

Conceptual Frameworks In the Design and Implementation of An In-House Leadership Development Program

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Conceptual Frameworks as a Guide to Action

How often have you attended a conference or workshop where you are subjected to series of case 'histories', each of which is a 'nuts and bolts' description of 'what we did in our school'. The presentations pay scant attention to the underlying principles which guided the initiative and are largely devoid of any reflective analysis of the factors which contributed to or hindered its success. The participant is then left alone with the task of extracting some underlying principles that might be taken away and usefully applied to their own organisational context.

What is all too often missing is a surfacing of the assumptions and beliefs that underpin action (Senge, 1992). It is these assumptions and beliefs – or, for the purposes of this paper, conceptual frameworks – which we need to understand and apply in a disciplined way, if we are to take a quantum leap in the quality of our school improvement initiatives.

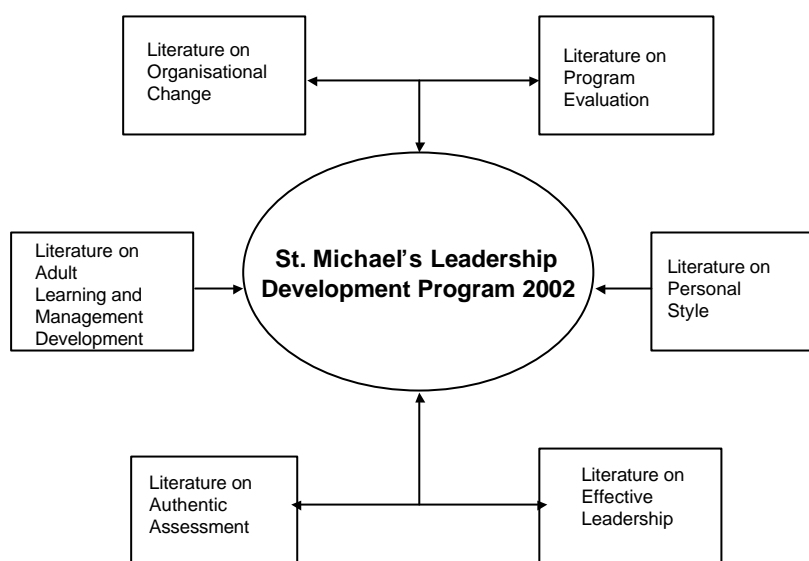
Hence, the primary purpose of this paper is to 'surface' the conceptual frameworks which underpinned the development of an in-house leadership development program conducted over a 12-month period at St. Michael's Grammar School (see PART A). However, sufficient detail about the program itself should assist those for whom the specific approach has more direct relevance (see PART B).

The leadership program in 2002 at St. Michael's was a vehicle designed to achieve two sets of outcomes:

- process outcomes: the development of leadership skills and behaviours
- task outcomes: to review existing patterns of assessment and reporting and to make recommendations for change (if warranted).

The decision to develop and implement this leadership program with its 'double agenda' stemmed from an understanding of a number of interrelated fields of study as indicated in Figure 1 below. Each field of knowledge offers its own frameworks which have informed our approach.

Figure 1: Interrelated Fields of Study Informing Program Development



The **literature on organisational change** provides a strong justification for our focus on building leadership capacity. Kotter's work on leading and managing change (1995) identifies the importance of creating a 'guiding coalition', a group of individuals who are capable of developing and implementing the vision. He also argues the need for building a 'case for change' and creating a sense of urgency related to that change. The **literature on program evaluation** describes the important role of evaluation data in providing a sound basis for decision-making and harnessing support for and shaping proposed change (Owen & Lambert, 1998). With its focus on reviewing existing assessment and reporting practices in the context of current research, the leadership program enabled its participants to identify significant shortcomings of existing practices. This 'evaluation data' helped to establish a shared belief that there was a strong case for redesigning practices and to create a sense of urgency related to their implementation.

While these areas of study and the frameworks found within them were fundamental in shaping the leadership program, they are beyond the scope of this paper. The discussion here focuses on frameworks found within the remaining areas: **adult education and management development, effective leadership and authentic assessment.**

PART A: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AS TOOLS FOR DESIGN

Framework 1: Effective Adult Learning and Management Development

The design of the in-house leadership development program is consistent with current thinking in adult learning and management development.

Its key design features are summarised as follows:

- a real-life challenge
- a dual focus including both process and task outcomes
- opportunities for reflection, on both self and others.
- a high level of participation
- integral to a coherent, ongoing organisational strategy.

