

LEADING THE SELF-TRANSFORMING SCHOOL

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This paper draws on themes in a mega-analysis of developments in the leadership and management of schools that spans 50 years. The focus of the project (mega-analysis) was on developments in which significant authority, responsibility and accountability have been decentralized to schools, reviewing what has transpired from 1988 to 2013, and looking ahead to possibilities and probabilities to 2038, exploring in particular how self-managing schools may become self-transforming schools.

These themes are drawn from *The Self-Transforming School* (Caldwell and Spinks 2013) to be published on the 25th anniversary of *The Self-Managing School* (Caldwell and Spinks 1988) which became a resource for the design and delivery of initiatives in England, in particular the 1988 Education Reform Act, as well as in Hong Kong (School Management Initiative) and New Zealand (Tomorrows Schools).

It is a mega-analysis in the sense that it draws on the findings of several meta-analyses as well as a series of research and development efforts by the authors and their colleagues. Examples of meta-analyses include Hattie (2009, 2012); Barber and Mourshed (2007); Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber (2010); Hargreaves and Shirley (2011); Barber, Donnelly and Rizvi (2012); and Jensen, Hunter, Sonnemann and Burns (2012), each of which include findings on leadership. Illustrations are drawn from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China (Hong Kong and Shanghai), Finland, India, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa and the United States.

This is not the report of a single research project so a discrete methodology cannot be described. It is the outcome of a series of studies and other projects with different methodologies with a focus on self-managing schools that is, schools to which there has been decentralized a significant amount of authority and responsibility to make decisions on the allocation of resources within a centrally-determined framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards and accountabilities. The following is a summary of these endeavours:

- Doctoral research by Caldwell (1977) on the objectives, processes and outcomes of decentralization in the management of schools in Alberta, Canada with particular reference to developments in Edmonton
- A Project of National Significance in two Australian states (South Australia and Tasmania) in 1983 on effective schools, in a general sense and in the manner in which resources are allocated to and within schools
- A three-year consultancy involving 52 workshops for about 1200 schools and 5000 principals, teachers, parents and students in the early introduction of self-managing schools in Victoria, Australia from 1984 to 1986, the processes and outcomes of which were included in *The Self-Managing School* (Caldwell and Spinks 1988)

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- Consultancies in several states in Australia as well as in England, Hong Kong and New Zealand from 1989 to 1992, with themes on leadership highlighted in *Leading the Self-Managing School* (Caldwell and Spinks 1992)
- Policy advice, leadership development and research on the processes and outcomes of a major initiative in self-management in Victoria from 1993 to 1998, including research that mapped the links between self-management and learning, as reported in *Beyond the Self-Managing School* (Caldwell and Spinks 1998), with leadership development programs of five-days duration for about 1000 school leaders
- Intensive engagement in the design and delivery of funding models for schools, especially in Victoria, and the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools, drawing in particular on developments in Australia, China, England, Finland, United States and Wales. Related publications included Spinks (2006), *Raising the Stakes* (Caldwell and Spinks 2008) and *Why not the Best Schools* (Caldwell and Harris 2008).
- Research and development program on scenarios for the future of schools conducted in every state and territory in Australia involving 19 workshops for leaders from about 300 schools, with the findings reported in *Our School Our Future* (Caldwell and Loader 2010)

Purpose

The primary purpose of the project on which this paper is based was to report on progress in the design and implementation of the self-managing school over the last 25 years and to explore the possibilities for the years ahead. There is, however, a sharper focus, because student achievement in several nations where schools have a relatively high level of authority and responsibility has flat-lined, notably in Australia and England whereas, in others where there is a high level of self-management, student performance continues to improve, and in many cases is leading the world, including several in East Asia, some parts of Canada and Finland.

