

**CORE PRINCIPLES
AS A MEANS OF DEEPENING LARGE SCALE REFORM**

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Four frogs are sitting on a log, and one decides to jump off. How many frogs are left? The answer is four, not three, because deciding is not the same as doing.

This paper is about how an entire system from bottom to top can engage in systematic, deeper reform on a continuous basis — from school and community, through district and regions, to system or national levels. It's about getting the agenda right (comprehensive, coherent, deep focus on teaching and learning) and doing it in a way that results in continuous improvement in actual practice — what Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000, call “the knowing-doing gap.”

England has had initial impressive success in moving literacy and numeracy levels of pupil achievement in its primary schools from about the mid-50s percentile (using 11 year olds as the marker) in 1996 to about the mid-70s in 2003. But progress has plateaued at about 75% for the past three years. More powerful strategies are needed which develop and mobilize the passion, talents, and ownership of educators working together within and across levels (see Fullan, 2003a, b).

One of the Government's main strategies for moving to deeper levels is to articulate a set of principles which would underpin the reform programme, and to invite engagement which would result in action consistent with the principles. The government has produced a document entitled 'The Core Principles' intended to serve as a foundation for action at the classroom, school and system levels.

My brief in this paper is to focus on these principles in order to assess their potential as a strategy for effecting deeper reform in the immediate future. The paper proceeds as follows: What are the principles? What method did I use to assess them? What was the reaction from the field? How do we close the knowing-doing gap? What conclusion/recommendations are there for moving forward? The idea is not to provide a blueprint, but rather to stimulate informed debate about this very thorny problem of how entire systems can coordinate their efforts.

The Core Principles

The core principles document in its full form can be accessed through DFES, 2003. There are 18 principles, six each in the following three categories:

- Teaching and Learning
- School Improvement
- Systemwide Reform

The principles, in particular are:

Core Principles – Teaching and Learning

1. Ensure every learner succeeds: set high expectations.
2. Build on what learners already know: structure and pace teaching so that they understand what is to be learnt, how and why.

3. Make learning of subjects and the curriculum vivid and real.
4. Make learning an enjoyable and challenging experience: stimulate learning through matching learning techniques and strategies to a range of learning styles and needs.
5. Develop learning skills and personal qualities across the curriculum, inside and outside the classroom.
6. Use assessment for learning to make individuals partners in their learning.

Core Principles – School Improvement

1. Focus systematically on the priority for improvement that is likely to have the greatest impact on teaching and learning.
2. Base all improvement activity on evidence — particularly data about relative performance against benchmarks.
3. Build collective ownership through leadership development.
4. Create time for staff to learn together, to make performance more consistent and effective across the school.
5. Embed the development work through the schools, systems and practices.
6. Collaborate with other organizations.

Core Principles – Systemwide Reform

1. A clear moral purpose — commitment to high standards and the equal worth and success of every learner.
2. Developing a system that is coherent at every level.
3. Devolution of resources and power to the local level to build capacity to innovate and transform the education system, whatever the local context and challenges.
4. An intelligent accountability framework: providing the basis for targeted intervention in inverse proportion to success.
5. An emphasis on diversity, collaboration, partnership and innovation: to raise standards, extend choice and help equalize life chances.
6. Working with partners to create local and regional capacity for professional support and challenge, to strengthen informed professionalism and build capacity for continuous improvement.

The Government's intent is that this set of principles (after sufficient field testing) would form a core part of the next phase of educational transformation in England in three ways by using the principles: (1) to critique, make coherent and integrate better national policies, (2) as an agenda for action by Government field agents and consultants, and (3) for school and local education authorities to help inform school, district and regional policies and actions.

This, in turn, leads to other questions which I focus on in this paper:

- Are the principles valid and complete?
- Are they useable and effective in practice?
- Do they represent a good strategy for moving to the next phase of education reform?

A brief word about the notion of the next phase of reform. The Government now characterizes its successful National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy as one of 'informed prescription' and acknowledges that this strategy has plateaued in terms of impact. They imagine that to go further there must be greater 'informed professional judgement' involving the collective intellectual and moral capacities of educators. New leadership at all levels is seen as one key to accomplish this move. Thus, one of the derivative questions is whether a strategy focusing on the core principles will help accomplish greater informed professionalism as leaders and others use the principles to guide, organize and assess new directions.

