

PRINCIPALS IN RELATIONSHIP: WORK, ROLES AND POSITIONING

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PRINCIPALSHIP

- Typically characterised as being made up of Educational leadership, management, and administration
- Alternative lens: work (tasks), roles and positioning
- Complex and demanding relational work
- Based on evidence from two aligned projects and interviews with six current principals and eight ex-principals

WORK

- Leadership Frameworks and Professional Standards
- *Kiwi leadership for principals* document (KLP, New Zealand MoE, 2008) aims “to present a model of leadership that reflects the qualities, knowledge and skills required to lead New Zealand schools” (MoE, 2008, p. 5).
- In New Zealand we have the *Professional Standards for Primary Principals* and four ‘areas of practice’ (‘culture’, ‘pedagogy’, ‘systems’, ‘partnerships and networks’) are identified to “provide a baseline for assessing satisfactory performance within each area of practice” (p. 1).

ROLES

- listener, communicator, information gatherer, detective, report writer, record keeper, facilitator, liaison, peacemaker and advocate. Other roles mentioned by these principals during the interviews included: Jack of all trades, teacher of teachers and of students, counsellor, nurse, first aider, mother, principal, leader, sports coordinator, curriculum development, programme/innovation gate keeper, Professional Development coach, caretaker, cleaner (bottle washer), security, health and safety officer, matron, cover for office, for sick bay, Board member, data entry, report writer, finance officer, grant writer/applicant, typist, ICT specialist/fixer, data analysis, maintenance, accountant, planner, community liaison, school spokesperson, telephonist, emergency coordinator, driver, property manager, historian, professional, seamstress, presenter, prize giver, resource manager, bus monitor, fire cleaner, pool servicer, gardener, comedian, director, event manager, sounding board, support liaison, furniture repair, surveyor, quality control, journalist-blogger-newsletter editor and publisher, librarian, special education coordinator, supervisor.

INTERACTIONS- RELATIONSHIPS

- students, parents, Board of Trustees members, teachers, caretakers, bus drivers, teacher aides, school administrator, colleagues from other schools, Union (New Zealand Educational Institute, NZEI Te Riu Roa) and School Trustees Association advisors and members, Professional Learning Support personal, Ministry of Education personal both locally and centrally based and Education Review Office personal, other government officials and sources of support such as police, social workers, youth aid, Child Youth and Family Service personal, District Health Board personal including psychologists, sources of targeted expertise face to face and through the use of information and communication technologies, researchers, business owners, salespeople, community leaders.

JIM

- When there was a group of drunken men going home from the pub, they would often stop outside my gate and toot, and try and encourage me to go out and have a beer with them before they headed off on their way home. It was like, "if I keep my head down for a while they will go away". But they never did, they persisted. Pulling up at the gate, drunk driving home in those days, you know. That was a test. That was a test of who I was and what I would do, and what I wouldn't do.

POSITIONING

- Positioning occurs in interaction between ones self and others.
- Positioning theory (Harré and Moghaddan, 2014) is "the study of the way rights ('what a person is owed by others' p. 129) and duties ('what a person owes to others', p.129) are taken up and laid down, ascribed and appropriated, refused and defended in the fine grain of the encounters of daily lives" (p. 132).

JOAN

- I did have a husband and wife come and see me once, early on in my time here and they'd both been on the board and I knew that they caused a huge ruckus on the board. They just wanted to put me in my place. So, I don't know, it was all about their kids but honestly, it was just all about them coming over here and asserting themselves a bit actually. So that was interesting, because I didn't really know the purpose of their visit, and I just said to them, 'I can't say I agree with you.' I just kind of stood up to them nicely.

HEATHER

- As a school that formerly did Calf Day and Pet Day and we don't [now]. But that might have been more my influence because if they [Board of Trustees] want to do it, then they had to run it. So one year they did. Because I just came along, a townie - don't ask me to organise pet calf days. That's not my area of expertise but go ahead- rather than me trying to do it right. I don't remember how they ran or what they did or anything else. They ran it, because they wanted to do it.

IN-INTERACTION

- "Positioning theory concerns conventions of speech and action that are labile, contestable and ephemeral" (p.132).
- Positioning is a largely conversational phenomenon, in situ, immediate and of the moment.
- In this sense temporary but with lasting influence on any ongoing relationship of the parties involved.
- Demeanour, tone, body language, and vocabulary contribute to how one is 'seen' by self as well as by the 'other' in interactions.

- Davis and Harré (2007) suggest that

"In making choices between contradictory demands there is a complex weaving together of the positions (and the cultural/social/political meanings that are attached to those positions) that are available within any number of discourses; the emotional meanings attached to each of those positions which have developed as a result of personal experiences of being located in each position, or of relating to someone in that position; the stories through which those categories and emotions are being made sense of; and the moral system that links and legitimates the choices being made" (p. 22).

Our beliefs associated with different jobs or roles: school principal, parents, researcher

Our assumptions about difference: Physical diversity, Intellectual diversity, Physical agility, dexterity and reflexes, Responsibilities and experiences, Sense of self, influence of peer group pressure, Cultural pressures e.g. regarding looks and Family values

*Stories in literature

ATTENTION

- Davis and Harré (2007) said “positions are identified in part by extracting the autobiographical aspects of a conversation in which it becomes possible to find out how each conversant conceives of themselves and of the other participants by seeing what position they take up and in what story, and how they are then positioned” (p. 8).

FROM HERE

- Stories in the literature that can be re-identified as episodes of positioning could be explored.
- Autobiographical reflection for exploration of roles, and on conversations/interactions for positioning (as a professional learning tool)
- Those in preparation and qualification programmes for principalship, and those working programmes to support principals in professional learning have stories, of instances/events/episodes to use as scenarios