Finland's Pasi Sahlberg offered an explanation of the shortcomings of developments in several countries in his account of the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). He described the characteristics of the GERM (the 'Finnish Way' is summarised in parentheses): standardised teaching and learning (customised teaching and learning), focus on literacy and numeracy (focus on creative learning), teaching prescribed curriculum (encouraging risk-taking), borrowing market-oriented reform ideas (learning from the past and owning innovations), and test-based accountability and control (shared responsibility and trust) (Sahlberg 2011: 103). He argued that the GERM was an outcome of concern for literacy and numeracy in the face of the constructivist approaches to learning in the 1980s, a demand from the public for guaranteed outcomes, and the competition and accountability movement in the reform of public services (Sahlberg 2011: 99-100).

Scope of the paper

The paper provides a summary only on the links between self-management and learning. These were reported in several of the publications listed above. It was concluded that the connection is a nuanced one. There have been three generations of studies and it is only in the third that evidence of the impact of decentralization on outcomes has emerged, and then only when certain conditions were fulfilled. The first generation in the 1970s was when impact on learning was not a primary or even secondary purpose. The second generation was in the 1980s when such purposes may have been to the fore but the database was weak. The third, emerging in the late 1990s and gathering momentum in the early 2000s, coincided with a pre-eminent concern for learning outcomes and the development of a strong database.

The most striking findings have come from analyses in PISA which confirm that the most successful systems of schools secure an optimal balance of autonomy, accountability and choice. Particularly noteworthy are two studies conducted for OECD by staff at the Ifo Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich (Department of Human Capital and Innovation). One focused on level of student achievement and the other on equity of student achievement. On level of student achievement: 'on average, students perform better if schools have autonomy to decide on staffing and to hire their own teachers' and 'students perform substantially better in systems where private school operation creates choice and competition' (Wößmann, Lüdemann, Schütz and West 2007: 59). As far as equity is concerned: 'rather than harming disadvantaged students, accountability, autonomy, and choice are tides that lift all the boats. There is not a single case where a policy designed to introduce accountability, autonomy, or choice into schooling benefits high-SES students to the detriment of low-SES students' (Schütz, Wößmann and West 2007: 35).

It is sufficient for the purposes of this paper to note that (1) schools and school systems are at different stages of the journey to self-management and self-transformation – context is important; (2) that high levels of professional skill are required to make progress; and (3) needs-based funding is important.

After defining self-management and related concepts, the paper includes an explanatory model that emerged from the various studies, an illustration of how the future can be mapped in the transformation of learning, an overview of aspects of leadership in / for the self-transforming school, and a summary / conclusion on 'the knowledge' of leadership.

Definitions and related concepts

A *self-managing school* is one to which there has been decentralized a significant amount of authority and responsibility to make decisions on the allocation of resources within a centrally-determined framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards and accountabilities. Resources are defined broadly to include staff, services and infrastructure, each of which will typically entail the allocation of funds to reflect local priorities. A self-managing school has a high level of, but not complete autonomy, given the centrally-determined framework.

Whereas a capacity for self-management is chiefly concerned with process, self-transformation is intended to shift the focus to outcomes. A *self-transforming school* achieves or is well on its way to achieving significant, systematic and sustained change that secures success for all of its students regardless of the setting.

The self-transforming school includes but goes beyond the concept of the *self-improving school*. David Hargreaves has written a series of 'think pieces' for the National College for School Leadership in England organised around the idea of a 'self-improving school system' (SISS). He described how school improvement has 'come to be defined in terms of the processes of intervention in schools that are deemed, by whatever measure, to be underperforming' (Hargreaves 2010: 4). He argued that a SISS, once established:

reduces the need for extensive, top-down systems of monitoring to check on school quality, the imposition of improvement strategies that are relatively insensitive to local context, with out-of-school courses not tailored to individual professional needs, and external, last-ditch interventions to remedy schools in difficulties, all of which are very costly and often only partially successful. (Hargreaves 2010: 23)

Hargreaves considers a capacity for self-management to be a pre-requisite for self-improvement. However, limiting the approach to improvement does not address the

need for transformation when one considers what is occurring in many nations. Improvement occurs within current approaches to schooling; transformation seeks success for all in what are certain to be dramatically different approaches to schooling in the years ahead.

