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Transforming an Academy through the Enactment of Collective Curriculum Leadership

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Abstract

Although the transformation of relevant curriculum experiences for African American youth from impoverished backgrounds in large urban high schools offers many leadership challenges for faculty, few studies have focused on the roles of students and teachers in the creation of distributed leadership practices to build and sustain improved learning environments. Through ethnography we explore the leadership dynamics in one academy within a large urban high school whose students are mostly African American. Students in some classes had opportunities to participate in cogenerative dialogues and, in so doing, learned how to interact successfully with others, including their teachers and peers, and build collective agreements for future classroom roles and shared responsibility for their enactment. The study highlights the centrality of successful interactions among participants and the extent to which co-respect and co-responsibility for goals occur. Initially, a lack of trust within the community undermined tendencies to build solidarity throughout the community despite a commitment of the academy’s coordinator to be responsive to the goals of others, listen to colleagues and students, and strive for collective goals. We argue that all participants in a field need to take responsibility for accessing and appropriating structures to achieve positive emotional energy through collective curriculum leadership and climates that create and sustain educational accomplishments. Furthermore, we suggest that individual and collective actions should be studied dialectically in subsequent research on leadership dynamics in schools.

Key words: Curriculum Leadership, Agency, Solidarity, Emotional Energy, Urban Education
Introduction

The tensions on the third floor—the history was that the third floor housed two separate communities. Last year the principal asked that we combine them and take it over, and there was quite a bit of animosity. The faculty came together rather quickly and nicely, but then it became fractured again this year, and there were two people vying for the position for academy leader. (Assistant principal and former academy coordinator)

The ‘third floor’, the setting of our research at City High School, was a ‘split’ academy where there may have been faculty commitment to common goals, but loyalties and inclusion were divided between conflicting factions. Traditional, individual-centred approaches to leadership would attribute the task of building bridges between opposing factions of faculty to the academy coordinator. Bridge building here might include such transformational leadership practices as: building vision; establishing goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualised support; modelling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive culture; and developing structures to foster participation in decisions (Leithwood et al. 1999).

A common underpinning for definitions of leadership is the exercise of influence over others’ practices (Christie and Lingard 2001, Lingard et al. 2003, Seers et al. 2003), where a leader may be defined as ‘any person who influences individuals and groups within an organization, helps them in the establishment of goals, and guides them toward achievement of those goals, thereby allowing them to be effective’ (Nahavandi in Sather 1999: 512). Therefore, just as a teacher can be a leader if his or her practices encourage colleagues to improve educational practices, students might also be considered leaders if they create opportunities for peers and teachers to improve their practices.

Recent reviews of the educational leadership literature have identified tensions between transactional and transformational leadership approaches (e.g., Busher and Harris 2000, Christie and Lingard 2001, Hopkins 2003). In stable school contexts,
transactional leadership practices are likely to be employed by designated leaders to
manage school systems and structures. In contrast, transformational leadership is more
congruent with cultural change where the focus is on ‘the people involved, their
relationships’ and the transformation of ‘feelings, attitudes and beliefs’ (Hopkins 2003:
56). This implies a leadership style that empowers faculty, fosters collegiality and shapes
a shared vision (Busher and Harris 1999).

In contrast to individual-centred approaches to leadership, a distributed perspective
views leadership as complex, fluid and emergent; involving tasks and practices that are
stretched over personnel and other resources within a field or organization (Spillane et al.
2001, 2004). A field can be a spatial/temporal setting like a school or an academy that is
characterised by the enactment of particular culture (Swartz 1997). Distributed
leadership² is generated from the interactions and dynamics within a field because
leadership is not embodied in a designated leader (Harris 2003). However, decentring the
prominence of individual designated leaders does not diminish the significance of
organizational leadership roles. Designated leaders will continue to be responsible for
such important roles as vision building, creating networks and structures to support the
work of others, and negotiating boundaries (Lingard et al. 2003).

