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# School leadership development strategies: The Austrian leadership academy

## A case study report for the OECD activity Improving school leadership

by:

Louise Stoll, Rapporteur

Hunter Moorman

Sibylle Rahm

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides information and analysis on Austria's Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy (LEA) is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (now Education, Arts, and Culture) launched in 2004 to equip leaders in Austria's education system with the capacity to lead an emerging body of reform initiatives and help establish a new culture of proactive, entrepreneurial school leadership. OECD selected the Leadership Academy as an example of a model of school leadership development because of its system-wide approach to leadership development, its emphasis on leadership for improved schooling outcomes, its innovative programme contents and design, and its demonstrated potential to achieve effective outcomes. The report is based on a study visit to Alpbach and Vienna, Austria, in April 2007 organised by the Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture upon request by the OECD. This case study report on the Austrian Leadership Academy is part of a larger OECD activity, Improving School Leadership, designed to help member countries improve policy and practice related to school leadership.

**1.      Background to the Leadership Academy: the Austrian context**

Austria has a stable, well-organised society and a well-developed market economy, but economic globalisation, membership in the European Union, migration and a changing family structure and rapid technological changes, among other conditions, are pressuring the country to change. These conditions are reflected in the school system. The system is highly structured and differentiated, offering ample choice to students and parents. But its selectivity puts different pressures on the schools, on students and, parents, and on teachers and principals. PISA findings indicate that many students are not developing the skills necessary to participate in life long learning and they reveal substantial disparities in the performance of students and allocation of entitlements in different classes, schools and regions. A growing system of standards, assessments, and transparency measures has introduced greater school accountability and heightened pressure to perform. Devolution has increased local autonomy, and conflict as well. Numerous individual reforms and efforts to streamline the education governance and delivery system are shifting power and responsibility, opening new opportunity, and creating tensions. The Austrian school system is by tradition compliance-oriented, bureaucratic, and cumbersome. One key to the substantial changes sought for the system lies with a "reculturing" of the school leadership ranks.

**2.      The Leadership Academy programme**

The mission of the Leadership Academy is to help develop more effective leadership capable of meeting the social, technological, and political challenges creating change in Austrian education. Graduates of the LEA should have the skills to implement the significant new educational reforms underway at national and provincial levels and constitute a critical mass of proactive, system-wise leaders capable of transforming the system. The Ministry's goal is for the LEA to train 3,000 educational leaders; each year 250-300 participants take the LEA training.

Individual learning and development, project leadership, and network relationships are the key elements of the Leadership Academy's programme. Each year, a cohort (called a "Generation") of 250-300 participants progresses through four "Forums," three-day learning experiences consisting of keynote presentations with group processing and of work in learning partnerships between two participants and in

collegial team coaching (CTC) groups each comprising three sets of partnerships. Each participant develops and implements a project in his or her own institution over the course of the year. Learning partners and CTCs meet regionally in the interim between Forums and also come together with other participants in regional networks. Participants are rigorously assessed during the year's programme. Participants who successfully complete the full training and assessment are certified and admitted into the graduate ranks of the Leadership Academy. There, LEA alumni play important roles mentoring subsequent candidates and supporting the networking of groups. Generation IV was completed in October 2007, with Generation V scheduled to start December 2007.

The LEA programme is based on a set of thoughtfully developed, interactive theories of action about effective learning-centred leadership, about effective learning of leadership learning, and, implicitly, about effective systems change.

The LEA is built on the premise that leadership quality is the starting point for systemic innovation, and the programme is a combination of principles of learning, structure, and curriculum content. It is based on sound theoretical models, such as the Leadership Competence Model. The programme emphasises "leadership for learning," drawing on a model of five dimensions of leading and learning developed at the University of Innsbruck. Participants are helped to take a proactive, team oriented, problem-solving stance instead of a passive and compliance orientation.

## 3.    Programme effectiveness and continuous programme improvement

The Leadership Academy has already demonstrated some positive outcomes. It has achieved operational status, enrolled a substantial number of participants, provided effective leadership development, and begun to achieve a degree of culture and systems change. Among LEA's specific achievements are that:

- Already 16,9% of leaders have voluntarily participated in the programme. In four Generations since 2004, 1015 school leaders have completed the LEA, and a further Generation of 259 will start the programme in December 2007.

- There is a high level of participant engagement with the programme and considerable enthusiasm about both the content and processes of the Academy, although follow-up after graduation appears to be a less successful dimension of the programme.

- LEA appears to have positive effects on both individual development and improved practice.

- The education system seems to be on its way toward making system-wide change.

- Only a small minority of participants did not benefit appreciably.

- The personal effects of the Leadership Academy appear to last over time in that patterns of thinking and ways of operating seem to endure, and many alumni have continued applying ideas and approaches they have learnt.

**4.      Policy conditions**

A broad set of policy conditions influence the LEA's quality and impact and its place in the ultimate achievement of the government's overall goals in education leadership.

*Issues of implementation and coordination.* The federal government's initiative and support have been critical to the launch and implementation of the Leadership Academy, but a legacy of issues arising from the manner of the programme's launch may be limiting the achievement of the LEA's full potential. In the eyes of some observers, participation of Ministry officials needs to be stronger. The LEA appears to lack fully coordinated connections with other national initiatives on school leadership and school reform. There is an impressive array of national reform initiatives underway, but there does not appear to be a coherent agenda behind these initiatives, nor is it clear where the LEA fits in an overall reform plan. The LEA's impact may also be blunted because its drive to change culture through individuals is not accompanied by a parallel effort to change the structure of the system. The LEA has no permanent structure or organisational home and may thus be vulnerable to threats to its existence and lack institutional capacity for sustainability and robust growth.

*Assumptions about change impact.* LEA appears to exemplify principles of managed change. Its success would be greatly enhanced by parallel structural change and by more powerful change management efforts beyond LEA itself on the part of the Ministry.

*Leverage points.* Disproportionately large improvements in school leadership could be returned at relatively low levels of investment at key leverage points. Leaders assert the need for greater authority or influence in choosing or changing their school's teaching staff. School leaders report feeling overwhelmed by the job, and reforms are adding to their burden. Assignment of personnel who could relieve some of the administrative burdens from school heads could pay large dividends. Overall quality of principals could be improved by selection criteria based on merit and fitness for the job.

**5.      The challenge of sustainability**

The Leadership Academy has had much success in a short period; now the key challenge is one of sustainability. Several issues concern the LEA's long-term continuation and effectiveness. First, personal change commensurate with the educational challenges ahead will be more likely if additional system support is provided. Second, the LEA alumni network must be strengthened. Third, LEA's considerable potential impact will be more likely to be achieved if: continued enrolments progress toward critical mass; vigorous Ministry involvement and support are forthcoming; robust leadership interactions at the regional level are fostered; and if contemplated parallel development of teacher professionalisation and distributed leadership in fact takes place. Building the capacity of the LEA team to deliver the programme through some form of institutionalisation and with alumni and network support is important, as it is to integrate the LEA with national leadership training frameworks and with other leadership and reform initiatives—without sacrificing the LEA's flexibility and ability to innovate. The LEA has shown a strong capacity to stimulate culture change, but it may be asked to do too much on its own; complementary structural changes in the system and embedding it in a comprehensive national message and strategy for school reform would enhance LEA's considerable potential.

**6.      Summary conclusions and recommendations**

The Austrian Leadership Academy is a bold and ambitious initiative. It has been designed to high standards of technical and operational excellence, and it has made an impressive start on achieving its mission. As a result, new ranks of effective leadership are working at all levels of the education and

government system, and the beginnings of a proactive, problem-solving, collaborative and systemic education culture are evident.

This study has identified some obstacles to the LEA reaching its full potential and some conditions that could enhance the likelihood of achieving the overall goals for education reform for which the LEA is one strategy:

- **Ministry support and integration with other national initiatives on school leadership and school reform**: High volume of participation of senior-level Ministry officials would have symbolic and substantive effect strengthening the LEA's message and impact, and could also help improve coordination between the LEA and other Ministry initiatives to improve education. Integrating the LEA and other national and provincial leadership and management training into a coherent framework would also pay dividends for all programmes.

- **Institutionalisation of the LEA programme:** Without compromising its current flexibility and innovativeness, consideration should be given to grounding the LEA on a firmer institutional base, so as to provide longer-term capacity for sustainability and growth.

- **Structural change and national change management:** Changes in education structure and processes could reinforce and extend the changes the LEA achieves through individual and culture change, as would a more coherent government agenda and message for education reform.

- **Changes at key leverage points:** more rigorous principal selection procedures, greater principal authority or influence in selecting and dismissing (and rewarding) teachers, and reducing the principal's administrative workload would have significant benefits for the quality of school leadership practice.

- **Programme sustainability:** the LEA's long-term effectiveness can be enhanced by continuing the programme and graduating increasing numbers of leaders, strengthening Ministry participation, improving the alumni and network follow-up experience, and taking steps to improve teacher professionalisation and distributed leadership.

## SCHOOL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES: THE AUSTRIAN LEADERSHIP ACADEMY


## A CASE STUDY REPORT FOR THE OECD ACTIVITY IMPROVING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP


This report provides information and analysis on Austria's Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy (LEA) is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (now Education, Arts, and Culture) launched in 2004 to equip leaders in Austria's education system with the capacity to lead an emerging body of reform initiatives and help establish a new culture of proactive, entrepreneurial school leadership.

The Leadership Academy was selected by the OECD Improving School Leadership activity as an innovative case study because of its system-wide approach to leadership development, its emphasis on leadership for improved schooling outcomes, its innovative programme contents and design, and its demonstrated potential to achieve effective outcomes.

This report is based on a study visit to Alpbach and Vienna, Austria, in April 2007 organised by the Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture upon request by the OECD. The visit included review of documentation, meetings with a range of stakeholders, and some site visits at both locations. The report provides the rationale for exploring this programme, sets the Austrian national and provincial context within which LEA operates, describes the programme design and content, analyses the practice in terms of constructs and impact, and ends with some reflections. The list of documents consulted and the visit itinerary, showing respondents contacted during the visit, are included at Annex 1.

## 1. Introduction: some background

This case study and report on the Austrian Leadership Academy are part of a larger OECD activity, Improving School Leadership, designed to help member countries improve policy and practice related to school leadership (Box 1).

School leaders in OECD countries are facing challenges and pressures with the rising expectations for schools and schooling in a century characterised by rapid and constant technological innovation, massive migration and mobility, and increasing economic globalisation. As countries struggle to transform their educational systems to prepare all young people with the knowledge and skills needed to function in a rapidly changing world, the roles and expectations for school leaders have changed radically. They are no longer expected to be merely good managers but leaders of schools as learning organisations. Effective school leadership is increasingly viewed as key to large-scale education reform and to improved educational outcomes.

## 1.1 *Why and how we are exploring preparation and development of school leadership*

School leaders' roles have changed from practising teachers with added responsibilities to full-time professional managers of human, financial and other resources accountable for their results. This has meant that more and more tasks have been added to the job description: instructional leadership, staff evaluation, budget management, performance assessment, accountability, and community relations, to name some of the most prominent ones. In this environment, the range of knowledge and skills that effective school leaders need today is daunting: curricular, pedagogical, student and adult learning in addition to managerial and financial skills, abilities in group dynamics, interpersonal relations and communications.

However, the picture concerning the availability and quality of training and professional development of school leaders across the OECD countries is mixed. While there is evidence that many countries now provide school principals and senior staff with significantly more training, and support than they received in the past, opportunities for school leaders in this area leave room for improvement. For example, a research study surveying new principals in Europe (Bolam et al, 2000) found that 65% had received no formal or structured preparation for the job. Moreover, much preparation and professional development may not be effective in fitting school leaders to today's challenges. This perspective suggests there is a need to focus on the range of leadership preparation and development programmes to understand how they can contribute to improve school leadership:

- Programmes may vary in *structure, content and effectiveness*. Some of the differences perceived depend on how the role of school leadership is conceived. Whether school leader development focuses on managerial responsibilities, including business skills and resource management, and/or on instructional leadership skills will depend on the level of autonomy and decentralisation granted to schools and the roles leaders are asked to play.

- The *delivery methods* and *timing* of preparation and professional development may also vary. Some countries or regions may focus primarily on on-the-job development, while other countries emphasize strong initial training for leadership. A third strategy is to provide specialised training at educational institutions at different stages of a leader's career. Normally, targeted participants are those just about to take on leadership positions, but can also include those who are already on the job or people who play a significant role in school change processes.

