Michael Schratz and Wilfried Schley

Educational Leaders as Change Agents in System Development: The Austrian Leadership Academy

Abstract: The Austrian Ministry of Education began the Leadership Academy in 2004 to enhance the innovative capacities of educational leadership on all levels of the school system. The professional development in this academy comes alive through generations. Each generation is composed of 250 to 300 participants from the educational system; these participants come from all provinces (Bundesländer) and school types and include ministry and regional education authorities (e.g. inspectorate) and higher education institutions for teacher education. This ensures that a systemic effect on change and transformation is possible and that the "whole system" is involved in a joint learning process. The Leadership Academy is designed in compliance with learning organisation principles and cooperates closely with responsible decision makers in the ministry.

The Leadership Academy functions as a project organisation and is comprised of generations that form a nationwide network of change agents after graduation. The participants must complete a leadership programme, which consists of four forums. At each forum, all the participants from the respective generation meet at the Alpbach Congress Centre in the Austrian Alps. Between the forums, individual school-based project work and intensive exchanges within professional learning communities are emphasised. Participants graduate from the Leadership Academy during the fourth forum.

Keywords: professional development, school leaders, system development, leadership for learning, learning organization, network culture

Michael Schratz, Ph.D., University of Innsbruck, School of Education, Department of Teacher Education and School Research, Innrain 52, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria; e-mail: Michael.Schratz@uibk.ac.at

Wilfried Schley, Ph.D., IOS – Institut für Organisationsentwicklung & Systemische Beratung, Geibelstr. 46 B, In den Maihak Höfen, 22303 Hamburg, Germany; e-mail: Wilfried.Schley@ios-schley.de

Introduction

Like many other countries in Europe and the rest of the world, Austria faces challenges stemming from global economic competition, technological change and demographic shifts. To address these challenges, Austria is adopting more flexible, inventive forms of public policy decision making that favour devolution to local levels and market-based choice. The government is also committed to developing a more flexible, responsive education system that will lead to higher quality outcomes for all pupils. This commitment implies and necessitates changes in the established manner of doing business in schools, in provincial and national governments, and in larger culture. Austria's social and political traditions and the organisation of its government and education system are not always well suited to support such change. Powerful central, hierarchical and consultative traditions must be modified to maintain continuity with the past and adapt to the needs of the future.

Policymakers, the education system at large and school leaders themselves—at all levels—need to feel responsible for developing more effective leadership in greater quantities that is distributed among a larger share of the education enterprise; this leadership is necessary to meet the current challenge. Steps towards systemic innovation require a new understanding of professionalizing leaders on all levels of the school system. We need "system thinkers in action" (Fullan 2005) who interact with larger parts of the system horizontally and vertically to bring about deeper reform. Their collective wisdom in thinking and acting shapes future steps in national school reform.

The aim of this paper is to provide some insight into the Austrian Leadership Academy's theoretical underpinnings and presents its structure and processes as a network organisation. The policy background is described to provide an understanding of the context of the programme, which is organized using large group arrangements to connect the different levels of the education system. The programme's main themes involve linking agency with structure, creating a mind--set for innovation and learning from the future as it emerges. Coaching groups and learning partnerships are presented as catalysts for change processes through

reflection in, on and about action. A model is presented to connect leadership with learning, and a matrix that uses energy as a key element during the transfer of learning to the participants' workplaces is introduced.

Austrian Policy Background

Since the Austrian Hungarian Monarchy,[1] Austria has had only a short history of democratic policy-making with the "Second Republic" after World War II. The country has developed into a federal state of provinces with distinct identities and a very strong culture of centralized thinking. Depending on one's perspective, it could in this sense be called the most centralized federal state or the most federal centralized state.[2]

This constellation of policy culture leads to a situation that makes it difficult to put central policies into practice without significant interference by the federal parts of the system. This situation was particularly exacerbated in 1962, when a parliamentary decision was made to handle school laws in the same manner as constitutional laws by requiring a two-thirds majority for laws to pass. This measure prevents sudden changes by minority governments while safeguarding the interests of the political parties and provinces.

Consequently, the present system is highly bureaucratic, strongly regulated in details, hierarchically organized and only slightly output-oriented. Too many actors, numerous parallel structures and too little congruence are present in task--orientation and assumed responsibilities. The system is characterized by the strong influence of social partnership structures, partisan politics, the (teacher) union and teacher representatives, whereas parents, students, researchers and other (less formally organized) actors have relatively little voice (Schmid et al. 2007).

This policy context makes it very difficult to introduce coherent approaches to developing the school system. The implications for school governance and leadership reform initiatives are that eclectic government interventions cause an overload by piling disconnected policies upon one another, thus leading to a sense of confusion and uncertainty not only among the actors in schools but also at different levels within the school system (regional, district, local levels). This in turn leads to de-energizing effects of fragmentation, creates leadership dilemmas and pulls school managers in different directions between *sollen* (duty) and *wollen* (desire) (Schratz 2003, pp. 409–410).