In the statement cited above, Hargreaves captured some important features of what may be defined as a *command-and-control* approach ('extensive, top-down systems of monitoring to check on school quality, the imposition of improvement strategies that are relatively insensitive to local context'). A related practice is when schools are provided with inducements to accept funds to implement programs determined at a system level in what is basically a *carrot-and-stick* approach. Carrot-and-stick is also an apt descriptor of practice when a higher level of government with more resources provides funds to a lower level of government with fewer resources and requires acceptance by the latter of strict terms and conditions that are not necessarily those that would have been accepted if there was no such dependence.

An explanatory model

The project yielded a model that explains why some countries with self-managing schools are flat-lining while others are surging, and also maps in broad terms the journey from the self-managing school to the self-transforming school. The model may be illustrated in the series of tables and explanations in the pages that follow.

The starting point was the identification of three dimensions, each of which provides a continuum on which systems may differ. One is the extent of school *autonomy*. While there are sound reasons for not using the concept of autonomy, it is employed here because of its wide use. It refers to the extent to which a school has the authority and responsibility to make decisions within a centrally-determined framework of goals, policies, standards and accountabilities. Schools may have relatively low or relatively high levels of autonomy.

The second dimension is the extent of system *control* over schools, which may be relatively tight or relatively loose. While there is a relationship between autonomy and control, it is possible for a system to exercise relatively tight control over schools on important matters while they may have a high level of autonomy on others. The third dimension is the *outlook* of the system, which may be relatively closed or relatively open, referring to the extent to which it is open to outside ideas and influences.

There are eight ways of classifying systems on these dimensions, as illustrated in Table 1, and these are designated as types. Before explaining these it is important to note that they are broad classifications and there may be different ways of classifying a system for different functions. Expressed another way, systems may have the characteristics of more than one type.

Type 1: Low autonomy, high control, closed outlook In Type 1 schools have minimal authority and responsibility to make decisions in important matters and the system exerts tight control over their operations. The system is generally impervious to developments in its external environment. Type 1 may be a preferred approach if a sense of coherence and order is required to raise standards across the system, especially if its leaders have high levels of expertise. This is a classic command-and-control approach but ultimately unsustainable in a time of complexity and change.

Type 2: Low autonomy, high control, open outlook For Type 2, schools have minimal authority and responsibility to make decisions in important matters and the system exerts strong control over their operations. The system is open to new ideas from its external environment. Type 2 is a preferred approach if a sense of order and coherence is required to raise standards across the system and its leaders have a capacity to draw ideas from within and outside in times of complexity and change. While still command-and-control, Type 2 is likely to be more sustainable than Type 1.

Table 1: Systems classified by type according to autonomy, control and outlook

Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Autonomy	L	L	L	L	H	H	H	H
Control	H	H	L	L	H	H	L	L
Outlook	C	O	C	O	C	O	C	O

Type 3: Low autonomy, low control, closed outlook Type 3 is likely to be a fragmented system, making slow progress in building a sense of order and coherence. It does not seek ideas from outside the system. Things do not augur well for such a system.

Type 4: Low autonomy, low control, open outlook Prospects for the system are likely to be better under Type 4 than for Type 3 because its leaders are open to new ideas, but they continue to exert minimal control over schools that have limited capacity to make decisions that may improve their lot.

Type 5: High autonomy, high control, closed outlook Type 5 involves a higher level of autonomy than Type 4, and a relatively high level of control may be appropriate where there is a need for a stronger sense of coherence and order. There is an opportunity for schools to make decisions that reflect their particular mix of needs and priorities. However, a closed outlook suggests that leaders in the system are shielding themselves from learning about a better way to do things.

Type 6: High autonomy, high control, open outlook Type 6 may be more effective and sustainable than Type 5 if leaders are open to ideas from outside the system. The danger is maintaining elements of command-and-control for longer than necessary.

Type 7: High autonomy, low control, closed outlook Type 6 provides an opportunity to move from self-management to self-transformation as the chains of an excessive command-and-control approach are cast aside and schools have the capacity to take charge of their operations. The approach will be constrained to the extent that the system and its schools are shielded from ideas from outside.