In addition, whatever the substantive and logistical characteristics of the programme, the policy context is also of prime importance. Information is needed on the particular policies that support effective programmes, additional policy necessary to ensure sustained effectiveness, the relationship of the program to key national priorities, programme implications for development of other programmes and policies, and national programme and policy alignment and system coherence.

A number of case studies have been chosen to explore the approaches to leadership preparation and development (Box 2). The aim of the case studies is to identify effective policies and practices to develop and support high quality school leaders. For this purpose, the case studies explore a range of country practices under different governance models: initial, in-service training or on-the-job development, different partnerships for training and different content of training that aim to produce and support the next generation of effective school leaders.

Each case study report provides an analytical overview of the practice or programme: (1) analyses the structure, content, processes, and outcomes of the practice examined; (2) analyses the content in terms of the key organising constructs; (3) identifies the policy conditions that are and/or should be in place to support the programme; and (4) provides an overall analysis of the approach.

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**Box 2: Criteria for the selection of innovative case studies**

The final set of case studies reflects the diversity of education governance systems, financing arrangements, and political cultures of the countries represented in the activity;

The full range of relevant stakeholders is involved;

The practice has been in operation for a period of time sufficient to establish its operational viability;

The practice focuses on educational results and reflects a clear theory of action grounded in the current literature with promise of achieving those results;

The practice can demonstrate initial results that suggest that it is on track to achieve its intended outcomes;

Full access to the site and to relevant data is afforded.

Be programmes or initiatives to prepare and develop school leaders that are based on innovative approaches about the roles and responsibilities of leaders, the purposes of schooling, and the operation of core school technologies to achieve intended outcomes;

Be designed to produce leaders who work to build student-centred schools with capacity for high performance and continuous learning and improvement toward that end;

Take a system-wide perspective; the innovative programmes should align with the larger goals and processes of the system concerning school improvement, student performance, and enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.

*1.2      The case study visit to Austria*

Austria faces challenges from global economic competition, technological change, and demographic shifts experienced by many other countries in Europe and the rest of the world. To address these challenges, Austria is adopting more flexible, inventive forms of public policy decision-making favouring devolution to local levels and market-based choice. The government is also committed to develop a more flexible, responsive education system achieving higher quality outcomes for all pupils. This commitment implies, and necessitates, change in the established manner of doing business in schools, provincial and national government, and in the larger culture. Austria's social and political traditions and the organisation of its government and education system are not always well suited to support such change. Powerful central, hierarchical, and consultative traditions must be modified in ways that both maintain continuity with the past and adapt to the needs of the future.  Policymakers, the education system at large, and school leaders themselves—at all levels—feel responsible for developing more effective leadership, in greater quantity and distributed among a larger share of the education enterprise, needed to meet the current challenge.

It is the mission of the Leadership Academy to prepare the new order of leadership.  Even more, the Leadership Academy aims to reculture the education system so that it can embrace change, adopt new values and practices, serve well a diverse pupil population and their communities, and continue to improve according to the dictates of a changing society and a changing world.  This report describes the Leadership Academy, situates it in its country context, and offers insights into policy conditions and recommendations of potential relevance to other governments and programme providers interested in the LEA.

This report is based on a study visit by an OECD team to Alpbach and Vienna, Austria, in April 2007 organised by the Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture upon request by the OECD.  The study team was composed of the rapporteur, Louise Stoll, visiting professor at the London Centre for Leadership in Learning, University of London, Hunter Moorman, a consultant to OECD based in Washington, D.C., and Sibylle Rahm, professor at the Otto-Friedrich University in Bamberg, Germany. The visit included review of documentation, meetings with a range of stakeholders, and some site visits at both locations. The rapporteur took the lead in writing the case study report, with the support of the other team members. The report provides the rationale for exploring this programme, sets the Austrian national and provincial context within which LEA operates, describes the programme design and content, analyses the practice in terms of constructs and impact, and ends with some reflections.

Following this introductory section, the report moves to a description in Section 2 of the context, highlighting key conditions in Austria that explain or influence the Leadership Academy, including its policy rationale.  In Section 3 we examine the Leadership Academy programme, outlining its purpose, goals and key features and considering its conceptualisation of leadership, school improvement and leadership learning. Programme effectiveness and ensuring continuous improvement is the subject of Section 4, while Section 5 addresses the necessary policy conditions and implications. We conclude the report, in Section 6, with some areas for reflection and recommendations for other countries considering such a programme.

**2. Background to the Leadership Academy: the Austrian context[1]**

*2.1 Austria's historical and social context*

Austria is a parliamentary democracy organised as a federal state comprising nine provinces (*Länder*). The official language is German, but the country is home to diverse ethnic groups who come largely from Eastern European countries, the former Yugoslavia, and Turkey, among other countries.

Austria has a well-developed market economy. The country is well-off, but the economy has slowed down recently and unemployment has risen (although the unemployment rate is still substantially better than the EU average). Globalisation and the expansion of Europe pose long-term challenges, bringing more competition and need to develop knowledge-based and value-added sectors. The recent past government sought to introduce a more liberal, market-oriented economic agenda and to revamp the role of the State, emphasising deregulation and privatisation, reform of public administration, and narrower targeting of social benefits.

Two-thirds of Austria's population of just over 8 million inhabitants (2001 census) live in urban areas, but the country has a substantial rural tradition. The population is aging, population growth is low. Austria's social context is also changing. Single parent households and working parents are more common. Immigrants comprise a growing share of the population, with 12.5% of the population foreign born (OECD, 2006). An older and increasingly immigrant population puts pressure on the national treasury and the country's generous health and pension systems. Schools are under increasing pressure to meet diverse student needs, satisfy roles formerly played by the family, and maintain public confidence.

Yet some social conditions of long standing persist. Austrians tend to live and work close to their places of birth and to identify closely with their local and regional areas. Geographic and job mobility is low, and teachers and school leaders customarily remain in one school over a career, occasionally hampering recruitment of teachers and school heads. Values and traditions emphasising social cohesion, trust, and stability strongly influence social and governmental processes. Decision-making in schools and school systems is a highly consultative process encouraging participation and negotiation among diverse interests. Decisions carry the weight of social commitment but come slowly and tend not to reach too far.

*2.2 Austria's changing education system*

The Austrian educational system is highly structured and differentiated. This system offers pupils and parents many choices and avenues, alternatives, and second chances.

Schools are organised into general and academic secondary schools, with upper and lower secondary education levels, and an elementary level. In upper secondary education the school system is divided into a general education branch and a vocational branch. Both, however, lead the pupils and students towards higher education entrance qualifications.

The Austrian school system is selective, tracking pupils after only four years in primary school into either general or academic secondary schools according to their marks. There is pressure on students

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[1] This section draws heavily on the Austrian country background report prepared for the Improving School Leadership activity, "Improving School Leadership Country Note: Austria," by Michael Schratz with the support of Katalin Petzold, December 2007; on background information provided in "Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Teachers, Country Note: Austria," by Françoise Delannoy, Phillip McKenzie, Stefan Wolter and Ben van der Ree, April 2004; and on the Eurydice Database on Education (2006).

and parents to compete for more prestigious schools, on teachers to prepare students well, and on schools to compete for students.

In the early years of this century, there have been on average approximately 853,000 pupils and students per year in elementary, general secondary and academic secondary level schools combined.[2] The number of primary school pupils has been declining, a trend that is forecast to continue until 2008 and further. The number of secondary school students has also begun to decline. Austrian schools are becoming more multicultural and classrooms increasingly marked by heterogeneity of language, religion, ethnicity and national origin.

Responsibilities for education legislation and implementation are divided between the Federal government and the *Länder*. Decision-making authority for financial, personnel, and other policy decisions is divided within the Ministry, and in some cases the Chancellery as well, between federal and the provincial school authorities, and between the different layers of the school system and the school leaders.

Consultation plays an important role in the system. Stakeholders – teachers, parents, students and the community – are afforded formal participation in decision-making, and teacher unions, organisations, and groups have a strong influence on decisions.

Education has always been heavily contested among political decision-makers. The extensive distribution of responsibilities between different bodies and entities can be seen in part as a product of and a brake on political interests. Prior membership in the teacher union or support for a political party seems to exert a strong if informal influence in the selection of school heads.

The differentiated system, divided governance, extensive consultation, and partisanship contribute to the strengths and quality of the education system. At the same time, they can complicate governance, slow decision-making, and impede change.

## 2.3    *Reform context*

The Austrian school system is by tradition compliance-oriented, bureaucratic, and cumbersome. Schools and other parts of the system have tended to look up the hierarchy for guidance and to respond reactively, rather than proactively to take the initiative in solving educational problems. Much of the policy debate and dialogue about improvement has focused on inputs rather than outputs, on how to operate the system instead of questioning whether it was producing the most appropriate results for the society. Diffuse decision-making authority, partly related to the federal structure of government, the plethora of stakeholders entitled to consultation, and ambiguity over the locus of responsibility for taking initiative to address problems have combined to limit and slow the pace of change.

Membership in the European Union and the shock of PISA results have underscored these shortcomings. PISA findings indicate that many students are not developing the skills necessary to participate in life long learning and they reveal substantial disparities in the performance of students and allocation of entitlements in different classes, schools and regions (Haider et al., 2003, in OECD, 2007).

The results of PISA and other large-scale assessments like TIMSS and IGLU have generated heated political and public discussions about the quality of schooling and triggered a major educational 'culture change'. A growing system of standards, assessments, and transparency measures has introduced

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[2] This approximate average is based on 2004/5 data for primary and Hauptschule pupils and 2002/3 data for academic secondary school students, found in Eurydice Database on Education (2006).

greater school accountability and heightened pressure to perform. Devolution has increased local autonomy, and conflict as well. Numerous individual reforms and efforts to streamline the education governance and delivery system are shifting power and responsibility, opening new opportunity, and creating tension where duties and privileges are added or lost.

In 2005 the Austrian Ministry of Education's "*Zukunftskommission*" (*Future Commission*) proposed a framework for education reform and numerous specific proposals for improvement. The principles included *systematic quality management, greater autonomy and more responsibility, improvement of the teacher profession,* and *more research and development and better support systems* (cf. Haider et al., 2003, cited in Schratz and Petzold, for the OECD, 2007). Among the panoply of specific initiatives which are starting to be implemented, some of the most far-reaching are:

- The adoption of national standards (*Bildungsstandards*) and assessments in year 4 (primary school) and year 8 (general secondary school and academic secondary school). The emphasis on outcomes, monitoring, and accountability represents a paradigm shift for Austrian schools.

- A measure to improve teaching and enhance learning-centred leadership by limiting *class size* to 25 pupils or students per class. An initiative for individualised teaching and learning (including quality assurance) will complement this measure.

- Authorisation (and in some cases funding) for some schools to provide *extended day* supervision for pupils.

Austria's long tradition of school inspection is also changing. School inspectors, organised by province, district, and subject and by school type, regularly examine the quality of teaching and the implementation of leadership and management tasks in a school and identify areas in need of improvement. Two quality assurance programmes are adding a broader dimension to schools' and inspectorate's interaction, strengthening schools' own quality assurance roles and emphasising inspectors' leadership and enabling roles.

## 2.4    *The changing role and conditions of school leadership*

Heads of school in Austria are civil servants either of the federal government (the heads of academic secondary schools or secondary vocational schools) or of the province (the heads of primary, general secondary schools, special schools, pre-vocational schools or vocational schools).

The traditional duties of the school head have been to implement laws and directives from above, administer the budget and school resources, monitor curriculum and teaching and learning and work with teachers to modify them as needed, maintain communication with the school authorities, parents, and community and manage the process of school partnership consultation, and in smaller schools, teach classes.

Both the duties of school heads and the way they carry out their duties are changing. Deregulation and somewhat expanded local autonomy have added broader pedagogical leadership duties to their traditional administrative and fiscal responsibilities. The impending introduction of national standards with result-based assessments and national tests also intensifies heads' responsibilities to provide pedagogical leadership. A large list of specific reform initiatives means that school heads must now lead successful change processes, support teachers in their new duties, manage the collaboration of school partners and increased levels of conflict and stress in schools, and ensure the success of the large variety of school reforms for which they are responsible.