Although the slow movement towards more decentralization and deregulation (Schratz and Hartmann 2009) has led to a shift towards more school-based innovation, local school governance and leadership are characterized by a flat hierarchical structure with one head and varying numbers of teachers. Because of the strong focus on one person, leadership is not shared by many people. Moreover, school heads are confronted with restricted autonomy (finance, curriculum, personnel), which makes it difficult for them to empower their faculty for collective action.

---

[1] Empress Maria Theresia introduced compulsory schooling as early as 1774.

[2] For further elaboration on Austrian policy culture, see Schratz (2012).

After several policy interventions for school reform (Zukunftskommission 2003; ExpertInnenkommission 2008), we seem to be experiencing the same question German sociologist Niklas Luhmann put forth from the perspective of systems theory: "whether the education system is able to generate new reflective ideas out of its own resources or whether it must depend on the irritations and structural couplings within its social environment - not least in order to be able to experience itself as difference" (Luhmann 2002, p. 196 [translation M.S.]). In Austria, international comparative studies in general and PISA in particular caused such an irritation, which more or less shows that the present education system has not achieved what it was supposed to. For Salcher (2008) the PISA debate focused on the right topic but the wrong direction: "The official reactions to the poor PISA test results 2003 in Austria and Germany was reminiscent of a highly talented student who succeeded in muddling through for years but whose poor achievement was suddenly exposed after an important exam. They reached from blaming and shaming, wild outrage, deep contrition to the promise to start to study harder and do better the next time. The responsible politicians took on the role of enraged parents who angrily approached the examination board to file complaints ranging from the completely unsuitable exam tasks their child had to solve to mistakes made in the corrections." (Ibid., p. 195)

If we look at international school reform, we find little evidence that the direction of change is balanced well. Researchers have repeatedly warned about findings showing that conventional school reform does not reach the classroom door (e.g. Levin 2008; Marzano 2004; Payne 2008; Schrag 1988). The main reason behind reform initiatives' missing sustainability seems to lie in the dysfunctional political culture, which develops reform models and tries to implement them by means of prescriptive strategies rather than by capacity building. Their failure is often attributed to the fact that they follow a traditional managerial or leadership model that builds on command and control (Harris 2010).

Educational leaders as change agents

In the early 1990s, Austria introduced a compulsory school management training programme for the first years after an appointment as a prerequisite for a permanent position as a school head (see Fischer and Schratz 1993, pp. 204–208; Schratz and Petzold 2007, p. 26). This is an on-the-job training program that helps new school heads change their role from that of a former teacher to a school leader and introduces them to the basics of their new role. Because they are organized for school heads in certain regions (usually on a provincial level) and are directed at individual new school heads leading their (new) school, these training programmes cannot contribute to coherent, system-wide developments.

Nationally, school leaders are an important link in synchronizing top-down and bottom-up processes (Fullan 2005) and are key actors in promoting quality processes in schools (Firestone and Riehl 2006; Hall and Hord 1987). Pont et al. (2008, p. 19) also referred to the decisive role school leadership plays in school

reform by bridging educational policy and practice. If central reform initiatives are to be coherently integrated into the lives of schools and classrooms (Stoll et al. 2002), a new approach to capacity building for professional school leadership had to be developed as a prerequisite to system-wide change.

Consequently, in 2004 the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture sought an innovative concept for the professionalization of its 6.000 school leaders and other executives in leadership positions in the Austrian school system. To learn from previous reform initiatives in Austria and research findings on innovation and change, the need for a new approach was framed around the following questions:

– How can the complex decision-making structure be disentangled and the different demands of central and federal interests be balanced?

– How can the communication and actions related to policy and practice be coordinated among the different levels of the system?

– How can a learning context aimed at influencing the pattern of how professionals change their organizations be created?

– How can the system be energized by more individual and organizational empowerment?

– How can leadership be more closely connected with learning to create better conditions for student achievement?

– How can professional development create system-wide culture change and be linked with the improvement capacity of actors on different horizontal and vertical levels?

We address these questions by presenting the philosophy behind the Leadership Academy (*LEA*), which highlights the innovative character of its design.

Working with large group arrangements representing the whole system

Recently, several methods have been introduced for engaging whole systems in development processes, such as the Future Search Conference, Real Time Strategic Chance (RTSC), Open Space Technology, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and the World Café. They all aim to include as many people as possible in systems development, thus fully engaging them in the change process (Holman et al. 2008). Taking recent developments into consideration, the LEA is organized in cohorts of up to 300 participants from across the entire education system, thus making use of educational leaders' manifold expertise and identifying with the overall goal of systemic innovation.

Each cohort is composed of 250 to 300 participants from all provinces, school types and organizations, including the ministry, regional education authorities (including the inspectorate) and teacher education institutions. This ensures

from the outset that a systemic effect on change and transformation is possible and that the entire system is involved in a joint learning process. The role of the LEA is congruent with the principles of a learning organization, and the LEA cooperates closely with responsible decision makers in the ministry. Moreover, joint efforts by a large number of representatives from different education system sectors generate the productive energy necessary for an inspiring and inclusive vision that is used as a basis for profound change (Bruch and Vogel 2005). The LEA is a part-time programme comprising four forums that take place over one year, at which all participants within a cohort meet for three days.