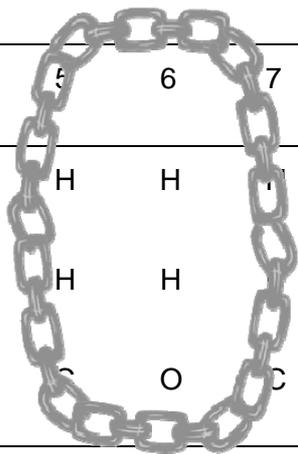
Type 8: High autonomy, low control, open outlook Type 8 maximises the opportunity for self-transformation if schools have the capacity to take charge. The system and its schools are open to developments from outside.

It is important to stress that these classifications are silent as far as capacities and outcomes are concerned. Whether schools in each type of system are effective depends on their capacities and the kinds of support they receive.

A major source of concern is the extent to which a command-and-control approach is unnecessarily constraining the efforts of self-managing schools, or has been maintained if not strengthened beyond what is necessary to achieve coherence in a system that is focusing its efforts on improvement. An inappropriate 'chaining' of self-managing schools is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Chaining the self-managing school

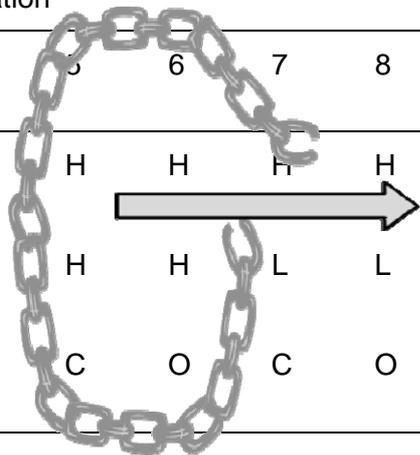
Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Autonomy	L	L	L	L	H	H	H	H
Control	H	H	L	L	H	H	L	L
Outlook	C	O	C	O	C	O	C	O



The appropriate response under these circumstances is to break the chain, as illustrated in Table 3. It is important to stress that the chain does not entirely disappear for it is necessary to ensure transparency and accountability where public funds are concerned. This 'unchaining' provides a window of opportunity, as it were, for many schools to move from self-management to self-transformation.

Table 3: From self-management to self-transformation

Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Autonomy	L	L	L	L	H	H	H	H
Control	H	H	L	L	H	H	L	L
Outlook	C	O	C	O	C	O	C	O



Houle and Cobb (2011) declared that 2010-2020 should be the decade of transformation in education. In describing the realities of exponential developments in technology and how these may apply to schools, they used imagery that is consistent with the model in stating that 'we need to break out of the box entirely' (Houle and Cobb 2011: 71).

Illustrating the possibilities

It is not possible to specify the particularities of changes in the years ahead, especially as far as scale and sequence are concerned, but it is possible to provide a framework to describe the domains in which change is likely to occur. The following proved helpful for mapping the transformation of learning.

Writing in *Education Nation: Six Leading Edges of Innovation in our Schools* Chan (2010) described six 'leading edges' that are giving shape to the transformation of learning: thinking, curriculum, technology, time / place, co-teaching and youth. For the last of these, for example, Chen described how today's students 'are marching through our schools, carrying a transformational change in their pockets in the form of powerful handheld devices. Yet this generation, 95 percent of the stakeholders in education and the ones who stand the most to lose from a poor education, are often left out of the conversation about how to change it' (Chen 2010: 213).

Figure 2 illustrates the continuum of possibilities for each of the leading edges. How far a school or classroom or learning experience has moved along the continuum for each of the leading edges may be mapped, as illustrated in the three lines that connect each continuum. The dotted line at the left illustrates the traditional classroom in the traditional school. There is only one way knowledge is transmitted (either / or), the curriculum is traditional and largely discipline-based, few students and probably few teachers are empowered with current technology, formal learning occurs in the classroom and is delivered by the teacher alone, and students are largely passive recipients in the process, with teachers doing all the work.

