



Collaborating and distributing leading: mosaics of leading practices

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Abstract

A mosaic approach to leading practices leverages collaboration and makes it possible to renew the social fabric of a school. In this article, the authors use the notion of a ‘mosaic of leading *practices*’ to unsettle top-down, hierarchical, positional conceptions of leadership that focus on *participants*. The latter invites questions about participants’ responsibilities for leadership; the former invites questions about what leaders *do* (their practices) in and for an organisation. We report on research conducted with Aotearoa New Zealand school leaders that explored perceptions of leading practices that support or constrain communities of learning. Drawing on interviews with leaders and teachers who were working to build Communities of Learning |Kāhui Ako (CoL) in their schools and across school communities, the article re-imagines sites of collaboration by viewing them through the lens of *practices*, not just *participants*. A theoretical framework is proposed to illustrate mosaics of leading. Patterns of leadership and the concepts of connective enactment and collective accomplishment highlight different degrees of educator collaboration. The article re-imagines sites of collaboration as a means to foster a grassroots approach to culture and community building, rather than as a means for the delivery of school improvement alone.

Keywords Communities of practice · Communities of learning · Leadership · Distributed leadership · Collective accomplishment · Connective enactment

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Introduction

There is much emphasis on the post-heroic concept of distributing leadership (Youngs & Evans, 2021) and the devolution of decision-making so that schools collaborate closely as communities, and teachers engage in dialogue together about their work and lives (Brown et al., 2020). However, given the ubiquitousness of shared and distributed leadership approaches (Hickey et al., 2022), we question the extent to which these ways of viewing leadership actually address a progressive ideal of collaboration in Education. This article addresses the question: what conceptions of leading are evident in the way leaders and teachers talk about their interschool collaborations? Data used are from Aotearoa New Zealand school leaders and teachers who describe approaches to their engagement with Communities of Learning|Kāhui Ako (CoL) (Ministry of Education, 2022a, 2022b). These inter school collaborations have been the hub of an Aotearoa New Zealand Government initiative, *Investing in Educational Success* (IES) (Ministry of Education, 2014). They require substantial collaboration between participating schools.

Taking the view that leading involves *practising* collaboration, we use the metaphor of ‘a mosaic of leading practices’ (Kemmis, 2023) in this article to explore different approaches to leadership in CoL in Aotearoa New Zealand. We adopt a practice perspective on leadership which comprises less of a focus on leaders and more on practices of leading (Wilkinson, 2022). The mosaics of leading we discuss centre on the reported practices of leaders. While the notion of ‘distributed leadership’ generally evokes the distribution of leadership *responsibilities* and *tasks* to people in various positions in an organisational hierarchy (e.g., in a school), we use the notion of mosaics of leading practices (sometimes abbreviated to ‘mosaics of leading’) to describe and analyse the ways in which *practices* of leading are distributed in different kinds of sites (e.g., schools).

We distinguish *collaboration*, itself a practice, as a relationship that involves practices of dialogue, developing trust, engaging in multiple conversations, and people respectfully and openly exploring ideas together. One model for these conversations is Habermas’s (1987) notion of communicative action: the kind of communication that happens when people stop what they are doing to ask, ‘What is happening here?’ and then have a conversation in which they genuinely strive for (a) intersubjective agreement about the language they are using, (b) mutual understanding of one another’s points of view (without necessarily agreeing), and (c) unforced consensus about what to do under the circumstances. This kind of communication may occur repeatedly whilst people engage in particular practices. Collaboration is more than people doing things together; it is working together over time, through dialogue and resulting action, in order to achieve shared purposes.

In what follows, we firstly introduce key ideas related to mosaics of leading practices by identifying a framework of four concepts that signal different patterns of leadership distribution. Next, we introduce and explain the concepts

of connective enactments and collective accomplishments. We then provide a brief background to the notion of CoL in educational policy in Aotearoa New Zealand and introduce the research. We use these theoretical ideas to analyse the perceptions of principals and teachers we interviewed to learn about their insights into leading in their CoL. We conclude with a discussion that re-imagines sites of collaboration as a means to foster a ground-up approach to culture and community building.

Mosaics of leading practices

Mosaics are constructed by inlaying fragments of variously coloured material to create pictures or patterns. The mosaic metaphor has been used for a range of illustrative purposes in scholarship. For example, in a mosaic research approach multiple perspectives are brought together to co-construct meaning (O’Callaghan et al., 2011); to mobilise a theory on the complexity of culture (Chao & Moon, 2005); and as a visual, participatory research approach (Clark, 2019). The term ‘mosaic memory’ has been used to describe how people create a sense of self from different elements drawn from a range of cultural environments (Fischer, 1994, as cited in Fox, 2010). Mosaic-making has also been deployed as a metaphor to describe academic leadership as a creative practice that is both rich and fulfilling but also risky (Sword, 2022).