Although school heads' autonomy in budgetary, staffing, and curricular decision-making has been increased by recent government policy, their discretion is still limited. Schools do not have authority for employing or dismissing staff. The complex distribution of responsibilities and extensive consultative processes constrain what autonomy school leaders have. Strong traditions of teacher autonomy and responsibility for interpretation of curricular guidelines further dilute decisive leadership and change.

As new laws and functions redefine the role of the school head, the relationship between school head and teachers is becoming more complex. While the head is the teachers' supervisor, teachers have a substantial degree of independence, resulting both from the tradition of classroom autonomy and from provisions requiring teacher and parent (and sometimes pupil) participation in important school decisions. Heads are responsible for monitoring and mentoring teachers, but most do not go deeply into teacher evaluation and coaching, because of collegial relationships or the lack of time due to pressure of administrative tasks. School heads have little direct authority to reward or sanction teachers. They do not, as noted above, have authority to hire and fire teachers, although they may advise on the choice of new teaching candidates. They have no say in setting teacher pay, which is uniform across the country, or in offering extra pay or bonuses, although they can recommend them to higher authorities. School heads are supposed to build teacher commitment to professional development, and as leaders of teaching and learning need to be able to direct teachers' continuing growth, but they have little authority or leverage for doing so.

## 2.5    *Leadership learning in Austria*

The most significant opportunities for leadership learning consist of a compulsory management training, individual courses offered by the teacher training institutions on a variety of topics, and the Leadership Academy.

New school heads are required to complete a compulsory management training programme within the first four years of their provisional appointment for their contract to be extended. The programme is offered as a part-time course by the individual provincial in-service training institutes. Broadly, the training includes a set of modules and a phase of self-study. Modules cover communication and leadership, conflict management, lesson supervision, school development, and educational, vocational, and household legal rights, regarded as core competencies for new school leaders (cf. Fischer and Schratz, 1993, in Schratz and Petzold, 2007). Participants use self-study to explore pertinent literature, conduct projects combining theory and practice, and take further training to their needs.

There is no required pre-service preparation for aspiring heads. Aspirants can take modules of the compulsory management training, but they are still required to take the full programme upon being named head of a school. In addition to the compulsory management training mentioned above, there are no additional induction programmes required. The different provinces however offer new heads a variety of special support programmes on topics such as coaching, supervision and other regular meetings to exchange experiences of novices and experts. Further participation in professional development programmes is expected but not compulsory or a condition of continued employment as a school leader, or for promotion or increased compensation. There are no systematic professional development programmes on the regional level but rather short-term options. Thematically focused trainings support the introduction of new reform initiatives and keep school leaders abreast of innovation on both the regional and national levels. In addition, a pilot project has been conducted in different provinces to explore innovative practices of blended learning through e-Learning components in different content areas.

*2.6*       *Policy rationale for the Leadership Academy*

National policymakers in Austria, cognisant of the need for systemic change in the education system, identified the need to prepare school leadership to lead and sustain systemic change. In 2004 the Minister of Education, Science and Culture founded the *Leadership Academy (LEA).*

The original intent was for the LEA to prepare school heads, with newly acquired autonomy but little experience operating outside a hierarchical, bureaucratic structure, with the capacity to act more independently, to take greater initiative, and to manage their schools though the changes entailed by a stream of government reforms. As the benefits to systemic change of involving a wider participant group became apparent, inspectors, staff of in-service training institutes, and executives from the Ministry of Education and provincial education authorities were added as participants. The LEA's brief in a first phase was to train 3.000 school leaders and other executives in education leadership positions in a very short period of time on the basis of the latest scientific findings on innovation and change.

*2.7*       *Conclusion*

Austria is undergoing social, economic, and political change because of and in response to global economic competition, membership in the EU, immigration and changing family structure, an aging population and growing social programme costs, among other reasons. The nation's strong, cohesive social structure and traditions provide stability but also hinder desirable change. Schools and the education system have been generally compliance-oriented, bureaucratic, and cumbersome. The national government has introduced a large agenda of school reform, and school leaders with new skills and initiative are needed to implement this. The Leadership Academy responds to this need.

**3.**       **The Leadership Academy programme**

*3.1*       *Ambitious objectives*

The Leadership Academy provides leadership development to prepare school heads, inspectors, government officials, and staff from university, in particular from university colleges of education to manage the introduction of national reforms and to lead processes of school improvement. Individual learning and development, project leadership, and network relationships are the key elements of the Leadership Academy's programme. Each year, a cohort (called a "Generation") of 250-300 participants progresses through four "Forums," three-day learning experiences consisting of keynote presentations with group processing and of work in learning partnerships between two participants and in collegial team coaching (CTC) groups each comprising three sets of partnerships. With support and critique from these learning partners and CTCs, each participant develops and implements a project in his or her own institution over the course of the year. Learning partners and CTCs meet regionally in the interim between Forums and also come together with other participants in regional networks. Generation IV was completed in October 2007, with Generation V scheduled to start December 2007.

The formal goal of the Leadership Academy is "sustainably improving the preconditions and processes of young people's learning in all educational institutions" (LEA, 2006). The purpose more simply stated but equally ambitious is to prepare leaders at all levels and in all types of schools to *work in and on the system* (LEA, 2007).

The programme has in its sights two levels of change: At one level, leaders are prepared to implement the government's ambitious reform agenda effectively and to enable schools to function with greater local autonomy and initiative. Thus, LEA builds participants' capacity to play their roles more intentionally and proactively, to take more responsibility, to motivate their staff teams and develop their organisation. In this way they will be seen to be working effectively within a system where autonomy has

been increased, using new skills, systems understanding, and relationships to focus on the core task of education for the future, building vision, developing team spirit, clarifying roles and values and emphasising pedagogy. Public law cannot be easily changed and, therefore, effective school leadership and management means achieving as much as possible within the existing system. But the introduction of several recent reforms under the impetus of the Future Commission also underscores the need for school leaders skilled at managing change.

At another level, LEA is creating the critical mass needed to fuel systems change. Leaders emerge from LEA with new values and attitudes in place of the traditional compliance-oriented stance, with new relationships across a traditionally segmented education system, and with a systems understanding that situates their practice in a far larger context. A critical mass of such leaders should begin to reculture the system, to introduce new understandings and norms of professional practice. As stated in the project documentation (LEA, 2007, p.1): "The programme for the professionalism in leadership works along a new understanding of theory and practice which transforms the educational system by taking the quality of leadership as the starting point for systemic innovation". In the end, the system should be more open, flexible, and inclusive, inclined to balance stability with innovation, and committed to and accountable for high quality outcomes.

### 3.2 Well considered theories of action

Programmes are more likely to reach their goals when they are guided by a theory that effectively links action to outcome. Theories of action in relation to school leadership, as Elmore (2006) interprets them, are "a set of logically connected statements that . . . connect the actions of leaders with their consequences for quality and performance". Ideally the theory of action will provide a logical, powerful, and actionable relationship of action to change, and leaders' (or programmes') actual practice will correspond to their espoused theories (Argyris, 1993; Argyris and Schon, 1978).

The LEA programme is based on theories of action about effective learning-centred leadership, about effective learning of leadership learning, and, implicitly, about effective systems change. These are described below.

*Leadership*

The leadership theory of action links a set of outcomes to a set of intervening conditions to a set of leadership skills, attitudes, and dispositions. The outcomes are implementation of national reforms and creation of more independent, solution-oriented schools. Intermediate variables are conditions shown by research to lead to effective schools, like motivated and high-quality teachers and engaged parents, and those conditions shown by experience to diminish school effectiveness, like compliance orientation and classroom isolation. The programme provides the third ingredient in the equation, a repertoire of attitudes, skills, and dispositions equipping leaders to work with these conditions.

The programme sums up its approach with the dictum "*Handlung schafft Wirklichkeit,*" or "action creates reality." The LEA attempts to instil a bias toward effective action needed to implement reforms and to solve problems and succeed locally. The several elements of this approach are:

- building self-knowledge needed to marshal personal resources for emotionally and intellectually stressful challenges of leadership;

- instilling an orientation toward proactive behaviour and initiative;

- replacing the "heroic problem-solver" stance with a future-oriented solution-creating disposition;

- creating an understanding of the complex nature of learning;

- building a systems orientation, awareness of the larger context of schooling and reform, and openness to relationships needed for strategic leadership;

- opening participants up to the habit of changing their "mental models" and assumptions of "the way it is"

- developing new skills like giving and receiving feedback, working collaboratively, delegating and sharing work.

*Leadership learning and development*

The programme approaches leadership learning as a complex task that takes place over time and as a result of several interactions. Presentations draw on general and adult learning theory, by, for example, grounding new knowledge in participants' current knowledge and combining academic and experiential processes to construct new knowledge. New material and exercises are sequenced logically and coherently, so that emotional and intellectual conditions necessary for effective learning are in place. The key theoretical construct is that training and experience pursued according to the principles embedded in the programme design will produce learning that can be effectively applied in the participant's home organisation. Core elements of the learning model are:

- sequenced introduction of new ideas (usually in familiar contexts);

- engagement of participants' own base of knowledge and experience;

- demonstration and modelling;

- frequent opportunity for discussion and development of applications;

- basing learning around problems and projects in the participants' own organisation;

- using diverse approaches meeting diverse learning styles;

- providing emotional and intellectual support and feedback and correction in a safe, trusting atmosphere; and

- establishing a comprehensive professional learning community practice to sustain application of learning and change.

*Systems change*

There is also an implicit theory of systems change underlying the LEA programme in which two elements are key:

- programme graduates with new attitudes, skills, and dispositions will change their own schools through their behaviour and the impact of their projects; and

- a critical mass of graduates will lead over time to a broadly changing education culture.

In implementing the programme, the three theories overlap.

### *3.3    Carefully blended programme design, content, and operation*

The Leadership Academy programme consists of a seamless mix of leadership focus, principles of learning, structure, and curriculum content.  To an exceptional degree, "the medium is the message", as all the elements of the programme are designed with the participant's learning in mind.  In the following sections, what is in actuality a composite blend is described as a set of discrete elements for the purposes of presentation.

*Focus on leadership*

The programme is premised on the idea that leadership quality is the starting point for systemic innovation (Schratz with Petzold, 2007). The central design feature of the programme is its concentration on leadership in several dimensions.

Learning-centred leadership

The Leadership Competence Model (Figure 1), based on the work of Riemann (1977) and Ulrich et al (1999), underpins the theoretical approach to the programme. The model shows how leaders balance their work between trying to promote change and leading for the future versus the need for continuity, as well as balancing the orientation towards results alongside the importance of communicating with people and the capacity to build up relationships through working together. The model suggests that leaders need to give direction, show strength of character and mobilise individual commitment as well as creating an atmosphere of achievement within organisations.

**Figure 1 Leadership Competence Model**
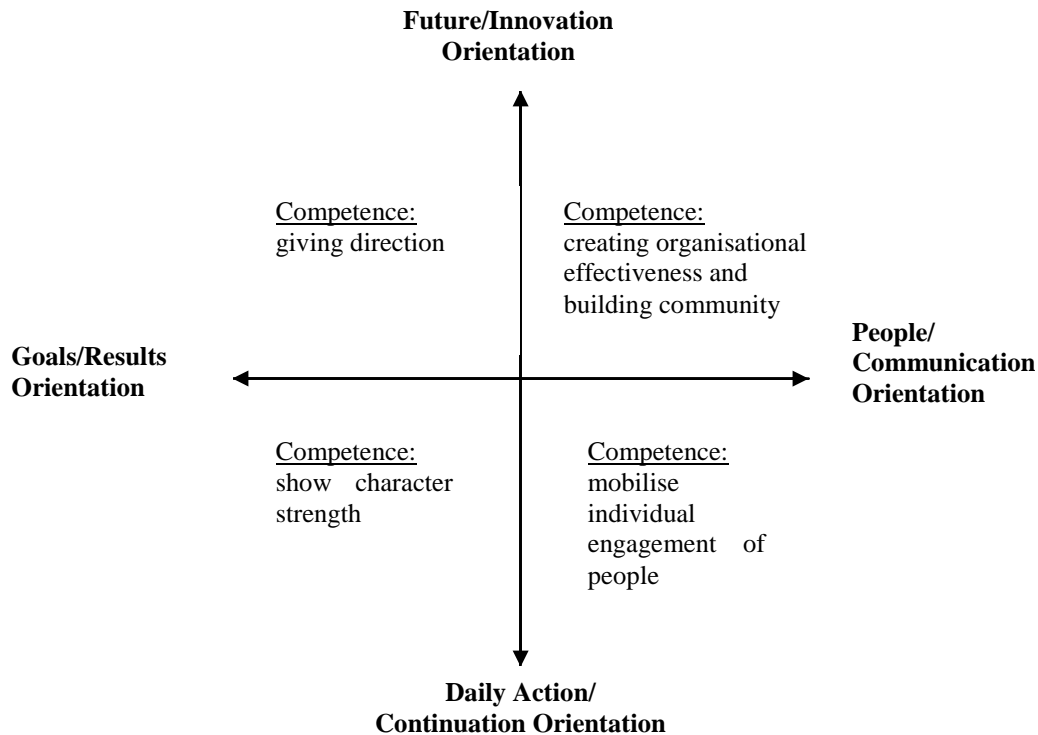


This is not straightforward in a system with many stakeholders. As a union leader we interviewed described it, the effective leader has to work with pupils, parents, peers and teachers "in a complex network".