The kick-off occurs during the first forum, which is designed to orient participants to the philosophy, organization, structure and underlying processes of the LEA. They are introduced to the idea of setting their own goals and choosing the personal professional projects that lie at the heart of their individual development. Creating trust in the network, forming learning partnerships and collegial team coaching groups (CTCs) and elaborating possible innovation themes take centre stage.

Between forums, the learning partners and the CTCs meet regionally or locally. They reflect on the reactions of stakeholder groups in their schools, education authorities, inspectoral systems or teacher education institutions to the individual development projects. These processes develop through cycles of anticipation, action and reflection. The principle of ownership and responsibility is combined with a goal and result, which demands respect, openness and flexibility from everyone involved.

During the second forum, the participants' individual development projects are defined, developed and outlined using project management methods and tools. In this phase, the CTCs are responsible for collaborative reflection on individual development processes with a view to challenging established patterns of thinking and time-worn "solutions". During the third forum, participants reflect on their mutual experiences during the implementation of their development projects. Scepticism, resistance, conflicts and tensions come to the fore just as much as agreement, motivation and enthusiasm in this creative space. Workshops on communication, motivation, conflict resolution and decision making are offered to support individual learning and capacity building. Workshops on art, dance or survival camp techniques support the holistic learning approach.

During the final certification forum, participants present their professional learning processes and their results in the privacy of their CTCs before deciding collaboratively on one project to be presented to the others during the final parallel sessions. For successful certification, each participant must submit a portfolio summarizing their individual personal and professional development process for review.

Connecting all levels of the system (horizontally and vertically)

School systems are usually organized along a hierarchical structure based on the political system, with the ministry on top and the schools at the bottom. Because school reform does not work along "detailed deliverology" (Hargreaves

and Shirley 2009, p. 110), the LEA invites educational leaders from all levels of the hierarchy (schools, local administration, inspectorate, ministry, teacher education institutions) into a stimulating setting outside the (hierarchical) system. The LEA takes place at the Alpbach Conference Centre. This centre also hosts the European Forum Alpbach**,** which, similar to the World Economic Forum in Davos, brings together politicians and decision makers from all areas to discuss and brainstorm new ideas and solutions to world problems (Figure 1).
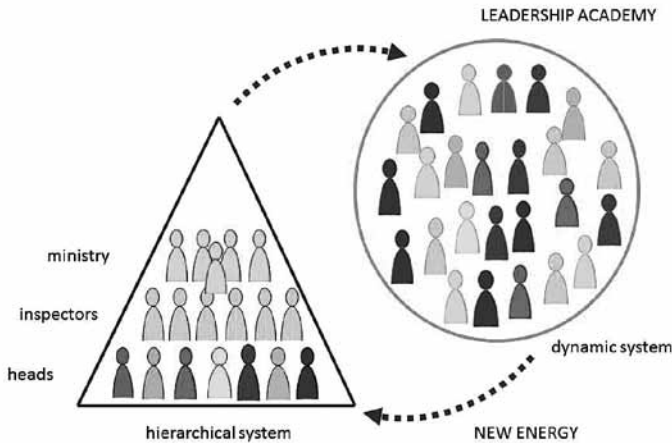

Figure 1: Connecting horizontal and vertical system levels

For Hargreaves and Shirley (2009), the hardest part of educational change is not starting it but rather how to make it last and spread, which calls for coherent activities that bridge policy and practice: "The challenge of coherence is not to clone or align everything so it looks the same in all schools…The challenge, rather, is how to bring diverse people together to work skillfully and effectively for a common cause that lifts them up and has them moving in the same direction with an impact on learning, achievement, and results" (ibid., pp. 94–95). They suggest the following four catalysts that create this coherence: sustainable leadership, integrating networks, responsibility before accountability and differentiation and diversity. Bringing together key actors from all levels in the system facilitates focusing on these four catalysts with a view to greater coherence in system development. Through dynamic work arrangements in various settings (large groups, small groups, coaching groups, critical friendship, regional networks), new energy for change processes is created; this energy can then be taken back to traditional workplaces, thus contributing to overall coherence.

Building a network culture

The LEA is a network organization and is not built as a physical environment. As Fullan (2005, p. 11) argued, "We need a radically new mind-set for reconciling

the seemingly intractable dilemmas fundamental for sustainable reform: top-down versus bottom-up, local and central accountability, informed prescription and informed professional judgment, improvement that keeps being replenished." Bringing together leaders from all parts of the system helps engage everyone in a mutual development process, thus leading to new ways of thinking and acting. The LEA invests in capacity building as a way of strengthening systemic leadership by shifting reform policy away from a mere top-down process towards network-based development. Network coordinators in all Austrian provinces function as the regional support system to ensure regional networking.

The networking character of the LEA aims to create a new leadership mentality that relies on trust and authenticity rather than on power through position. Its ultimate goal lies in sustainably and improving the preconditions and processes of young people's learning in all educational institutions. Networking serves the capacity building, qualification and empowerment of leaders in the Austrian educational system. Leaders are motivated to strategically target complex development tasks through setting priorities, focusing on solutions, undertaking individual development projects and creating organization profiles. The participants learn to translate challenges into innovative development processes and entice and empower staff in their work environments to achieve high-quality performances.