Reflecting elements of these metaphors, the notion of ‘mosaics of leading practices’ pertains to differing degrees of collaboration and cohesion. In this article, we use the idea to leverage the notion that there are multiple parts, perspectives, and—most importantly—multiple *practices* that come together through an approach that recognises that shared social life is accomplished through the many connective enactments and collective accomplishments (Hopwood et al., 2022) of different people’s practices.

The mosaics in this metaphor are made up of practices. In making a mosaic of leading practices, there is an ‘all in’ approach to distributing patterns of leading through ‘connective enactments’ and ‘collective accomplishments’ (Hopwood et al., 2022, p. 49). As Kemmis and Hopwood (2022, p. 2) observe, ‘practices in many work settings are distributed; that is, they rely on contributions from multiple people performing distinct actions in coordinated ways’. Connective enactments are the actions people in a team undertake as they orient together to achieve what needs to be done. Their collective accomplishments result from the team’s synergy to ensure the achievement of shared goals or objectives through development of trust, fluidity of roles and responsiveness to context (Kemmis & Hopwood, 2022).

Mosaics of leading practices differ in orientation to shared and distributed forms of leadership. Shared leadership can be defined as a ‘series of role functions that could be performed by any members of the group.... or as an emergent team property where leadership influence and responsibilities are distributed among multiple individuals’ (Wu et al., 2020, p. 49). Overlapping with and similar to shared leadership, distributed models can be seen as apportioning out activities and responsibilities across actants. Distributed

leadership has gained great currency over recent years as there have been increased accountability pressures placed on school leaders. Bellibaş et al., (2021, p. 391) observe that distributed leadership has been conceptualised in different ways as ‘synergetic interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation’ and as ‘decision-making practices performed by staff at multiple levels instead of by a single individual’. These views of shared and distributed leadership focus on the *people* doing the leading, and their ‘functions’, ‘influence’ and ‘responsibilities’. By contrast, our view of leading as a mosaic of leading *practices* focuses on how people connect with one another in distributed *practising*. These leading practices occur in shared intersubjective spaces where people encounter one another (Kemmis, 2022).

Following the ‘practice turn’ in contemporary leadership literature (e.g., Wilkinson, 2022), we aim to disrupt the view of leadership that sees leading in terms of distributing or sharing out leadership *roles* (together with the *functions*, *influence*, and *responsibilities* that define and partly constitute those roles). We focus instead on *leading*: that is, *practices* of leading that are distributed among participants. In our view—more provocatively—practices of leading are *always* distributed among participants in social life. We think this is so in two senses.

- (1) Practices are always distributed in the sense that X leads Y in doing A, while Y leads X in doing B (e.g., Bob leads the Science Department through directing the work assignments of staff, while science teacher Alice leads the teachers in the Science Department as they develop their inquiry teaching approaches; Gwendolyn teaches Sally to read, while Sally teaches Gwendolyn about life in her neighbourhood).
- (2) Leading is also a distributed practice in the sense that leading aims for, implies, and is (in fact) constituted in practice *only* when it is reciprocated in practices of following (which is to say something more than that ‘leaders’ imply ‘followers’). In this latter sense, leading-following is always a conjoint distributed practice (‘it takes two to Tango’), and the relationship is not unidirectional but reciprocal. As is well known, 1950s social psychological literature found that leaders are greatly influenced by those they lead, and often more compliant with group norms than other group members (for a brief review from the 1950s forward, see Oc & Bashshur, 2013).

It should also be noted that leading is not just a positional, role-based practice as officially detailed in position descriptions or in much of the research literature of educational leadership. Leading is (also) a ‘wild’ practice, occurring ‘naturally’ and ubiquitously in everyday sites of human coexistence everywhere. It is emergent and contextual and as such its ‘wildness’ can be seen in mosaics of leading practices. Sometimes it is noticed—and diminished—in the leadership literature as ‘informal’ leadership, but this obscures its importance in everyday life in countless situations where people lead and guide others, including in situations where (e.g.) children lead adults, students lead teachers, and subaltern groups lead hegemonic ones.

Patterns of leadership distribution

Here, we explore the idea that, rather than distributing or sharing out leadership *roles*, participants distribute or share *practices* of leading. Leithwood et al. (2007) identified different patterns of leadership distribution and developed a framework of four concepts: planful alignment, spontaneous alignment, spontaneous misalignment, and anarchic misalignment. With *planful alignment*, there is a planned distribution of tasks and activities. There are agreements over the leadership practices and the different roles allocated to different people. Although the task distribution can be suboptimal, there is a likelihood that this approach increases the chances of a productive pattern of leadership distribution. As Leithwood et al. (2007) point out, the values and beliefs associated with planful alignment include:

- Reflection and dialogue as the basis for good decision-making;
- Trust in the motives of one's leadership colleagues;
- Well-grounded beliefs about the capacities of one's leadership colleagues;
- Commitment to shared whole-organisation goals; and
- Cooperation rather than competition as the best way to promote productivity within the organisation. (Leithwood et al., 2007, p. 40).