Methods and Sources of Data

This is not a paper based on a formal research study. My task is to conduct a critical appraisal of the core principles as a strategy option. I drew primarily on two sources. One was our own thinking and involvement in large scale reform efforts in England, Canada and the U.S., and associated research literature. The second source was a questionnaire I handed out to three groups of educators in England with whom we were conducting an all-day workshop on educational reform in May 2003. The locations were three different LEAs. The workshop participants were heads, deputy heads, LEA leaders and a small number of higher education staff working on reform issues. The number of respondents from the three sites were N=115; N=87; N=50 — about 80% of those who participated. The sample is not random but, I believe, is representative of local educators who have an education reform interest. The questionnaire asks three questions: Are the principles the correct ones? How might you use them in your schools? Do they represent a helpful approach in moving from informed prescription to informed professional judgement?

Reaction from the Field to the Principles

I would have speculated that there would have been more skepticism from respondents about a Government document that espoused lofty principles. In fact, about 85% of the 252 respondents reacted with positive comments and constructive suggestions. Possibly this is because the principles hit a responsive chord and/or because respondents perceived the Government to be sincere in its intent to pursue the principles in action.

Are the principles the correct ones?

First, I take up the perceived validity of the principles. I start with the themes in the minority (negative comments), most of which concerned the third set of principles, i.e., systemwide reform:

- I cannot disagree with the principles but they are very idealistic. Can they ever be realized? A key one is the devolution of resources because without adequate investment and this money reaching schools it is difficult to see how any other principle

can be achieved (quite ironic in the present financial climate). (secondary head, commenting on systemwide principles)

The reference to the current budget, which arose in several comments, concerns a controversial problem during the past year in which LEAs and schools did not receive the resources they expected and the explanation was not clear — especially frustrating since the Government all along has claimed that it has increased its investment in education:

- I would certainly find it hard to disagree with the statements but confess to being cynical as to whether they are actually being followed. I don't believe the Government to have either a clear vision or internal consistency. (primary head/systemwide principles)
- Overall, the core principles appear reasonable and just. However, there is no evidence of these principles in practice. The Government has a purpose which is extremely narrow based purely on quantitative data of simplistic measures. This purpose does not have a moral agenda. (primary head/systemwide)

As one can see, virtually all of the negative comments concern the six systemwide principles, a point I will come back to in the conclusion.

The vast majority of participants made positive comments and any suggestions for improvement were constructive:

- The areas are key to successful learning. Finance to ensure that they become a reality is needed. For these to become a reality requires training of all staff and time to review and assess impact on a regular basis. (primary head/teaching and learning)
- Principle 4 [create time for staff to learn together] is incredibly effective/through personal experience these past two terms have found it the most worthwhile training ever undertaken. (primary head/school improvement)
- Yes, they are sound, robust statements that provide a comprehensive framework for teaching and learning. (LEA/teaching and learning)
- Yes, I strongly agree with all six. My own school/LEA is weak on number 6, collaboration with other organizations. There needs to be more, much more, sharing of good practice. (other/school improvement)
- Assessment for learning — please can we have some focused inset on this and what it looks like in practice, i.e., case study. (primary head/systemwide)
- Definite need to focus on teaching and learning processes. More opportunities for staff to work collaboratively across schools. (secondary deputy/school improvement)
- Yes, I am particularly pleased to see 4, 5 and 6 [time for staff to learn together; embed throughout the system; collaborate with other organizations]. Time for reflection, evaluation and sharing is absolutely necessary to increase effectiveness. These principles will see teaching become increasingly professional and diagnostic. (primary head/school improvement)

- The six T&L principles seem to have all that I would want for my own child. (other/teaching and learning)
- As we develop practice to reflect the core principles we must make sure that they, in themselves, are not just an add-on, yet another initiative. (primary head/school improvement)

We are now in a position to provide a tentative summary of respondent's perception of the principles:

- Only a minority is skeptical about the principles and almost all of this focuses on the systemwide set.
- The vast majority appreciates the principles, endorsing all three sets but especially the first two sets.
- The content of the principles requires only refinement — clarification of wording, consistency and coherence of principles, the role of parents in relation to collaboration, and (my own addition) the need to highlight the role of LEAs.
- There are several tensions and questions about implementation including:
 - the tension between competition and collaboration
 - broadening the curriculum beyond literacy and numeracy
 - budget and other resources such as time
 - need for skill development in assessment for learning
 - the attraction and difficulty of cross-school and cross-LEA collaboration

How might you use these principles in your school?