Real-Life Challenges

Typical attempts at leadership development involve sending individuals or small teams to external workshops, seminars or even residential programs. Another option is for individuals to undergo extensive external leadership programs such as the Williamson Leadership Program. There is no doubt that these approaches can have valuable outcomes. However, the St. Michael's program was an attempt to remove the disconnect between what is 'learned' outside the organisational setting and the behaviours that are required and exhibited when back on the job.

The use of reflection groups and real implementation teams working on live issues is consistent with current trends in management development in the corporate environment. Based on a study of practices in Canada, the UK, Japan and the USA, Gunzburg (1992) identifies dominant themes which characterise leading edge practice in management development. Important among these is the recognition that much training is too remote from the workplace. This in turn has led to a shift away from conventional classroom-based training, to a focus on the use of actual issues and live project-based approaches and an emerging emphasis on coaching and feedback (see for example, General Electric's Crotonville Model and the Middle Management Development Program: DPIE, 1991).

Dual Focus: Process and Task

The focus on process reflects a trend in adult educational technology. Attempts are being made to invent techniques for involving individuals in ever deeper processes of self-diagnosis of their own needs for continued learning and in formulating their own learning objectives based on direct experience (Knowles, 1983: 56).

High Level of Participation

The high level of participation was critical for two reasons.

Firstly, it was required to develop the desired leadership culture, which was owned and shared, not just by the few senior administrators, but by the entire 'middle management' group as well. More specifically, there was the need to develop a cohesiveness between the various structural teams within the School - for example, Heads of Houses, Heads of Faculties, Junior School Executive and Senior School Executive. Each team was constructed so as to have representatives from each of these groups.

Secondly, the high level of participation created a critical mass of 'leaders' who understood and supported the need for changes in assessment and reporting, with a new K-12 model currently being planned for implementation in 2004.

Opportunities for Reflection: Self and Others

'Learning involves a balance between action and self-reflection. The best coaches encourage associates to investigate new ways of being, to experiment with new behaviour, and then to reflect on their experience' (Brookfield, 1986).

Wood (1994) also argues that two key elements in any effective leadership intervention are a high level of interaction and feedback combined with the opportunity to practise leadership skills.

Benfari (1991: 50) speaking in the language of the Myers Briggs type theory suggests that the challenge for leaders is to use all their functions – sensing, intuition, thinking and feeling – in a balanced way. He suggests that leaders can learn to modify their 'types' (without making any permanent change in their type) but that this takes hard work over a period of time. The belief that leaders need to 'practise role flexibility' underlies the introduction of the MBTI (Myers Briggs Type Indicator) to the team prior to their involvement in their program.

Part of A Coherent Organisational Strategy

Wood (1994: 31) claims that a successful leadership intervention needs to be part of a coherent organisational strategy which, in addition to those features discussed above, should include:

- a valid and reliable 360 degree feedback instrument (currently in design phase at St. Michael's).
- a performance feedback model which provides support for on-going learning.
- on-the-job experiences for development and change integrated as part of regular goal-setting.

Framework 2: Effective Leadership

There is a plethora of models of effective leadership in the literature. However, a number of considerations influenced our selection of a series of models to serve as frameworks for our program. Those selected needed to be:

- readily defensible - that is, they needed to be grounded in sound research.
- capable of being distilled and becoming part of a shared language amongst the participants in much the same way as a vision statement needs to be capable of being distilled into a single statement or series of statements.
- capable of articulating the behavioural characteristics required of effective leaders if the organisational needs were to be met.
- capable of providing a framework for reflection on self and others.
- meeting the leadership needs of the organisation.
- personally endorsed by key leaders in the school.

Using the above criteria, three models became central to our design:

- Zenger, Musselwhite, Hurson & Perrin's framework (1994) which conceptualises organisational leadership as a shared task. This was linked

to the Myers Briggs Typology on Personal Style which provided a vehicle for self understanding and reflecting on the strengths of others (Moss, 1989).