Spontaneous alignment involves collaboration that is spontaneous and there is little planning around the distribution of leadership *tasks and functions*. Leithwood et al. (2007, p. 40) note that this approach does not adversely affect organisational productivity. However, they observe that there can be implications down the track with a reduction in flexibility and adaptability in relation to challenges for leadership *practices* in the future. The values and beliefs they associate with spontaneous alignment include:

- 'Gut feelings' as the basis for good decision-making;
- Trust in the motives of one's leadership colleagues;
- Idealistic beliefs about the capacities of one's leadership colleagues;
- Commitment to shared organisational goals; and
- Cooperation rather than competition as the best way to promote productivity within the organisation. (Leithwood et al., 2007, p. 41).

Spontaneous misalignment is like spontaneous alignment in the way that leadership is distributed, and the underpinning values and beliefs are the same. However, outcomes are not necessarily beneficial and there is misalignment in approach and outcomes. Short and long-term organisational productivity are at risk when misalignment happens.

Anarchic misalignment is characterised by the rejection of leadership within the team. This results in individuals acting very independently and even competing with others in the organisation around the determination of goals and access to resources. There is a high degree of reflection, as leaders engage in practices of critique to take up particular positions. The values and beliefs likely to be associated with anarchic misalignment include:

- Reflection and dialogue as the basis for good decision-making about one's own work and sphere of influence;
- Mistrust in the motives and capacities of one's leadership colleagues;
- Commitment to individual or unit, but not whole organisation, goals; and

- Competition rather than cooperation as the best way to promote productivity across units within the organisation. (Leithwood et al., 2007, p. 42).

The distributed leadership concepts in Leithwood et al.'s (2007) framework do not necessarily align with a mosaic approach that is premised on a democratic orientation. There can still be hierarchy and followership in Leithwood et al.'s (2007) model. Positional hierarchies and mosaics of leading practices can co-exist. However, the metaphor of a mosaic of leading can link with the notion of distributing *practices* of leading as conceptions of planful and spontaneous alignment. This applies if the planning is collaborative and multiple voices are valued in the process.

The notion of a mosaic of leading challenges the dichotomy of leaders and followers frequently presupposed in traditional hierarchical conceptions of leading. A mosaic of leading practices differs from distributed leadership in which there is a top-down distribution of roles and hierarchical leader and follower relationships. A mosaic of leading involves many people participating in everyday practices of leading. This is a type of all-in collaboration that involves all participants, though some may choose, at times, to be spectators or passengers. In a mosaic of leading practices, participants have authentic agency; they are not necessarily coordinated from the top down; and they collaborate in all-in ways to leverage their own life experience and expertise, bringing a range of perspectives to the table.

Different people have varied responsibilities and undertake diverse parts in a mosaic of practices (Kemmis, 2022). Participants recognise that they are parts of a shared community constituted in and through practices: in fact, in and through 'ecologies of interdependent practices' (Kemmis, 2022, p. 5).

Connective enactments and collective accomplishments

The figures that follow depict some of the key concepts that Hopwood et al. (2022) invoke in their descriptions of *connective enactments* and *collective accomplishments*. Figure 1 details practices associated with connective enactment (aspects of distributed practice) that enable actors to collectively orient to the salient aspects of a situation (Kemmis & Hopwood, 2022).

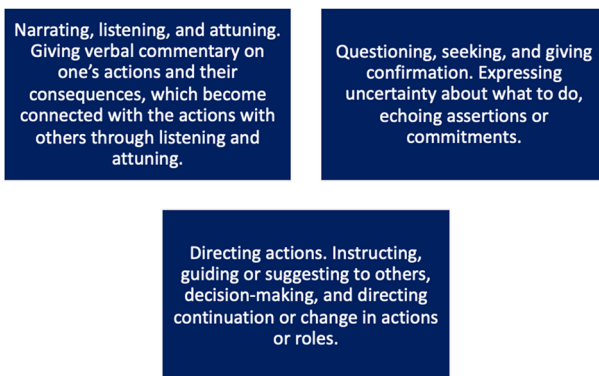


Fig.1 Practices of connective enactment (Hopwood et al., 2022, p. 8)

Hopwood et al. (2022) coined the notions of *connective enactment* and *collective accomplishment* to describe the fluidity and moment-by-moment learning that professionals enact to accomplish distributed practices. ‘Connective enactments’ involve enacting practices where individuals work together to narrate what is happening, use questioning to facilitate shared understandings, and direct actions so all understand what is happening and can take appropriate action (Hopwood et al., 2022). Connective enactments are more than intensive collaborations around collective goals. They involve a shared understanding of the task at hand, and an agreement around the paradigm that underpins the processes involved. Through collective accomplishment, practitioners enact practices in coordinated ways, with different people taking different roles and responsibilities, to produce desired objectives.