The reaction to this question, in a sense, elaborates on what respondents said in the previous section. The same small minority made critical comments, and the large majority made positive suggestions about how the principles could be used. First the negative:

- Of debatable use/motherhood and apple pie. (other/teaching and learning)
- I would not use in present form. They are too lengthy and disconnected. (LEA/all 18 principles)
- Depends on whether they are principles or instructions. Reads like the latter. (secondary head/systemwide)

On the positive side:

- To aid dialogue about purpose and values. To use dialogue about performance and continuous improvement as a means of building coherence of policy, what we are

measuring, why, and what are the outcomes and strategies to achieve them.
(LEA/systemwide)

- Each principle is supported by statements which are useful as quality characteristics for judging our success and progress within a learning community. I shall use them in strategic planning. (primary head/teaching and learning)
- To initiate discussions. As a benchmark against which to evaluate our own practice. Comparison with our own values and principles and a starting point in developing our T&L policy. To ensure that assessment is in place in relation to the T&L policy. (primary head/teaching and learning)
- We will revisit these in our school — asking the question: Why are we doing this? Also, we need to revisit use of data/looking especially at assessment for learning, not just of learning. (primary deputy/school improvement)
- We have already started to collaborate with others. We need to push this harder. I want to build that collective leadership across the school and make sure that we build a structure that will not only allow, but force all, to have time for assessment for learning. (secondary head/school improvement)
- As a checklist for teachers in their planning. As an observation tool for lesson monitoring. As a focus for a common objective in performance management. As agenda time for team discussion. As a framework for discussing good lessons with pupils. (secondary head/teaching and learning)
- I will use them to reshape the debate on curriculum, teaching and learning. I will use the outcome of this debate as the basis for school policy and in this way make the principles our own. I also intend to work with my colleagues to redesign the self-evaluation and performance management process so I can measure the things that are important to us. (primary head/teaching and learning)
- Not as easy as the T&L and school improvement but the sytemwide principles need to be put to all members of staff to establish a climate in which we work (primary head/systemwide)
- By coincidence the review of the school's T&L policy is on next year's agenda. These principles will help me, along with the staff, to assess the impact of current policy and its effect on raising achievement in classes. (primary head/teaching and learning)

In summary, most respondents readily saw the value of teaching and learning and school improvement principles in stimulating review, planning, going deeper and the like. Their worries related to implementation concerning how to be systematic, thorough, and how to build capacity within the system. The use of systemwide principles was not so apparent although some saw them as a valuable, broader template. We will come back to these issues in the conclusion.

Is this a helpful approach in moving from informed prescription to informed professional judgement?

Most respondents said “yes” with major caveats concerning implementation:

- Yes, if it is accompanied by a process where teachers develop and share their examples of how and why these are significant for pupils, otherwise it will suffer the fate of too many lists/checklists. (LEA/teaching and learning)
- If genuinely adopted, yes. However, lipservice to these principles would be a complete disaster. It would have to be understood that many schools would need to undergo a culture change. Are they target-compatible, i.e., targets are dependent on a prescription model? These principles depend on trust. (primary head/all principles)
- It is important that people in any role in education don't see this next phase as a complete change. (LEA/teaching and learning)
- Yes, because there is a heavy emphasis on learning not teaching. This is much more sophisticated and professionally demanding.(LEA/teaching and learning)
- Yes, the principles allow for each school to sign up and develop their own culture. Gives very clear expectation of what the LEA would expect to see in each school. Allows for signing up as a learning community. (primary head/teaching and learning).
- Yes, but only if worked through at the local level; otherwise they become another set of prescribed impositions. (LEA/school improvement)
- Only if the DFES is seen to apply and demonstrate these behaviours internally and then in their outward facing policies. (other/teaching and learning; systemwide)

One can see, then, that most respondents recognize the potential for new developments. They are not cynical but looking for ways in which deeper dialogue and action can occur at the local level. They are worried that this may not occur. Some see the distinction between informed prescription and informed professional judgement as too sharp.

Before turning to drawing conclusions and recommendations, it is important to stand back and consider the issue of how to achieve action at the level of practice. Guiding principles can be powerful but they are notoriously difficult to link in an authentic manner to day-to-day action. It is for this reason that we should take a short foray into the knowing-doing gap.

Closing the Knowing-Doing Gap

In working with abstract principles it is easy for people to agree with them, even believe that they are following them, but in actual practice not be doing so. In our own work we find that the terms travel fairly easily — professional learning communities, assessment literacy, capacity building, etc — but the underlying concepts and actions are much less easily grasped and realized.

A study on The Knowing-Doing Gap (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000) brings this problem into sharp relief and parallels our recent experiences in large scale educational reform initiatives.