Even though urban schools face difficult times (Barton and Tobin 2001) there has
been a paucity of research devoted to understanding leadership practices in large urban
high schools (Spillane et al. 2004). This study was designed to explore leadership in
relation to the dynamics of everyday life within a ‘transforming’ academy—in which
science, engineering and mathematics were central components of the curriculum—of a
large urban high school. Accordingly, individual leadership roles were just as important
as the collective leadership that emerged through joint actions across fields within the
SEM academy. Before we describe our theoretical framework, the associated research
methodology and the leadership dynamics at the study site, we situate the construct of
collective leadership within the leadership literature.
Collective Leadership

In his seminal work on leadership, James MacGregor Burns (1978: 452) asserted: ‘Leadership is collective’. He argued that a symbiotic relationship develops and binds leaders and members (or followers3) within organizations to form a social and political collectivity and, more recently, Burns (1996: 1) wrote that there was ‘the existence of webs of collective leadership’. While we acknowledge the importance of individual actions within a collective like a school academy, we share Burns’ view that leadership is a relational construct that is not embodied in a single individual. Of course this premise underpins a suite of related leadership perspectives or constructs (e.g., democratic, distributed, dispersed, shared leadership), some even being used interchangeably (e.g., distributed and collective leadership—see Avolio et al. 2003). While some scholars have invested their energies into distinguishing between particular constructs at a theoretical level (e.g., Woods 2004), our purpose is to study the leadership practices within an actual academy. For this purpose, we draw on literature concerning various constructs, especially involving teams or units in functioning organizations (e.g., Pearce and Conger 2003). As we show later, individuals within the SEM academy occasionally took particular stances that may not have been democratic or where the designated leader chose not to distribute some tasks to colleagues within the academy, yet there always was a collective component to them. For this reason, the more inclusive construct of collective leadership was adopted and refined during the study.

Collective leadership can be defined tentatively as the process by which members of the group or team (or in our case, the SEM academy) create structures that afford the group accomplishing its goals (Avolio et al. 2003). This definition is based in part on generalised social exchange theory (Seers et al. 2003) first articulated by Lévi-Strauss (1969) and elaborated by Ekeh (1974). Essentially, ‘generalised social exchange describes an emergent pattern in which individuals exhibit group-directed behaviours that are reciprocated by other group members; . . . it is multilateral, indirect exchange in
which individual contributions are spread over time and across various group members’ (Seers et al. 2003: 85-86). For example, Teacher A might contribute to a curriculum unit being developed by Teacher B, not simply under the expectation that Teacher B would reciprocate but rather that all teachers would be prepared to contribute—where they have expertise and opportunity—to the development of particular curriculum units developed by Teacher A and improvement of school curricula more generally. Unsurprisingly, because generalised exchange contributions are made with the expectation that returns will be spread over time and across various group members, generalised exchanges build group solidarity (Seers et al. 2003).

Solidarity is a feeling of membership or belonging to a group of interlocutors, where ‘our sense of solidarity is strongest when those with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as “one of us”’ as opposed to ‘one of them’ (Rorty 1989: 191). Solidarity should be evident then in teams and organizations with well-established enacted collective leadership practices. Examples of generalised exchanges and solidarity (as well as contradictions) through social interactions between academy members were of particular interest to us in this study because they were assumed to be indicators or markers of enacted collective leadership. We argue through this article that solidarity among members of a team or organization and the salience of emotions in shaping the success of interactions (Collins 2004) are central to realising collective leadership.

Structure | Agency

Our research is grounded in dialectical theories of human practices, as these have been developed in cultural approaches to sociology and social psychology. Fundamental to cultural practices is the structure | agency dialectic, a theoretical framework that overcomes the dualism and reductionism characteristic of other approaches (Sewell 1992). The framework is dialectical, because agency and structure mutually presuppose one another: there is no agency without structure, and no structure without agency. As Musolf (2003: 10) argued, ‘to say that humans are both shaped and shapers means that
structure and agency construct each other,’ and more generally, ‘social life is a dialectical struggle between structure and agency’ (p. 8).

The term structure refers to the social arrangements, relations and practices that exert power and constraint over our lives. Structures exist in two, dialectically related (mutually presupposing) forms. First, there are the sociomaterial resources constituting the world we inhabit. Second, there are the schemas that allow humans to perceive and act in this world. The two forms of structures are dialectical, because without schemas, humans cannot perceive and act toward sociomaterial resources. But the sociomaterial resources are necessary for the schemas to emerge and evolve. The continued emergence and evolution of structures occurs in praxis.