In the example of medical simulation that Hopwood and colleagues present, healthcare professionals (medical clinicians, nurses, midwives) engaged in closely aligned sayings, doings and relatings where they “verbalised, listened and attuned to one another... [and helped] to anticipate and determine what to do next” (Hopwood et al., 2022, p. 54). In schools, examples of ‘connective enactments’ include teachers orienting to one another to co-teach in the open spaces of Innovative Learning Environment (ILE) classrooms or to co-facilitate professional learning.

Figure 2 outlines the accomplishments that guide action and ensure that distributed efforts achieve a common goal (Kemmis & Hopwood, 2022).

Hopwood and colleagues describe how collective accomplishments are vehicles for praxis and can involve role-switching, coordinated and responsive sequencing and pacing, and clarity and security in what is happening. Role-switching is where one professional (e.g., a nurse) steps in as needed to undertake a particular task usually undertaken by someone in another role (e.g., a medical clinician). Coordinated and responsive sequencing and pacing involve transparency around communication so everyone knows what actions are required and when change should take place. Clarity and security are important to maintain a sense of calm, and to avoid unnecessary anxiety. (The Hopwood et al. study focused on a medical

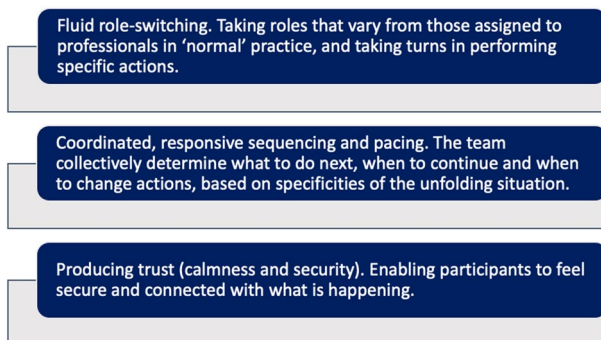


Fig.2 Collective accomplishments derived from distributed leadership (Adapted from Hopwood et al., 2022, p. 8)

emergency in childbirth, but teachers and leaders also aim for calm and security in classrooms and schools.)

Within a schooling ecosystem, some leading may be a hierarchical practice in which there are positional leaders and followers, but those hierarchical leadership practices generally coexist with many non-hierarchical and collaborative leadership practices that support shared solidarity and collective responsibility for the work (Kemmis et al., 2014). Considering education settings from the perspective of mosaics of leading practices invites attention to the connective enactments through which participants orient their practices to coordinate with one another and take shared responsibility to accomplish collective objectives. Under the Aotearoa New Zealand Communities of Learning policy, for example, leadership in a CoL is often defined by remunerated roles, including a lead principal and an array of designated roles for cross-school and in-school leaders. This arrangement is one way of distributing leadership, and it also requires participants to engage in connective enactments to accomplish collective objectives.

Communities of learning *kāhui Ako*

A progressive approach to education has been conceptualised in Aotearoa New Zealand as ‘the fostering of creativity [and] a focus on cultural awareness and social justice’ (Mutch, 2013, p. 98). In this article, we explore how leading can reflect an aspiration for a progressive conception of education, a view where there is an ethical position in which people aim for the common good and where leading happens at the interface between individual and collective agency. Kemmis et al. (2014) articulate a tripartite aspiration for education in terms of ways of knowing, doing and being.

[Education is] the process by which children, young people and adults are initiated into particular (1) forms of understanding that aim to foster individual and collective self-expression, (2) modes of action that aim to foster individual and collective self-development, and (3) ways of relating to others and the world that aim to foster individual and collective self-determination. These individual and collective aims mean that education is always oriented, on the one hand, towards the good for each person and, on the other, towards the good for humankind. (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 26)

Kemmis and Edwards-Groves (2018, p. 134) add that:

Practices of education aim to initiate students into (1) practices of self-expression, to secure a culture based on reason; (2) practices of self-development, to secure a productive and sustainable economy and environment; and (3) practices of self-determination, to secure a just and democratic society.

Communities of Learning have the potential to support the nexus of individual and collective agency through leading practices that take place within and across schools. They are implemented to foster collaborations between education

organisations and between leaders and teachers working across tertiary institutions, schools, and early childhood centres (New Appointments National Panel, 2021). The shift to a structural approach, where schools work together to access funding as a CoL, has been described as an approach that ‘reframes the way that [Aotearoa New Zealand has] been thinking about and organising [its education] system for over a quarter of a century’ (New Zealand Education Review Office, 2017, p. 27).

The study

The data reported in this article are drawn from a qualitative study which investigated professional learning in the Aotearoa NZ context. The study design included a survey of school leader and teacher perceptions ($n=216$) of professional learning, and semi-structured interviews with a subsample of 38 leaders and teachers who agreed to participate in follow-up interviews and provided contact details. The study design comprised invitations sent to school principals to participate in the research, with a further invitation at their discretion to be sent on to their staff. This approach to sampling yielded significantly more school leaders than teacher participants. For this reason, more school leaders are included in the data for this article.

