

Eight Threats to a Principal's Sustainability – – and What to Do about Them

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Abstract

School principal's experiences in contemporary educational contexts are more and more complex and difficult to deal with. Looking from long-term perspective of well-being of school leaders and sustainability of their functioning in professional role, some major threats have to be pointed out. Paper presents eight of them showing how they can affect sustainability of school leadership and suggesting how to deal with them.

Keywords: school leadership, principal's sustainability, threats of the leadership role

Introduction

This paper aims to throw light by means of international comparisons on Polish principals' experiences. Whilst I have not

taught in Poland, I have wide experience of researching in both Western and Eastern cultures, and am particularly interested in the connections between global policies and Principals' experiences in a variety of countries. Over a decade of research has led to the development of a research tool – *Portrait Methodology* – which I and colleagues have used to investigate the challenges in Europe and the Far East which school principals experience. The results (Bottery, 2016, Bottery, Wong & Ngai, 2017) suggest some global similarities, but some strong cultural differences, and marked individual ways by principals of dealing with the challenges of the role.

The argument of this paper follows from this research and suggests that there are a number of threats to leaders' sustainability, but that they affect different people in different ways. It also suggest that there are very few if any simple solu-

tions, and the best ways of dealing with them are probably by a better recognition of the contexts and the personalities through which leadership is practiced, through re-framing the leadership role for such turbulent and complex times; and probably most importantly, by educating others beyond education to these understandings.

Leadership Sustainability and the Threats to it

I have written at length elsewhere on the meaning – and meanings – of sustainability (Bottery, 2016), and I don't want to dwell long on the topic, but a couple of points need raising. First, it is a prescriptive term: it advocates a position, and people discussing the topic need to be aware of what other people are advocating when they use the term. With respect to the sustainability of educational leadership, my view is that it needs to focus on long-term visions of the well-being of all those involved in the educational enterprise, and not be so fixated upon short-term visions of achieving better results; that it involves moving from simple understandings of change, to ones based upon a better understanding of a turbulent and complex reality; and that to sustain educational leadership, we need to re-think the way in which the leadership role is approached. This paper will then attempt to justify such assertions.

A second preliminary point is that a decline in leadership sustainability is normally measured in the literature by a decline in the number of those applying to take on a principal's position; by the number of those who do not remain

long in the post; and by the number of those retiring early. These, however, are only symptoms, and we need to treat the causes of these symptoms if we are going to achieve anything like long-term sustainability.

In a recent book (Bottery, Ngai & Wong, 2017) my colleagues and I suggest that there are at least eight different threats to such sustainability. These are:

- Threat 1: Damaged Relationships between Governments and Educators
- Threat 2: Differences in Perceptions of the Purposes of the Role
- Threat 3: Increased Accountability and Surveillance of their Role
- Threat 4: The Increasing Complexity of the Role
- Threat 5: The Growth of Guilt and Blame Cultures
- Threat 6: Overwork whilst in the Role
- Threat 7: Lack of Preparation for the Role
- Threat 8: The Increased Use of Power rather than Persuasion to Effect Changes

Threats 6 and 7 are the threats most often described in academic literature – which is largely Anglo-US in nature, even if similar results are now being found elsewhere. Our research suggests that these threats differ in their importance between country, context and individual, and that therefore one needs to be very careful in assuming that these threats will have the same effect on different individuals.

Part of this caution stems from the different value positions that individuals take. We have found that those who value a strong and inclusive welfare state are generally going to feel more stressed – and therefore less sustainable – if a neo-liberal market-oriented government comes

to power in a society formerly committed to welfare state values, than would an individual who enthusiastically embraced these newer politics. Similarly, different personalities will react differently to stresses: UK headteacher who want to keep their heads down and not be noticed, tend to be more easily stressed than others who are happy to publicly challenge the nature of legislation. Finally, the nature of the demands may affect people differently: whilst some principals find a 'normal' week a very demanding challenge, we interviewed one Hong Kong principal who was thriving on working 14 hours a day because he enjoyed the challenge of keeping his school open.

