

Background Paper The Learning Generation

Leadership Development Guidance Note

Laura Lewis
Teach For All

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Teach For All Leadership Development Guidance Note

By Laura Lewis, Senior Director for Research and Evaluation, Teach For All

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SUMMARY

This Guidance Note focuses on answering two questions:

1. What is the evidence of leadership in effecting change in education?
2. How can systems develop and support leaders to maximize their individual and collective impact for students?

This guidance note was prepared for the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity; it is not a comprehensive literature review, rather it tries to highlight the positive evidence of the importance of individual and collective leadership, inside and outside of education, and provides promising examples of how this leadership is being developed globally. The note also serves as a call to action for the need to commission additional research in order to truly understand investments and strategies that unlock leadership and develop and cultivate the knowledge, skills, and mindsets needed to ensure quality and inclusive education for all.

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE OF LEADERSHIP IN EFFECTING CHANGE IN EDUCATION?

LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED, AT EVERY LEVEL OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ACROSS ALL SECTORS, TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ALL CHILDREN

“Leaders are critical to the management of whole systems, and, more importantly, the success of each and every school. And yet, endeavors to develop more education leaders remain among the most powerful and least talked about drivers of progress.”

Kopp & Saavedra, (2015) Putting Leadership on the Global Agenda

Leadership is needed at the classroom, school, community, district, state and national levels, in research and higher education institutions and across all other sectors which enable students to thrive in school and beyond. Leadership matters in helping education systems to move from poor to fair, fair to good, and good to great, and to improve educational outcomes for all children (McKinsey & Company, 2010). A study of five of the most-improved urban regions globally demonstrated that effective leadership at all levels of the system was crucial to the reform agenda. The study found that the development of policy reform agendas and effective implementation of these agendas requires student, parent, classroom, school, community, school and city/urban leaders aligned to a distinct ‘theory of change’ (Elwick and McAleavy, 2016).

School Level Leaders

Leadership at the school level is one of the largest determinants of student outcomes

Strong leaders at the school level improve educational outcomes for students. Data on operations, targets, and human resources management practices in over 1,800 schools educating 15-year-olds in eight countries¹, showed that leadership and management quality is strongly associated with better educational outcomes (Bloom et al., 2014). A recent literature review of 134 studies of school leadership also identifies the positive impact of various leadership activities on student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2009). Successful leadership in the school is not reliant on a few but widely distributed within the school (Leithwood et al., 2008). Several top performing systems, including Singapore, Hong Kong, and British Columbia, as measured by international tests, recognize the strong leadership role teachers play within schools (Driskell, 2016). Research that looks at the most improved systems also demonstrates that creating a pedagogical approach in which teachers and school leaders work together to embed routines that nurture instructional and leadership excellence is key to truly transformational impact (McKinsey, 2010). The overall quality of an education system is

¹ Booth et al. (2014) collects data from the following eight countries: UK, Sweden, Canada, US, Germany, Italy, Brazil, and India.

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reliant on the quality of its teacher leaders, middle leaders, school leaders and management (Barber and Mourshed, 2007; Barber et al., 2010).

System level leaders

Strong, sustained political and technocrat leadership is needed at the national, regional and district levels

Government and public sector leaders must recognize the economic returns of increased investment in education. A review of 139 global economies from the 1950s to present day reveal that private returns to schools are positive, with an average rate of return of 10 percent a year. Economic returns to education are highest in low or middle income countries, and women benefit more from schooling, on average, than men (Montenegro & Patrinos, 2014). The returns to education are more likely to improve the lives of the most disadvantaged and highest needs communities, underscoring a moral imperative for greater public investment in education reform to address global systemic inequity.

Government officials at all levels are instrumental in reform. The success of education reform is often helped by strong leadership, commitment, and collaboration of government at the national, regional, district, and local levels (EFA, 2015). Strong political will is required to make meaningful changes to the education system in the face of widespread opposition (Klein, 2014). At times, political leaders from across the spectrum come together to push through large-scale reforms in a country, thereby sending strong signals on their commitment to policy reform and implementation. In 2009, both Houses of the Indian Parliament passed the Right to Education Act (RTE), that committed to providing education to all children between 6 and 14 years of age (Times of India, 2009). Furthermore, strong, trusted political leadership at the top can help provide reassurance to key stakeholders of education reform. In Kenya, the successful implementation of universal primary education is attributed to the Minister of Education's continuous engagement with stakeholders to build their confidence in their ability to perform under extreme pressure and time constraints (The World Bank & UNICEF, 2009). Electoral accountability has been found to be an important instrument in political leaders delivering on their election promises. In five countries in Africa, the

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abolition of school fees was carried out because leaders had mentioned it in their manifestos during election campaigns (The World Bank & UNICEF, 2009).