The LEA network creates an intellectual and practical focus within a new paradigm of personal and institutional improvement in leadership capacities at all levels of the school system. Networking requires a new understanding of theory and practice that transforms the educational system by using the quality of leadership as a starting point for systemic innovation. It creates a learning context that aims to influence the patterns and habits of professionals in leading positions, thus enhancing their capacity to develop and transform their organizations.

Linking agency with structure

In several countries, the ascendancy of school leadership is linked to the government's goals of raising educational standards and modernizing the education system; therefore, "the primacy of leadership is part of a wider agenda of transformation across public services where leaders are the vehicle by which policy reforms can be implemented and change realized" (Forrester and Gunter 2008, p. 67). We regard this "functional organizational leadership" as a managerial approach of neo-liberal policy-making rather than leadership associated with being visionary, motivational, inspirational and innovative. Because of the discrepancies between reality and the ideal, conceptions of leadership in recent years have been increasingly characterized by notions of personal leadership. As a result, delineation is present in characteristics applying to individual leaders and strategies for influencing their associates' behaviour. According to Staehle (1999, p. 839), "A concept of leadership represents a (normative) system of recommendations for action on the manager's part, both in reference to personal responsibility

and their personal leadership tasks. Leadership concepts are based explicitly or implicitly upon one or more leadership theories".

For our work with the LEA, we found Hinterhuber's (2003) theoretical model helpful; this model attributes differentiating attitudes, mind-sets and actions to management and leadership by modelling them along the Eastern conception of yin and yang (Figure 2).

Leadership
• discovering new possibilities with the capacity to realize them or make them realized
• creating a new paradigm
• working on the system
• enciting and empowering staff to achieve top preformances
• dignity for the human being (trust)
• attitude of "serving"

• creative problem solving
• working within a paradigm
• working within the system
• getting "things" and people into motion, methods, techniques, control
• the human being as support (aid)
• attitude of "doing"
Management

Figure 2: Interrelation between management and leadership
(Hinterhuber 2003, p. 20 [translation. M.S.])

According to the yin-yang metaphor, no clear-cut division exists between management and leadership; however, their features are distinct. This metaphor does not include "either-or" but rather includes "as well as". Management carries leadership elements and vice versa. Management is a state of behaviour referring to norms; leadership is a (moral) attitude of influence. Behaving (managing) without a moral attitude is just as problematic as leading without acting according to (given) norms. Competency in management is easier to acquire than the capability of leadership, not least because leadership is never a solo act. It is rather a social activity that should enable others to rise to their individual challenges and meet them using necessary measures. Leadership requires school leaders who are in contact with many different stakeholders (not just within the school but in society at large, including the community, politicians and the public) and they also register their differing (and at times conflicting) interests. Leadership can only be effective if leaders are willing to take on, and work to, their own moral (and policy) agendas. However, these agendas must be grounded within the political framework in which their education systems operate because the weight of normative pressures bears differently within varying educational contexts (Portin et al. 2005).

Culturally embedded trends "are based not on the laws of physics but on human habits, albeit habits on a large scale. These habitual ways of thinking and acting become embedded over time in the social structures we enact, but alternative social structures can also be created" (Scharmer 2007, p. xiii). In his structuration theory, Anthony Giddens (1984) "talks of the duality of structure in which social structures are not fixed sets of rules and resources but are features of social systems that have to be recreated in the specific moment of action. Such recreation can only take place when human agents act in this way or that and a powerful influence at that point is the reflexivity and knowledgeability" (Frost 2006, p. 4). Therefore, the implication of Giddens' theory of action is that social (or organizational) structures can be modified by individuals' agency. Through its energy-driven approach and large group intervention, the LEA promotes agency as a driving force in leadership for learning.

Creating a mind-set for innovation

In many ways, knowledge and excellence based on past experiences have lost their validity as a portent of future success. What we learned about management and processes and what has worked for us until now does not necessarily provide answers to the diverse problems of today and, even less so, tomorrow. Education systems have often reacted to pressure in an attempt to improve achievement within the existing framework of functionality. However, this "more of the same" approach often leads to little improvement because a typical learning curve reaches the upper limit of further outreach. Old patterns bump against the potential solutions' limitations. Special arrangements are sometimes made (e.g. through incentives) to attain best practice status; however, these arrangements are difficult to implement because of their special status (e.g. model schools). Hentig (1993) therefore argued that it is not enough to renew or improve schools; he called for rethinking school and demanded a new mind-set to envisage school. In research, theoretical and methodological discussions have taken place within the process of reframing the "classical approach" to changing patterns of schooling at large and of teaching and learning in particular (e.g. Vosniadou 2008). We see this reframing process as a shift from best practice to next practice (Figure 3).

