evolving policy context, featuring ongoing developments in the status, roles, and core functions of teacher leaders, it is important to recognize that as much remains unknown as is known about the machinations of school-based leadership as a distributed quality.

Fourth, Linda Lambert (2007) has postulated a major consideration for school leadership, given the capacity-building focus of this book. Lambert endorses the concept of distributed leadership but notes that leadership in different phases of capacity development requires different functions (p. 316). For example, she asserts, if schools are at "instructive," "transitional," and "high capacity" stages of development, the form of leadership that is required—of both principals and teachers—is necessarily different.

Lambert is one of the very few international thinkers to construe school-based leadership for capacity building as linked to phases of development. In so doing, she has made a singularly important contribution to the practice of modern school-based leadership and also to the research that underpins this book. Critical in Lambert's contribution is that there is no one "style" of educational leadership that fits all needs, situations, or contexts, a position that is supported by Maden (2001). We have previously made the point (Crowther et al., 2009, pp. 28–36) that contemporary school-based leadership approaches tend to fall into four broad categories:

- *Transformational,* emphasizing charisma, vision, inspiration, and intense energy
- *Strategic,* emphasizing planning, accountability, objectivity, and efficiency
- *Advocacy* (educative), emphasizing social justice, consciousness raising, culture struggle, and confronting barriers to fairness
- *Organizationwide,* emphasizing democracy, shared responsibility, synergies, and everyone a potential leader

The question of which, if any, leadership approach is most important at each of Lambert's three stages of school development is seriously underresearched. But Hallinger and Heck have recently captured the importance of this point:

> Leaders must be able to adapt their strategies to changing conditions at different stages in the journey of school improvement. (2010, p. 106)

Also of relevance to our concern about leadership and phases of school development is the very helpful postulation of Hallinger and Heck (2010) that school-based leadership and school-based capacity building may be characterized by a range of interactive relationships:

- A *direct effects* relationship, in which a school's leadership is the primary driver for student learning
- A *mediated effects* relationship, in which a school's leadership shapes the school's capacity for improvement
- A *reversed mediated effects* relationship, in which school outcomes shape a school's leadership
- A *reciprocal effects* model, in which a school's leadership and capacity building are mutually influential

Hallinger and Heck's (2010) research conclusions are very interesting: that the *reciprocal effects* model has greatest validity, and that leadership for successful school improvement should be viewed "as a highly responsive and contextualized relational process" (p. 106). But the question of what form of distributed leadership, if any, best suits the reciprocal effects model has not yet been explored in detail.

In summary, we conclude that leadership for capacity building is best thought of as a distributed quality. That much is agreed on by authoritative contemporary observers. But distributed among whom? How? And for what purposes? These questions continue to be explored by educational researchers. In our building of the leadership underpinnings of COSMIC C-B, we drew heavily on the four developments referred to in the previous paragraphs and summarized in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Key Contributions of Four Recent Educational Leadership Developments to COSMIC C-B

Model	*Key research-based contributions*
Mulford (2007) Harris (2004) Timperley (2005) Crowther et al. (2009)	• Distributed leadership is essential to school success
Pont, Nusche, and Moorman (2008)	• The teaching profession is maturing rapidly, with teachers in a wide range of countries assuming significant leadership roles and functions in school improvement
Lambert (2007)	• Principal and teacher leader functions should take into account the distinctive requirements of particular phases of their school improvement processes
Hallinger and Heck (2010)	• Successful school improvement and school leadership are reciprocally related

CONCLUSION

It might well be surmised from the analyses that we have completed in the preceding sections that more is *not* known about achieving school success than is known.

On one hand, we have ready access to a range of highly credible conceptual models that tell us what successful capacity building looks like. But, on the other hand, we don't know much about the actual school-based processes of capacity building. Perhaps most important, we don't possess clear understandings of how to sustain successes that have been achieved in the face of changing influences such as a new principalship, and we don't know how to avoid overload and burnout as the process unfolds. As Louise Stoll has stated, we learned ten years ago that multiple parts of the school as an organization have to be developed if capacity is to be built, but only now are we beginning to understand capacity as a holistic and generic process of continuous improvement (Stoll, 2009, p. 116).

We know also that distributed forms of leadership—involving the principal and teacher leaders—are fundamental to school success, but we know very little about the ways that the roles and functions of principals and teacher leaders should be defined in the different phases of a developmental process.

Thus, is more known or not known about how to achieve sustained school success? That question is too complex to be easily answered. What is comparatively easy to agree on is that we desperately need to know the criteria that define a successful school improvement process and just as desperately need to know the leadership forms that are part and parcel of those criteria.

These are the core challenges that guide this book.