Technocratic leadership is required to effectively implement education reforms. While strong political support of reform built by coalitions of political leaders can certainly facilitate the implementation of policy, technocratic leadership has the distinct advantage of navigating tumultuous political climates to successfully implement policy reform (BBC, 2011). Reforms need to be implemented at every level of the system. This requires regional and district alignment which helps to facilitate implementation of large-scale policy reforms at the ground level; when timelines are short, resources and activities often need to be mobilized quickly, with regional and district leaders required to respond to urgent capacity needs and remove institutional barriers.

Locally Rooted and Globally Informed Change Makers

Local leadership capacity is also critical to the effective design and implementation of solutions

In many countries, community leaders and parents actively participate in School-Based Management. Research has shown their engagement results in positive impacts of reducing repetition and improving attendance, although student outcomes results are mixed (Barrera-Osorio et al 2009). Long-term impact studies on school-based management reforms may be needed in order to measure impacts on student achievement². Understanding the problem and developing solutions to resolve educational inequity requires in-depth knowledge of education issues at the community level. Each community that has the deepest understanding of its needs and the ability to ensure those interventions succeed. Typically, governments look to international best practices which often are not tailored to the local context and may crowd out bottom up solutions. We do not yet have all the solutions, and we would be remiss to not leverage local leaders, ideas, and innovation. The outcomes of not leveraging local communities

² A meta-analysis of 232 studies from 29 school-based management initiatives in the United States demonstrate that reforms need at least 5 years to bring about changes at the school-level and about eight years to impact student achievement (Bruns et al, 2011).

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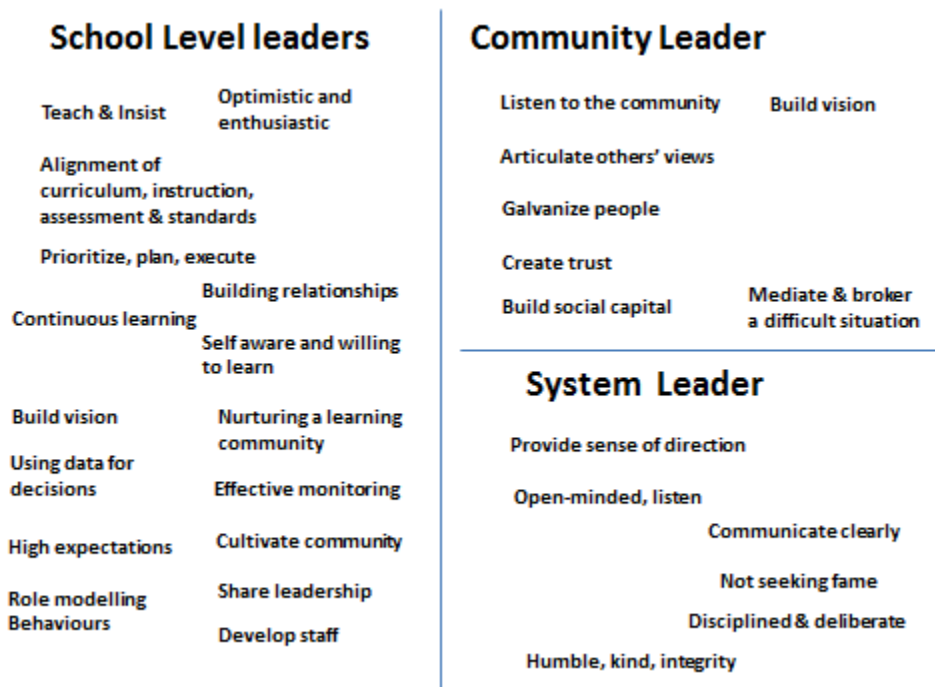
are unimplemented laws, unfunded agencies, and unused processes littering education sectors across the globe (Pritchett et al., 2010 and EFA 2015).