Our visit to a school led by a Generation 1 Leadership Academy alumnus highlighted these competences at work. The head felt very much 'in charge' of the school's future and possibilities, and was described by her school inspector as having clear aims, being confident, feeling responsible to follow national educational policy but comfortable to inform the inspector of specific doubts about Ministry policy: "She takes responsibility for the details which she forms according to her beliefs and has the capacity to shape it to the school's needs". Colleagues, parents and a student we spoke to felt that there was a sense of democracy and that decisions were not taken without a consultation process, including with students, the representative of whom described a good leader as one who: "listens to students and respects their ideas". Teachers in this school wanted to be involved in school development and, somewhat unusually within the Austrian context, admired leadership that: "leaves space for the energy teachers bring by themselves".

Leadership for learning

Leadership for learning through leaders' influence on learning has been identified as a critical element of successful school leadership (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003) and is central to the LEA approach. Schratz (2006) explains how, in Austria, 'leading' and 'learning' have traditionally been considered as separate domains of thought and been associated with different people. School leaders lead (also sometimes teaching), teachers teach and learners learn. The LEA, however, systematically coordinates leadership and learning, by emphasising both pupils' learning and school leaders' learning.

The LEA programme aims to bridge the gap between leadership and learning by drawing on a model of five dimensions of leading and learning developed at the University of Innsbruck (Schratz and Weiser, 2002): knowledge; understanding (meaning); ability (application); individual (personal) and group (social) and its applicability to leadership and learning for the future. The pedagogical focus on learning has grown since Generation 1. During our visit to a Leadership Academy Forum, we attended a very engagingly presented session introduced by an LEA director with the questions: "What are we doing in leadership for learning? What is the focus? What is the impact on pupils?" These five dimensions were then introduced through 'leadership theatre' and participants were invited to consider them in relation to the school's role, teaching methods, a particular subject, assessment and people's personal biographies. Interviews with several participants suggested that this was new thinking for them. This session followed up one at the previous Forum which had focused on how pupils, staff and leaders learn.

Leaders' learning is also critical, as described in a 'chain of effects' model (Schley and Schratz, 2004), developed for and used with Generation 1 participants. This chain of effects is described as a mental web of meaningful relationships pointing the way from leading to learning and back again (Schratz, with Petzold, 2007). It shows, "in theory how leadership impacts on people, planning, culture and structures and how, through interaction produces action and results related to the school's goals".

Leading school development and change

Focusing on school development is a key feature of improving schools, enabling leaders and teachers to monitor and evaluate practice in order to improve the practice of teaching and learning (Elmore, 2006). Austrian quality initiatives (e.g. QIS; QIBB) sustain the maintenance and enhancement of quality in the educational sector, focusing on teaching and learning in a changing society. Quality development includes a changed view on school management and leadership. Teachers must become learners and school heads have to cope with the tasks of school development and school improvement. As outlined in a 2003 OECD Austrian report on teacher policy (Delannoy et al, 2003), the increase of autonomy of schools makes it more difficult to become an effective head. Furthermore, with the inspectorate's changing role, we heard several times about the importance of a positive working relationship and of how school leaders inform their inspectors of their plans and discuss with them their aims, grades and development. One head reflected that positive relations with her inspector provide a good basis for what she wants to do.

The shift to greater school-level autonomy has meant that schools now need to be "learning organisations", finding solutions to everyday problems and challenges such as personalisation, the increase in information, social changes and global thinking and acting (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, Undated).

Heads have to be aware of their strategic role and have to take responsibility for leadership of learning. Heads have to take charge of external reform strategies and also need to activate reform energies in their staff. Leaders must not only care for resources and outcomes but also for the development of the school's vision and educational offerings. They must inspire, motivate and create an atmosphere that will lead to staff commitment and students who are highly motivated to learn: in short, they need to build the capacity for continuous and sustainable learning (Stoll et al, 2003). Leadership in autonomous schools is a challenging task that includes having the personal capacity to bring about positive change and paying greater attention to the emotional side of leadership.

Leading learning organisations, professional learning communities and networks

Increasingly, leadership and improvement literature are pointing towards the benefits of collaborative working in what are variously described as learning organisations (Mulford, 2003) and professional learning communities (Stoll and Seashore Louis, 2007). This is a challenge in a culture

where many teachers have been used to working independently. Leaders in such learning communities have to develop and connect the energies of others. Leadership is, therefore, not only aiming at enhancing the practice of individual teachers but also at developing collaborative capacities of all professionals working at school as well as making connections with other schools through learning networks (OECD, 2003) and other partnerships. The intention is that schools in Austria will increasingly become professional learning communities and the Leadership Academy promotes this approach by creating a professional learning community among its participants and introducing learning strategies that can be adapted for use back in schools with and by other staff in order to help promote professional learning communities.

System and distributed leadership

Systemic thinking as the basis of change management involves thinking about the system as a whole. From a systemic point of view, the interrelationship and interdependence between different levels of the system is critical. This requires a multi-level approach to influence the system and leadership at all levels throughout the system.

Promoting system leadership is a key intention of the Leadership Academy; a commitment to collaborating with colleagues at all levels for the benefit of all children and young people, not just those for whom they have the closest connection, described both in this programme and elsewhere as "system thinkers in action" (Fullan, 2005). This has been a major consideration for involving large numbers of leaders at different levels of the system – schools, districts, training colleges, and the Ministry – working together in partnerships, teams and networks.

Hopkins (2006) goes further, arguing for "a systemic approach that integrates the classroom, school and system levels in the pursuit of enhancing student achievement". Our experience suggests that while the intention is to promote the development of professional learning communities within schools, issues relating to teacher professionalism need to be addressed (see final section) before greater distribution of leadership will occur throughout Austrian schools.

Schools themselves are complex organisations, with several intersecting domains: curriculum and teaching and learning, organisational structure and processes, school culture, professional development, and pupil and classroom management, as well as budget, personnel, and facilities matters. The addition of school autonomy, school improvement and development processes, and quality initiatives further complicates the system and creates a complex, challenging learning process for those in it. It is not enough to be skilled in managing the individual parts, though that is important; the competent leader must also understand and be able to guide the system as a whole.

School heads also operate in a larger system environment beyond their schools. This necessitates a pattern change in individual leaders' thinking, as most have been accustomed to acting in passive compliance toward that outside system. School autonomy, quality programmes, accountability, and extensive reforms now require leaders to have a broad network of contacts in the system, to understand and anticipate the reaction to their actions of other parts of the system, and to be effective in creating strategic collaborations and negotiating for support and resources from the system.

### 3.4 Project planning, management and costs

The LEA is a project in which the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science, Kulturkontakt Austria, the University of Innsbruck, the University of Zürich and the Institut für Organisationsentwicklung und Systemberatung (IOS) Hamburg closely cooperate. The programme design and academic realisation of LEA has been commissioned by the Ministry to two academics. The two project directors collaborate, one providing the greater share of personal professional development know-

how, the other the greater share of education and host country expertise. The project directors manage a scientific team, of which they are a key part, and are linked to an organisational team managed by the project manager in the Ministry who is responsible for the overall organisation of LEA and the coordination among stakeholders. The teams have clearly assigned responsibilities, and regular meetings are scheduled in which planning can take place for the Forums, research and evaluation and ongoing activities with participants and alumni. The scientific core team is small, consisting of the two directors with two assistants (one oversees the design of the LEA's training didactics, the other coordinates research activities) and a project manager who looks at how the LEA's aims and goals can be put into practice. They are supported by the wider team, who include the regional network coordinators. The Ministry partner also oversees the policy aspects, checks qualifications of potential participants and is responsible for communication with participants in-between the Forums.

The Ministry's contract with the universities has funded the full start-up and operating costs of the programme. The cost for supporting the programme each Generation (programme cohort) has been a little over 500,000 Euros, or, after the initial year in which overall costs were slightly higher, just under 2000 Euro per participant. The cost per participant covers all programme planning and management, costs to put on each Forum (including presenters, conference site rental, media, lodging and food for all participants), services and support for such items as the website and learning materials, and a variety of miscellaneous costs. Participants' organisations are responsible for transportation to and from the conference site for each Forum.

A high degree of substantive and training expertise is required of the expert team providing the programme. At least at present, it is not intended that the programme will be institutionalised or incorporated into existing routines or organisations; rather, needed resources will continue to be procured from external sources.

### 3.5 *Powerful learning principles*

A set of principles of learning underlie the Leadership Academy curriculum:

*Creating a trusting environment and trusting relationships*

Establishing trust between the professional members of the Leadership Academy is the starting point of the training. The Forums start with an emotional "invitation", as one of the directors described it. A regional coordinator explained how "LEA offers an emotional access to people, therefore it becomes easier to work on the cognitive level", and a primary head explained how "trust helps us to expose ideas we may not expose in other situations". One head of an academic secondary school commented: "I can't describe my feeling. I feel very close to colleagues I didn't even meet before October".

*Providing self-directed and constructivist learning opportunities*

In many senses, the learning is self-directed (Hallinger, 2003). Learning opportunities give participants the freedom to make their own choices. On the one hand they are responsible for their decisions. On the other hand, they reflect on alternative ways of acting in the pedagogical arena. Networking and learning partnerships provide possibilities to experience leadership opportunities. In addition, plenary meetings focus on issues that occur in school life and members of the collaborative team coaching groups are asked to work together on tasks related to the presentations. This means that learning is considered as one's own activity, as a constructive activity, and not as a simple consequence of training.

The starting point for leadership learning is developing the personal capacity of individuals and the need for school leaders to understand themselves as leaders as well as in relationship to others and the system. It is a fundamental programme assumption that leadership, and growth as a leader, begins with

knowledge of self. A leader has to know about his/her "inner team" (LEA, 2007), the different facets of personality that shape any person's action, and be able to balance those inner voices to become authentic. Clarifying one's own position before communicating with colleagues is essential. Knowledge about the team members in the school community and the ability to communicate with them and to motivate them follows this self-knowledge.

*Experiential learning and varied learning strategies*

The participants' everyday problems play a central role in the design. Each person brings their own development 'situation'—generally some problem in their home organisation—to the Academy as a case to serve as the basis for a learning project. Participants develop and implement their projects using new learning gained from the LEA. CTCs serve as 'critical friends' (Costa and Kallick, 1993) or coaches to project owners over the course of the year, helping them gain new insight, confidence, and competence in their roles as school leaders.

Learning is structured in ways that appeal to a variety of learning styles. Forum trainers employ a mix of approaches including large-group lectures, case studies, scenarios and stories. Serious content is leavened with self-deprecation and ample humour. Great care is given to "scaffolding" new knowledge with existing knowledge, and participants are frequently invited to reflect on, discuss, and speak to the plenary audience about their emerging understanding. Formal learning sessions are mixed with informal learning conducted in informal social settings. Participants listen, watch, write, create, and act out (in drama, dance, or other kinaesthetic methods) in the course of their learning. A combination of academic and experiential methods is used. Through their learning partnerships and CTCs, participants are often in the role of learning facilitators. The scientific team members themselves model the importance of different learning and teaching styles through their different personalities and experiences.

The LEA training equips participants with a range of skills, techniques, and tools they can use as school leaders. While these can change from year to year, depending on the particular programme emphasis, the training would usually include skill development in communication and feedback, mentoring and coaching, project management, working strategically, and dimensions of leadership competence.