The solid line which moves backwards and forwards across the various continua illustrates a school that has moved some way to developing a 'both / and' way of managing knowledge, but does so in a fairly traditional classroom but about half the students have access to up-to-date technology. Most but not all of the formal learning occurs at the school site. The teacher is not the sole source of knowledge; those who work in other settings are brought in as experts on some occasions, either face-to-face or online. Students are gaining their voice; they are not passive but teachers still do much of the work. This classroom has made a modest start to the transformation of learning.

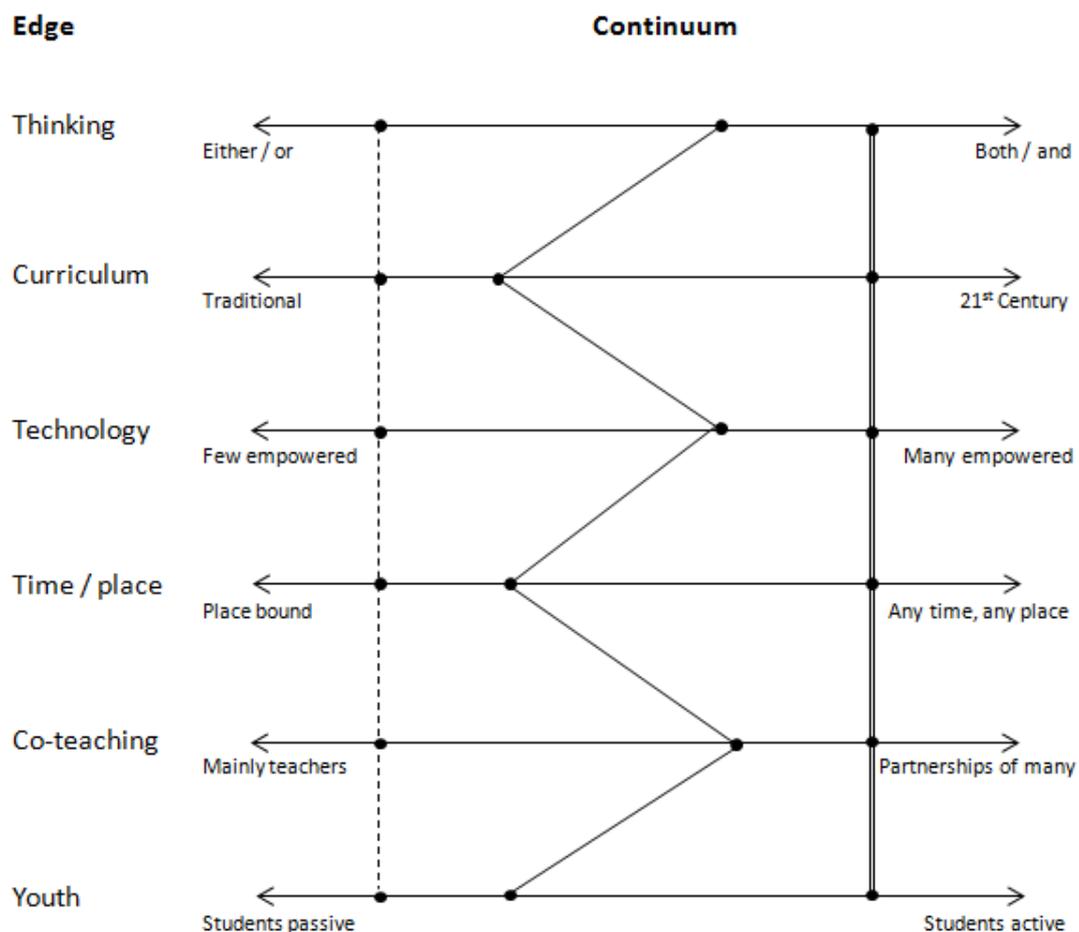


Figure 2: Mapping the leading edges of innovation (devised by the authors using classifications proposed by Chen 2010)

Leadership for the self-managing school

The purpose of this section is to briefly describe aspects of leadership for schools and school systems where there is a degree of school self-management and the intent is to push on to ensure that all schools are self-transforming. These are related to leadership in learning, governance, ethos and policy.