For new patterns to emerge, critical incidents or interventions must enable perspectives to open up to the next practice (Kruse 2004). However, leaving the trodden path initially causes insecurity and instability: the old patterns do not function any more, and new ones have not yet gained stability. The experience is similar to an incubation phase for the emergence of the new, which conjoins with the old or even questions it. Creating a mind-set of sustainable change is a key concept that runs through all the LEA's phases.
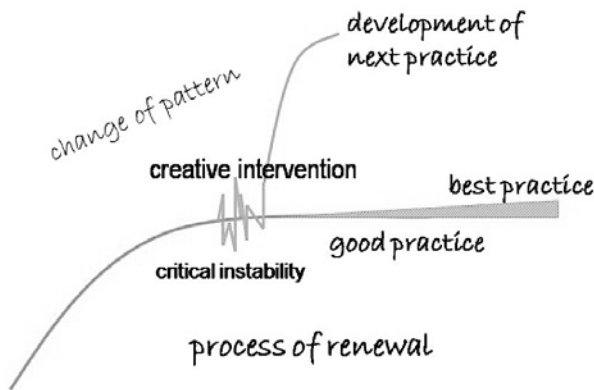
Figure 3: Pattern change through creative intervention

Learning from the future as it emerges

Creating a mind-set of change cannot be imposed or enacted; this creation is rather related to a human being's innate capacity to create new knowledge. Otherwise, as Scharmer (2007, p. 119) argued, we are "downloading" patterns of the past, thus preventing us from creating a new future. In *Theory U. Leading from the Future as It Emerges*, Scharmer developed a systemic theory of leadership that centres on "presencing", a term he constructs from "presence" and "sensing". For Scharmer, the essence of leadership builds on the capacity to feel future possibilities that are most salient rather than "downloading the patterns of the past".

To activate this vital potential as a leader, three preconditions are necessary: an open mind, an open heart, and an open will. Opening the mind is based on our intellectual capacity, which allows us to see things with fresh eyes to ask for new perspectives on leadership practice. Opening the heart relates to our ability to access our emotional intelligence and asks for empathy to feel the sensibility of the field. Opening the will "relates to our ability to access our authentic purpose and self…It deals with the fundamental happening of the letting go and letting come" (ibid., p. 41). Presencing is the moment when we connect to the source.

Scharmer (ibid.) described these three stages of openness as new intelligences every leader must nurture and cultivate like precise instruments to help create the best possible future. Leadership, he argued, "in its essence is the capacity to shift the inner place from which we operate" and "leaders who understand how can build the capacity of their systems to operate differently and release themselves from the exterior determination" (ibid., p. 373). This leads eventually to a "shift from sensing exterior causation to sensing something collective that is emerging from within" (ibid.).

Using *Theory U* as a "social technology" in the LEA helps challenge participants' traditional views on leadership. It takes participants on an intimate journey of personal and professional learning about one's understanding of the

world and organizations, and it highlights forms of learning on both the individual and systems levels as an interwoven and essential dialogue. Applying *Theory U* in everyday practice enables participants to pursue a path to an "ecosystem of innovation", in which profound change through "co-creating and co-evolving" social realities becomes possible. This opens a wide field for both individual and collective learning and understanding and helps close the "split between matter and mind" and thus "gain access to a deeper participation in the process of social reality creation" (ibid., p. 374).

Creating system thinkers in action

Linking policy with practice through networking leads to new types of roles in the education system. Fullan (2005) saw their role as system thinkers in action and stated that these are "leaders at all levels of the system who proactively and naturally take into account and interact with larger parts of the system as they bring about deeper reform and help produce other leaders working on the same issues. They are theoreticians, but they are practitioners whose theories are lived in action every day. Their ideas are woven into daily interactions that make a difference" (ibid., p. 11).

Bringing representatives from all sections of the system together is a pre-requisite for creating system thinkers. The LEA uses the social technology known as collegial team coaching (CTC) to practice system thinking in action. Each CTC team consists of heterogeneous groups of six participants who work within a strict structure. This fosters a solution-oriented approach rather than a problem-oriented one. In each CTC session, one participant is the "actor" who is guided from the "problem space" in which they are caught to a "solution space". Goal orientation, creativity and inventiveness are the foundation and factors of CTC's philosophy.

The collaboration in CTC enables a precise diagnosis of key issues, including those related to the development, leadership and management of an organization, thus offering concrete possibilities for solutions and their implementation. This collaboration utilizes a team's intellectual, creative and emotional potential; fosters entrepreneurial and goal-oriented thinking and acting; and encourages partici-pants to forge new paths and develop new strategies. CTC also reflects the process itself, analyses patterns and levels of energy during its interactions and enables participants to read between the lines. The energy often explodes after a period of searching for key issues and breakthroughs in "seeing the seeing" and "seeing from the whole" (Scharmer 2007). CTC also strengthens the reliability of results.

CTC is used for each participant during every forum and between the forums as a continuous learning and development process of colleagues by colleagues. It is practiced so it becomes an integral part of an organization's culture and a significant strategy for building a learning organization. It respects and reflects the complexity of the work, especially leadership and management.