Barriers to Using Knowledge

Let us first consider the five big barriers to using knowledge identified by Pfeffer and Sutton. It is not that the barriers are absolute truths, it is that they identify factors that reduce the likelihood that the core principles (in this case) will be acted upon.

Barrier One – When talk substitutes for action

One of the main barriers to turning knowledge into action is the tendency to treat talking about something as equivalent to doing something about it. (p. 29, emphasis in original)

There are many firms where planning activities, holding meetings to discuss problems and their solutions, and preparing written reports are mistaken for actually accomplishing something. Such firms produce actions: meetings, conversations, and the generation of reports. They just don't produce actions that have much effect on implementing what the firm knows. (p. 35)

The authors proceed to cite examples where mission statements, planning and planning reports, and even conversations around these issues end up as "substitutes for action."

Barrier Two – When memory is a substitute for thinking

People in organizations that use memory as a substitute for thinking often do what has always been done without reflecting. (p. 69)

Another version of this is assuming that existing practice is already incorporating something when, in fact, it is not ("we are already doing that").

Barrier Three – When fear prevents acting on knowledge

Fear-based approaches to management presume that unless people are under pressure and fearful for their future they won't work diligently. (p. 118)

Among the consequences say, Pfeffer and Sutton are:

An atmosphere of fear and distrust, a focus on the short-term, a focus on the individual rather than the collective, and a tendency not to take risks and not to admit (learn from) mistakes.

Barrier Four – When measurement obstructs good judgement

Pfeffer and Sutton state that measurement systems become problematic when:

1. The system is too complex with too many separate measures.
2. The system is highly subjective in its actual implementation.

3. Precise metrics often miss important elements of performance that are more difficult to quantify but that may be critical to organization success over the long term. (p. 148)

Barrier Five – When internal competition turns friends into enemies

Internal (within the organization) competition undermines the overall ability of the organization “to turn knowledge into action” (p. 180). It inhibits interdependence, trust, loyalty, and related characteristics of strong knowledge-sharing organizations. Internal competition is most likely to be prevalent and harmful when:

- People have incentives to avoid helping others.
- Leaders act as if performance comes from the sum of individual actions rather than interdependent behaviours.
- Management acts as if people in the firm are competing in a “race” or “game” creating winners and losers.
- The way the work is managed distracts people from the task at hand because they feel they are under scrutiny and are constantly being compared to others.
- Leaders are selected because they value competition and have a history of dominating peers in zero-sum contests.
- Little attention is paid to the power expectations so people are labeled as “losers” or as part of a bad unit and feel a lack of self-worth and resentment toward the firm. (p. 200)

The authors argue that in successful organizations “competitive juices are aimed at external competitors rather than at people from other locations, units, or departments within the firm, or even peers within the same unit (p. 202, emphasis in original).

Guidelines for turning knowledge into action

The directional solutions to these barriers involve the flipside of the issues. Pfeffer and Sutton offer eight such guidelines for turning knowledge into action and here I will make an explicit link for each guideline to the core principles strategies. First, the eight guidelines as a list:

1. Why before how: philosophy is important.
2. Knowing comes from doing and teaching others how.
3. Action counts more than elegant plans and concepts.
4. There is no doing without mistakes.
5. Fear fosters knowing-doing gaps. So drive out fear.
6. Beware of false analogies: fight the competition, not each other.

7. Measure what matters and what can help turn knowledge into action.
8. What leaders do, how they spend their time, and how they allocate resources matters.

To elaborate on each with a connection to the core principles strategies:

1. Why before how.

In posing the question of why many companies fail to learn from others even when the information is available, Pfeffer and Sutton observe:

Too many managers want to learn “how” in terms of detailed practices and behaviours and techniques rather than “why” in terms of philosophy and general guidance for action.(p. 246)

It is crucial that educators learn to internalize and understand the underlying philosophy. This, of course, is the core principles. The more that educators go beneath the surface to internalize the core principles, the more powerful will be their strategies and actions.

This includes ongoing dialogue about the concepts, as well as linking them to action and reflection on action. Understanding the philosophy (re the core principles) is a powerful source of moving to informed professional judgement. The question is what strategies at the school, LEA and system level are most powerful for promoting this collective internalization of the philosophy.