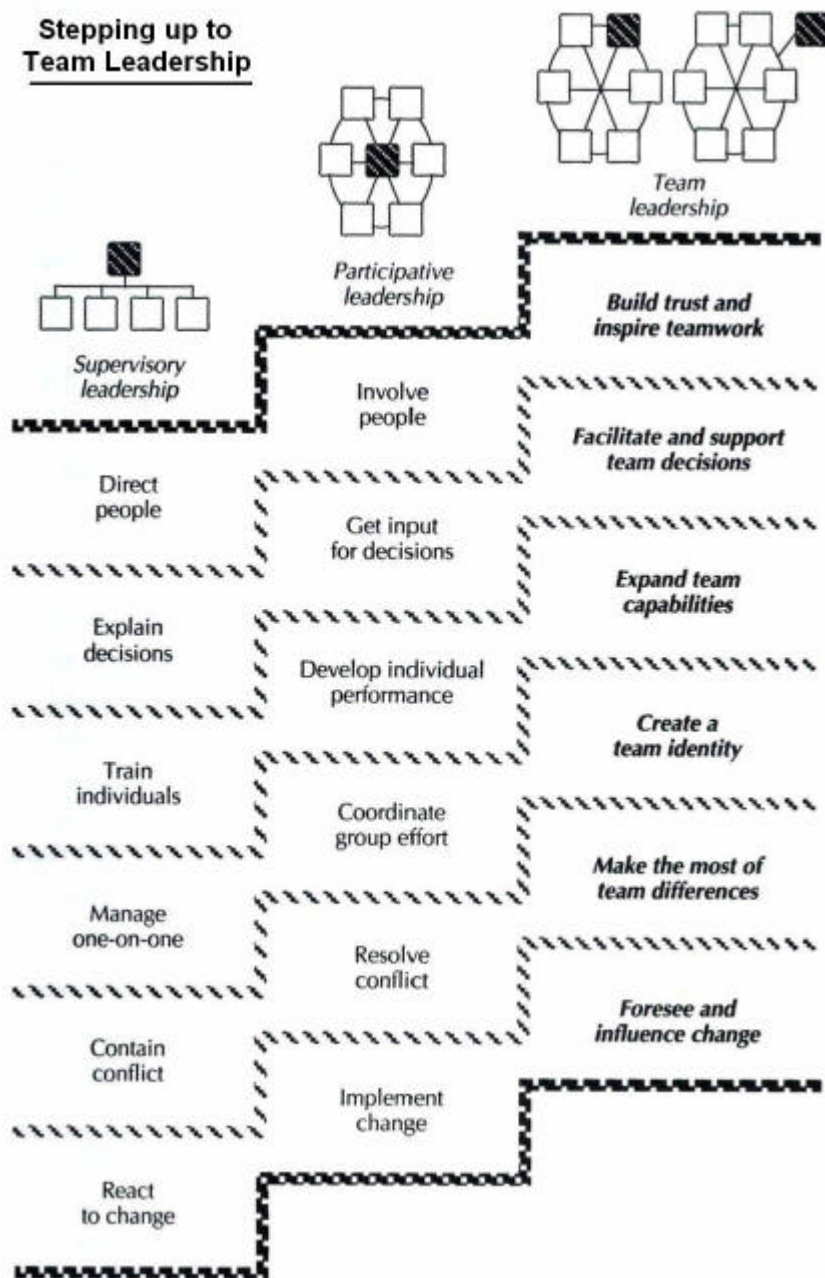
- Covey's Principle-Centred Leadership Model and the Ten Power Tools for Principle-Centered Leadership (Covey, 1992) which places integrity and honourable dealings with others at the heart of effective leadership.
- Kouzes and Posner's (1987) Framework of Behavioural Commitments which is based on the assumption of the importance of personal integrity and provides a simple set of guidelines for effective leadership action.

Shared Leadership and Personal Style

Organisations can no longer afford to rely on single individuals for their leadership requirements. In fact, to do so is to surrender the confidence and power needed to progress in an increasingly complex environment which demands a vastly expanded range of leadership skills. What is required is a collective notion of leadership so that those individuals with the requisite skills and talents are given the opportunity to contribute to the leadership challenges within the organisation.

Therefore we need a framework for shared leadership and for valuing and drawing on the strengths of team members. Zenger et al. (1994: 29) explore this notion of shared leadership in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: A Model of Shared Leadership



Source: Zenger, J H, Musselwhite E , Hurson K, & Perrin, C. (1994) *Leading Teams*, Zenger Miller Inc., Business One Irwin, Homewood Illinois.

As a way of encouraging staff to explore team differences and maximise the leadership capacity of the group, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator was introduced as a vehicle for reflecting on their own behaviours and those of others, as well as a means to understanding the significance of 'difference' in leading and managing teams.