Agency refers to social actions by individuals and groups that question, challenge, resist or oppose the ‘normality’ of the given order and their part in it (Osterkamp 1999). Our theoretical framework assumes that human activity is embedded in, and emerges through, social interaction. Each action reproduces and produces structures, which become resources for possible actions of participants in a field. Resources can provide opportunities that enable or restraints that hinder future actions. When the resources produced by an individual or group limit the actions of others, these may not be in the common interest; such resources might serve partial interests and prevent others from pursuing their goals. This leads to a phenomenon that can be characterised as ‘us versus them’. However, common interests are served when individuals assume collective responsibility for a group’s goals, when individuals use their agency toward the group’s goals, suppressing efforts to pursue individual goals that conflict with collective interests. This relationship between individual and collective is captured in the diction of ‘One for all, all for one’. That is, when they serve collective interests, individual actions can create the conditions for interaction chains to occur; such actions produce enabling resources not only for some but also for the collective as a whole. Agency then is collective as well as individual; as Sewell (1992: 21) noted, even personal agency is ‘laden with
collectively produced differences of power and implicated in collective struggles and resistances’.

Developmentally oriented organizations work on transcending private (individual, organization) interests toward the realisation of generalised, common interests (Holzkamp 1980). We are aware of at least two studies that have shown the transformative potential of generalisable actions to urban science education. When each teacher in a coteaching situation concretely realised collective responsibility, opportunities were created for new and seasoned teachers, administrators, supervisors, university-based methods teachers, and researchers to learn to teach (Roth et al. 2002). Similarly, when each teacher and all students in interactive conferences known as cogenerative dialogues assumed collective responsibility for the quality of classroom environments, solidarity was built between participants, the teacher gained greater understanding of teaching and the students developed skills associated with science fluency (LaVan and Beers in press). Cogenerative dialogues are theory-building conversations among participants about shared experiences for the purpose of changing praxis and are typically scheduled soon after particular lessons. Cogenerative dialogues usually include the teacher and two or three students who are as different from one another as possible to incorporate diverse perspectives (Tobin et al. 2003). The purpose of cogenerative dialogues is to ‘cogenerate’ collective resolutions in regard to issues such as outcomes, roles, resources, and rule structures. Accordingly, a cogenerative dialogue can provide opportunities for creating and enacting collective leadership (Fletcher and Käufer 2003). In this article, we extend this form of analysis to the study of leadership, and in the refinement of collective leadership in particular. Actions contribute to collective leadership when they lead to the occurrence of interaction chains, that is, when they serve a common interest rather than the partial interest of one group over another (students, teachers, administrators).
Research Design

Our study of leadership in that academy at City High School that has a science, engineering, and mathematics theme (SEM) is part of an ongoing critical ethnography (Lather 1986) of teaching and learning at City High School over the course of about eight years. City High School serves more than 2,000 students in a large urban district in the northeastern USA. We not only have access to an extensive data base that preceded our five-week intensive observation period, but also three of the four members of this research team have long-standing (three to eight year) histories of conducting research at the school from different vantage points. Our research practices were guided by the criteria of authenticity (Guba and Lincoln 1989). Accordingly, researchers should learn from the research, what is learned should be used to educate participants, research practices should catalyse positive changes within the fields of study, and researchers should assist participants to benefit from what is learned.

Participants and Data Sources

The intensive observation period occurred in the fall of 2003. A variety of qualitative research methods was used to create data for the study. Observations of classrooms and of interactions in other fields (e.g., faculty lounge) nested within SEM led to the construction of vignettes and personal narratives, including some written by Carambo (the recently appointed academy coordinator of SEM). Interviews with both experienced and inexperienced teachers were conducted. Focus group interviews, each with three to five students, were convened on several occasions to check the viability of developing research claims. The assistant principal and the SEM coordinator also were interviewed. These interviews were audiotaped or videotaped and the tapes were transcribed.