The training also emphasises the importance of understanding the different dimensions of learning. These are identified as learning to: know, understand, do, live together, and be. These underscore the cognitive, constructive, practical, social, and existential dimensions of learning. The programme seems to say that all dimensions are present in any learning situation, but learners will have different preferences for or strengths in the different dimensions. Learners can be more effective when they understand these dimensions and their preferences, and teachers and leaders of learning can be more effective in supporting others when they too appreciate the implications of these learning dimensions. Participants report that after identifying their own learning preferences and understanding the preferences of others, they began to feel more responsible for and competent at managing system change.

*Learning as part of a community of learners*

The LEA functions as a community of learners that enriches the individual growth of participants and models principles of learning communities that participants can introduce in their home organisations.

A learning community or learning organisation is reported to perform more effectively and to improve its performance on the basis of experience (Senge, 1990, 1992; Marquardt, 1996; Mulford, 2003). Typically such organisations incorporate values, structure, and processes that enhance the capacity of workers to perform at high levels, to adapt to change in the organisation's environment, and to make ongoing improvements in the quality of their work and output. Key elements are reflection and openness to

learning, collective responsibility and shared goals, collegial and transparent work habits, explicit and common definition of effective practice, quality systems, flexible allocation of resources, and maximum use of internal expertise. The community is carefully developed, building from the pairs of learning partners, to CTC groups, to regional networks (see details below). Conditions for learning and professional development are introduced and extended at each level.

The LEA's commitment to operating as a learning organisation reflects the assumption that personal development and school development to improve pupils´ learning are interrelated. Personal change of leaders who assist each other in 'learning communities' makes possible the improvement of their learning outcomes. Social bonds and norms inspire trust, a sense of safety, and confidence. Transforming the educational system needs a multi-level approach. Starting with individuals, helping them to reflect on their own attitudes, making them communicate in networks and then changing learning communities in the larger system are the crucial points in the Academy's change process.

*Taking a holistic approach*

Reflecting the belief that learning is a complex process involving all dimensions of the human being, the LEA not only offers learning possibilities on the cognitive and emotional level but also provides the opportunity to develop and nourish other skills and talents. The LEA invites participants to walk in the Alpine surroundings where the residential forums are located, to dance, to practise gymnastics, and to experience survival camp techniques. LEA participants initially show a rather reserved attitude towards the extended learning approach, but such reservations vanish over time.

*Creating the LEA culture*

The creation of a body of shared norms, concepts, and vocabulary is one distinctive feature of a reculturing effort. A few examples will illustrate the LEA's practice in this regard. In a break with custom, all participants and staff immediately adopt the familiar form of address (*duzen),* equivalent to connecting on a first-name basis but an even stronger indication of openness and trust. Terms like *"Handlung schafft Wirklichkeit"* and *Musterwechsel,* the notion of altering fixed patterns or "mental models," serve as banners of the new attitudes and practices LEA introduces. Teaming and collaboration are the dominant modes of interaction and learning; and habits of going it alone and isolated pursuit of goals are quickly broken down. Responsibility for self and for learning is constantly underscored; when, for example, participants ask trainers questions or appeal to the trainers' expertise, the trainers will often turn the matter back to the participant, putting the responsibility for thinking and learning on the participant's shoulders.

## 3.6    *A connected programme structure and strategies*

*Forums*

In the initial meeting, the First Forum, participants are introduced to the philosophy, organisation and structure of the LEA. Learning partnerships and collegial team coaching groups are formed. The introduction of the LEA approach means making participants familiar with personal development matters and networking. The Second Forum is important for defining development projects and practising collegial team coaching. The scientific team provides tools for professional project management. The Third Forum invites participants to talk about their experiences while implementing their reform initiatives. Workshops provide communication skills, problem solving strategies or motivation. In the final Certification Forum, participants present their projects, deciding in their collegial team groups which project will be presented. For graduation each participant has to showcase their work by writing it up and also has to document his/her personal and professional development processes.

*Learning partnerships and collegial team coaching (CTC)*

The LEA offers learning opportunities for school leaders by building learning partnerships and networks of 'learning leaders'. The learning partnerships and the CTCs function as discussion groups in which members develop understanding of new learning and link new to existing knowledge. They also serve as critical friends supporting participants in their learning from project experience and seeing their situation from different perspectives. As one primary head commented: "The diversity of participants is very important to help me look beyond the four walls of my school". CTCs follow well-defined rules for coaching that include giving and receiving feedback and helping participants take responsibility for their learning. The Leadership Academy's directors observe team interaction. Although they do not interfere in the group process, they take "time out" opportunities to raise questions or offer analysis about project substance and group process.

Teamwork is an important condition for successful schools, and interviewees described the contribution of learning partners and CTCs to their competence in teamwork. Motivating others to follow new pedagogical concepts was, from their point of view, a very difficult task. Knowledge about different ways of learning and tensions in the "inner team" (different inner voices or identities) of their colleagues and staff clarified for them the nature of resistance to change. This seems to be the starting point for collegial team coaching which opens up action possibilities. Together with team members, difficulties in the change process may be reflected on and solutions found. The disposition to clarify one's own position, then to listen to others, to leave one's comfort zone and to motivate others to improve pupils' learning is at the heart of the LEA approach.

Collegial team coaching is a structured micro-world in which participants find their way with the help of others. Field-based experiences are brought forward for systematic analysis. The working process of the CTC groups is characterised by a sequence of working steps to discuss each person's case. After the presentation of one CTC member there follow questions from other participants, a coaching conference, the definition of the main subject, brainstorming ideas, a reflection on the process and feedback. The CTC work is a team reflection which leads not only to insights about the challenges of leadership but also to ideas about solutions.

*Regional networking*

CTCs are grouped into regional networks that meet periodically to explore substantive and administrative topics related to the LEA programme and to link graduates to the alumni network. The networks support leaders in many ways. Trust and cooperation among professional colleagues can activate

innovative resources. In a safe environment, leaders can test out and receive feedback on their ideas and school practice. School leaders' capacity for systemic thinking is fostered. Systemic thinking means establishing a connection between individuals and system structures. Transformation of the educational system needs a multi-level approach. Helping leaders to reflect on their own attitudes, recognise interrelationship between different levels of the educational system, and discerning critical system variables that make system change possible are crucial elements in the change process.

*Assessment, certification and membership in the Leadership Academy*

The assessment of the personal development of candidates in the Leadership Academy is based on the documented project that members have carried out. Learning partnerships, CTC meetings and regional group meetings provide feedback for participants. The CTC provides two reviewers for each report and the participant has to defend her or his report to these two peers, one of whom is the learning partner. In addition to the formative evaluation there is also a summative assessment by the scientific team.

The Leadership Competence Scale defines indicators for assessment of leadership abilities. Participants complete this at the beginning and end of the experience and, since Generation 2, some colleagues are also asked to complete the scale as part of a 360º feedback process.

A *micro article,* in which participants write about a critical incident, was used in earlier generations but stopped because it did not help participants think about their project in a positive, forward-oriented manner. Project leaders hope to reintroduce it in a revised form. A *photo evaluation*, whereby participants took pictures of how they envisaged leadership in schools, was also used with earlier generations, but there was insufficient capacity for the scientific team to evaluate these.

Those fulfilling the assessment tasks become certified as members of the Leadership Academy. Others merely receive confirmation of participation and do not become members of the Leadership Academy network.

Participants who successfully complete the full training and assessment are certified and admitted into the graduate ranks of the Leadership Academy. The fourth and final Forum concentrates on synthesising key learning, project presentations, planning continuation of the learning partnerships, CTCs, and regional networking, and award of certificates. The expectation of graduate members of the Academy is that they will continue the process of learning and they will contribute to the learning of others

LEA alumni have an important role to play in the personal development of leaders and in supporting the networking of groups. Alumni serve as mentors of subsequent candidates. They lead regional meetings and give advice to collegial teams. The network coordinators establish contacts between LEA generations (Generation I-IV) and foster open communication in the system.

## 3.7 *Conclusion*

The Leadership Academy programme is an innovative and carefully crafted response to a need to prepare a large number of school leaders over a short period of time to fulfil their role effectively in an increasingly autonomous system. Blending content and process, it focuses on developing learning-centred leadership and an orientation to systems change through an approach that emphasises building personal capacity in a supportive learning community.

## 4. Programme effectiveness and continuous programme improvement

Quality assurance and ongoing quality improvement of leadership development programmes is critical to ensure that these address programme goals, participants' needs and that they respond to

contextual changes and updates in the knowledge bases. In this section we draw on and extend an evaluation framework used at the National College of School Leadership in the United Kingdom and based on a framework used to evaluate training programmes (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 1998) to present information about programme effectiveness and continuous improvement.

### 4.1 *Already 16,9% of leaders have voluntarily participated in the programme*

As noted, this is an ambitious programme, with the intention of reaching half of all Austrian school leaders in a relatively short period of time; hence the large size of each generation. To this point, four generations have gone through the experience. Since 2004 1015 school leaders (16.9%) have completed the LEA, and a further generation of 259 will start the programme in December 2007. Several of those we interviewed spoke positively of the experience of being with a large number of colleagues and also the access to colleagues from other generations.

### 4.2 *High degree of engagement with the Leadership Academy*

Our observations and interviews suggested a high level of engagement with the programme, and considerable enthusiasm about both the content and processes of the Academy. The ideas were new to the majority of participants and there seemed to be an excitement about being able to 'see' different ways of communicating and resolving issues. Inevitably, in any externally guided professional learning experience, trainer quality is an important factor for a positive experience. The consensus was that the quality of inputs during the forums was very high, professionally stimulating and challenging, and greatly appreciated. For the most part, CTCs were equally engaged and self-sustaining, although some required more focusing and support during the forums, raising an issue for those considering this approach about how to ensure engagement and high quality partnership work between forum meetings. The extended nature of the programme and its demands in terms of having to carry out a project and write a report was also particularly helpful for some participants in sustaining commitment.

Follow-up after graduation appears to be a less successful dimension of the programme. Programme alumni are intended to constitute a virtual academy intended to provide benefits and support for ongoing leadership practice and to sustain system momentum for the new leadership culture. Regional networks are the vehicle for alumni participation. Participation rates and effectiveness of the regional networks are reported to be uneven. Lack of focus and direction in some networks elicited more negative comment than any other element of the LEA programme. Yet anecdotal evidence of successful ongoing interactions across learning partnerships, CTCs, and regional networks indicates the potential of the virtual academy to be an effective mechanism.

### 4.3 *Positive impact on leadership practice*

While this is a relatively young programme, a powerful impact of the Leadership Academy appears to be its effects on individuals. A leadership competence scale (Pool, 2007) is used to assess the participants at the beginning and end of the programme. Originally, this was just completed by the participants, but since the start of Generation 4, it has also been given to 10 members of staff in participants' organisations, as a form of 360º feedback.

On one hand, our interviews highlighted many examples of personal leadership outcomes. While, in some cases, prior beliefs had been reinforced, we heard many stories about how patterns of thinking about problem-solving and communication with colleagues have been changed. Creating a more supportive atmosphere through being more self-aware, taking a sensitive approach towards others and encouraging mutual appreciation, building trust and involving others were important outcomes. Colleagues of alumni also described examples of impact from their perspective. Inspectors spoke of school heads who had taken

up their greater autonomous role more quickly. They described evidence that these heads were more goal-oriented and whose aims were clearer and better focused, who communicated better and more precisely and involved teaching staff more, who were freer in their decisions and were able to look at their problems from different points of view and compare the results.  As a consequence of these changes, colleagues sometimes saw a chain reaction, with heads presenting an example for teachers and students who then began to act in a similar fashion. We also heard from an alumnus involved in research exploring the impact of the Leadership Academy on Generation 1 that there was much greater self-reflection, leading to a noticeable change in communication. This person concluded that: "You can feel the work of the LEA".

In addition, an important outcome of leadership learning is its application in practice and how this affects others with whom participants in leadership learning come into contact. Again, there were many stories of how what participants learnt through the Leadership Academy was fed back into and influencing daily work outside. Apart from the project that all participants are expected to carry out in their organisation as part of the programme, other examples included: applying the patterns of thinking to a range of different problems; using the leadership competence survey with staff throughout schools or all school heads in districts; developing middle managers; and integrating CTC groups into a regional school management course. Participants and some alumni also use their learning partner or other members of the CTC as sounding boards if they have a problem, and it was clear that a number of personal friendships have developed between learning partners. We also heard from some colleagues of how the new culture of communication is having an impact on staff in participants' organisations.