Principle-Centered Leadership

Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* (1987:15-27) explored the question of what followers expect of their leaders. Over two years, 2600 managers completed a checklist of superior leader characteristics. The attributes rated most highly by American managers were: honesty (83%), competence (67%), forward-looking (62%)

and inspiring (58%). 'In every survey we did, honesty was selected more often than any other leadership characteristic.'

'To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible, we must be truthful.' – Edward R. Murrow, Journalist and News Commentator.

Covey (1992: 101–108) argues that leaders have a choice in the strategies they use to get followers to follow. Followers may follow out of fear (coercive power), because of the benefits that come to them if they do (utility power – fair bargain) or because they are trusted, they believe in them and their cause (principle-centred power).

'Principle-centred power occurs when the cause or purpose or goal is believed in as deeply by the followers as by the leaders.'

The hallmark of principle-centered power is sustained proactive influence. Covey argues that to be honourable is to have power and puts forward ten processes or principles that will increase a leader's honour and power with others (see Figure 3 below). The theme of integrity emerges in the work of both Kouzes and Posner and Stephen Covey, and indeed, many other writers in the realm of effective leadership.

Figure 3: Ten Power Tools of Principle-Centered Leadership

Here are ten suggestions for processes and principles that will increase a leader's honor and power with others.

- **Persuasion**, which includes sharing reasons and rationale, making a strong case for your position or desire while maintaining genuine respect for followers' ideas and perspective; tell why as well as what; commit to stay in the communication process until mutually beneficial and satisfying outcomes are reached.
- **Patience**, with the process and the person. In spite of the failings, shortcomings, and inconveniences created by followers, and your own impatience and anticipation for achieving your goals, maintain a long-term perspective and stay committed to your goals in the face of short-term obstacles and resistance.
- **Gentleness**, not harshness, hardness, or forcefulness, when dealing with vulnerabilities, disclosures, and feelings followers might express.
- **Teachableness**, which means operating with the assumption that you do not have all the answers, all the insights, and valuing the different viewpoints, judgments, and experiences followers may have.
- **Acceptance**, withholding judgment, giving the benefit of the doubt, requiring no evidence or specific performance as a condition for sustaining high self-worth, making them your agenda.
- **Kindness**, sensitive, caring, thoughtful, remembering the little things (which are the big things) in relationships.
- **Openness**, acquiring accurate information and perspectives about followers as they can become while being worthy of respect for what they are now, regardless of what they own, control, or do, giving full consideration to their intentions, desires, values, and goals rather than focusing exclusively on their behavior.
- **Compassionate confrontation**, acknowledging error, mistakes, and the need for followers to make "course corrections" in a context of genuine care, concern, and warmth, making it safe for followers to risk.
- **Consistency**, so that your leadership style is not a manipulative technique that you bring into play when you don't get your way, are faced with crisis or challenge, or are feeling trapped; rather, this becomes a set of values, a personal code, a manifestation of your character, a reflection of who you are and who you are becoming.
- **Integrity**, honestly matching words and feelings with thoughts and actions, with no desire other than for the good of others, without malice or desire to deceive, take advantage, manipulate, or control; constantly reviewing your intent as you strive for congruence.

Source: Covey, S R (1992) *Principle-Centered Leadership*, Fireside, New York p.107- 8

It is my view, that the staff in our school and indeed in many schools, become disgruntled and disenfranchised if required to work within a culture of fear and blame; that they are only motivated by external rewards to a degree, but perform beyond all expectations if they are trusted and motivated to achieve for the benefit of the students in their care. It is this sense of mission which pervades the culture of schools and that tends to attract a certain calibre of person. Hence, for us it made sense to work with the principle-centred notion of power articulated by Covey and supported by the research findings of Kouzes and Posner.

Framework 3: Behavioural Commitments of Effective Leaders

Figure 4 describes the behavioural commitments of personal best leadership cases identified by Kouzes and Posner. The power of this framework for the practitioner is its simplicity and its focus on what effective leaders are seen to be doing. The model is particularly valuable in highlighting certain behaviours not always apparent in school cultures – in particular the notion of challenging the process, modelling the way and the often neglected ‘encouraging the heart’. The key phrases became part of the in-house team discussion in the course of wrestling with their team challenges (described in more detail below). It is broadly consistent with, but much less sophisticated than, the more refined set of leadership capabilities identified by the Department of Education in their study of best practice in Principals, Assistant Principals and Leading Teachers in Victorian schools. (Haygroup, 1999). It is these more complex clusters of capabilities that will inform the 360 degree leadership team performance feedback model that we are currently designing and which represents a further step in our leadership development program.