At City High School cogenerative dialogues have provided insights into teaching and learning (e.g., Tobin et al. 2003). Several cogenerative dialogues were observed during the study period; these were either audiotaped or videotaped. Some tapes were transcribed completely while only selected vignettes from other tapes were transcribed.
Data Interpretation

Interpretation of data occurred at meso and micro levels. At the mesolevel participants experience time as it is lived, without manipulation. Studies of the mesolevel usually are undertaken through participant observation and incorporate standard ethnographic techniques such as interview, field notes and reflective journals (Elmesky 2003). At the mesolevel researchers reviewed data resources individually and collectively, identifying patterns and articulating assertions. We examined and re-examined the data sources in relation to these assertions, seeking patterns and associated contradictions. As interpretations unfolded we involved students and teachers in the process of member checking. We did not set out to triangulate different perspectives of the same events, however, because we expected participants to have different views of the events. In other words, based on our theoretical framework, we expected thin coherence and contradictions to be the norm and emerging patterns of strong coherence would need explanation.

Collins (2000: 18) argued that microsituational encounters are ‘the ground zero of all social action and all sociological evidence’. To complement our mesoanalysis we conducted microanalysis of several videotaped recordings of social interactions within SEM. In particular, salient videotaped segments were identified, digitised and analysed frame by frame, allowing us to identify patterns and associated contradictions as resources were accessed and appropriated during interactions.

A key resource used in the writing of this article was a videotape of a planning meeting between Carambo (academy coordinator) and Mr. Bryant (a beginning teacher of engineering classes, hereafter referred to as Bryant—pseudonyms are used for faculty and students other than Carambo who is a co-author), which followed a whole-class cogenerative dialogue in which both were involved. The tape of the meeting was selected for microanalysis because we wanted to study the interactions between Carambo and Bryant and to explore whether and how collective understandings and resolutions were
negotiated. Carambo successfully interacted regularly with Bryant in the planning of and negotiations over the development of the curriculum for a new set of courses in engineering. This was not only a significant and authentic task for SEM, but the meetings were essential for the teacher’s professional development and his students’ learning outcomes.

Analyses involved frame-by-frame investigations (i.e., intervals of 0.03 seconds) of several video clips. First, the entire videotape was viewed at varying speeds to search for patterns and contradictions in the actors’ speech and gestures. Then two clips were selected for discussion because collectively they revealed a variety of patterns relevant to the constructs of solidarity and emotional energy, which we associated with an emerging collective form of leadership. Each clip featured up to about 50 seconds of interactions. The identification of discernible patterns and contradictions necessitated intensive re-viewing of the clips as we documented the fine detail (e.g., eye contact and movement and synchronised body movement) that occurred during interactions. In attending to such detailed observations we assume that body movements (e.g., head, eyes, hands), voice inflections, emotional displays, and so on provide resources for the actions of others. Enriched interpretations of these detailed notes and the video clips were obtained from discussions with researchers from a larger research group involved in different but related research projects.

Overview

The leadership dynamics across SEM were observed during interactions between the major stakeholders (i.e., students, academy coordinator, and teachers) in fields that included lessons, cogenerative dialogues, and faculty meetings. These observations were supplemented by interview data and narrative accounts. The results are presented in three sections. The first section focuses on collective leadership within Bryant’s class, where students begin to demonstrate collective responsibility for enacted structures. Through their respectful interactions with Bryant the class, as a collective entity, was able to
agree on a set of actions that produced resources enabling a more productive learning environment for all participants. But these structures were not enacted successfully and it took intervening action from Carambo to mediate possible new structures to expand the agency, hence possibilities for action, of Bryant and his students. In this instance Bryant and his students did not have the resources needed to enact the collective agreements they had reached in cogenerative dialogues. The coordinator, with his significant experience and status provided additional resources that enabled Bryant and his students to enact roles that more closely fit with their collective agreements.

In the second section we show how Carambo and Bryant enacted collective leadership by jointly creating structures that might improve student learning in Bryant’s class. These detailed analyses reveal patterns indicative of successful interactions between Carambo and Bryant, co-respect, and the processes associated with an experienced teacher creating an environment in which a new teacher could learn about the interconnections between the classroom and home. In the third section we highlight how Carambo interacted as an academy coordinator to build solidarity among the faculty and students.