1. Leadership in learning The logic of self-management has settled in recent times, with the primary intention agreed to be the improvement of outcomes for students. Each school contains a unique mix of student needs, interests, aptitudes, ambitions and passions and is situated in a unique community. A deep capacity for local decision-making is necessary to ensure there is an optimal match of resources to strategies that will ensure the best possible outcomes for students, with resources defined broadly to include curriculum, pedagogy, professional expertise, community support, technology and money. There are commonalities among schools across a nation or school system, and common values and common approaches may call for common frameworks, but these do not detract from or over-ride the uniqueness of each school.

Creating a deep capacity for self-management may not be a high priority in some nations or jurisdictions where the driving imperative is to ensure that students and even staff attend school regularly, and that teachers have the knowledge and skill to deliver the basics. Even when these conditions are satisfied there may be a highly fragmented approach to learning and teaching within and among schools and there is little information on which to make judgements about the progress of students. It is understandable that governments as well as school and system authorities exert a high degree of control under these circumstances. Once a high level of alignment and coherence has been achieved then building the capacity of schools to make their own decisions should move up the order of priorities so that the school becomes self-managing within centrally-determined frameworks, and ultimately become self-transforming.

A uniformly high quality of initial teacher education, as in Finland and high-performing jurisdictions in East Asia, is a pre-requisite for self-transforming schools. Every teacher entering the profession must have deep knowledge, and a demonstrated capacity to apply that knowledge, about the factors that work together to secure high levels of achievement, for example, the 150 factors identified by John Hattie. Professional learning must be deep and continuous, given advances in knowledge about learning.

2. Leadership in governance A strong case can be made that there are too many levels of governance in some jurisdictions and that schools are excessively burdened with rules and regulations. This may be the case in countries like Australia and the United States, each being a federation of states. While constitutional powers to make laws in relation to education lie with the states, the federal governments in each instance exert control because they have power to make grants to the states with strict conditions being set for the ways in which they may be used. This seems straightforward; after all, it is argued, a federal government is best placed to serve the national interest. In practice, however, many of these arrangements may be power-coercive, with strict compliance a requirement if the grants are to be paid. Both countries have very large departments of education at the federal as well as the state level.

The contrast with Canada is striking. Canada has about 50 percent more population than Australia and similar land area, with 10 provinces and two territories compared to Australia's six states and two territories. Except in a few areas related to small numbers of students, the federal government in Canada has no power to make laws

in relation to education and does not distribute funds for schools. A national perspective is readily achieved through a council of ministers.

While system-wide strategies may still be helpful in some circumstances, it is face-to-face or online networking that is driving much of the effort in self-transforming schools. Schools join or leave networks to the extent they add value in sharing knowledge, addressing issues of common concern or pooling resources. Increasingly the self-transforming school is networking with schools elsewhere in the country and beyond. A global outlook may mean that aspects of the curriculum are global rather than national.

3. Leadership in innovation As in virtually every other field of endeavour, innovation should pervade a school and a system of schools. It seems that some systems actively discourage innovation on this scale, insisting that schools maintain their focus on the basics, securing good results in high-stakes tests. It is argued that it is 'the system' that should identify the best innovations and take action to ensure that all schools adopt them. Strategies for dissemination that have often proved successful in the past are maintained in an effort to achieve a cascading effect. However, this is not the way things work in the twenty-first century, with advances in technology and outstanding formal and informal networking by schools ensuring that worthwhile innovations are adopted or adapted, often more effectively and much faster than if centrally driven. These schools don't wait around for direction from the top. An outstanding example is the adoption of the tablet computer, with some schools providing them to all students from the earliest years while the system was barely getting a field trial under way. Innovations that at first sight should be rolled out to all schools through a system-wide initiative, because it is efficient to do so, often fail because they don't meet the needs of schools.