School leader interviews were recorded, and the data transcribed. NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to store and organise the data initially. It was analysed with a line-by-line analysis in NVivo to initially identify references to CoL. These references were incidental to the study because the interviews were semi-structured, and the leaders elected to talk about CoL as part of their focus on professional learning. While the principals were active in their CoL, fewer teachers referenced their involvement in it. In this article, we focus on the interview comments of five principals and two teachers (identified by pseudonyms), although more participants referred to CoL. These comments were selected on two grounds. Firstly, the interviewees reported that they were engaged with CoL. Secondly, the comments provide the most succinct representations of the various aspects of mosaics of leading practices. These illustrative examples from school leaders are provided below to explore different dynamics in mosaics of leading. Here, we flesh out the different patterns of leadership distribution identified by Leithwood et al. (2007): planful

Table 1 Details of participants

Participant	Leader role	School profile		
1 Mary	Principal	Years 1–6	200 Students	Urban
2 Kate	Principal	Years 1–8	140 Students	Regional
3 Jill	Principal	Years 1–8	400 Students	Urban
4 Di	Principal	Years 1–6	350 Students	Semi-rural
5 Heidi	Teacher	Years 1–6	270 Students	Regional
6 Mark	Principal	Years 1–6	430 Students	Urban
7 Matt	Teacher	Years 7–13	320 Students	Regional

alignment, spontaneous alignment, spontaneous misalignment, and anarchic misalignment, and their relationships with the processes of connective enactment and collective accomplishment that occur in distributed practices. The seven participants are identified by pseudonyms and their school profile is provided in Table 1.

The analysis

As indicated above, initially we coded the transcribed interviews through NVivo to curate themes which included CoL data. The seven participants were identified, and data were extracted and analysed in accordance with three distinct kinds of mosaics of leading that we identified in the data. These references to the mosaic metaphor comprise:

- An aspiration for all participants' practices to be in a school and COL mosaic;
- An aspiration for just some participants' practices (e.g., in a school) to contribute to the mosaic; and
- Some practitioners' practices are left out of the mosaic, are not yet included, or, for a range of reasons, excluded from contributing to prospective changes.

There are three parts to this analysis: (1) identification of patterns of distribution of leadership and leading (Mascall et al., 2009); (2) identification of connective enactments and collective accomplishments (Hopwood et al., 2022); and (3) interpreting the practices through a mosaic lens. This enables us to map the approaches to leadership and leading, and, in the process, to leverage key ideas about distributing leadership and leading. We were talking to leaders from CoL to understand their perceptions of how they were working together with the aspiration to improve student learning.

Mosaics of leading practices in communities of learning|Kāhui Ako

In the first category below, the quotations exemplify aspirations for practices of participants to form a pattern, as in a mosaic. This is closely aligned with planful alignment and connective enactments, as there is alignment evident in trust in the motives of leaders, reflection and dialogue underpin decision-making, and there is a commitment to shared organisational goals (collective accomplishment).

Aspiration for all practices to be part of the mosaic

This is a shared aspiration in some CoL, where the practices of participants are viewed as contributing to a collective good. When there is an aspiration for the practices of all participants to be recognised (all practices in the mosaic count), practitioners and members of the school's community are valued for their voices and

the contributions they make. There is a ‘ground up’ approach to practices of leading and change, where power is shared.

All practices in the mosaic—Kate’s CoL

Kate’s example highlights how leaders engage in shared practices (all practices in the mosaic). Kate describes an account of the CoL working in close alignment as a mosaic. Leaders successfully work together across schools. There is spontaneous alignment when there are decisions made in the moment about what needs to happen in the Community of Learning and the respective schools. The practices are planned out collaboratively and there is a shared responsibility and dialogue that enables connective enactment.

In our cluster nobody’s voice is louder than anybody else’s. It’s not on school size, it’s not how long you’ve been in there. Everybody’s voice is the same. And that’s the key towards working [together]. Nobody has it ‘done to’ them and everybody has a responsibility to the initiative. (Kate).

This quotation from Kate makes people and their voices prominent in the CoL, whereas practices are hidden in the ‘working [together]’. This prioritisation reflects an individualistic culture, where people are foregrounded, and what they do (practices) are in the background. Therefore, when thinking and talking about leadership, practitioners working across schools may foreground people and positions. However, it is important to see beyond the roles of individuals to recognise the practices implied in what they say. In Kate’s community of learning, in practice, people are instructing, guiding, and suggesting ideas to others; sharing in decision-making; and collectively taking up practices to realise a mosaic of *leading practices*.

And what we’ve identified is that the simple roles that the people who are innovative... they just are visionary, they see something, and they come with ideas and often they just spark something that’s really amazing. They’re often not the person who’s going to sit down there and do some teasing out and then writing it up and, you know, somebody else will say I’ll take those ideas and I’ll write it up and bring it back to the group. Another person will be saying, ‘Oh! But we need the money so that I’ll go and look at a fundraiser’. Other people are doing all different roles. In that way, we’re all bringing unique strengths to the initiative. (Kate).