An interesting example of change within an organisation is the story of one of the Ministry directorates where the Director General participated and has applied the Leadership Academy approaches across the directorate where a colleague described how it is helping them clarify their vision, change their orientation to work and ways of communicating with each other. This brings us to the question of system impact.

### 4.4 *On the way to system-wide changes in the school system*

Bringing about system-wide change is notoriously difficult. Later in the report, we consider this in more depth, but we were interested to consider what evidence there was of system-wide change. In a sense, the considerable change in attitudes and orientation to leadership that appears to be a result of the Leadership Academy for many of its participants produces a groundswell at various levels of the system where people have been involved – schools, districts, regions, teacher training institutes and parts of the Ministry. Two factors appear to be particularly significant, however, in whether a leadership academy such as this can achieve the change articulated in the phrase 'working on the system'.  The first is critical mass. The more people who participate, the stronger the impetus for change is likely to become. For example, we heard of a situation where almost a third of school inspectors from a particular region have now participated in the Leadership Academy and are creating a new culture in their area. It appears, however, that at present, the Leadership Academy is not at the point where critical mass has been reached. The second factor is the involvement of Ministry leaders at the most senior level. Our discussions suggested that those Ministry officials who have participated have, for the most part, found the Leadership Academy programme and experience as powerful as their peers. Many of these officials, however, are not at a high enough level within the Ministry to be able to effect the kind of structural changes that might be needed to ensure the greatest system-wide impact. Certainly, some graduates of the Leadership Academy are moving into positions of influence throughout the system and this may have an effect, but it will depend on how many people are involved and the particular positions into which they move.

*4.5*        *A minority of participants did not find benefit*

The effects of the programme, of course, were not identical for all participants. It sometimes depended on where people came from and their prior experience. The project documentation states that participants must have had three years experience of being a school head. In more recent generations, this rule has been relaxed. It appeared, in a few cases, that those who were in the first few years of being a school head found that, sometimes, dealing with the management issues would get in the way of being able to get the most out of all of the LA processes.

More particularly, impact seemed to depend to some extent on whether people were open to the experience and in particular to reflecting on questions of their own leadership and their personal role. The general view was that the Leadership Academy was successful for the large majority of participants who took up the mindset and method of working. There appeared to be several reasons why there was a lack of change in a small minority (approximately 10-15%) of Leadership Academy participants. Some were able to feel the need for leadership but unable to engage deeply because they were very content-oriented. Others were unable to translate all their reflection back into the reality of life as a leader, especially if faced with resistance to change from teachers. For some others, the LEA experience was unable to address a lack of sensitivity in terms of communication or, occasionally, might have exacerbated it.

As far as difference between school heads, inspectors, teacher trainers or Ministry leaders is concerned, there does not appear to be a noticeable difference in impact between the groups, although their spheres of influence are different, and some individuals in particular groups may have greater scope to bring about significant change in other people's daily work.

*4.6*        *Sustained impact on participants*

Inevitably, ensuring impact over time is important for the Leadership Academy and any similar ventures. We spoke with a number of alumni. From these discussions, it appears that the personal effects of the Leadership Academy last over time in that patterns of thinking and ways of operating seem to be long lasting, and many alumni have continued applying ideas and approaches they have learnt, even if they engage less frequently or hardly at all with the Leadership Academy's offerings for alumni. The research currently being carried out in Generation 1 schools will help the project directors, team and funders understand what aspects of the Leadership Academy experience retain their effects over time as well as how it has infiltrated into the school and other communities with which Leadership Academy participants engage on a daily basis.  We talk further about the challenge of sustainability in the final section.

*4.7*        *Ongoing monitoring and evaluation*

Each forum is evaluated by participants and they can also write their opinions on cards. The feedback is considerable. A team member has the brief for promoting effective programme delivery, by planning ahead, anticipating problems, taking feedback into account, preparing an analysis of any problems, liaising with the programme directors and other team members to ensure that adjustments are made. Team meetings are held to discuss the programme and quality improvement, and team members consider these meetings a critical part of their ability to respond to necessary changes. The team also has external critical friends with expertise in organisational development and school development. These people have attended forum sessions and provided their own feedback which is incorporated into programme planning and revisions.

Every participant brings their 'case' (project) to their CTC meetings.  In the first generations, one member of the leadership team was responsible for three CTCs during the entire period and monitoring was not specifically scheduled. The leadership team felt that the coaching was not operating as well as it

might, so each CTC is now observed at least once by a member of the leadership team during every forum to check for problems with the coaching process. A 'time out' signal is used if the leadership team member wishes to make a point that will help the team's meta-cognitive perspective on their learning, and the leadership team member may also step in to model the kinds of questions to ask or highlight, for example when the CTC is ignoring the human side of a problem.

In addition, each of the six 'cases' is documented at every CTC meeting. Roles are assigned at the beginning of each session with one member of the team taking the role of writer who completes a form and checks back with other members of the CTC that she/he has represented the situation, colleagues' responses and decisions accurately. By looking at the forms for each case over time, it is possible to see whether and how participants are reframing problems or if they are just jumping straight in to dealing with them. This information is fed back into the programme design.

Furthermore, a national research project commenced near the end of 2006 to look at Generations 1, 2 and 3, with a hope to follow the 10 schools involved over a 15 year period. Questionnaires were sent out to school leaders, teachers, pupils and parents, with follow up interviews. At the time of our visit the initial data were being analysed. Alumni are also involved as part of the research team.

## 4.8    Conclusion

Positive outcomes of the LEA can already be seen in: the number of leaders who have voluntarily participated; their generally high degree of engagement; a positive impact on leadership practice; and some changes in the wider school system. Sustained impact, while not entirely clear at this point, shows signs of promise (see final section for suggestions to promote sustainability). Further research and evaluation should help to assess this.

## 5.    Policy conditions

This section examines a broad set of policy conditions related to the LEA's quality and impact and to the ultimate achievement of the government's overall goals in education leadership.

## 5.1    Issues of implementation and coordination

The federal government's initiative and support have been critical to the launch and implementation of the Leadership Academy.  It is unlikely that a programme of this sort –addressing a national need, requiring considerable resources to support, and depending on large enrolments – could have been initiated by a provincial government, a university, or a private provider.  The government is unusual in its recognition of the importance of leadership for learning and leadership for system change.  It has launched a visionary and innovative initiative in the Leadership Academy.

There is, however, a legacy of issues arising from the manner of the programme's launch. LEA was begun as a personal initiative of the former Minister and introduced into the bureaucracy, as it was described to us, "from the side."  That is, the programme was not developed in accordance within the customary bureaucratic procedures. Advantages were speed of launch, dedicated resources, and attention as a Ministerial priority.  While this has had advantages in terms of response from many school heads, there seem to have been several potentially adverse consequences:

### Ministry support and connections with other related national initiatives

The Ministry is in a position to provide symbolic and substantive support for the LEA by enrolling Ministry officials including those at the top levels in the programme.  There is disagreement within the Ministry whether Ministry participation in LEA has been adequate to this point. LEA

participants have been recruited from seven Directorates and 78 Departments in the Ministry. Programme advocates state that attendance by top officials has been strong: 21 of the 85 officials who are in the position of Director General or Department Head have participated, which is just under one quarter. Others disagree. "If you have a rigid system that doesn't want to change and then a LEA that stimulates change, then you'd have to hope management would be the first to attend, but this is not what has happened," stated one official. It seemed to the visiting team that some conflict over "bureaucratic turf" could either limit participation or create impressions of lack of support for the programme in all quarters.

The programme also appears to lack the fully coordinated connections with other national initiatives on school leadership and school reform that might have resulted had it been developed within the main education policy framework.

*Lack of complementary structural change*

Some officials pointed out that the LEA's impact will be blunted because its drive to change culture through individuals has not been accompanied by a parallel effort to change the structure of the system. The LEA is a logical approach to changing school leadership, they say, but it clashes with the power structure. They feel it is important to know what the political context is in the country and bring together (make congruent) the logical and political structure. Programme graduates, they imply, will still end up working in a cumbersome system characterised by layers of government, separate school systems, extensive consultation processes, civil service-based personnel systems, and other impediments; and existing holders of power will resist the new ways. It was no doubt easier to launch a culture change initiative than to take on the political interests behind the structure, and it may be that once critical mass is attained, there will be sufficient momentum to create structural change. But for the moment, almost the entire burden for systems change rests on the LEA, and this may be too much to ask of any one leadership development programme.

*Coherence of national reform agenda*

The LEA does not appear to be part of a coherent overall national agenda for education reform. There are certainly a large number of reforms underway. The team was impressed at the intent behind the work of the Future Commission and the commitment to create a responsive, world-class education system evident in the many initiatives underway. But we did not see that there was a coherent agenda behind these initiatives, nor was it clear where the LEA fit in an overall plan. Any success LEA enjoys, and there seems to be ample promise of success, would be greater within the context of a well-aligned body of reforms supported by a coherent policy agenda targeting school leadership and school outcomes.

*The Leadership Academy's 'home'*

Finally, the LEA has no permanent structure or organisational home. What once might have been an advantage, offering speed and flexibility, now seems to some observers within the system to be a potential liability. As a programme that is both outside the bureaucracy and "virtual," the LEA now seems vulnerable to bureaucratic whim and to lack the impact of a programme more centrally situated in the bureaucracy. Moreover, LEA relies on the unique talents and background of two individuals and their teams. The programme quality, direction, and continuity rest almost entirely on the presence of this capacity. The Ministry does not have such capacity, nor are steps being taken that could somehow institutionalise such a capacity.

### 5.2    *Assumptions about change impact*

Since the LEA is designed as a change programme, it is appropriate to examine the assumptions of its change strategy. The theory of change can be stated as follows: a well designed programme,

following established principles of change management, will produce effective individual leaders whose projects and subsequent behaviour will help change each individual's organisation and who will eventually constitute the critical mass needed to change the overall system culture. We explored programme effectiveness in Section 4. Here we raise some points concerning the programme's assumptions about its change impact with policy implications.

*Adaptive change*

The LEA appears to exemplify principles of managed change. Viewed from the perspective of general systems change theory, the programme incorporates such requisite elements as a vision of the desired future, modelling appropriate behaviours, generating a constant stream of pertinent information, providing ongoing feedback and support, and celebrating success. LEA also fits well with the elements of the more particular model of "adaptive change" (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz and Linsky, 2002), with for example a safe "container," consistent modelling, and "turning up and down the heat." However, these change elements are confined to the LEA programme itself; they are less evident in the larger system. That is, with the exception of one directorate where the LEA programme was made a very high priority, and thus modelling commitment to change, we saw less indication that the Ministry was acting as an effective change agent itself by adhering to these principles. The LEA thus bears a very large burden for effectuating change in the overall system. This burden is possibly too large, or certainly would be better off shared.

The LEA's success as an agent of culture change will depend first on the quality and impact of each participant's project and behaviour in their organisation and, second, on the programme's capacity to create the needed critical mass of change agents within the system. It is hard to assess the impact, current or potential, of either of these conditions. Again, however, it does seem that their success would be greatly enhanced by parallel structural change and by more powerful change management efforts beyond LEA itself on the part of the Ministry.

An early policy decision to expand participant eligibility has had profound and positive consequences for the programme. Originally intended for leaders of schools at all primary and secondary levels and with general, academic, and vocational focus, eligibility was opened up to include school inspectors, university programme providers, and regional and national government officials. Such diverse participation across all elements of the education governance, accountability, training, and delivery system has enhanced the programme emphasis on breaking down system boundaries and barriers and promoted the development of a deeper, more inclusive systems orientation among participants.

The decision to apply to the LEA is made by the applicant, who applies directly on the LEA website, although at times official encouragement or directives motivate applicants. The LEA accepts a balanced cohort that is representative of the diverse target population. It is not clear how well this voluntary approach works, given the LEA's aim to produce culture or systems change and create a critical mass of change agents. Some observers in Austria question whether the national government shouldn't put all or the majority of its middle- or top-level officials through the programme early on. In their view the Ministry at present lacks the breadth of understanding, commitment, and coherence needed to fulfil the LEA vision. Similarly, where school inspectors play so potentially central a role in school quality and accountability, and in hastening or slowing school-level change, training the entire corps early on could create more powerful leverage for change.