Reflecting and connecting through critical friendship

The smallest entity of the LEA is based on a learning partnership. This learning partnership is the home base for two participants, each of whom aligns in a trusting, reciprocal coaching partnership. The participants support each other through explorative questions, help define project milestones and guide each other through individual learning processes. Each CTC consists of three learning partnerships comprised of groups of six participants who consult and coach each other collegially. Within individual learning partnerships, the individual pairs act as "critical friends".

According to Costa et al. (1993), a critical friend is a "trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens and offers a critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work" (ibid., p. 22).

Advocacy for success is an important asset to a critical friend's work. He or she deals with the outcome of the respective coaching phases in which his or her partner has been involved and helps in strategic planning for the "homecoming" after the forum. On one hand, he or she monitors his or her partner's progress in personal and professional development by bringing in an outside perspective. On the other hand, the learning partners support each other in putting their new leadership insights into practice. This can take place through mutual visits to one another's workplaces, including shadowing, or through meetings exchanging experiences and critically reflecting on them.
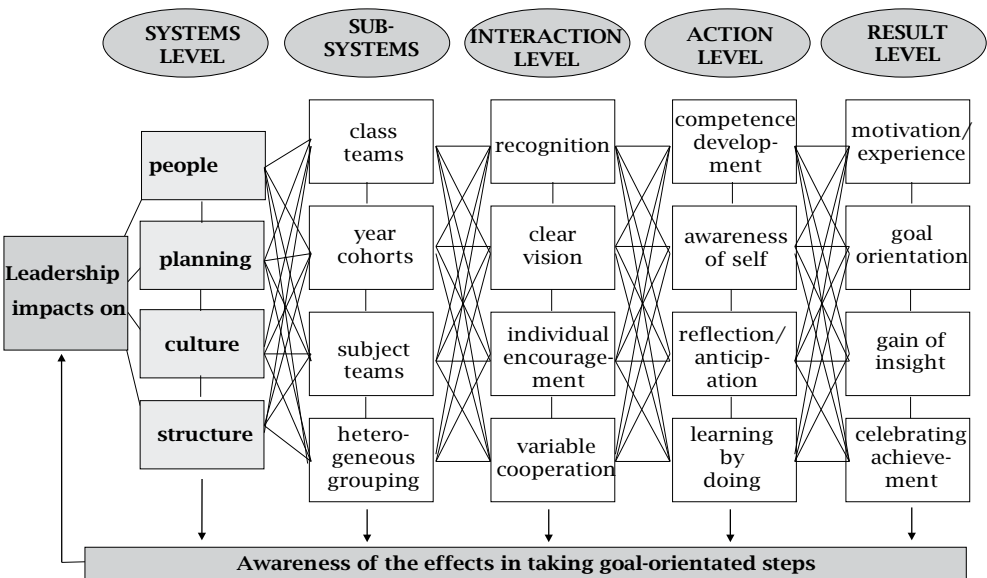

Figure 4: Chain of effects from leadership to learning (Schley and Schratz 2004, p. 4)

Connecting leadership with learning

Before his assassination, John F. Kennedy prepared a speech that included the statement, "Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other". Since then, the pairing of leadership and learning has been seen as indispensable in the context of schooling. However, there is a great distance between a president's vision and the transfer of school leadership into classroom learning. In recent times, great effort has been put forth to bring leadership into closer contact with student learning (Frost and Swaffield 2004; MacBeath and Moos 2004). Internationally, *Leadership for Learning* has become the concept that focuses on the effective relationship between leadership and students' learning processes in the classroom (MacBeath and Cheng 2008).

If we compare schools as organizations with organisms (Pechtl 2001), "the heartbeat of leadership is a relationship, not a person or process" (Sergiovanni 2005, p. 53). If we regard the learning school as a living organism, this "heartbeat" calls for enough resonance within the school to make the relationships between people at different levels, planning, culture and structure in the system become visible. To put this concept into practice in the LEA, Schley and Schratz (2004) developed a diagram illustrating a chain of effects in their leadership work (Figure 4). This diagram shows a web of meaningful relationships that point the way from leading to learning and back again. This chain of effects illustrates how leadership affects people, planning, culture and structure and how, through interaction, it produces action and results related to a school's goals.

Using energy as the currency of high leadership competence

Changing an organization's culture is not easy. We use energy as a lever for promoting change because it is easier to influence a system's energy than change the culture. In *The Power of Full Engagement*, Loehr and Schwarz (2003) argued that "positive energy rituals…are key to full engagement and sustained high performance" (ibid., p. 16) and not the amount of time invested. Using positive energy during large group arrangements is an important feature of the LEA. The use of this energy creates a positive collaborative culture for full engagement. Organizational energy helps organizations move in a certain direction. The intensity of organizational energy is an indicator of how much emotional, mental and behavioural potential can be mobilized to reach the organization's goals. It is an indication of the vitality, intensity and velocity of innovation processes. Bruch and Vogel (2005) offered an energy matrix that helps assess organizational energy according to the intensity and quality of innovation processes.

The matrix in Figure 5 depicts four quadrants of organizational energy in a field of tension between low/high intensity and negative/positive quality characteristics. In our work, we experience schools with low energy and negative quality level, which often leads to resigned indolence. If a positive quality level is seen, the school rests within its comfort zone and does not see a need for change.

