



Barcelona International Conference on Learning Leadership, 4-5 December 2013

Rapporteur's reflections

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3. Understanding Learning Leadership

These reflections were framed according to the **5Ws and 1H** in the first chapter of the book/summary chapter in the Catalan book.

Why learning leadership?

- Every day hope comes in for a better future – Minister of Education. Remember Malala. We are thinking about all young people in every setting

What is different about learning leadership?

- **A total focus on learning** - Improving School Leadership focused on the core responsibilities of teaching and learning. This is about leading to learn for 21st century deep and lifelong learning. It's about always being mindful of learning.
- ILE may not exist without PISA – it's responding to the gaps. We may only be in the foothills of understanding about learning (Perkins) but The Nature of Learning is providing us with critical thinking and we are focusing here on the difference between learning in captivity and learning in the wild (Perkins).
- Highly professional teaching that involves design is essential which means learning for teachers and leadership that learns, with feedback processes and failure as a learning opportunity
- **New connections** – whatever words we choose, a core issue is relationships, the dynamics of interaction, alliances, partnerships and connectivity matter – between people and ideas. This includes collective intelligence, sharing leadership and students co-producing teaching. International connections are essential, as well as relationships between different stakeholders in the system, as exemplified in the Jaume Bofill Foundation's research group
- **New language** – for example, co-construction, co-production, learning management, lerndesigner, lernatelier, backwards design. If you don't have language for distributed leadership, create it or use a term that is meaningful for your context
- **New mindsets** – this is about serious change, a mind shift, being open to innovation, not just implementers, but designers and being agents of change – 'letting the bird out of the cage'.



Leadership as a creative process – think of Ferran Adria and what he has chosen to focus on since he closed the El Bulli restaurant – he hasn't ceased from exploration and being forensic about better understanding food and what you can create with it. Think about the change in practice of book buying. It's about thinking differently about things you have taken for granted, taking risks and being bolder. It's also about being ready for new, younger mind sets, younger leaders from different generations, who may think differently about how to go about this task. And it's about leadership as enthusiasm and passion because emotions are integral to learning.

How of learning leadership

- First, creating the conditions and ensuring the processes to make it happen – many examples can be found in the book
- Also ensuring processes to get the ideas out there – at this conference this has included streaming, international exchange, graphic narration through story boards, but also technology and networks

When and where of learning leadership

- Everywhere, happening in different places and spaces in an innovative ecosystem (Ismael Palacin) that is sustainable. It's about the choice of location for this conference at La Caixa. And it's about understanding how different cultural contexts will mean that innovation isn't the same across contexts.

Questions for you during the conference:

- Research on effective learning highlights that it challenging thinking as a part of changing practice. How open are you to new learning? How will you ensure you allow your thinking to be challenged at this conference?
- Connecting and interacting is critical, so will you make a commitment to connect with three people who bring different perspectives and have a dialogue with them about developing and leading practice?

6. Reflections across Working Group Discussions

- Thinking about purpose is critical – what outcomes we want, knowing about all of the children, so we can ensure we have the right services to reach all children and ensure social justice
- Looking across all of the discussion themes, the issue of maximising learning and design through social connections is critical
- We are talking about making innovation sustainable by widening the pool, including those not traditionally 'used' enough



- The potential of partnerships and networks is significant but there are issues around roles, boundaries, perspectives, collaboration, trust, reciprocity, mutual respect for prior knowledge and experience
- Relationships and interactions are fundamentally important, but there is a need to alter power relationships and question 'who is the expert?' What expertise are we talking about? We need to rethink in terms of 'ubuntu' – 'I am because we are', more non-hierarchical, horizontal relationships across a more organic system
- Common understanding and language are needed, which calls for more dialogue
- While action frameworks and quality assurance are important, they shouldn't be over-regulated
- 21st century learning competencies and principles aren't just relevant for children and young people. We should consider them when thinking about the adults who design and implement innovative learning environments eg engaging in enquiry, feeling a sense of agency, risk taking, being adaptable and flexible, and the kinds of learning we are designing for teachers and other educators

9. Reflections on Conference Discussions

As a result of what we have heard at this conference, here are some questions to take away:

1. Do you think Improving School Leadership is adequate to the task of preparing all learners for the future and tackling all of the social challenges you face? Is the current system 'unacceptable' (Valerie Hannon argued passionately that mere improvement is insufficient, if we want to address the unacceptable challenges we now face)?
2. Are you talking about innovation as change, little by little, step by step, redesign and reinterpretation or transformation? What is your worldview (Valerie Hannon)? How important is cultural context to this?
3. Are you really willing to accept that learning does not just take place in classrooms and in schools? If so, are you prepared to be open to altering power and authority relationships and think of ourselves as an ecosystem? And how can you bring governments on board?
4. How willing are you to be courageous? Are you ready first to take Manhattan, then Berlin (Leonard Cohen as stated by Valerie Hannon, then Barcelona)?
5. How will you nurture and nourish ourselves on a long and challenging journey?
6. What can you learn about learning leadership by going back to the seven principles of learning?
7. What is one thing you are going to do yourself to change and take yourself out of your comfort zone? eg social networking, asking students to become involved, using or adapting the sorts of learning processes used in the conference etc
8. What is one connection you will make back in your system?
9. What next? This question was for David Istance and the OECD Secretariat.