Generalisations then can be dangerous, and particularly if issues of sustainability differ in different cultures: our research consistently showed that English headteacher believed they faced a much more 'aggressive' accountability and inspection than did their Hong Kong counterparts. Yet there was very little difference between these sets of leaders when it came to workload, as both generally felt that sustainability was threatened by the constant demands on workload. And in terms of European educational systems, with their different histories, politics and cultures, one would expect to find that there are likely to be clear national differences in the relative strength of the eight threats above, and perhaps the emergence of other factors not picked up in our research. The point being made is that whilst global trends exist, the impact will likely differ because of different national settings, the individual leadership approach, and the local context within which they work. Bearing these qualifications in mind, it is

time to examine in a little more detail the threats listed above.

Threat 1.

Damage to government/educator relationships

In the process of such growing differences, and in the light of highly critical literature of public sector professionals educators (e.g. Hayek, 1944; Friedman, 1962) it is also unsurprising that a change in attitude to public servants by such governments took place, where educators were seen less as gatekeepers and contributors to the purposes of students' education, and, instead viewed as service providers to educational consumers in a market system. In the process, damage to the relationships between members of these two parties was a widespread occurrence, as many educators reacted to such a narrowing of focus, and governments suggested that such reaction was symptomatic of a untrustworthy profession, and acted accordingly. As one teacher said to me:

'...It's profoundly dispiriting to come home after an exhausting and frustrating day, to know you've got another two or three hours work in front of you after you've finished your tea, to switch on the television, only to find you're watching a government minister telling you how you can't be trusted, how you're the cause of the country's educational and social problems, and to find your educational ideals are disparaged and belittled.' (Bottery, 1998, p. 36).

And when your feel untrusted, your efforts so little recognised, personal sustainability becomes a real problem.

Threat 2.

Differences in purposes between educators and their governments

Many educators see the purposes of education as rich and varied, covering issues like cultural transmission, child-centred interests, social reconstruction and environmental concerns, as well as economic and job-related issues. The advent of the global rise over the last forty years or so of governments adopting neo-liberal and market-oriented positions has led in many cases to a narrowing of government perspectives on the purposes of education, and a growing difference of purpose between many educators and their governments. In the UK for instance, a former secretary of state for education was not unusual in suggesting that ‘...*Learning is the key to prosperity... investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy of the 21st century; Learning throughout life will build human capital by encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and skills and emphasising creativity and imagination; The fostering of an enquiring mind and the love of learning are essential for our future success...*’ (Blunkett, 1998). Nor is a US middle school handbook from 2017 alone in narrowing education to a ‘...*number one priority ... [which] is to help our students gain essential skills to master all Standardized Assessment tests.*’ Given such economic, job-related and testing foci by governments, it is not surprising to find growing differences in purpose between governments and their teaching forces.

Threat 3.

Increased accountability and surveillance

If educator/government relationships were damaged by the perceived differences in the purposes of education, one outcome was a loss of trust between the two parties. And when one party’s trust declines, they are much more likely to watch what the other party is doing: and from this stems a great deal of the increased accountability and surveillance of educators’ work which is seen internationally. In terms of sustainability, this seems to have two major impacts: one is that mentioned by Foucault (1979): that the more one knows one is being watched, the more one restricts oneself to what is wanted by the watcher, and this inevitably affects many people’s morale and sustainability. The other is an effect mentioned by Lauder *et al.* (1998, p. 51) when they suggested that such narrowing of focus, such increased accountability and surveillance will very likely lead to ‘...*a trained incapacity to think openly and critically about problems that will confront us in ten or twenty years or time.*’ [my emphasis].