Instead, education systems should support locally-led interventions which focus on the most relevant issues facing the community, unleash local talent, and problem-solve around implementation and capacity building (Booth and Unsworth, 2014). There is a tension between global best practice and local prerogative. Too much of the former leads to an “Astroturf” movement without grassroots support. Too much of the latter runs the risk of creating excessive variation in performance. Leaders must master the art of balancing both sets of perspectives and finding solutions that synthesize them. As noted above, education reform requires strong political leadership as well as sustained efforts within individual school sites and communities. In order to achieve systemic transformation, systems must have persistence, patience, and a contextualized vision (Lattimer, 2012).

We are beginning to understand the necessary leadership skills to effect change

Effective leaders often exhibit the following leadership practices to bring about change: problem structuring, relationship-building, storytelling, and action orientation (Ganz, 2012). These skills are not just displayed at the national level but throughout the education system. A review of the literature highlights commonalities amongst the leadership skills and qualities needed at the classroom, school, community, local, and national levels to build support. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Leadership skills and mindsets



Source: Author's analysis of literature

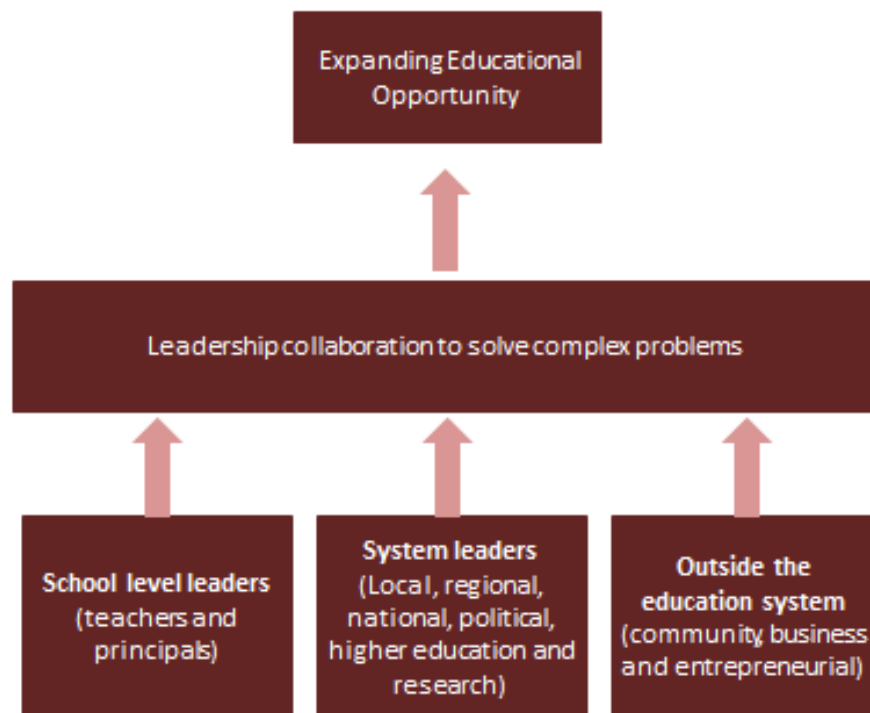
INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP ALONE IS INSUFFICIENT. WE NEED COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP.

"We are at the beginning of the beginning in learning how to catalyze and guide systemic change at a scale commensurate with the scale of problems we face, and all of us see but dimly."

Senge, Hamilton, and Kania, (2015) Dawn of System Leadership

Systemic change cannot be achieved by one group of leaders alone. We need to reimagine how leaders from multiple levels of education and different sectors work together in order to truly achieve system transformation (Fullan, 2004). Figure 2 below provides a conceptualization of the importance of individual and collective leadership in improving educational outcomes for all children.

Figure 2: Importance of individual and collective leadership in improving educational outcomes for all children



Leadership collaboration to solve complex problems

Between and within schools, collaboration is key in order to bring about change on the ground

A recent study of schools in the US emphasized the need to ensure alignment between school leaders and teachers. The Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership for Learning (CALL) found that there was wide variation in perceptions between teachers and school principals on skills and practices that lead to successful schools, emphasizing the need for stronger alignment and collaboration between them in order to achieve transformational change at the school level (Bowers et al., np). Other research has also highlighted the role that collaborative or trusting cultures play in both school improvement and innovation (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). Research in England has also

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highlighted that collaborations between schools can help improve student outcomes (Mujis 2015).

