THE POWER OF VISION

The power of a vision is essential for the ongoing success of any organization because it sets the stage, frames the actions, and directs the energy of the people in the organization. Senge (1990) believed that people must be committed to the vision, not just compliant with it. Commitment releases human potential and energy. Effective leadership develops this commitment and sustains school improvement.

Fullan (1991, p. 32) describes the developmental nature of vision building. He says, “unions of dynamic complexity one needs a good deal of reflective energy before one can form a plausible vision. Vision always emerges from, or is greater than, the energies of both the school and the district.” Action. Even then it is always provisional. … a situation which is essential for success, must evolve through the dynamic of the situation of organizational members and leaders” (p. 28). The phase is a process of reorganization, including the strategic direction. In preparing for Phase 1, the district prepares to reorient its thinking and acting upon the district’s vision, as described by Fullan, is built into the culture of a school system.

LEADERSHIP FOR EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE WORK SUPERVISION

Leadership for innovation is absolutely critical to the success of a school system. Below, we summarize some important leadership concepts and principles. Mastering these is important for sustaining school improvement.

Creating innovative ideas to redesign work processes, social architecture, and environmental relationships, then implementing and sustaining these ideas, is a tremendous task. This task cannot be undertaken without many leaders all following the same script, which is defined by the school system’s strategic direction developed in the Phase 1 Search Conference. Building and maintaining support while facing various challenges, setbacks, and Sisyphean endurance tests that are a part of large-scale change requires consistent, creative leadership efforts on the part of everyone.

Transformational Leadership

A specific type of leadership is required to create and sustain school district improvement. In the past, leadership was associated with “getting things done” or “leading people somewhere.” In KWS, leadership is required to transform three sets of key school system variables: the district’s knowledge work processes, its social architecture, and its relationship with its environment. This kind of leadership is called transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Leithwood, 1992).

KWS requires transformational leaders to motivate followers to work for long-term goals instead of short-term self-interest, and to work toward achievement and self-actualization instead of emotional security (Avolio & Bass, 1988). Transformational leadership is inspirational because it redirects the energies and potential of people to achieve a vision. Transformational leadership taps into the emotional energy of people and provides them with meaning and a sense of personal value. People inspired by a transformational leader no longer “go to work”; instead, they work for a “cause.” There is a sense of excitement, adventure, and enthusiasm that emerges as people realize they can do more than they ever thought possible.

Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership factors emerged from Bass’s (1985) research. He identified five factors that describe transformational leaders:

- Charisma—the ability to instill values, respect, and pride and to articulate a vision.
- Individual Attention—paying attention to followers’ needs and assigning meaningful projects so followers grow personally.
- Intellectual Stimulation—helping followers to rethink rational ways to examine situations and encouraging followers to be creative.
- Contingent Reward—informing followers about what must be done to receive the rewards they prefer.
- Management by Exception—permitting followers to work on tasks without being interrupted by the leader unless goals are not being accomplished in a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost.

Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991) described the “Four I’s of Transformational Leadership”: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individual consideration. Bass and Avolio (1993) add depth to these “Four I’s.” They explain that “[t]ransformational leaders integrate creative insight, persistence, energy, intuition and sensitivity to the needs of others to forge the strategy-culture alloy” for their organizations” (p. 113). Each of these “Four I’s” is important for KWS.

An essential element of transformational leadership is its focus on vision. Making explicit the core values that support the vision, modeling behaviors and attitudes that reflect those core values, and coaching and facilitating the development of individuals in adopting these core values are important tasks of transformational leadership.
THE POWER OF VISION

The power of a vision is essential for the ongoing success of any organization because it sets the stage, frames the actions, and directs the energy of the people in the organization. Senge (1990) believed that people must be committed to the vision, not just compliant with it. Commitment releases human potential and energy. Effective leadership develops this commitment and sustains school improvement. Fullan (1995) notes the developmental nature of vision building. He says, “unions of dynamic complexity one needs a good deal of reflective exercise before one can form a plausible vision. Vision always emerges from the mind, not the other way around. Action even then happens only after the vision is ready to travel.” (p. 11). The district prepares to recycle to Phase 1, the strategic direct. In returning to Phase 1, the school creates a new vision or renews to the current one. In this experience of reflecting and acting upon the district’s vision, as described by Fullan, is built into the culture of a school system.