Yet again we need to be careful. These damaging effects are highly possible. In our own research, we found this to be very much the case in the UK, where schools seemed almost frantic in their attempts to protect themselves. They talked of ‘...*All kinds of systems and procedures that make sure it works, and lots of record keeping systems, because that is my evidence to OFsted...*’ and their focus was very Foucauldian: ‘...*we can show this to Ofsted’ always comes up, no matter what you’re doing...*’

Yet such tension was not seen in our interviews in Hong Kong, where many echoed the thought that the inspection bodies ‘... *have good intentions, not pick our faults...*’ and that inspections were not there to catch them out and shame them (as seemed to be the perception in England), but that inspection ‘... *is a good means for the school to do something after listening to their expertise and ideas...*’ International movements in education are mediated differently by different cultures, and so produce different levels of threat to the sustainability of educational leaders – which is further mediated by local contexts, and individual personalities.

Threat 4.

The increased complexity of the leadership role

This all sounds very complex, and indeed a fourth very important if neglected threat is the increasingly complex nature of the world we live in, and in the similarly increasingly complex nature of the leadership role, (though as we shall see shortly, a fifth threat lies in *not* recognising how complex it is, and behaving as if it wasn’t). Complexity, I am suggesting, is something we really need to think carefully about, because it seems to be one of the most fundamental threats to leadership sustainability we face. Unfortunately, the nature of the complexity we face is not always easy to understand, but I want to suggest three different ways of recognising how it impacts on the leader’s role:

i. The need for systemic rather than linear understandings: it is much easier to think of a world where A causes B, which causes C. This is simple linear

causality; it is easy to understand, it usually has a short time frame, and it can be very appealing to managers and leaders pressed to make quick decisions. But what happens if A causes B, but this then affects X, which affects O, and then P, Z and S, before affecting A again. This is complex systems causality, and instead of simple problems and solutions, ‘...*so many variables are at work in a system that its overall behavior can only be understood as an emergent consequence of the holistic sum of all the myriad behaviors embedded within...*’ (Levy, 1992, p. 7–8). Problems will then evolve in unexpected, complicated and unpredictable ways, and if we use simple linear thinking, our framing of a complex problem, and the solutions we reach, are almost certainly going to be unsuccessful – which is not going to help an individual’s leaders sustainability in such a demanding world...

ii. A greater appreciation of the extent of what we don’t and probably can’t know. A second understanding of complexity comes, I have to confess, from one of my least favourite US politicians of the last 30 years, Donald Rumsfeld, but sometimes those you most disagree with, will say something profoundly true. And I think Rumsfeld did when he suggested (2002) four categories of human knowledge and ignorance. His first category was of **Known knowns**: things that leaders know they know: hence they expect and normally experience predictable impacts, and will feel sustained by their understanding

here. But his second category of *Unknown knowns* is composed of things leaders think they know, but are wrong, and so experience unanticipated and surprising impacts. These clearly are much more problematic for a leader's sustainability, for now they find themselves making mistakes which are likely to be noticed by significant others.

Rumseld's third category is that of the *Known Unknowns*: those things leaders know that they don't know: and so will be surprised and find it very difficult to know what to do if one of these occurs, which would likely be unhelpful to their personal sustainability. His final category is that of the *Unknown unknowns*, the things that leaders don't know that they don't know, and the effect on their sustainability is likely to be even more marked. Indeed, it seems highly likely that the more we move towards the 'unknowns' the more that we will be dealing with systemic rather than linear issues, and therefore that we will be challenged by the unexpected, the complicated and the unpredictable: and therefore the more that our sustainability in an increasingly complex role will be challenged.

iii. The greater recognition of the importance of 'wicked' in contrast to tame' problems and solutions. A third and final way of viewing such complexity takes us, I believe, to the heart of many issues of sustainability, not just for leaders, but for the world as a whole. It suggests that we need to view problems on a spectrum from 'tame' to 'wicked'. Now, *tame* problems have

definitive, easily understood, and universally agreed formulations; and there is therefore only one way of solving the problem: if you have the right key, there is only one way of opening a lock, and so solutions to tame problems like this only need performing in a standardized way to achieve resolution. And importantly, as we shall see, if you fail to open this 'lock', it must be *you* who is at fault...

