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Editorial (Special Issue)

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EDITORIAL

Howard Youngs and Cathy Wylie

Guest Editors: Special Issue

Where to next? (Re)forms of Leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand Education over the last 30 years

Leadership has increasingly become a major presence in Aotearoa New Zealand education practice, policy, and research. Similar shifts have occurred across the Educational Management Administration and Leadership (EMAL) field in other nations. Aotearoa New Zealand has gone much further in its policy settings than most, with its shift after the 1989 *Tomorrow's Schools* reform to schools as self-managing organisations. This placed more focus on executive leading and managing, and in particular, the role of school principal. Leadership and management were also increasingly emphasised in early childhood education and tertiary education.

In parallel to this changing focus in education, the Leadership Studies field was evolving from a near sole focus on leader-centric theories, and leader-follower framing, to post-heroic approaches that broadened the boundaries of leadership beyond those in organisational management roles. The EMAL field has evolved to include distributed, shared, and collaborative forms of leadership practice, alongside the focus on individual executive leaders. In addition, there has been a growing emphasis on supporting learning and teaching as a core component of EMAL practice, policy, and research, as well as the prominence of various forms of middle-layer leadership.

The purpose of this Special Issue is to look forward and ask where to next with leadership practice, policy, and research in education, through a lens of the experiences of the past 30 years, and changes in that time. Our invitation to potential contributors to this Special Edition asked them to look back over the past 30 years with these questions in mind:

- How are your experiences or understandings of leadership now different, compared to when you started? Have you had to do any 'unlearning'?
- What have you learned along the way?
- What theoretical shifts have occurred with how we understand and research educational leadership?
- Are we in a better place now compared to 30 years ago? Do we have the right conditions for enjoyable and effective leadership?
- What do you think needs to happen next in leadership practice, policy, and/or research?

The Special Issue consists of five articles from education professionals who have been at the nexus of educational leadership practice, policy, and research in differing ways over the past 30 years in Aotearoa New Zealand. Their collective experiences traverse early childhood education, compulsory school education, and tertiary education. Each article describes challenges, lost opportunities and new opportunities. One persistent theme is the need for a coherent and reliable system to grow and support leadership practices at all levels, and the value of collective leadership.

The first article by Jenny Ritchie, an early childhood educator and researcher, focuses on the responsibility and opportunities leaders have to counter racism and climate change. She describes the seminal role of the early childhood care and education curriculum, *Te Whariki*, and the role of teacher education programmes in supporting collective leadership in early childhood settings to deeply understand *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (The Treaty of Waitangi), signed by indigenous Māori and the Crown in 1840, and change practices to use te reo Māori, enact te ao Māori values, and include whānau Māori in their programmes. She sees promise in the greater awareness of education's role in addressing racism that has been shown recently by the government. She concludes with a call for strong leadership – collective and individual - to work to overcome racism, and in relation to the global climate emergency.

Graeme Macann, a former secondary school principal, President of the Post-Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA), and currently an adjunct senior lecturer, also draws attention to the necessary shift from a monocultural approach in the second article. Reflecting on his own experience, he brings out the marked change in school leadership, from passive to active, and greater collaboration across different leadership levels, linked to the growing complexity of school provision. However, this has not translated into sufficient system support for middle leaders and others, including adequate teacher workforce planning. Competition between schools leads to attention to marketing and distrust between principals, making it difficult to work together for improvement.

The shift to distributed leadership is the focus of the next article by Ross Notman, who has much experience in leadership development research and education. He provides an illuminating case study of adaptive leadership through co-principalship, which is still rare in Aotearoa New Zealand schools, despite principals increasingly struggling with workload and work-life balance. Ross concludes with thoughtful notes about the opportunities with the 2018 Leadership Strategy to improve leadership practice and development, through connected providers and support services that build on local relationships and knowledge of needs.

As the 2018 Leadership Strategy was launched, a major review of the Tomorrow's Schools system brought in through the Education Act 1989 was under way. Cathy Wylie, a Chief Researcher at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, who was a member of this taskforce, draws on her experiences of researching school leadership and the impact of policy on schools over the past 30 years. While distributed perspectives of leadership have become commonplace, the role and workload of the principal have increased rather than decreased. Cathy draws on multiple national studies to illustrate how this challenge has continued to grow across the school system, arguing how the satisfaction principals get from their role comes at a price. Despite this challenge, interest in the principal leadership pipeline remains steady, even though over the last 30 years New Zealand has never had a sustained, coherent and in-depth approach to educational leadership development and ongoing support. Underpinning her case for improvements is the important role leadership research can play in educational practice and policy.

The final article by Howard Youngs, a leadership educator and researcher, rounds out this Special Issue by asking what leadership has become, and what alternative ways of understanding it are desirable. He traces the rise of leadership as a frame in New Zealand education, where 30 years ago it was in the shadows of management. This was a reflection of the priority of self-managing organisations in the Education Act 1989. Since then management and leadership have taken a reverse profile, where leadership is now a *sine qua non* (an essential ingredient) in and for education. He emphasises the lack of a coherent approach to leadership development and illustrates a time where New Zealand was on the cusp of finally achieving such an approach, all for it to crumble due to spending and staffing cuts at the Ministry of Education. He concludes with some hope that the country will now have a coherent approach to leadership development, this time with more of a focus on leadership in practice, where the focus is on process and practices, rather than individual leader development.