Coalitions of leaders can guide sustained change and avoid instability

Studies suggest that changing any system takes between five and ten years. Often, the typically low profile and high turnover of education ministers serve as roadblocks to operationalizing a vision and mobilizing the bureaucracy to execute a plan (The Carnegie Endowment). Where there are frequent changes of political leadership, a guiding coalition of leaders throughout the education system can also be instrumental in continuing to build on the vision set out rather than constant U-turns and changes with every new government (OECD, 2010). In fragile and conflict-affected states, the role of leaders across public, private, and civil society is often highlighted as a key success factor, which again reinforces the need for a broader coalition-government working with stakeholders from within and outside of the education system (Rose and Greely, 2006).

Action research partnerships between higher education institutions, government, and practitioners ensure continuity of reforms and changes in behaviors

Action research partnerships between higher education institutions, teachers, and government have proliferated across many developed and developing countries (Somekh and Zeichner, 2008). For instance, in Namibia, partnership efforts for over a decade between researchers and teachers have empowered teachers to undertake research, building on their local knowledge base to support and embed a new system of teacher education (Zeichner and Dahlstrom with Mayumbelo and Nyambe, 1999). In Thailand, partnerships between higher education institutions and teachers led to the development of local curricula to complement the national curriculum (Sahasewiyon, 2004). In other instances, action research is conducted at a much smaller scale for the specific purpose of enabling teachers themselves to better understand their own classroom environment and pedagogy (Mills, 2011). Research organizations and higher education leaders have played a key role in supporting such action research.

Networks are most powerful when they catalyse broader movements and are aligned to a shared outcome

Social capital can help to spread innovation and is more likely to succeed through bottom-up networks. Bottom-up networks can both flexibly adapt to local conditions and link schools to new innovations. This is in direct comparison to top-down approaches, which are more likely to be fixed and to not meet local needs (Hargreaves, 2004).

Evidence of the impact of networks is still in its infancy, however, a review of 14 studies carried out by the Networked Learning Group and the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education in the UK showed positive impact on student outcomes in nine studies and positive impact on teachers in eleven. Nine studies also reported favorable impact of school networks on parental involvement (Bell et al., 2006). The success of networks is linked to several factors including whether they were voluntary or mandatory, the power dynamics between partners, their size and density, external partner involvement, and timeframes (Muijs et al., 2010).

Social movements that bring together a number of education actors rather than just those inside of schools are also seen as a means of bringing change and reform from the bottom—but again their success depends on factors such as the depth, breadth, and quality of leadership, and the leaders' ability to translate the opportunity fully into real action and purpose (Odugbemi and Lee with Ganz, 2011). Social movements in a number of different countries are playing a crucial role in raising awareness and bringing about change. While there is no certain formula for growing a movement that authentically represents both the grassroots and the grasstops, strong networks or initiatives can catalyse these movements under the right conditions. For example, The Half the Sky Movement Global Engagement Initiative uses various media and tools to promote gender equality and has reached over a million people with messages highlighting the issues facing millions of women and girls.³ A program called Vidya Chaitanyam empowered women in India's rural Andhra Pradesh to apply pressure to their local primary schools for quality improvement. It supported community collective action by engaging a large network of existing women's self-help groups to monitor school quality

³ Half the Sky Movement <http://www.halftheskymovement.org/>

via a simple scorecard and to share the results in their own group meetings and in School Management Committees.⁴

The most effective leaders are those who bring stakeholders together and develop human capital throughout the system

Leaders who are effective in system reform are able to i) ignite change through the shepherding role they play, ii) bring to fruition their understanding and experience of the system and iii) fill pivotal roles with leaders with the right skill sets (McKinsey and Company, 2010). Collective leadership requires leaders who are able to create new approaches jointly with local partners, share collective responsibility, broker constructive relationships, demonstrate empathy and candor, and provide honest feedback (Munby and Fullan, 2016). It is the leaders who are able to build a shared vision and sense of purpose, role model behaviors and practices, understand and develop people, have a continued focus on performance, and connect with the community that are the most successful (Barber et al., 2010).