For *wicked* problems, however, there may have no agreed view of what the problem is, or what the solution should be, and so there is unlikely to be a definitive set of rules from which to work. Individual contexts then may affect the nature of a problem and demand much more individual framings of the solution. And to make the situation even worse, you may not know if a problem is solved, as you may only have eliminated its current symptoms, and your attempted solution may change the nature of the problem (Rittel & Weber, 1973; Bottery, 2016; Bottery, Wong & Ngai, 2017).

Now you will need to be really lucky to solve a problem with a 'tame' solution if the problem is a wicked one, because:

- the problem has no definitive set of rules;
- there are several ways of framing the problem;
- you can't be sure a problem is actually solved, and
- because your solution may only changes the nature of the problem.

You are then going to need a broader, much messier range of solutions to solve this problem. And if you contin-

ue to treat wicked problems as tame ones, and if you continue to use tame solutions instead of wicked ones? Then you end up with my fifth threat to leader's sustainability.

Threat 5.

The growth of guilt and blame cultures

So, in a world where it is accepted that many problems and solutions are of a wicked nature, when a problem is not resolved, the fault can lie in many places – in the inappropriate framing of a problem, in the incorrect application of potential solutions – or in the simple fact that we may not know what is the root of the problem, and so are having to guess (one of Rumsfeld's 'known unknowns'). In such a world, with many of these kinds of problems, it is much less likely than in a tame one that the fault will be attributed to the implementers (unless of course others don't want to admit any responsibility, or even want to denigrate the implementers). The reason is simple: there are many possible causes and many possible solutions which require consideration that we need to be much more careful, much less prone to blame, much more cautious in what we think we know, and much less confident in those who assert that they *know* what is wrong, and know how to resolve it. Single 'silver bullet' solutions are seldom going to be effective.

However, in a world where it is believed that the majority of problems and solutions *are* of a tame nature, if a solution fails, the fault *will* normally lie with the implementer and their framing of the implementation, and if politicians,

the general public, the media, and educational leaders themselves believe in such a tame world (and there is tremendous political and media pressure to do so) then if a solution, implemented by a leader does not succeed, then blame is likely to be attributed to them, and probably worse, these leaders are likely to feel personal guilt at such 'failure'. Accepting the reality of a tame world, then, is a dangerous road for the sustainability of educational leadership; recognizing and arguing for the stronger reality of a wicked world, and all that that entails, is going to be a strong way of combatting the threat of a guilt and blame culture.

Threat 6.

Overwork whilst in the role

It has already been observed that one person's excessive workload can be another person's ideal number of hours; individuals do differ in their capacities, and so one needs to be careful in arguing that this – or indeed any other threat – applies to all. Having said that, there are so many countries in which overwork is now an issue, and there are so many statements of this in the reasons why leaders find their role increasing onerous, that it has to be considered a very serious threat to many leaders' sustainability. As Young and Szachowicz (2014, p. 1) said for the situation of educational leaders in the US: '*Principals have always had mandates...but never have there been so many mandates being implemented simultaneously...And doing all of this while managing previously existing mandates...can seem overwhelming.*'

This doesn't seem to be a US problem alone. Our research in England and Hong

Kong replicates much of the international literature on this over the last thirty years; this threat to personal sustainability is vocalised again and again. In England, for instance, headteachers say things like ‘... *We haven’t even got time to think about the fact that we haven’t got time...*’ and that as a body, headteachers now face ‘...*Countless, countless, countless initiatives...*’ In Hong Kong, we have found principals saying ‘...*Even when I’m not working, you to have to think all of the time...I can do things very quickly, very fast, but you see coming at you a lot of papers, circulars...*’ and importantly ‘*It’s a tough job for a head, so no one wants to take up this position...*’

Such overwork stems from a variety of different sources, many of which can be traced back to the other threats mentioned: the large amount of time needed to read, understand and then implement the volumes of legislation consequent upon market-oriented government strategies; the greater amount, detail and frequency of inspections consequent upon such implementation; the ‘function creep’ (Starr, 2015) of principals’ work, as more and more of this has to be done at home and at the weekend; the problems consequent upon implementing tame policies when wicked ones are needed; and all the time needed to counsel, correct, or comfort staff who are finding that they also are stressed by such change.