### 5.3  Leverage points

Because most of the structural factors that make the education system complex and slow to change are also deeply embedded in the country's culture and traditions, it does not seem likely that these will be changed any time soon, either through policy decision or more indirect culture change. There are, however, a few leverage points where disproportionately large improvements in school leadership could be returned at relatively low levels of investment.

*Changes to tenure of teaching staff*

School heads identify a variety of conditions that would help them perform better. Cited more often than any condition was the authority to choose or change their school's teaching staff, something out of their reach at present. Using a football analogy, one head said that as long as he has a mediocre team over which he has no selection control, he cannot take the full responsibility for his school.

*Reducing administrative overload*

Among a variety of conditions hindering the exercise of effective pedagogical leadership, school leaders—especially primary and general secondary school heads with little or no administrative support— report feeling overloaded with administrative tasks and heightened feelings of stress. As one school head phrased it: "The school head's duties are so manifold, diverse, and widespread, and we are not trained for them or able to find the time to manage them all." In fact, far from easing such burdens, the provision of legal autonomy has created new administrative and managerial duties. Assignment of personnel who could relieve some of the administrative burdens from school heads could pay large dividends.

*Amending criteria for selection of school heads*

There appears to be the need for greater rigour and objectivity in the selection of school heads for the job. A range of respondents from different perspectives in the system identified the tradition of political intervention, favouritism, and patronage as problematic. Requiring that selection be made according to explicit criteria related to the job requirements of pedagogical leadership would be one step toward the selection of principals on merit and fitness for the job.

### 5.4  Conclusion

The Leadership Academy is clearly affected by surrounding policy conditions. Importantly, its launch and implementation have been supported by the federal government. Policy issues that appear to influence the LEA include: Ministry support and connection with other school leadership initiatives; limited complementary structural change or connections with the wider national reform agenda; and the question of the LEA's 'home' base.

Given that the LEA appears to conform with a model of adaptive change, there are some tensions in a system where a bureaucratic model still predominates in many Departments. We have, however, identified a number of leverage points within the system where we believe that relatively low levels of investment would be likely to lead to large improvements in school leadership. These include changing the tenure of teaching staff, reducing administrative overload, and amending the criteria for selecting school heads.

**6.        Some conclusions: the challenge of sustainability**

The Austrian Leadership Academy is an ambitious and innovative programme, with an aim to reach many leaders throughout the system, thereby influencing both their individual professional practice and, as a consequence, bringing about system-wide change to address the needs of a rapidly changing world. At this point, approximately 40 per cent of the 3000 school leaders for whom the programme was initially developed have received their certification; that is, almost one fifth (16,9%) of the total number of Austrian school leaders. This is a considerable percentage and an achievement in two-and-a-half years. It has impact in terms of coverage, as it is not only school leaders, but a diverse range of participants that benefit from the interaction. As a regional coordinator described it regional inspectors "…have formed a new culture". But there are other indicators of success. Most participants reflect on the powerful and sustained impact the Academy has had on their leadership practice. They are applying a new set of skills in their daily practice. Furthermore, engagement with the Academy remains high even after the training process is finalised. Sixty per cent of participants stay connected, valuing the networks they have developed.

In this section, we raise issues that countries would want to consider if developing a similar programme within their context, other than ensuring that the programme addressed their own important contextual issues. For us, the key challenge in relation to the Leadership Academy can be summed up as one of sustainability. Here, we consider sustainability from a number of perspectives: depth, length, breadth, capacity, integration, and system change[3].

*6.1        Depth: the power of change through continued development*

This is a demanding programme, seeking significant change in personal patterns of thinking, responding and communicating. From our limited experience, it is hard to tell whether the depth of change experienced by individuals through the LEA will enable them to take the kinds and promote the necessary innovation to deal with increasingly adaptive challenges. Our guess is that, with system support and continuous training, this is possible. However, the timing of participation in the LEA needs to be aligned to leadership training and development trajectories. If initial management training occurs after people become school heads, then it makes sense to recruit people to the Leadership Academy after 3-5 years as a school head given that our interviews suggest that some practical management issues tend to overwhelm new school heads, making it hard for them to focus on the Leadership Academy 'curricula'. Bringing the compulsory management training forward so that it occurs before people take up their role as school head, as used to happen in Austria and happens in some other counties, would be another way to address this.

*6.2        Length: ongoing involvement and support structure for alumni*

Maintaining the spirit of the Leadership Academy is not always easy. Once out of the programme, the intention is that alumni will create collegial commitment through the alumni network. In reality, approximately 50 per cent carry on with collegial links and approximately 60 per cent with their partnership dialogue. A member of the programme team explained how alumni attend follow up events: "to feel the spirit/the power. They say it's hard to continue when so many people are looking at problems. So they are looking for a support structure and systems that will sustain it. It's not enough to meet. It's about having a connection." From experience of other networks, we know that sustainability requires a common purpose and task, facilitation, infrastructure, face-to-face meetings and a small amount of money to cover these. A few people felt that the significance of membership in the Academy following graduation was diluted by the lack of active involvement among many graduates. They recommended that ongoing

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[3] Some of these perspectives are addressed by Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink in *Sustainable Leadership* (2006) San Francisco: Wiley.

membership be granted only to alumni who stayed active in the network. It certainly makes sense that membership should be linked to active contribution to the Leadership Academy, whether attending alumni events, support meetings or connecting through the website or with learning partners and CTC colleagues. There was even a suggestion that input should help alumni to start a new project. It seemed to be understood, therefore, that after all of the intense work to bring about change, continuation of commitment and use of ideas is essential.

Ongoing involvement appears to be a particular issue for Ministry participants because offerings for alumni tend to be school-focused and, as a Ministry leader described it, "at the operative level", while Ministry leaders focus more "at the abstract level". It seemed that an ongoing support network for Ministry personnel would be valuable, although some Ministry leaders particularly valued the CTC connections they had made with school and inspector colleagues

## 6.3    Breadth

*Critical mass*

At what point does the number of people who have been through the LA experience translate into a critical mass of school leaders and, indeed, other system leaders who are able to exercise strategic, person-centred leadership for learning? We heard of one region where eight of the 26 school inspectors have participated in the LA and, as a regional coordinator described it: "they have formed a new culture". Some interviewees wanted to see more school heads and inspectors participating because, in a Ministry leader's words: "Whether we'll succeed in bringing about systemic change depends on how many we can penetrate . . . It's only possible if the process continues and more take part". Another Ministry leader commented: "If all 6000 were in the Leadership Academy there would be nobody left with responsibility in teaching in education who would say 'this is not possible, this doesn't concern me, I can't do this'". If the other points raised in this section were addressed and not too many alumni retire in the next few years, it may be a matter of only a few years before critical mass is reached.

*Involvement of senior Ministry leaders*

It appears that the involvement of senior Ministry leaders can have a particularly powerful effect on the system when they follow up their own participation by replicating LEA processes with their staff, as has happened throughout one Directorate. At present, from 7 Ministry Directorates, one Director General and three Deputy Directors General have participated. A Ministry leader was not alone in commenting that: "it will only succeed if the people who take part are in leading positions". Indeed, while few senior Ministry leaders had participated in the Leadership Academy, a number felt that the decision makers at Ministry and provincial level should be involved: "Start at the top of the system" (Ministry leader). For significant system change to occur, the influential groups in relation to the power structure need to be involved, especially in the Ministry.

*Spreading ideas across regions*

There were several examples of school leaders and inspectors sharing their experiences with other non-involved colleagues in their own regions, but this seemed to be dependent on individuals and also the number of the LEA's current participants and alumni in a district or region. Perhaps some independently offered regional seminars and regional leadership meetings might help to transport leadership ideas to the whole region. Some participants also felt that more regional meetings for people working at a particular level – "speciality meetings" – would help people to apply what they have learnt. A regional coordinator also suggested that there would be more power if the Leadership Academy could be experienced by regional policy makers: "so LEA projects are seen by people at the policy level". Like any

other voluntary initiative, however, this one faces the challenge of persuading uninvolved people (heads, inspectors and Ministry personnel) to become involved. Some see it as a club, others feel "we don't need it - you just deal with your school" (primary school head), while some inspectors, in particular, appear to be afraid that they may lose power by attending given that in their current role, as one interviewee described it: "compulsory school sector inspectors tell schools what to do". Developing a regional strategy with regional partnerships may be beneficial. This has already been started in one region where the regional coordinator is in close contact with local politicians.

*Parallel development of teacher professionalisation and distributed leadership*

An issue highlighted many times throughout our visit was that of teacher autonomy and the need for greater teacher professionalism. We are aware that the Ministry of Education has invited one of the Leadership Academy directors to lead a group looking at increasing the teachers' 'professionalisation', and has developed a model with five domains of professionalism: personal mastery of their craft - individual competence; capacity for reflection and discourse, considering and sharing their knowledge and skills; awareness of their professionalism – seeing themselves as experts; collegiality – understanding the benefits of cooperation; and capacity to deal with differences and diversity. This model seems to support the concept of a professional learning community, but the extent to which it is realised in teacher practice will depend in part on the extent to which it influences the curriculum of the new *Pädagogische Hochschulen.*

In addition to the need for a parallel approach to teacher development, there is also the issue of increasing pressure on school leaders which, it would seem, may need addressing through widening the client group for leadership development. School administrators already have their own development programmes but these are not focused on leadership for learning. It may be valuable to place a greater emphasis on development of senior leadership teams as well as promoting greater distribution of leadership through teacher leadership development. As one Ministry official commented; "The definition of leadership is not just heads. It is teachers who have influence on a team. It has to be seen slowly. It's difficult. In a future oriented society, I see a strong role for the LEA". It would be ideal if there were a coherent stream of professional preparation and development programmes for administrators and teachers. Such a programme stream would align the current compulsory management training, the LEA programme, and other training for administrative leaders. It would also align with the content of teacher preparation, in order to promote coherent concepts of the school as a learning community.

## 6.4 *Capacity for programme delivery*

With such a large programme, it is impossible for the project directors and scientific and administrative project team to facilitate the entire programme. Ensuring that all CTCs are visited once during each forum is a challenge on the project team's time, and providing facilitation support to CTCs between forums would certainly help those that experience difficulties with the process. The initiative requires high quality facilitation. It makes good sense that there is an extended project team with regional coordinators who facilitate network meetings but, inevitably, the success of regional networks depends on the quality and leadership of coordinators and their ability to draw out the leadership and ownership of members. Already, some Generation 1 participants are playing support roles. Others and some alumni from later Generations might also become more involved, but Ministry involvement is needed to institutionalise this capacity.

Clearly, the planning required is extensive and having a coordinated team that meet regularly is valuable. With oversight of more than one Generation at a time, this task becomes even more critical and depends on being able to plan ahead.

*6.5      Integration into national leadership training frameworks and with other initiatives*

For successful change initiatives to become institutionalised, they need to become integrated into the system; part of the normal way of life. One Ministry official thought that it is possible that because the original idea came from outside the system the ground for innovation was more open. It is important for the Leadership Academy to be connected to the system and its other initiatives. Already, it complements the mandatory management training, and it is helpful that it draws some regional network facilitators from those involved in school management courses. Regional network coordinators also reflect different roles in the system – heads of different kinds of schools, school inspectors and regional inspectors – which is likely to promote further integration. Furthermore, helping school leaders engage effectively with national quality development initiatives and making the best use of the new standards as they are introduced is a useful effect of the LEA. Additional links can be seen with the QIBB which also operates at three levels. The LEA alumni who have become experts in quality assurance and focusing on standards and who have been invited to act as role models and provide examples at sessions at the teacher training colleges provide further important connections.

Additional efforts to coordinate the content of the compulsory management training and the content of LEA seem advisable.  First, some common vision of "leadership for learning" and of the management and leadership elements comprising that vision should unite both programmes.  It is especially important that the initial training for new school leaders contain not only straightforward managerial content, important as that is, but also material that links management functions with the overriding goals of leadership for learning.  At the same time, there is room in the LEA programme for more explicit and fully developed focus on the content and operation of schools as learning communities.  Second, our informants expressed a range of views concerning the quality of their compulsory management training.  Given that the programmes are offered in a variety of institutions, it seems likely that quality and content vary by provider.  The state should continue its efforts to monitor programme quality and take steps to ensure the uniform quality of the management training and its coordination with the LEA.