Ensuring inclusive and quality education for all children requires a coordinated approach of leaders at all levels with a continuous focus on shared goals

Active networks and social movements create the ideal conditions for coordinating leaders toward achieving shared goals. Bringing together leaders from across government, civil society and communities to focus on results is driving change in a variety of contexts. In Tanzania, Big Results Now was developed through a participatory process that included leaders from the government, donors, civil society, and the community. Together, this group identifies evidence-based, focused interventions which could have a potential impact on student learning and allow for rapid delivery. The approach identifies challenges, sets goals, prioritizes evidence-based activities, develops specific interventions with extremely detailed implementation plans, and operationalizes a strong monitoring process from the central to local levels (United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Education).

⁴ Vidya Chaitanyam Project Vidya <http://www.educationinnovations.org/program/vidya-chaitanyam-project>

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Strong leadership combined with coordinated team effort led Western Cape, South Africa to steadily raise literacy and numeracy levels since 2002, narrowing the achievement gap of the poorest and lowest performing quintiles of students (South Africa, Western Cape Government, 2015). This progress was achieved by using data to identify specific communities with performance challenges, understand the specific local needs of those communities, and tailor support accordingly. Improvement in education results in Western Cape has been achieved with a continuous focus on delivery (McKinsey and Company, 2010).

Brazil has seen one of the largest improvements in math scores of any country in PISA since 2003 (OECD, 2012). Rio de Janeiro itself improved faster than the Brazilian average between 2007 and 2011 on national tests, thanks in part to clear leadership from the top, as well as leaders at all levels of the system working together. In addition to administering the Prova Brazil national standardized test, the city introduced classroom level assessments to provide more real-time data on individual and school performance, and accompanied this with an integrated feedback process. It is these learning loops that helped to support a data-driven reform process (Elwick and McAleavy, 2016).

HOW CAN SYSTEMS DEVELOP AND SUPPORT LEADERS TO MAXIMIZE THEIR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IMPACT FOR STUDENTS?

INVEST IN TALENT, INVEST IN THE COLLECTIVE, AND INVEST FOR THE LONG TERM TO ENSURE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

Cultivate leadership at all levels of the system

Identify leadership potential

Education systems have leaders at all levels. Systems that can identify leadership potential on an ongoing basis are the ones that truly thrive. For example, to ensure that

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Singapore has the best leaders, teachers are continuously assessed for their leadership potential and are provided with opportunities to further develop their leadership capacity. The system selects future leaders from a pool of successful teachers, with all education leadership positions being part of the teaching career structure (OECD, 2012). In England, a program called Teaching Leaders identifies, trains, and develops leaders to close the achievement gap in the most challenging schools by supporting them to improve the quality of their teaching, team performance, and motivation. The program's key objective is also to ensure retention of talented leaders in the schools that need them most.⁵ Systems should pay attention to identification of both school and middle-tier leaders—the latter, in general, has not reached the same level of consistency and sophistication as the identification of potential school leaders (Barber et al., 2010).

Take intentional steps to create leadership pathways

Education systems need to create a pipeline of leaders who will help to ensure quality education for all students and support various leadership pathways, provide opportunities for leaders which expand their reach beyond their classrooms, and facilitate deeper collaborations within and across schools (NYC Department of Education). Alternative pathways into education can also help to attract leaders who may not have considered education but may also have skillsets that are needed. The Broad Foundation in the U.S. supports two fellowship programs to raise student achievement by recruiting, training, and supporting leaders to transform urban public school systems. Unlike some other leadership development initiatives, individuals are brought into the education system from the outside, with the aim of leveraging their passion for education and their deep experience of leadership and management to help them create the conditions that will enable students and educators to succeed⁶.

⁵ Teaching Leaders <http://www.teachingleaders.org.uk/>

⁶ <http://www.broadcenter.org/residency/>

Ensure leadership development adapts to the local context and, in turn, support these leaders to adapt

A recent research report exploring why leadership development can fail identified the following four lessons: i) Take a tailored, context specific approach to leadership development. ii) Ensure projects/programs are related to the day-to-day work. iii) Understand mindsets and the root causes of why leaders act the way they do. iv) Measure changes in leadership performance over time (Guardijan et al., 2014). Leadership development programs must prepare leaders to thrive in new realities, with leaders at all levels empowered to deal with constantly changing local circumstances. Consideration needs to be given to new competencies and skills needed in this ever-changing context, as well as building a culture that allows leaders to experiment (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Invest in the collective and build effective networks to bring together key actors to work together, learn with and from each other, and make change happen