LEADERSHIP FOR EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE WORK SUPERVISION

Leadership for innovation is absolutely critical to the success. Below, we summarize some important leadership concepts and principles. Mastering these is important for sustaining school improvement.

Creating innovative ideas to redesign work processes, social architecture, and environmental relationships, then implementing and sustaining those ideas, is a tremendous task. This task cannot be undertaken without many leaders following the same script, which is defined by the school system’s strategic direction developed in the Phase 1 Search Conference. Building and maintaining support while facing various challenges, setbacks, and Sisyphean endurance tests that are often part of large-scale change requires consistent, resilient, and creative leadership efforts on the part of everyone.

Transformational Leadership

A specific type of leadership is required to create and sustain school district improvement. In the past, leadership was associated with “getting things done” or “leading people somewhere.” In KWS, leadership is required to transform three sets of key school system variables: the district’s knowledge work processes, its social architecture, and its relationship with its environment. This kind of leadership is called transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Leithwood, 1992).

KWS requires transformational leaders to motivate followers to work for long-term goals instead of short-term self-interest, and to work toward achievement and self-actualization instead of emotional security (Avolio & Bass, 1988). Transformational leadership is inspirational because it redirects the energies and potential of people to achieve a vision. Transformational leadership taps into the emotional energy of people and provides them with meaning and a sense of personal value. People inspired by a transformational leader no longer “go to work”; instead, they work for a “cause.” There is a sense of excitement, adventure, and enthusiasm that emerges as people realize they can do more than they ever thought possible.

Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership factors emerged from Bass’s (1985) research. He identified five factors that describe transformational leaders:

- Charisma—the ability to instill values, respect, and pride and to articulate a vision.
- Individual Attention—paying attention to followers’ needs and assigning meaningful projects so followers grow personally.
- Intellectual Stimulation—helping followers to rethink rational ways to examine situations and encouraging followers to be creative.
- Contingent Reward—informing followers about what must be done to receive the rewards they prefer.
- Management by Exception—permitting followers to work on tasks without being interrupted by the leader unless goals are not being accomplished in a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost.

Avolio, Waldman, and Yammamino (1991) described the “Four Is” of Transformational Leadership: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individual consideration. Bass and Avolio (1993) add depth to these “Four Is.” They explain that “[t]ransformational leaders integrate creative insight, persistence and energy, intuition and sensibility to the needs of others to ‘forge the strategy-culture alloy’ for their organizations” (p. 113). Each of these “Four Is” is important for KWS.

An essential element of transformational leadership is its focus on vision. Making explicit the core values that support the vision, modeling behaviors and attitudes that reflect those core values, and coaching and facilitating the development of individuals in adopting these core values are important tasks of transformational leadership.
Another fundamental aspect of transformational leadership is an astute understanding of the interconnectedness of all aspects of a school system (as reflected in the “string” metaphor, above). This understanding is a hallmark of systems thinking. Systems thinking is also an essential aspect of organizational learning (Senge, 1990). Transformational leaders who want to change school systems into high-performing organizations of learners must be well versed in the subtleties of systems thinking. Systems thinking helps leaders to see the school system as a whole and to see interrelationships, interdependencies, patterns, and relationships. Leaders also use systems thinking to determine where small changes in the district might result in great improvements.

Transformational leaders also have an informal, personal style with people. They approach their tasks from a collaborative orientation reflected in statements such as “We are in this together, so let’s see what we can do to be creative and solution oriented.” Transformational leaders see their role as coaching and facilitating rather than as directing or commanding. Building relationships, inspiring creativity and humor, demonstrating optimism, finding solutions, and having dogged persistence are important characteristics of those who want to transform entire school systems into high performing organizations of learners.

Transformational leadership provides the contextual background for four other levels of leadership required for effective KWS. These are: strategic leadership, tactical leadership, team leadership, and self-leadership (see Figure 10-1).