In this quote again, ‘all different roles’ foregrounds the person (role incumbent) and locates the function or practice in the role. Kate refers, implicitly, to multiple functions and tasks. These are the practices that are collectively accomplished by participants in the CoL. The practices Kate alludes to include teasing out ideas, writing up recommendations, reporting to the group, and following up on suggestions (e.g., the fundraiser). The idea that colleagues take up an initiative and act upon it, is evidence of collective accomplishment with its fluid role-switching. Participants’ practices are coordinated, responsively sequenced, and paced. The team collectively determines what to do next, based on specificities of the unfolding situation.

All practices in the mosaic—Mary's CoL

The second example, Mary's CoL, demonstrates coherence through practices that foster shared direction, aspiration, high trust, and collegiality. Mary states that the leaders can encourage and act on a shared belief that 'there are some children in NZ who are not achieving to their potential, and there is no excuse for children not achieving their potential as human beings'. Mary acknowledges the effectiveness of her colleagues' practices, saying that collectively 'they know about student achievement and what works' (i.e., practices that work) in their school settings. There is collective accomplishment through the group's coordination, as participants collectively determine what to change based on the conditions of their Community of Learning and their schools. Mary comments on the practices of guiding and directing associated with connective enactment. 'The thing is that we all take turns. So, if there is something that we need to do, whoever has got that strength or passion picks it up'. There are practices of fluid role switching in the collective accomplishment that Hopwood et al. (2022) identify. The practices associated with planful alignment are indicated when Mary comments that although the roles are fluid when '[one] person leads it, it works perfectly'. There is trust and security demonstrated when she says, 'it works for our CoL because we like each other and we respect each other, and our schools are open to each other—we're deadly honest'. This openness facilitates practices of collaboration.

All practices in the mosaic—Jill's CoL

In this third example, Jill describes how there is alignment in cross school practices with a collective focus on all working in synchrony which reflects planful alignment. 'We have been working with the teaching-focused researcher and developed a vision and written principles. We are developing practices that can go across all of our schools'. The practices associated with partnering with a researcher across all of the schools and co-developing principles highlight planful alignment. These imply new practices associated with the implementation of a vision—for instance embedding new teaching practices across schools. Jill describes a shared purpose to their practice: 'that we're all here for the greater good for students'.

Connective enactment is apparent in the team practices where they are "working collaboratively, allowing for honest talk, dialogue, and discussion. There is listening and sharing of practice'. Further, Jill describes group practices where they engage in dialogue with questioning, in order for realisations to take place.

The members of the team support you by asking the deep probing questions, which helps and supports you to be able to rationalise why you do things and how you know you're successful. It challenges you to ensure that it's not just rhetoric that you're talking, that it is evidence-based practice. (Jill).

Aspiration for some practices to be part of the mosaic

The second category includes quotations where leaders exemplify aspirations that the practices of some teachers be included in the community and contribute to the collective of the CoL. But this kind of mosaic does not include everyone. It is partial: some practices are valued and others are not (weak links), although there is an appetite to be inclusive.

Some practices are part of the mosaic—Mark's CoL

Mark describes an approach where he is a leader at the top of a hierarchy. He speaks about how he developed practices to support school-wide inquiries around effective pedagogy and student engagement in his school. These practices, according to Mark, were shared by him with the CoL. Mark has a deficit perception of the CoL school improvement model, that it is about working with schools where the practices can be categorised in a binary of strong and weak. He finds the CoL approach to shared leadership practices “painfully slow.” He describes the approach as a ‘retarded model’ where the CoL ‘are trying to bring the weakest link forward’. Mark’s statement suggests that the CoL practices reflect spontaneous misalignment where schools are doing their own thing and with very separate practices to each other. He speaks about planful alignment, but, in our view, one individual ‘working politically to engage and enable’ colleagues (as he describes his own practice) is not a collaborative approach to alignment. Mark’s comments indicate that he does not want to work in a mosaic where there is a ground up democratic process; evidently, he prefers a hierarchical approach to leadership. According to Mark, working through practices that enable a ground-up approach to change is too ‘backward’ and slow.

Some practices are part of the mosaic—Di's CoL

Di describes a transition between anarchic alignment, where the practitioners in schools practise as separate entities, to planful alignment. Although there is no connective enactment across schools, Di signals an aspiration for it when she alluded to aligning teachers’ practices:

Initially, we had a real focus on literacy and numeracy because that was the expectation from the Minister of Education at the time. Things have got a lot more flexible now. And now our CoL is looking much more holistically—It’s much more around teacher practice now and getting that aligned... So, you’ve got schools that are their own entities. And so, it’s how do you manage to form them and to attain [goals], and that definitely takes time. (Di).