2. Knowing comes from doing and teaching others how.

In a world of conceptual frameworks, fancy graphics presentations, and in general lots of words, there is much too little appreciation for the power and indeed the necessity of not just talking but of doing – and this includes explaining and teaching. (pp. 248-249, emphasis in original)

With respect to the core principles it means that leaders must make links between the principles and actions, and “teach others what those links look like.” As Pfeffer and Sutton put it:

Knowing by doing develops a more profound level of knowledge and virtually by definition eliminates the knowing-doing gap. (p. 251)

3. Action counts more than elegant plans and concepts.

In a world where sounding smart has too often come to substitute for doing something smart, there is a tendency to let planning, decision-making, meetings, and talk come to substitute for implementation .(pp. 251-252)

The implication of the core principles is not to suspend planning, but to beware of the limitations of too much talk and too many documents and too little day-to-day action, learning how to operationalize the principles. Knowing and understanding come from the latter – trying to put the principles into practice while learning from the experience.

4. There is no doing without mistakes. What is the company’s response?

In building a culture of action one of the most critical elements is what happens when things go wrong? Actions, even those that are well planned inevitably entail the risk of being wrong.(p. 253)

Does the culture have a “learn from mistakes orientation or does it treat failure harshly?”

5. Fear fosters knowing-doing gaps so drive out fear.

Closely related to lessons 4:

The idea of rapid prototyping — trying things out to see if they work and then modifying them on the basis of that experience — requires a culture in which failure is not punished because failure provides an opportunity for learning. (p. 254)

Organizations that are successful in turning knowledge into action are frequently characterized by leaders who inspire respect, affection or admiration, but not fear. (p. 256)

Clearly for the core principles to take effect it will require leaders at many levels working on this agenda.

6. Beware of false analogies: fight the competition, not each other.

There is a mistaken idea that because competition has apparently triumphed as an economic system, competition within organizations is a similarly superior way of managing. (p. 257, emphasis in original)

Turning knowledge into action is easier in organizations that have driven fear and internal competition out of the culture. The idea that the stress of internal competition is necessary for high levels of performance confuses motivation with competition. It is a perspective that mistakes internal competition and conflict, accompanied by a focus on “winning” internal contests, for an interest in enhancing organization performance and winning the battle in the marketplace. (p. 259, emphases in original)

Schools are bad enough when it comes to learning from each other (there are already built in structural and normative barriers to sharing) without reinforcing atomistic behaviours through state policies that stress competition. Some of the core principles explicitly recognize and reinforce the value of collaboration and partnerships. For strong collaboration to take hold we need leaders at all three levels — schools, district, state — who realize that intra-system sharing is the route to greater overall system performance. The enemy is not within (other schools and other LEAs), rather it is those in the general public who devalue teachers and schools. If you want competition, think of the performance of other countries, not other schools and LEAs in the district or country.

7. Measure what matters and what can help turn knowledge into action.

The dictum that what is measured is what gets done has led to the apparent belief that if a company measures more things, more will get done but that is not at all the case ... Organizations tend to measure the past ... but systems seldom provide information that is helpful in determining why results have been as they have. Organizations that are serious about turning knowledge into action should measure the knowledge-doing gap itself. (pp. 259-260, emphasis in original)

Again, the relevance of the core principles is clear. Assessment for learning is a key premise of the principles. Schools, LEAs and the Government need to figure out how to assess performance in a manner that influences performance. This means reviewing both what is assessed and how it can be used for greater affect on altering practice.

8. What leaders do, how they spend their time and how they allocate resources matter.

The difference in organizations that are better at turning knowledge into action is that they establish:

Systems and day-to-day management practices that create and embody a culture that values the building and transfer of knowledge and most important acting on that knowledge ... their systems of practice that produce a more reliable transformation of knowledge into action. (p. 261)

Once again we see that the pursuit of the core principles depends not only on the articulation and setting of expectations by leaders but also through what leaders do.

With these eight lessons and preceding sections we are now in a position to draw some conclusions about the future role of the core principles.

Recommendations

We need to be clear about the audiences for the core principles strategy. I've divided these into two — Government and local educators. The core principles are intended to be used by both. I also include a final 'omnibus' recommendation. The intent of the recommendations is to identify ways in which the 18 core principles could become a basis for deeper, more coherent action. They should not be seen as another 'add-on', but rather as a means for understanding existing effective practice and for developing shared commitment and strategies for embedding continuous improvement at all levels of the system. As David Hargreaves (2003) says, we need to explain why good things come about not just describe them. Deeper explanation and informed action need to go hand in hand.