**Collective Leadership in the Classroom**

Little attention has been paid to student leadership in the literature (Lingard et al. 2003). Success in improving school climate appears to occur when students are treated with respect, when their leadership potential is recognised, and when they are involved as co-participants (Sather 1999). In this section we highlight the emergent participation that students in SEM played in concretely realising collective leadership. We begin by describing a classroom vignette written immediately following a lesson on bridge building with mostly tenth grade engineering students. This vignette is then discussed in terms of mutual respect and the individual and collective actions of participants to create structures to enhance the learning environment for all.
Vignette—Respect is a two-way thing

‘Is that a mind map?’ Raphael interrupted the Engineering 1 class pointing to the inscriptions on the sidewall chalkboard.

Bryant, the engineering teacher, was outlining the next student task. The task was planned as a vocabulary exercise where students were asked to construct a mind map of at least five bridge building concepts listed on a chart on the back wall (e.g., tension, compression, bending, shear, force).

Bryant did not answer but fielded other student questions and comments. Inattention to a question can be understood as ignoring the student. Raphael remarked, ‘All I want to know, is that a mind map’? Jennifer, sitting directly behind Raphael, assures him that it was indeed a mind map, but Raphael interrupts again: ‘Mr. Bryant, is that a mind map’? This time Bryant responded, ‘What do you think’? Raphael’s broad smile, raised shoulders and inflection suggested mounting frustration as he responded, ‘Well that’s why I’m asking you’. The noise level increases and several students competed for Bryant’s attention as others initiated student-student conversations.

Bryant began copying student names onto a sheet of paper attached to his clipboard as he announced that the students needed to show greater respect for the speaker. Bryant normally used this practice to list rule breakers for punitive measures and dissuade other students from breaking the rules. In an exasperated tone, Jennifer demanded attention: ‘I need to say something here’! Without pausing to gasp for breath, she continued, ‘I agree that we need to pay each other more respect, but it is a two-way thing. You are the teacher, Mr. Bryant, but you also need to show us some respect. You need to answer our questions’. Bryant replied, ‘Okay. I’m trying to do that, but we all can’t talk at once’.

Raphael requested, ‘Can I say something’? Bryant handed Raphael the chalkboard triangle as a token denoting a legitimate turn at talk. Raphael continued, ‘All I wanted to know, Mr. Bryant, was that a mind map? A simple yes or no. You didn’t answer me. I apologise if I didn’t show respect but you could show me respect by answering my
question’. As several students raised their hands to request the triangle to voice their concerns, this whole-class discussion took on the characteristics of a cogenerative dialogue. Five consecutive speakers each expressed disappointment with the unfair structure of recording names of students without an opportunity to check and challenge the listing. Jennifer added, ‘And if you are not going to answer Raphael’s question, it’s not cool to write my name down when I’m helping him. We should be helping each other learn’.

After all students had the opportunity to express their concerns, Bryant acknowledged the students’ concerns as valid criticisms in a brief concession, followed by a statement to inform the class that they would now have to hold over their visit to the computer lab to try out the graphing exercise undertaken in the first segment of the lesson. These comments slid easily into what had become the final segment of the lesson where volunteer students reported to the whole class on the progress of their mind mapping exercise.

**Earning and Showing Respect**

This vignette might be interpreted in terms of disruption to an engineering class and failed attempts of a novice teacher to impose order. However, these students actively contributed to the renegotiation of rules for a productive classroom climate not evident earlier in the lesson. Successive interactions built on one another and participants showed one another respect by listening, commenting on what was said previously, and not interrupting through verbal or non-verbal actions. What Bryant said and how he said it permitted students to speak their minds. Then, during chains of interactions, students used one another’s comments as resources for building arguments. These positive actions possibly minimised the expression of energy draining emotions (i.e., negative emotional energy) that might have been fuelled by disagreements and the use of other asynchronous actions. Accordingly, there was synchrony in the actions of participants in that one
speaker spoke at a time and all others listened attentively. Notably, sufficient time was provided for this conversation to unfold even though instructional time was truncated.

Respect is the most important currency in the street code of the African American students who attended City High School (Anderson 1999). However, respect is a symmetrical code; it needs to be apparent in the actions of all participants. In their actions, Raphael and Jennifer both articulated their expectation that the teacher would show them respect and Bryant did so through a series of synchronous actions that provided structures for additional contributions from students. Once Bryant opened up the lesson to discussion of classroom structures we did not observe any instances of asynchrony, nor did we sense a build up of negative emotional energy.