Practices left out of the mosaic

The third category draws on quotations where there are aspirations for just some teachers in the community to practise as part of the CoL. There are two teacher interviews in this data set. We use these interviews to gain a perspective of leadership from those who are not designated leaders. Both teachers described how not everyone was interested or involved in the work of the CoL. They describe their experiences of their CoL in terms of fragmentation and lack of inclusivity. This is where, despite an aspiration from some participants in the CoL to contribute to a mosaic of leading, the lived experience indicates a lack of cohesion. The mosaic is partial, as various practitioners and their practices are left out of the mosaic, not yet included, or do not want to be involved.

Practices left out of the mosaic—Matt's CoL

Matt is a secondary teacher in the only high school in the sample, which is linked with four primary schools. He describes how some people practise together but there is not a community. The following protracted quotation is included as it highlights how the focus on shared outcomes is limited. As Matt says, some schools work together while others do not. There is no sense of connective enactment or collective accomplishment.

You have to have the buy-in from the staff and that's difficult enough when you talk about one school, but you're talking about five schools. And we're in a community of learning with four primary schools. Well, how is our PD going to be the same as their PD? Those two things aren't equivalent.... So, I can see it working in that [primary] context where there's a buy-in and there's something that makes everybody come together. What I can't see is where *we're* at... people are like 'well, why are you here?' And it's because I've been told to be here. I guess that again it's the staff buy-in thing. It's all well and good throwing money at it, but you know, we are humans and we're quite cynical. I think the Community of Learning is a great concept. It's just I've not seen [it working]. I've not heard anybody who is bragging about this. (Matt).

Matt's comments indicate that he sees the practitioners from the different sectors (primary and secondary) as having differing needs and aspirations. From Matt's perspective the CoL leadership does not support a consistent approach to practising across schools. He describes how the messages are not clear, and he does not see how a cross sector CoL could work. Matt's comment suggests that there is spontaneous misalignment in that there appears to be a lack of cohesion and clarity about the purpose of what the CoL is trying to achieve, namely, a cohesive social and geographic community that produces a shared practice that transcends what can be achieved by individual schools.

Practices left out of the mosaic—Heidi's CoL

Heidi is a classroom teacher who was asked by the principal to execute a survey that was to run across all schools in the CoL. The narrative data in the quotation below indicates that she recognises the value of a mosaic approach where everybody shares their practices by undertaking the same survey that she was administering. This approach reflects planned alignment. However, one principal said they did not want to align and use the same survey. This meant that data could not be combined and disaggregated across schools.

I got invited to a CoL meeting a while back because we did a well-being survey for the school. The CoL wanted every school to take the same survey. That's my understanding. My principal asked if I could come and help to do it because it would be good to have one person administer it... And we did it really well. But one of the other schools said 'Oh, we don't need to do it because we designed our own well-being survey and we've already done that...' I thought the purpose would be for all schools to do it and all people look at the results overall for the whole community. The point of doing it was to pull out different age groups and ethnic groups and have a look at the comparisons. We can't do that if everyone doesn't provide the data. So, I couldn't quite get my head around why that didn't work properly. Yeah, and why one principal would say well, I've already done something else so we're not doing it. He was all about his school. It didn't matter because he knew he was doing well, and everything was fine. (Heidi).

In this case, there appears to be a breakdown in the cohesion of leading practices across the CoL. According to Heidi, because the schools were not prepared to share practice there was no connective enactment or collective accomplishment evident. Although it was not mentioned in Heidi's interview, some schools could have agreed to work together. As one of the principals decided they were autonomous and they didn't need to contribute data to the collective, they can be seen to have engaged in anarchic misalignment. As a classroom teacher invited to be responsible for executing the survey across schools, Heidi is 'the meat in the sandwich', with the principals in the CoL having differing perspectives on how to share practice around collaborating and using data. This failure in the communication practices between the leaders meant that practices of interrogating data as a collective were compromised.

Discussion

Mosaics of leading can be explored in relation to practices associated with collaboration, different patterns of leadership distribution, connective enactment, and collective accomplishment. In researching leading practices, we consider the interrelatedness of *practices* within the mosaic. This contrasts to a conventional distributed leadership approach where the emphasis is on how *participants* who

are practising in a specific context interconnect. In their critique of distributed leadership, Wilkinson and Kemmis (2014) observe that ‘relationships between practices are nonetheless characterised as relationships between *practitioners* who relate to one another in practices (i.e. leader–follower)’ (p. 343). This myopic emphasis on positional hierarchical leadership minimises the role of context and in so doing reifies the agency and identity of leaders in a technicist and managerial discourse (Wilkinson, 2022).

We identified conceptions of leading that reflect the way that leaders and teachers in the study talk about their CoL and specifically about practices that enhance and inhibit interschool collaborations. Re-imagining leading as a mosaic of practices, where there can be collaboration and alignment, supports a ground-up approach to community building. Leading as a set of situated practices can be understood and experienced as a “democratic, collegial, and shared form of collective practice/praxis” (Edwards-Groves et al., 2020, p. 132). While this ‘re-imagining’ could be seen as a utopian, Kemmis (2006, p. 467) has made the point that emancipation from ‘irrationality, injustice, and unproductive and unsatisfying forms of life’ is a worthwhile goal. It is therefore important to closely scrutinise leading practices to determine the degree to which they foster broad participation over the narrowing of decision-making associated with intensely hierarchical relations. To reiterate, we identified three distinct mosaics of leading practices in the data that make up a typology: (1) an aspiration for all people’s leading practices to be in the mosaic, premised on democratic deliberation; (2) an aspiration for partial inclusion of practices and limited collaboration; and (3) an emphasis on exclusion of particular practices and a culture of exclusivity.