Government

Recommendation 1

The core principles should be used to guide and inform the next phase of reform. The current version of the principles is essentially on the right track and needs only refinement (DFES is currently conducting a field study which will yield suggestions for improvement). In our own study some of the issues include: clarify and strengthen the role of parents (is the

parents' only role in the first principle of teaching and learning or should it also be in principle six of school improvement?); clarify and strengthen the role of the LEA (at present the structure of the principles, in terms of the three sets, omits the LEA).

Recommendation 2

Clarify the basic purpose of the core principles. For example, is it to develop coordination within and across system levels? Make clear the linkage across the three sets of principles. Further, the purpose of the third set, systemwide, needs attention so that it can be seen and used by local educators to connect to the big picture. I recommend dropping the distinction between informed prescription and informed professional judgement because it implies that external requirements are less important. Informed professional judgement could still be used as a term as long as it is stressed that (1) it refers to collective capacity, and (2) ideas and requirements include external sources of expectation and collaboration.

Recommendation 3

Treat the core principles as a living document to be further developed as it unfolds. Make it invitational for local development, not impositional. In our own study we saw that the majority of local respondents can readily see how they could use the principles. More work needs to be done, in particular, to deepen the pedagogical basis for the teaching and learning principles.

Recommendation 4

Apply the core principles internally to critique and make more coherent Government policies and strategies. Among the issues to be resolved are the competition versus collaboration question (targets should be aspirational; competition should not be within the system). Resolve the budget uncertainty which is currently a major distraction from the core principles.

Recommendation 5

Concerning the importance of the knowledge-doing gap beware of simply espousing the principles or making them coherent only on paper. It is crucial that internal interaction within Government should mirror/model what is expected at the local level.

Recommendation 6

Apply the core principles externally as a reform agenda for action and dialogue by Government field forces being especially sensitive that it is an invitation to act, albeit a proactive one to stimulate and develop greater coordination. Again, what needs to be conveyed and recognized are not the surface words but what the values and philosophy look like in action. I have provided a fairly clear picture of these underlying actions in the previous section. Additional attention must be paid to how measurement and monitoring is addressed. Assessment for learning capacities needs to be fostered at all levels. Partnership and leadership development, that is to develop leaders who exemplify the core principles in action, are also crucial. It is not turnover of leaders that is a problem as

much as lack of continuity of direction. Investment in leaders who can develop other leaders represents a critical leverage.

Local Educators

Recommendation 7

Treat the core principles as an opportunity for you to create cultures of high performance. The principles should be treated as your agenda, not the Government's. We saw in the reaction from the field that local educators especially identified with the first two sets of principles.

Recommendation 8

Pursue the underlying values and philosophy and their manifestation in action. Work on reducing the knowledge-doing gap. Invest in leadership as a major strategy for accomplishing this agenda.

Recommendation 9

On the one hand, critique Government action and policies which seem inconsistent with the principles. On the other hand, seek Government partnerships when this leads to best exploitation of given principles. Several of the principles require joint problem-solving with Government to make them work in practice.

Recommendation 10

Look for ways to delve into systemwide reform principles with and without Government for two reasons: (1) the larger infrastructure matters and should not be left to others (local educators can finish the local infrastructure — especially if there is a system openness to do so— thereby helping to change the context for the better), and (2), local leaders who do best are ones that are also plugged into the big picture. Look for ways of promoting local dialogue about the larger picture.

Recommendation 11

Above all, focus on developing and expanding coordination — internal to the school, across schools in the LEA, across LEAs with other regional and national agencies. Mobilize what Hargreaves (2003) refers to as intellectual, social and organizational capital in concert. Intellectual capital refers to the quality of ideas in individuals; social capital involves quality relationships; organizational capital concerns strategy and design for enabling intellectual and social capital to flourish.

One final recommendation is so critical that I called it an 'omnibus' recommendation applied to all.

Recommendation 12

The eighteen core principles are complementary. If they don't work together their impact is limited. Therefore the key to judging and increasing the worth of the principles is only realized when all 18 principles are moving in the same direction and reinforcing each other. Do not think of embedding the principles one at a time within a set, let alone across the three sets. The challenge is to implement all 18 principles simultaneously.

I don't know of any national or state school system that is attempting to seriously use core principles as a strategy for system transformation. Thus, this has to be seen as a social experiment of the highest order. We have seen successful reform in individual schools and in individual LEAs but not in total systems. The core principles should be seen as an opportunity to change all three levels (school, local, national) and their relationships. As a strategy, the core principles have great potential. And they may represent one of the few ways of pursuing the Holy Grail of school improvement — sustainable reform.

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