4. Leadership in ethos Innovation is just one of many functions that demand a change in ethos in schools and school systems. At the system level, the culture should be characterised by service to schools, and every aspect of cultural change should be addressed in ensuring that this is the case, including how appointments are made, performance is evaluated, and day-to-day interactions with those who work in schools are conducted. The self-transforming school is outward facing and this calls for an ethos that values the support of the wider community, which often means a change in how public education is understood. While public schools may still be owned and operated by a public authority it is evident that support will be drawn from a range of public and private sources.

5. Leadership in policy Policymaking is a critical function in the drive to create the self-transforming school. Regardless of the distribution of authority, responsibility and accountability, policymakers at all levels should be concerned with the alignment of education, economy and society and the same principles of formal and informal networking apply. An important purpose in policy is to help schools become less dependent on 'the system'. Expressed another way, public policy should build capacity for schools to be self-transforming.

A concise description of what is likely is contained in the following description – essentially a vision – offered by Houle and Cobb (2011) in *Shift Ed: A Call to Action for Transforming K-12 Education*.

A transformed school will not look like that brick building set apart from the society it is intended to serve. A transformed school will be an integrated part of the community and its students will be active participants and contributors to the community. In short, *a transformed school will look more like life.* (Houle and Cobb 2011: 72)

The knowledge

The title of this final section is inspired by the remarkable intellectual capital required of taxi drivers in London. They must learn 320 routes and the location of 25,000 streets and 20,000 landmarks before they are licensed. It may take up to three years for 'the knowledge' to be acquired. No analogy is intended, although the imagery may be transferred to the school setting to the extent that there may be 320 or more routes or pathways for students in a school if their needs, interests, aptitudes, ambitions and passions are to be addressed. The 'streets' and 'landmarks' are changing constantly for schools. Not only must initial teacher education be rigorous, extending to four years or more, but professional learning must be deep and continuous.

The core of professional knowledge for leaders includes the following:

- Constructing a narrative for self-management and the journey to self-transformation, how the connections to learning, and the pre-conditions that enable these connections to be made
- Understanding trends and megatrends in society and economy and how these shape developments in schools; strategically navigating so that the school is always well-positioned to meet current expectations and future needs
- Understanding change theory and choosing appropriate strategies for change and approaches to measurement; minimising dysfunctional approaches in each instance
- Being innovative; understanding the relationship between innovation, reform and change; searching out and sensibly adopting or adapting best practice and next practice
- Understanding and applying developments in the six leading edges of practice that transform learning; maintaining a focus on direct instruction; understanding what is fundamental change and what is simply an adaptation of traditional approaches, driven by technology, including virtual learning and blended learning; anticipating the shift from national to global curriculum

Concluding challenge

Transformation often carries the connotation of dramatic change that occurs at great speed. Is this necessarily the case for the transformation of schools? Is this what lies ahead for the self-managing school that seeks to become the self-transforming school? Does this set a far too demanding expectation for schools and those who lead them?

The answers to these questions may be framed by a famous statement by Peter Drucker in the oft-quoted opening lines of *Post-Capitalist Society* (Drucker 1993):

Every few hundred years in Western history there occurs a sharp transformation . . . Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself – its world view; its basic values; its social and political structures; its arts; its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world . . . We are currently living through such a transformation. (Drucker 1993: 1)

Schools should surely be considered among the 'key institutions' that Drucker referred to. If his statement applies to schools then we would expect that over the course of fifty years that schools have been or will be transformed. An important question is the starting point and end point of this period. A strong case can be made that we are roughly at the mid-point of this transformation that may have begun in the mid- to late-1980s (roughly about the time *The Self-Managing School* was published)

and will continue for another 25 years (the time frame of *The Self-Transforming School*).

In Drucker's mind the transformation of schools may have barely started in 1993, when *Post-Capitalist Society* was published, as suggested in the following statement presented here as a concluding challenge:

As knowledge becomes the resource of post-capitalist society, the social position of the school as 'producer' and 'distributive channel' of knowledge, and its monopoly, are both bound to be challenged. And some of the competitors are bound to succeed . . . Indeed, no other institution faces challenges as radical as those that will transform the school. (Drucker 1993: 209)

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