Threat 7.

Insufficient preparation for the role

Some readers may be surprised to find that I have left overwork and insufficient

preparation for the role until the end of the list of potential threats to sustainability. In the case of overwork, it is placed near the end because one needs to be aware of the work involved in countering the other threats before one realises how wide-ranging the causes of overwork are. Whilst the threat to sustainability from an insufficient preparation for the role would be near the front of many governments’ minds, this is placed much later in our list, because whilst many governments seem very confident of their agenda when they set up national colleges of leadership to better prepare potential and actual leaders, I am left asking the question: in such turbulent and complex times, how do you prepare for such a turbulent role, and for dealing with such threats. And my first answer is in the negative: it is *not* done by framing the role in terms of solving tame problems, not as one which requires ‘training’ for the role. For by doing this, all we are likely to do is to exacerbate the kinds of issues leaders currently face. I am therefore suggesting that preparing for the role in such complex times means reframing the leader role to more clearly recognise and respond to such complex challenges.

Reframing the role

I therefore want to suggest that dealing with leadership sustainability threats requires a reframing of education policy and practice in at least three different ways: a reframing of the leadership role; a reframing of the student’s role; and a re-orientation of the stakeholders role. I will deal with each in turn.

Reframing approaches to the leadership role

It is tempting to try to provide a number of ‘tips for teachers’ but they inevitably end up looking like tame solutions to problems, rather than the kind of overviews required for wicked problems. Better, it seems to me, then, is the advocacy of approaches to the role which can be applied in different ways, depending on who is doing the applying, and into which context they are being applied. I therefore want to suggest four approaches which might better inform the leadership role in a wicked world.

- a. First, ***leadership challenges are more about throwing birds than about throwing stones***. This was a phrase coined by Plsek (2001), and seems particularly apt to the leadership role, for when one throws a stone, one normally has an idea of how you want to throw it, and where it will land. Many leadership problems, however, are more like the throwing of a bird, because there is more than one interested party in such flight, and therefore the direction, the trajectory, and the final result are likely to be much less controlled and predictable. Many problems inherent in policies and their implementation have this characteristic: they don’t possess a stone’s trajectory, and therefore the leader’s role is made more sustainable by the recognition of such unpredictability and being prepared for it.
- b. It follows from this that ***the role may be as much about living with uncertainty as it is about responding quickly to problems***. In a complex and wicked work, time will normally be needed to frame problems which reflect such complexity and wickedity. As the English poet John Keats said, an essential quality will be one of ‘negative capability’: of the ability to remain comfortable with uncertainty, rather than feeling the need to rush into action when a problem presents itself. In tame belief systems decisiveness can often be little more than hasty reaction, where delay and reflection are viewed as indecisiveness. The ability and opportunity to remain comfortable with uncertainty are then going to be essential qualities in nurturing sustainable leadership.
- c. Given the above, it should not be surprising to find that a third suggestion is that ***the leadership role is as much about asking right questions as in providing right answers***. This assertion comes from the understanding that just as there are tame and wicked problems, so there are also tame and wicked responses, and it is therefore crucial to be able to identify what kind of problem is being dealt with. Choosing tame rather than wicked options without proper reflection will highly likely lead to damaging consequences.
- d. ***The leadership role needs underpinning by more humility than certainty***. A final suggestion here, one in large part opposing the ‘heroic’ American school of management literature, is that there is too much

leadership literature which assumes the need for the certainty of the individual transformative charismatic vision, and of such individuals leading others in its implementation. Yet in a world of the complex and the wicked, I suggest that the leader's (and the policy maker's) role needs be framed much more within an understanding of human limitations, rather than one of certainty. Such a suggestion has important implications for the student's education, and for stakeholders' roles.