Support leadership development through peer-to-peer learning, particularly through networks or clusters

An OECD study suggests that leaders' collaboration with other schools and with the local community can help to improve problem-solving through intensified processes of interaction, communication, and collective learning (Schleicher, 2012). An international survey of school leaders showed a number of education systems are increasing the opportunities for school leaders to learn from one another, particularly through networks and clusters. The survey suggests that these opportunities are valued more highly than other development interventions. This is similar to surveys of business leaders which also find that peer-to-peer on-the-job learning is one of the most effective ways to develop skills and capacities (Barber et al, 2010). In Washington, D.C. and Memphis, Tennessee, the New Leaders Effective Practice Incentive Community pilot showed that job-embedded learning, based on effective practices of other leaders in the

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education system, resulted in a positive impact on their own leadership practice and on teaching and learning in their schools (Rockman et al., 2011).

Create networks/coalitions based on shared goals

For networks, bigger is not necessarily better. Impact derives from new ideas and perspectives that can be generated by connections into different networks rather than the number of actors involved (Cross, 2011). Moreover, there is a tension between “creating” networks and allowing them to grow organically. Networks, particularly in the most challenging communities, require relational trust to reach shared goals, which is too often overlooked in the current reform agenda (Finnigan and Daly, 2014).

Ontario has successfully used learning networks to raise school performance. Schools are organized geographically into Learning Networks, each focused on one of thirteen areas of school performance (parameters) and including approximately five to ten schools. Superintendents act as coordinators, and the necessary stakeholders and knowledge are brought in as needed (Schleicher, 2012). In Peru, the Ministry of Education is fostering leadership broadly by empowering a network of leaders at all levels through a more decentralized approach, and putting in place professional development support to unleash leadership throughout the system.

“Teach For All (2007–present) is a global network of 40 independent locally-led and funded organizations. Each partner organization recruits and develops a diverse range of university graduates and young professionals to teach for two years in high-need schools in their countries, with the goal of developing a pipeline of future education leaders. The aim is for Teach For All participants to continue as alumni to work across sectors that impact education and opportunity as teachers, school leaders, policymakers, social entrepreneurs, and business or civic leaders who help effect change and ensure that more students are able to receive a quality education.

Perlman-Robinson and Winthrop with McGivney (2016), Millions Learning: Scaling Up Quality Education in Developing Countries

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Seek out or incubate entities that can serve as hubs for networks and movements

Often, at critical moments in network and movement building, specific leaders or entities come to the foreground and play a coordinating role in accelerating connections between leaders at all levels of a system. These can be system leaders, NGOs, foundations, donors, or other organizations that are a part of the system and have an interest in shaping it. In the Race to the Top era of reform in the U.S., several NGOs played this role at the state level: TN SCORE in Tennessee, the Colorado Education Initiative, and the Rodel Foundation of Delaware. Within the charter school sector in the U.S., organizations like these are deliberately cultivated to play the “harbormaster” role, helping to bring order and collaboration to the ecosystem, but not directing traffic.

On the international stage there are also several organizations that work as hubs for leadership networks. Comprised of over 3,000 Ashoka Fellows, the Ashoka Support Network is one of the largest networks of social entrepreneurs. It convenes entrepreneurs from a variety of fields to work together to solve society’s most pressing social problems. The network supports connections between fellows; facilitates gatherings from informal, small-group meetings to larger, more formally-organized events; and provides opportunities for deeper alliances and for fellows to work together—in some cases sitting on each other’s advisory boards⁷. Similarly, Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)⁸ provides a means of linking and supporting leaders to solve problems through an array of online courses as well as training materials, virtual mentoring, and networking opportunities (EFA, 2015).

Invest for the long term and in more research into how to effectively identify leaders and develop individual and collective leadership

We are still in the early stages of exploring how we develop leaders throughout the system, not just individually at a classroom or school level, but collectively inside and outside of the

⁷ <http://edit.ashoka.org/fellows>

⁸ <https://yali.state.gov/>

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education system. This highlights the need to invest more money in research in this area, as well as taking a longer term perspective when analyzing the impact of leadership development programs. Doing so will require funding mechanisms for both the research and the innovations themselves, with the acknowledgment that some innovations will not be able to meet the rigid impact evaluation requirements that some current funding mechanisms require.

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