Some schools have a high energy level but negative quality characteristics, which acts as a corrosive force. A lot of energetic activity occurs in these schools, but it is not used productively for the future. Leadership for learning aims at reaching the top right quadrant of high energy and positive quality characteristics. This comprises the creative and productive impetus necessary for development processes. In other words, it involves a transformation from "mourning schools" into "breathing schools".
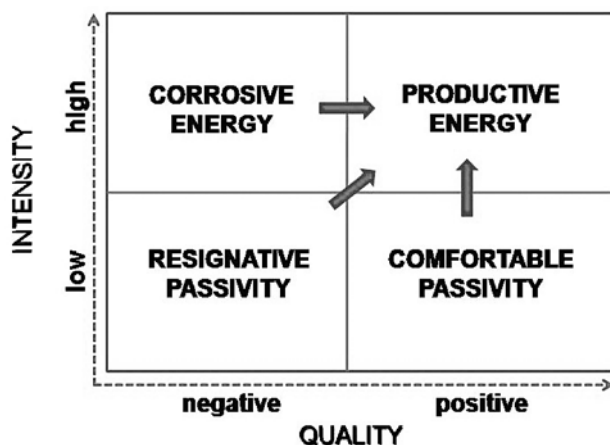

Figure 5: Energy matrix (Bruch and Vogel 2005, p. 42)

In all, 11 generations of LEA graduates (over 2,500 of 6,000 school leaders) have become "system thinkers in action" (Fullan 2005) and have collectively begun to sense, shape and create a new future (Scharmer 2007) for Austrian schools that have already reached a critical mass in using leadership as a leveraging factor for systems development. To get there, the concept of "agency" forms the bridge between policy and practice and between leadership and learning. However, we often hear the criticism that working on the system's "software" (agency) does not change its "hardware" (structure). For this reason, we based our work on Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, in which he attempts to move beyond the dualism of structure and agency and argues for the "duality of structure", stating that social structure is both the medium and the outcome of social action.

Conclusion

Matters of innovation and change are often seen as merely organizational or technological questions that turn complexity into a series of (trans)actions from policy to practice. However, dealing with complexity does not involve creating more complex structures to plan, act on, control and develop systems. The shift to an organic understanding of growth is related to openness and trust, which helps reduce the complexity of systems: speaking openly opens others. In our work with

the three system-wide initiatives described in this paper, Scharmer's concepts of open mind, open heart and open will have become part of our professional culture (Scharmer 2007). Therefore, we have been actors and observers in the shift in mind-set and culture, thus overcoming the traditional abyss between policy and practice. Our fieldwork, which included many stakeholders at all levels of the system, taught us the wisdom of many in the collective intelligence of practice and opened up new dimensions of dealing with system-wide development.

A school system's performance is based on an understanding of the different situations, contexts, demands and challenges within each organizational unit. Consequently, developing performance is not simply achieved by sending individuals to a training course but instead is obtained after a journey through the "field structure of attention" (ibid.), which builds on different modes of self-awareness. According to Owen (2009, p. 287), "Self-awareness is about knowing how your actions affect other people". The level of awareness of how "system thinkers in action" (Fullan 2005) can develop the whole system by "presencing" (Scharmer 2007, p. 242) has increased during the last five years. We are becoming aware of an emerging organizational learning culture characterized by a spirit of innovation and commitment and new attitudes for dealing with complexity, facing dynamics, taking risks and learning from mistakes.

Looking back on our journey, we can see four distinct powers that have served as levers for successful system development: strategic leadership concepts, leading change strategies, building infrastructure and sustainable leadership through participation. It remains an exciting experience to continue building on the collective wisdom and realising that key persons are now better at coping with emerging complexity. Rather than solving a problem by adding another layer of regulation or infrastructure, we need a process of co-evolution that allows people to see and act from the emerging whole.

References

Bruch, H. and Vogel, B. (2005). *Organisationale Energie: Wie Sie das Potenzial Ihres Unternehmens ausschöpfen*. Wiesbaden: Betriebswirtschaftlicher Verlag Gabler.

Costa, A. L. and Kallick, B. (1993). Through the Lens of a Critical Friend. *Educational Leadership,* 51, issue 2*,* pp. 49–51.

ExpertInnenkommission (2008). *Zukunft der Schule.* Wien: BMUKK.

Firestone, W. A. and Riehl, C. (eds.). (2005). *Critical issues in educational leadership series. A new agenda for research in educational leadership.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Fischer, W. A. and Schratz, M. (1999). *Schule leiten und gestalten: Mit einer neuen Führungskultur in die Zukunft*. Innsbruck, Wien: Studien-Verlag.

Forrester, G. and Gunter, H. M. (2009). School leaders: Meeting the challenge of change. In: C. Chapman and H. Gunter (eds.). *Radical reforms. Perspectives on an era of educational change.* London, New York: Routledge, pp. 67–79.

Frost, D. (2006). The Concept of 'Agency' in Leadership for Learning. *Leading & Managing,* 12, issue 2, pp. 19–28.