Practices of democratic deliberation

When all practitioners are invited to share, so that their practices form the mosaic, they contribute to the CoL and, as such, are open to democratic collaboration. It may take time to grow capacity in people so that they have the knowledge, expertise, and vision to join the collective and strive toward shared goals. Further, there is a cultural shift that may be required to develop practices so there is connective enactment and collective accomplishment. There is a question to be raised around the degree of democratic deliberation, where it is safe for individuals who collaborate, so that all voices are heard in the decision-making process. However, we view that there is the potential for democracy when all practitioners share practices in the mosaic. Leading through planful alignment, as Leithwood et al. (2007), conceptualise it, may not grasp the democratic potential that is unleashed when participants engage in shared practical deliberation, evidenced in dialogue, mutual recognition, and valuing multiple perspectives, that allow participants to connect with one another and work together towards common goals.

Practices of inclusion

In the second kind of mosaic of leading, where only some practices are included, the goal is to develop collaboration with value placed on the practices of some but not all members of the community. It is a less democratic process. This second category involves engaging those whose practices are regarded as of high value on a journey where others will gradually join and follow. In the case of Mark, this aspiration sustained a hierarchical approach, with little democratic participation. It may be seen as an attempt to gain a critical mass around a particular suite of practices in order to move forward to achieve the tipping point. There can be spontaneous alignment and spontaneous misalignment in this form of mosaic of leading: spontaneous alignment when motivated people's practices are in alignment with a particular vision, and spontaneous misalignment when the identified desired outcomes are not fully shared, understood, and realised. In such cases, there may be an aspiration for connective enactment and some elements associated with collective accomplishment, for instance, trust building.

Practices of exclusion

When just some practices are valued in the mosaic, it does not achieve the purpose of the CoL: to form a cohesive and inclusive community focused on improved student learning outcomes. The practices of some practitioners are excluded through their own volition or through the practice of powerful colleagues. This echoes our earlier point that practices of leading are *always* distributed among participants with the practices of those working in schools affording and constraining the practices of others and in turn being influenced themselves in the process. When *leaders* set up a mosaic where critical practices of leading are left out, they create an exclusive group that has an impact on insiders and outsiders through the conjoint, distributed practices that compose everyday life. This pattern of distributing leadership is primarily anarchic misalignment. Only some participants in the CoL experience and contribute to connective enactment and collective accomplishment. Although it is important to avoid coercion and ensure that people contribute on their own volition, the challenge is to find ways to engage people so that the practices of many or most practitioners are included in the CoL.

Conclusion

The interdisciplinary use of Hopwood et al. (2022) work is a key contribution of this study. The concepts of connective enactment and collective accomplishment were developed in the Health sector, and in this article we apply these to leadership practices in the schooling sector. Our findings in relation to schools (mostly primary schools) suggest the ideas may have promise across levels and kinds of educational institutions. Further, there could be more exploration of the similarities and differences between the perceptions of teachers and principals if studies were

designed to include more teachers. There could also be further investigation of the specific ways that power relations manifest across the typology of leading practices described here as a mosaic.

Viewing leading as praxis decentres the focus on the positional leader and recognises that everyone in an organisation is involved in everyday leadership practices. For many years, metaphors have been a rich resource for researchers exploring educational leadership (Cowie & Abbiss, 2014). The use of metaphor, which has origins in the Greek words *meta* meaning ‘over’ and *pherein*, meaning ‘to carry’, enables the cross-pollination of concepts (Alexander, 2011, p. 269). Viewing CoL as mosaics of leading recognises that the leadership practices of participants in a whole community can be valued and included—like the full complement of tiles in a completed mosaic. Viewing leadership practices as mosaics offers scope for realising democratic leadership which is (anti-hierarchical and) all-in rather than ground-up or top-down.

The mosaic typology of leading practices we have outlined here (all practices, some practices, practices excluded) provides imagery through which educators and researchers can explore the degree to which participants in educational organisations can collaborate through different patterns of distributing *leading practices*. Hannah Arendt (1958, p. 8) says, ‘we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live’. Every human being has something to say, something to contribute, and something that helps to engender the overlapping communities in which we live, both within CoL and outside them. From this perspective, there is scope for everyone to participate in mosaics of leading practices, not just an elite group, as happens with some (more exclusive) views of distributed leading. The ‘all in’ kind of mosaics we have described are sites of collaborative practices that foster a grassroots approach to education, culture, and community building.

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