Figure 4: Behavioural Commitments in Personal Best Leadership Cases

<p>The Ten Commitments of Leadership</p> <p>Challenging the Process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Search for Opportunities 2. Experiment and Take Risks <p>Inspiring a Shared Vision</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Envision the Future 4. Enlist Others <p>Enabling Others to Act</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Foster Collaboration 6. Strengthen Others <p>Modeling the Way</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Set the Example 8. Plan Small Wins <p>Encouraging the Heart</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Recognise Individual Contribution 10. Celebrate Accomplishments <p>Source: Kouzes, J M & Posner, B Z (1987) <i>The Leadership Challenge</i>, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, p14.</p>
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Framework 4: Authentic Assessment

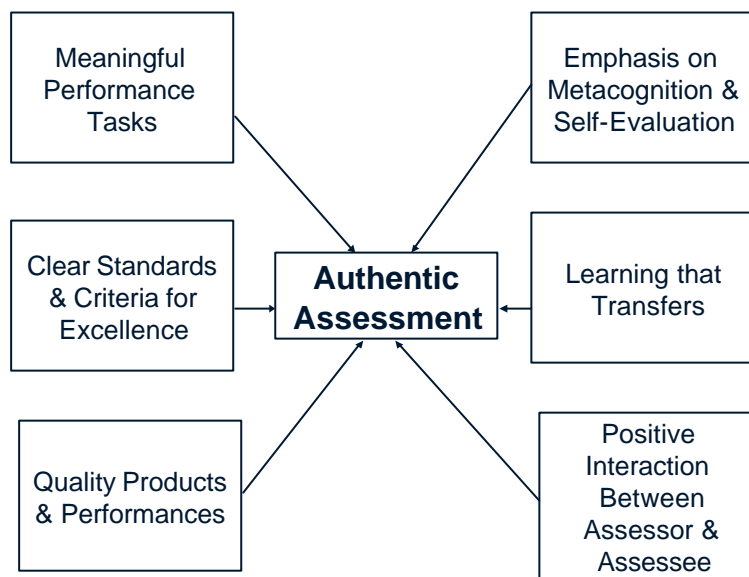
Best practice in assessment involves teachers:

- establishing and clearly communicating learning goals for students.
- collecting information about student performance from a variety of sources.
- involving all students in assessing their own learning.

- using information from a variety of ongoing assessments to plan and adjust learning opportunities that promote academic achievement and personal growth for all students.
- exchanging information about student learning with students, families and support personnel in ways that improve understanding and encourage further learning.

Figure 5 identifies the key dimensions of the authentic assessment framework which was provided in the brief to each of the leadership teams.

Figure 5: Key Dimensions of Authentic Assessment



Source: Burke, K. (1999) *The Mindful School: How to Assess Authentic Learning*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Australia, p.xxi

PART B: THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN ACTION

This section is designed to give just sufficient detail about the St. Michael's program to allow the reader to understand how the conceptual frameworks described above were applied to its design and implementation in practice.

The 2002 program consisted of four major parts:

- One: Setting the Scene
- Two: The Team Challenge
- Three: The Residential
- Four: Next Steps – Task and Process

Part One: Setting the Scene

Based on the premise, that to be effective in a leadership role, one must first understand one's own strengths and areas of weakness, a number of initiatives were designed to encourage staff to reflect on their own behaviours.

Staff were introduced to the Myers Briggs Type Indicator as a vehicle for thinking about their personal style, encouraging them to understand their preferences and to link these with their strengths in their leadership role. This work encouraged participants to see the importance of 'valuing difference' in working with and leading others and provided the basis for later discussions on shared leadership.

The focus then shifted to the value of feedback in developing one's leadership competencies.

Staff were asked to complete a short exercise where they identified a 'trusted other' who would provide them with feedback on their strengths and one area of weakness. These were shared voluntarily in meetings with the leadership team. This exercise generated a stronger level of trust within the group and underlined the value of feedback. This was regarded as a positive experience.