Frost, D. and Swaffield, S. (2004). *The Leadership for Learning (Carpe Vitam) project: an eclectic and emerging methodology*. ICSEI: 17th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement. Rotterdam, 6.– 9. January 2004.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership & sustainability: System thinkers in action.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hall, G. E. and Hord, S. M. (eds.). (1987). *Change in schools: Facilitating the process.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hargreaves, A. and Shirley, D. (2009). *The fourth way: The inspiring future for educational change*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Harris, A. (2010). Learning to Improve: Transforming Schools and System. ICSEI: 23rd International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement. Kuala Lumpur, 5. – 8. January 2010.

Hentig, H. v. (1993). *Die Schule neu denken: Eine Übung in praktischer Vernunft; eine zornige, aber nicht eifernde, eine radikale, aber nicht utopische Antwort auf Hoyerswerda und Mölln, Rostock und Solingen*. München: Hanser.

Hinterhuber, H. H. (2003). *Leadership: Strategisches Denken systematisch Schulen von Sokrates bis Jack Welch.* Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Allg. Buch im FAZ-Inst.

Holman, P., Devane, T. and Cady, S. (eds.). (2008). *The change handbook: The definitive resource on today's best methods for engaging whole systems*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Kruse, P. (2004). *Next practice - erfolgreiches Management von Instabilität: Veränderung durch Vernetzung*. Offenbach: GABAL-Verlag.

Levin, B. (2008). *How to change 5000 schools: A practical and positive approach for leading change at every level*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Loehr, J. E. and Schwartz, T. (2003). *The power of full engagement: Managing energy, not time, is the key to high performance and personal renewal*. New York: Free Press.

Luhmann, N. (2002). *Das Erziehungssystem der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

MacBeath, J. and Moos, L. (2004) *Leadership for Learning*. ICSEI: 17th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement. Rotterdam, 6.– 9. January 2004.

MacBeath, J. and Cheng, Y.-C. (eds.). (2008). *Leadership for Learning: International Perspectives*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Marzano, R. J. (2004). *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement: Research on What Works in Schools*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Owen, J. (2009). *How to lead: What you actually need to do to manage, lead and succeed.* New York: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Payne, C. M. (2008). *So much reform, so little change: The persistence of failure in urban schools.* Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Pechtl, W. (ed.). (2001). *Zwischen Organismus und Organisation: Wegweiser und Modelle für Berater und Führungskräfte*. St. Pölten, Wien, Linz: Landesverlag.

Pont, B., Nusche, D. and Moorman, H. (2008). School Leadership Development: Policy and Practice. *Improving school leadership.* Paris: OECD.

Portin, B. et al. (2005). *International Politics and Local School Development: Emerging Themes from a Seven-Nation Study*. Montreal: Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

Salcher, A. (2008). *Der talentierte Schüler und seine Feinde*. Salzburg: Ecowin Verlag.

Scharmer, C. O. (2007). *Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges: the social technology of presencing.* Cambridge: Society for Organizational Learning.

Schley, W. and Schratz, M. (2004). Ergebnisorientierte Führungsverantwortung als Antwort auf PISA. *Lernende Schule,* 7, issue 28*,* pp. 1–4.

Schmid, K., Hafner, H. and Pirolt, R. (2007). *Reform von Schulgovernance-Systemen: Vergleichende Analyse der Reformprozesse Österreich und bei einigen PISA- Teilnehmerländern. IBW-Forschungsbericht.* Wien: IBW.

Schrag, F. (1988). *Thinking in school and society. Philosophy of education research library.* New York: Routledge.

Schratz, M. (2003). From Administering to Leading a School: challenges in German-speaking countries. *Cambridge Journal of Education,* 33, issue 3, pp. 395–416.

Schratz, M. (2012). Austria's Balancing Act: Walking the Tightrope between Federalism and Centralization. In: L. Seashore et al. (eds.). *Educational Policy in an International Context. Political Culture and Its Effects.* Houndmills, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 95–104.

Schratz, M. and Hartmann, M. (2009). Schulautonomie in Österreich: Bilanz und Perspektiven für eine eigenverantwortliche Schule. In: W. Specht (ed.). *Nationaler Bildungsbericht Österreich 2009.* Graz: Leykam, pp. 323–340.

Schratz, M. and Petzold, K. (2007). *Improving School Leadership: Country Background Report Austria*. Innsbruck/Wien: OECD.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2005). *Strengthening the heartbeat. Leading and learning together in schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Staehle, W. H. (1999). *Management: Eine verhaltenswissenschaftliche Perspektive.* München: Vahlen, Franz.

Stoll, L., Bolam, R. and Collarbone, P. (2002). Leading for Change: Building capacity for learning. In: K. A. Leithwood and P. Hallinger (eds.). *Kluwer international handbooks of education: Vol. 8. Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration.* Dordrecht, Boston: Kluwer Academic, pp. 41–73.

Vosniadou, S. (ed.). (2008). *International handbook of research on conceptual change.* New York: Routledge.

Zukunftskommission (2003). *Zukunft Schule. Das Reformkonzept der Zukunftskommission - Strategien und Maßnahmen zur Qualitätsentwicklung*. Wien: bm:bwk.