Developing the education of students

If educational leaders frame their role in this way, then a crucial part of the role will be in educating students towards such understanding.

- a. A first way will be through *students understanding and reflecting upon the nature of a wicked reality*. One way of doing this would be through considering the nature of causality, and the consequences of holding linear rather than complex and systemic views of causal reality, and from there, of the nature of tame as opposed to wicked understandings, and the consequences of adopting one rather than the other. A deeper appreciation of these differences would enable students to better conceptualize the nature of problems, and better understand the nature of responses required.
- b. An accompanying suggestion is then to *enable students to listen to others' truths as much as telling others their own*. Schein (2013) argues that educating students into an ethic of certainty tends to lead individuals into telling others their 'truths', rather than in listening to others' 'truths'. Educating students into an underpinning ethic of humility would then more often lead to a greater tolerance of others views; and in a world of many wicked problems, educating students into such an ethic opens up more of the space within which others' points of view can be viewed, and differences explored and reconciled.
- c. *Students must understand the inevitability of personal framings of reality*. Underpinning such appreciation must be the recognition that no human being can appreciate all the information around them: all human beings, consciously or unconsciously, select particular pieces of information and values from what is available to them, and as importantly, others won't necessarily see the world in the same way as they do. They need then to be educated into empathizing with others through coming to better see that people understand the world through different experiences, different values, different framings. Such empathic understanding has profound implications for future societal problem solving, toleration and reconciliation.
- d. *Students should then appreciate the dangers of believing in too much certainty, predictability and control*. Given the above, part of a student's education should be in a greater aware-

ness of the danger of believing in an essentially predictable and controllable world. They need to understanding that there may be things we know that we know, but that there is much that we know we don't know (though others may have useful answers here). At least as importantly, there is likely to be a great deal that we don't know we don't know. An embrace of a 'wicked' education is then an embrace of humility, empathy, and tolerance, and a rejection of the simplistic and linear, and the too-quick assignation of blame to others. This not only helps to frame a more sustainable role for educational leaders: it also frames a vision for a more sustainable world.

Re-orienting the stakeholder role

If such understandings are to succeed, they need to transcend educational institutions, for other powerful stakeholders drive much of a public educational agendas and its policies. If these stakeholders fail to understand the changes needed, this will only add to the threats to a principal's sustainability, and to the educational system as a whole. Given the re-framing so far described, there are a number of crucial changes needed for stakeholders' understandings. Some of these can be influenced by the work of educational leaders, but other changes need creating within a wider institutional and national culture.

- a. ***Stakeholders need to understand that dealing with wicked problems requires the creation of the right conditions for dealing with wicked problems, as much as attempting to solve***

them. If educational leaders need to embrace an ethic of humility, so do stakeholders: all must recognize that their central role cannot be in personally defining the nature of the problem and charismatically leading others to its resolution. Instead, they must accept the limits of their understanding, and ensure that the understandings of others are brought to bear on a problem. Their role then becomes one centred on the facilitation of problem identification and resolution, and in creating conditions for dealing with wicked problems. As Datnow and Park (2009) suggest, co-construction is going to be the best way of developing adequate responses; as Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001, p. 394) suggest, critical to any solution will be in '*... creating transformational environments, rather than creating the innovation itself.*'

- b. ***They should recognize that different strategies are needed in arriving at responses.*** If stakeholders bring many different frames to problem resolution, they also need to recognize that not all will adopt the frames they do, and in most cases 'silver-bullet solutions' will need replacing by clumsy, rather messy responses. These clumsy approaches will normally require a combination of different strategies for solving wicked problems: from the hierarchical, to the collaborative, to the individual, and even to the fatalist response, all of which may be needed at one time or another (Verweij and Thompson, 2011). Appreciating which of these – or which combina-

tion of these – is the most suitable, will be another step towards creating the environment within which problems can be properly addressed.