The scene was set for developing a performance feedback model for the leadership team and articulated in a paper entitled 'Cracking the Wall of Privatism' (Lambert, 2002) in which models of evaluation were discussed and agreement in principle related to a performance feedback model designed for the sole purpose of professional development

These experiences were followed by:

- a formal dinner for the leadership team where guest speakers, one from the corporate environment and one from the education sector, spoke about their personal experiences of leadership. The dinner was designed to mark the beginning of a program in which the leadership team would be encouraged to see themselves as both special and empowered within the school context.
- workshop sessions which explored the concept of shared leadership and the closely aligned models of effective leadership by Stephen Covey and Kouzes and Posner.
- a workshop on Authentic Assessment conducted by Ms. Pam Burton. This workshop reflected the framework of authentic assessment (as described above) and was used for the team challenge. This workshop provided participants with critical background knowledge for their leadership task.

Part Two: The Team Challenge

The staff were divided into 3 teams of 10 in each team. Individuals were allocated to teams to ensure a cross-representation from the various groups within the school and each team was given a name: Team Effort, Team Spirit, and Team Action. Teams were at liberty to change their names but none actually did.

Each team received a set of guidelines for the task itself and a large resource folder of materials related to authentic assessment and reporting. Figure 6 provides an extract from the leadership team 'brief' which describes the key features of the leadership challenge:

Figure 6: Leadership Team Brief: Introduction [Extract only]

This challenge is designed to accomplish two important outcomes:

1. Process Outcome: to build a deeper understanding of the leadership task and build skills in developing effective teams.
2. Task Outcome: to produce a model of assessment and reporting which you, as a team, believe should be implemented at St. Michael's Grammar School.

This means that time should be devoted to reflecting on both the process and the task.

The leadership and team challenges embedded in this task are to:

1. Use creative strategies to harness the energy and commitment of this group.
2. Determine and allocate roles to maximise the productivity of the group, building in shared leadership for various aspects of the brief.
3. Practise your skills of communication and persuasion both within teams and in the final presentation to a Panel at a residential at the beginning of Term 4.

Both will have significant ramifications for your work as leader in your functional area, and the teaching and learning that occurs within classrooms. The extent to which you succeed in both will depend on your ability to harness the energy and enthusiasm of the team and capitalise on individual member strengths.

Detailed guidelines were provided for the team challenge. These guidelines were described under the following key headings:

1. The Mechanics of the Challenge
2. Key Parameters of the Assessment Model
3. Philosophical Assumptions Related to Best Practice In Assessment
4. Shared Leadership
5. Valuing the Difference: Type and Problem-Solving
6. Monitoring the Group: How well are we working as a team?

The first two are reproduced here to provide a more detailed understanding of the program in action.

Figure 7: The Mechanics of the Challenge

The task is to design a model of assessment and reporting that will involve you reflecting on all facets of feedback that we provide students and parents: in the present system this includes Marks and Standards, Parent-Teacher Interviews, written reports, verbal feedback and prize awards. You need to carefully consider each of these existing practices in the context of the philosophy and best practice guidelines provided below. You do not need to confine yourself to existing practices – a key criterion for assessment of this task is the extent to which you demonstrate that you have considered alternative practices and you may challenge the philosophy as long as you are prepared to articulate the grounds upon which that philosophy is challenged.

The final product will be a group presentation (of no longer than 30 minutes) and a written report of your model of 'Assessment and Reporting at St. Michael's' to a Panel at a residential. The residential will be held on Sunday October 6th and Monday October 7th. The Panel will consist of a facilitator, and experts from a range of areas including assessment and reporting and effective teams and leadership.

You will be rewarded for team success, with the most successful team being that which meets most effectively the following criteria as judged by the Panel:

- Evidence of shared leadership.
- Evidence of reflecting on group processes and using creative, flexible strategies in building a cohesive 'high energy' team.
- Evidence of consulting major stakeholders/experts to inform the development of the model (with the exception of students and parents at this stage).
- The development of strategies for gaining acceptance for the proposed model amongst key stakeholders.
- The alignment of the presented model with the parameters of the brief in Section Two and the

philosophical assumptions as defined in the Section Three below.

- The development of a model which can be applied in practice.
- Evidence of thinking laterally about existing practices.
- Persuasiveness of the final presentation to the Panel and evidence of teamwork.