While increasing integration is desirable, the LEA needs to continue to have the flexibility to adapt as necessary and help lead innovation which can be stifled if it is bureaucratised within a system of hierarchical structures. This is a fine balance that the Leadership Academy appears to have been able to tread up to this point. It may be time for closer integration if the LEA's impact and overall success of reform are to be optimised. In doing this, if system change is not addressed, the challenge will be to retain its adaptive quality and sustain the energy of cultural change (see next section).

*6.6      System change*

*Aligning cultural change versus structural change*

The key question here is whether cultural change, in itself, is sufficient to achieve the impact desired for the Leadership Academy, or whether it needs to be accompanied by structural change. A Ministry leader reflected: "How long do the flames exist? What happens if you come back to school and you are faced with the old structures?" The Leadership Academy was introduced fairly quickly into the system which meant that there was no preparation of the system and no accompanying structural changes. Given the cycle of political change, structural changes, for example, related to the hiring of teachers may be necessary: "Otherwise it won't have the impact they expect/hope it to have" (Ministry leader).

*National change strategy*

We have commented on issues related to overall national reform strategy and the Leadership Academy's place in it. The LEA is a bold and innovative initiative, but we are inclined to think that it is asked to do too much—that the goals for which it was instituted could be better served by support of a more comprehensive national message and strategy for school reform. (If these elements are in fact to be found in the Future Commission report or some other document or policy, we have not come across them.) In particular, the message would communicate a vision of the effective or high-performing school, of dynamic professional learning communities, and of powerful leadership for learning. The strategy would generate pervasive dialogue about this message and leverage key points in the system to conform to the vision. We note, in this regard, the intent of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber to promote a shared vision and understanding of school leadership and responsibility for school performance. Even the process of formulating such a vision and strategy, engaging key elements of the education and policy systems in extensive consultation consistent with national traditions, could play a significant educative function as well as generate broad-based support for the outcome. A more explicitly framed and comprehensive national reform message and strategy would more effectively advance the work of the Leadership Academy and achieve the results intended for it.

## 6.7 Summary

The Austrian Leadership Academy is a bold and creative initiative that, in three years, has already reached approximately 40 per cent of the 3000 leaders for whom it was designed. We conclude that its future can be viewed in terms of sustainability, essentially:

- whether it can promote the depth of change necessary for the changing educational landscape of today and the future;

- whether its alumni will maintain an ongoing involvement with its ideals and practices and the extent of support needed for them to do so will be available;

- whether a critical mass of leaders, including key Ministry leaders, will be reached, ideas will be spread across regions and other leaders, including teacher leaders, can become engaged;

- whether the programme leaders can involve sufficient others of high quality to help build their capacity for delivery and facilitation of a very large and growing programme;

- whether the LEA is integrated into national leadership frameworks and with other related initiatives; and

- whether the necessary changes occur to system structures as part of a coherent national change strategy.

These are challenges that we believe any system considering such an innovative approach to leadership development will want to consider seriously.

**Box 3: Summary conclusions**

This report provides information and analysis on Austria's Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy (LEA) is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (now Education, Arts, and Culture) launched in 2004 to equip leaders in Austria's education system with the capacity to lead an emerging body of reform initiatives and help establish a new culture of proactive, entrepreneurial school leadership. The Leadership Academy was selected by the OECD Improving School Leadership activity as an innovative case study because of its system-wide approach to leadership development, emphasis on leadership for improved schooling outcomes, innovative programme contents and design, and its demonstrated potential to achieve effective outcomes. This report is part of a larger OECD activity, Improving School Leadership, designed to help member countries improve policy and practice related to school leadership.

Austria is undergoing social, economic, and political change because of and in response to global economic competition, membership in the EU, immigration and changing family structure, an aging population and growing social programme costs, among other reasons. The nation's strong, cohesive social structure and traditions provide stability but also hinder desirable change. Schools and the education system have been generally compliance-oriented, bureaucratic, and cumbersome. The national government has introduced a large agenda of school reform, and school leaders with new skills and initiative are needed to implement these reforms. The Leadership Academy responds to this need.

The Austrian Leadership Academy is an innovative and carefully crafted response to a need to prepare a large number of school leaders over a short period of time to fulfil their role effectively in an increasingly autonomous system. Blending content and process, it focuses on developing learning-centred leadership and an orientation to systems change through an approach that emphasises building personal capacity in a supportive learning community.

Positive outcomes of the LEA can already be seen. In three years, it has already reached approximately 40 per cent of the 3000 leaders for whom it was designed. There are a high proportion of leaders who have participated voluntarily; there is generally a high degree of engagement; it has had a positive impact on leadership practice; as well as producing some changes in the wider school system. Sustained impact, while not entirely clear at this point, shows signs of promise. Further research and evaluation should help to assess this.

Additionally, this study has identified some obstacles to the LEA reaching its full potential and some conditions that could enhance the likelihood of achieving the overall goals for education reform for which the LEA is one strategy:

-Ministry support and integration with other national initiatives on school leadership and school reform: High volume of participation of senior-level Ministry officials would have symbolic and substantive effect strengthening the LEA's message and impact, and could also help improve coordination between the LEA and other Ministry initiatives to improve education. Integrating the LEA and other national and provincial leadership and management training into a coherent framework (as well as coordinating with teacher training) would also pay dividends for all programmes.

-Institutionalisation of the LEA programme: Without compromising its current flexibility and innovative nature, consideration should be given to grounding the LEA on a firmer institutional base, so as to provide longer-term capacity for sustainability and growth.

-Structural change and national change management: Changes in education structure and processes could reinforce and extend the changes the LEA achieves through individual and culture change, as would a more coherent government agenda and message for education reform.

-Changes at key leverage points: More rigorous principal selection procedures, greater principal authority or influence in selecting and dismissing (and rewarding) teachers, and reducing the principal's administrative workload would have significant benefits for the quality of school leadership practice.

-Programme sustainability: the LEA's long-term effectiveness can be enhanced by continuing the programme and graduating increasing numbers of leaders, strengthening Ministry participation, improving the alumni and network follow-up experience, and taking steps to improve teacher professionalisation and distributed leadership.

**ANNEX 1: ISL INNOVATIVE CASE STUDY VISIT TO AUSTRIA, 15 – 19 APRIL 2007**

**Sunday, 15 April, Site Visit and Interviews in Alpbach**

19.30    Informal Dinner with team members and guests of the Academy
        *Mrs Maria Gruber-Redl, Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture*
        *Mr Wilfried Schley, IOS Hamburg*
        *Mr Michael Schratz, University of Innsbruck*
        *Mr Bernhard Weiser, University of Innsbruck*
        *Mr Paul Resinger, University of Innsbruck*
        *Mrs Katharina Barrios, IOS Hamburg*
        *Mr Eike Messow, Breuninger Stiftung*
        *Mr David Green, Director of the Centre for Evidence-Based Education  (CEBE),*
        *Princeton, New Jersey*
        *Mrs Eisele, Ministry of Education, Baden-Württemberg, Germany*

## Monday, 16 April, Site Visit and Interviews in Alpbach

08.30 – 10.30   Plenary Meeting: "5 Dimensions of Leadership for Learning"

10.30 – 11.00   Interview with a LEA participant (target group school head/primary school)
*Nora Hosp, school head, primary school, Innere Stadt, Innsbruck*

11.00 – 12.30   Plenary Meeting: Collegial Team Coaching (CTC) – Methods and Specification

12.30 – 14.00   Lunch

14.00 – 15.00   Collegial Team Coaching: observation of a selected coaching group

15.00 – 16.00   Interview with the Ministry´s project manager
*Mrs. Maria Gruber-Redl, Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture*
*(alternative: observation of a 2$^{nd}$ CTC-Group)*

16.00 – 17.00   Walk in the Alpine Surroundings *(alternative: Interview with the Ministry´s project manager)*

17.00 – 18.00   Interview with the LEA participant and dean of the University College of Education in Klagenfurt (target group Teacher Training Institution)
*Mrs. Marlies Krainz-Dürr, PH Klagenfurt*

18.00 – 19.00   Interview with a LEA participant (target group school inspectorate)
*Mr Wilhelm Prainsack, provincial school inspector, Klagenfurt Stadt*

19.00 – 20.00   Dinner with the scientific deans of the academy

20.00 – 21.00   Interview with the scientific deans of the academy
*Mr Wilfried Schley, IOS Hamburg*
*Mr Michael Schratz, Universitiy of Innsbruck*

**Tuesday, 17 April, 2007 Site Visit and Interviews in Alpbach / Journey to Vienna**

08.30 – 09.30   Interview with representatives of the **QIBB quality initiative in the Länder**

> *Mrs Judith Wessely, provincial school inspector for technical schools in Vienna, LEA alumna*
> *Mr Wilhelm König, provincial school inspector for technical schools in    Lower Austria, LEA participant*


09.30 - 10.30    Interview with scientific team members of LEA

> *Mr Bernhard Weiser, University Innsbruck*
> *Mr. Paul Resinger, University Innsbruck*


10.30 – 12.00   Interview with the regional coordinators of LEA in the Länder


12.00 – 13.00 Interview with officials of the Union of Public Services representing teachers/school heads

> *Mr. Walter Meixner, Chairman, Regional Directorate for teachers/school    heads    of general compulsory schools*
> *Mr. Wolfgang Muth, Chairman, Regional Directorate for teachers/school    heads    of academic secondary schools*

13.00 – 14.00   Lunch break

14:00 – 14.45   Interview with LEA alumnus (target group school head/VET schools)
          Mr. Jordan, school head, Vocational College

14:45 – 15.30   Interview with LEA alumnus (target group Teacher Training Institution;   school management programmes)
          Mr. Happ, In-service training institution Innsbruck


15:30    Travel to Vienna

20:35    Arrival of participants in Vienna (Wien Westbahnhof)

## Wednesday, 18 April, 2007, Vienna

08.30 – 11.30   School Visit at the academic secondary school GRG 21
"Bertha von Suttner" Schulschiff
Mrs Judith Kovacic, school head, LEA alumna who is realising an
innovative school based project and takes part in the midterm research
project on the effectiveness of LEA

Interviews with
> *school head and members of the teaching staff working on the LEA project*
> *parents*
> *representatives of the SGA*
> *the administrator*

12.00 – 13.00   Interview with Mrs Silvia Wiesinger, In-service training institution Vienna
Director, dep. of school management training and international   cooperations

13.00 – 14.30   Lunch "Zu ebner Erd und erster Stock"

14.45 – 15.30   Interview with LEA alumnus, representing the target group school head of
general secondary school / special needs school / pre-vocational school

15.30 – 16.30   Interview with LEA alumnus representing the target group Ministry and  members
of his staff
Mr Friedrich Faulhammer, Ministry for Science and Research
DG for higher education and University Teacher Training

16.30 – 18.30   Round Table "Regulatory Framework"

Mr Wolfgang Stelzmüller, Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
DG responsible for personnel, school management and legal affairs of   schooling     and
teaching, project owner LEA

Mr Friedrich Fröhlich, Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
Deputy DG for teaching staff

Mrs Maria Gruber-Redl, Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
Project Manager LEA and legal advisor to the DG

Mr Rainer Fankhauser, Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
Director, dep. for civil law and Federal school authorities

## Thursday, 19 April, 2007, Vienna

08.30 – 09.30  Visit of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and presentation of recent
involvements in educational policies, project "Leadership Award - School head of the year", event
"Entrepreneurship Education for Schools´ Innovations"

Mr Michael Landertshammer, Director, dep. of educational policy

10.00 – 12.00   Round Table "School management and policy related to school   improvement"

Mr Anton Dobart (opening), Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
DG responsible for broad education policy related to school improvement   and reform in general schooling; project owner QIS

Mr Josef Neumüller (moderation), Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
Director, dep. for international relations

Mr Edwin Radnitzky, Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
Deputy Director, dep. research, planning, quality development;   project manager QIS

Mrs Anneliese Ecker, Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
Deputy Director, dep. of vocational education and training and in-service teacher training

12.15 – 13.15   Interview with DG Theodor Siegl, Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
DG responsible for broad education policy related to school improvement and reform in vocational schooling; project owner QIBB

14.00 – 17.00   OECD Review team meeting to agree on report content and structure

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