**Strategic Leadership**

Strategic leadership focuses on the big picture, the vision, the core values, and the strategy for achieving the vision. In KWS, the SLT provides strategic leadership. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) does not replace the superintendent of schools as the CEO of the district but rather collaborates with the superintendent to provide strategic leadership for systemic school improvement.

The SLT is also the primary “vision keeper.” In this role, members of the SLT ask questions such as “Who are we as a school district?” “Where are we going?” and “What do we need to do to get there?” This team frequently monitors the external environment, the school system’s culture, and the morale of people in the school system to determine what needs to be done to achieve the district’s vision more effectively.

Nicholls (1999) described two important tasks of strategic leadership: path finding and culture building. The vision is directly related to path finding. Culture building, which supports the vision, depends upon the quality and articulation of the core values. Leaders engage in these path-finding and culture-building tasks so their school system can move toward higher levels of performance. When strategic leadership is functioning properly, “[t]here is a unity of purpose throughout the [school system] in accord with a clear and widely understood vision. This environment nurtures total commitment from all employees. Rewards go beyond benefits and salaries to the belief ‘we are family’ and ‘we do excellent work’” (Scholtes, 1992, Section 1, p. 12).

![Figure 10-1. Leadership Processes for Knowledge Work Supervision](image-url)
Another fundamental aspect of transformational leadership is an astute understanding of the interconnectedness of all aspects of a school system (as reflected in the "string" metaphor, above). This understanding is a hallmark of systems thinking. Systems thinking is also an essential aspect of organizational learning (Senge, 1990). Transformational leaders who want to change school systems into high-performing organizations of learners must be well versed in the subtleties of systems thinking. Systems thinking helps leaders to see the school system as a whole and to see interrelationships, interdependencies, patterns, and relationships. Leaders also use systems thinking to determine where small changes in the district might result in great improvements.

Transformational leaders also have an informal, personal style with people. They approach their tasks from a collaborative orientation reflected in statements such as “We are in this together, so let’s see what we can do to be creative and solution oriented.” Transformational leaders see their role as coaching and facilitating rather than as directing or commanding. Building relationships, inspiring creativity and humor, demonstrating optimism, finding solutions, and having dogged persistence are important characteristics of those who want to transform entire school systems into high performing organizations of learners.

Transformational leadership provides the contextual background for four other levels of leadership required for effective KWS. These are: strategic leadership, tactical leadership, team leadership, and self-leadership (see Figure 10-1).

**Strategic Leadership**

Strategic leadership focuses on the big picture, the vision, the core values, and the strategy for achieving the vision. In KWS, the SLT provides strategic leadership. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) does not replace the superintendent of schools as the CEO of the district but rather collaborates with the superintendent to provide strategic leadership for systemic school improvement.

The SLT is also the primary "vision keeper." In this role, members of the SLT ask questions such as “Who are we as a school district?” “Where are we going?” and “What do we need to do to get there?” This team frequently monitors the external environment, the school system’s culture, and the morale of people in the school system to determine what needs to be done to achieve the district’s vision more effectively.

Nicholls (1999) described two important tasks of strategic leadership: path finding and culture building. The vision is directly related to path finding. Culture building, which supports the vision, depends upon the quality and articulation of the core values. Leaders engage in these path-finding and culture-building tasks so their school system can move toward higher levels of performance. When strategic leadership is functioning properly, “[t]here is a unity of purpose throughout the [school system] in accord with a clear and widely understood vision. This environment nurtures total commitment from all employees. Rewards go beyond benefits and salaries to the belief ‘we are family’ and ‘we do excellent work’” (Scholtes, 1992, Section 1, p. 12).

The SLT also aligns school district policies, procedures, and reward systems with the newly created organizational culture of participation and collaboration. The SLT removes obstacles, creates metaphors to facilitate organizational learning, finds and distributes resources, and models appropriate behaviors to encourage others to do the same. They are practiced systems thinkers and diligently apply themselves to anticipate problems, challenge assumptions that could hinder progress, and explore the effects of policies and procedures.