Note: It is highly recommended that a member of the group be designated the role of reporting on progress of the group – both in terms of process and the task. [Guidelines will be provided to assist in reflecting on the group processes.] Reporting will be done at various stages of the term. It may be directed towards key members of the executive team such Dean of Curriculum or a Deputy Head, to the Leadership Group as a whole or to specific Heads of Faculty/Heads of House Committees. The challenge is for the team to demonstrate the flexibility to meet reporting requests when required. The final outcome for the School may be a composite of the models and ideas presented at this residential. Any model will need to be explored with staff, students and parents for their feedback.

Figure 8: Key Parameters of the Assessment Model

The model must include:

- written reports to parents in some form.
- provision for both formative and summative assessment..
- some element of student self-assessment.
- provision for students of different levels of ability including overseas students and special needs students.
- some face-to-face contact with parents.
- provision for awarding prizes at the end of the year, assuming they are to be continued.
- a clear description of the roles of the major players i.e. subject teachers, Heads of House
- a timeline.
- examples of the documents that are central to the model [e.g. reporting formats].
- evidence of consultation with internal staff and key experts in the field, including practitioners using different models (but excluding parents and students at this stage).

Teams commenced work on this brief midway through Term 1 and continued for the duration of Terms 2 and 3. During the course of their work, additional input was provided in the form of a presentation on on-line reporting. The Leadership Residential was held at the commencement of Term 4.

Part Three: The Leadership Residential

All participants in the program received a bound booklet which provided a description of the venue, the equipment available for their presentations, a program outline, reflection pages for both pre and post residential reflections, reading related to the residential including the Kouzes and Posner leadership model and team roles, a list of criteria for success for the team challenge including a scoring rubric, and a residential evaluation sheet. The role of this booklet was to emphasise the importance of the event and to convey a professional approach to its design and implementation.

The first day of the residential consisted of team presentations from two external 'experts': one who focused on the team and leadership process issues and the other, who focused on the proposed models of assessment and reporting. On the second day, teams reflected on all the models presented, identifying elements in common, strengths and weaknesses.

Part Four: Next Steps - Task and Process

Task: A special project committee drawn from representatives of each of the leadership teams was assigned the task of mapping out the next steps in the process of revamping the assessment and reporting processes. This group met after the

residential and set up a series of task groups with detailed briefs grounded in the discussion and debate that had occurred at the residential. Task groups were also led by members of the leadership team. That process of review is currently continuing for implementation of changes planned for the commencement of 2004.

Process: The next step in terms of leadership and team processes was to develop the performance feedback model in the paper at the beginning of the year. Since the residential, the leadership team have been involved in discussing the capabilities that will be included in a 360 degree feedback tool. At the time of writing, the instrument was being placed on-line for initial trialling.

Concluding Remarks

If we had our time again, we would have made more formal arrangements for the leadership teams to meet. This would have assisted them in their planning which, as could be predicted, was hampered by a whole range of competing commitments. If we had our time again, and we had more resources to invest in the program, we may have employed facilitators external to the School to observe the teams in action and provide feedback on a regular basis.

However, the program has come to be regarded as highly successful in achieving its intended outcomes.

An evaluation of the team work and the residential itself was carried out and the results were very encouraging. There was strong evidence that the experience had promoted a feeling of collegiality amongst the different groups within the Leadership Team, provided an opportunity to share ideas on assessment and reporting, and encouraged individuals to reflect on their leadership roles and team processes.

There is no doubt that the program has changed the way in which individuals view their role in the School and that it has generated a high level of acceptance of the concept of the performance feedback model currently under development. There is no doubt that the program has helped to build bridges between the distinct groups operating within the School's hierarchy. Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes was the respect earned by the Junior School staff despite being outnumbered by Senior School staff in each of the teams. The value of their perspectives on assessment and reporting was repeatedly highlighted in the course of the residential.

But perhaps equally exciting are the outcomes related to 'task'. The discussions of assessment and reporting in leadership teams and at the residential have led to a high level of agreement regarding the strengths and weaknesses of our existing practices. In short, we now have, in Kotter's terminology, our 'guiding coalition', and a critical mass of staff convinced of the need for change – the sooner the better. Furthermore, there is a groundswell of support from within the leadership ranks for an innovative response. This outcome in itself sets the scene for a quantum leap in the quality of our teaching and learning which ultimately is shaped by the structure of our assessment and reporting practices.

The leadership development program in 2002 was a risky venture which nevertheless achieved what it was intended to achieve. We believe that this was no accident. Clear conceptual frameworks provided a rationale for action, a basis for shared understandings, and they helped to inform design. In doing so, they also

provided those leading the initiative with the conviction and courage required to see it through.

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