- c. ***Stakeholders must come to understand the limits of what educational leaders can promise and deliver.*** Responses then need to be as complex and wicked as problems are, and in such a role, leaders should seldom promise instant, universal, or permanent solutions. As H.L. Mencken once said, to every complex problem there exists a solution which is neat simple – and **wrong**. Instead, because wicked circumstances limit any certainty of successful outcomes, stakeholders need to come to understand the limits of what leaders can promise or deliver, and should therefore recognize that part of both the stakeholder's and the leader's role must be in educating others as to the limits of what can be promised. This will mean an appreciation of an education in the wicked rather than in the tame, and an education in the consequences for leadership sustainability in adopting one approach rather than the other. Educational leaders can do so much here: stakeholders can do much more to help an understanding of this in the wider society.

- d. ***Stakeholders – and leaders – need to understand that the role is as much inherently political as it is transformative.*** A leader's role in their institution is primarily an educative one – a leading away from a simplistic and tame framing of problems to

a better understanding by others of the need for a more complex and wicked approach. However, it is also, necessarily, a **political** one, for leaders are by the nature of their role largely 'bricoleurs' (Grint, 2008): individuals who must negotiate with other stakeholders to arrive at mutually acceptable definitions of problems and responses. This is messy leadership, as they must judge when they have sufficient agreement to move to action. Both stakeholders and leaders are then more likely to achieve sustainable change by nurturing relationships than by attempting to exercise power-based or transformational compliance. A 'bricoleur' approach will not be perfect, but it is probably the most sustainable.

Conclusion – an eighth and final threat

So far, only seven of the eight threats to leadership sustainability have been discussed, but given what has just been discussed, the **final eight threat – the increased use of power rather than persuasion to effect changes** – can now be commented upon, because it has become apparent that the ability to maintain some leadership sustainability lies within an individual leader's compass, but the ultimate remediation of a considerable number of threats ultimately lies beyond such influence. Thus, damaged relationships between governments and educators require a willingness on both sides to listen to the other's point of view, if such relationships are to be healed, just as does any reconciliation in the differences in perceptions of the purposes of the role.

Bridges can be built to help these, as can the use of dialogue to reflect upon the nature of the increased accountability and surveillance of their role. Leaders can individually come to better understand the increasing complexity of the growth of guilt and blame cultures; and overwork is also partly remediable through better individual prioritisation of tasks, better organisation of existing work, and enhanced devolution of responsibility to staff, even if it is only through research and dialogue that powerful others will come to appreciate how damaging overwork can be. And whilst some governments have responded to a lack of preparation for the role by what some will see as essentially limited 'tame' measures of the scope and nature of the role, there nevertheless remains room for dialogue here.

However, the final eighth threat remains a real danger. The increased use of power rather than persuasion by governments to effect changes, results in the more powerful side in a dialogue moving to a monologue of power, where decisions are made with little or no consultation. If consultation is announced, it may then be little more than token consultation with little or no intention of listening to the views of others. And when non-consultative power is used, then even the most sustainable leader and organisation can be brought low very quickly, for radically different purposes for the role can be declared by fiat, tame problems and solutions insisted upon and enforced through surveillance and increased accountability, and blame cultures follow from the adoption of tame policies. In such situations, the existing purposes upon which sustainability had been built are very likely to disappear, and

enforced compliance to very different purposes may well lead to a rapid decline in leadership sustainability.

So a final addition to the list of ways of sustaining educational leadership is now proposed, and it is not an educational one so much as a political one: it requires the renewed strength of a civic society such that neither the state nor the market is dominant, but both are engaged in a dialogue with vibrant alternative voices which reflect a much greater diversity and richness of approaches to the wicked problems which a society faces. The sustainability of a principal may then ultimately rest upon the increased use of dialogue and persuasion within society – which seems a good description of a properly functioning democracy, at both institutional and national levels.

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