Speaking out against injustice in this way not only engaged Bryant, but also it was a practice that earned the respect of peers. Here, Bryant’s willingness to engage with students opened up new opportunities for action, which, in the present instance, allowed other students to contribute to the conversation. The apparent solidarity among students and the persuasiveness of their argument, allowed Bryant to reflect and then acknowledge the existence of a problem. Bryant tried to explain why he had not immediately responded to the student’s question. This explanation was heard as taking a conciliatory stance, which earned respect from the students and an apology from Raphael who further asserted his position.

Jennifer and Raphael’s actions became resources for the agency of others. Students were aware of this reflexive nature of their own action. For example, Raphael commented:

If we have a group conversation with the whole classroom. . . . It’s kind of hard for only one person to be talkin’ because as soon as somebody hear something they like somebody’s goin’ to comment. So then everybody goin’ to comment. . . . Everybody’s got something to say. Because if you hear something you don’t like or if you do like something you heard then they’s goin’ to comment because it’s a debate. (Interview)\(^8\)
This ‘debate’ interrupted the lesson while new roles were cogenerated. Bryant agreed to desist from recording students’ names and several students eventually voiced their concerns, making the original complaint more compelling.

Leadership was evident at two levels. On the one hand, Bryant showed leadership by providing opportunities for students to participate in the concrete realisation of collective responsibility. On the other hand, the students showed leadership not only by speaking out, but also by doing so in a respectful manner that acknowledged the centrality of community goals and the co-responsibility for cogenerated resolutions.

Although the research in Bryant’s class was promising, similar changes were not apparent yet throughout SEM. Carambo noted ‘these events were possible with Bryant because he had already bought into all of the philosophical/pedagogical underpinnings of this type of teacher/student interaction. I had no such success with any other teacher.’

This perspective was supported by the following comment from one of the science teachers from SEM: ‘What I noticed is that most of his cogenerative dialogues were only with the new teachers. In order to get more support and acceptance on the third floor he needs to talk to experienced teachers on the third floor, accept and accommodate their suggestions, and show them by action (not verbally) that he cares about their suggestions. Just like students, teachers also want respect from their administrators.’ Hence, Carambo had an impact in Bryant’s class because he took the steps to create a sense of collective, showing respect for the voices of teacher and student. However, with the more senior teachers he did not create similar networks within their classes and the patterns of solidarity did not extend across the entire academy. As Carambo gained more confidence in his new role as SEM coordinator, we later found out that he began developing such networks with the other teachers.

Continued Contradictions

Even within Bryant’s class, all was not rosy. Continued use of cogenerative dialogues without addressing students’ concerns might reinforce their perceptions that Bryant—
despite his dedication and commitment—is a ‘pushover’ who does not deserve their respect. A significant caveat in the use of cogenerative dialogues is the danger of providing forums for students to negotiate structures and then failing to enact agreed-upon changes.

So, we have like open discussions about the class and stuff and what we need to change to make it run smoother and make us like it more . . . but it doesn’t change that much.
(Suzie, Engineering 2 student)

He’s trying. We have meetings like ‘what’s goin’ on, but nothin’s being accomplished.
(Raphael)

Overuse of cogenerative dialogues by novice teachers, especially when experienced teachers do not use this practice, might also signal ‘inexperience’ to students thereby reinforcing the image of teacher as pushover. This might reduce further the chance for students to develop respect for their teacher.

The students were forgiving and they appreciated that their teacher was inexperienced and had limited resources to create and sustain a more engaging curriculum. But there was a general view expressed that little change would result from further open discussion with Bryant. Accordingly, a group of students approached Carambo to include him in the discussions. In cases where a teacher and students could not resolve conflicts within the classroom, Carambo organized cogenerative dialoguing sessions that also involved him. His presence mediated these sessions, because the original confrontation of two parties (teacher, student) characterised by partial interests could now be recognised as such. The mediated dialogue provided participants with opportunities to articulate their collective, common interests and to establish plans for change. Should such intervention become a routine in Bryant’s class, however, students could become less respectful. This would weaken cogenerative dialogue as an opportunity for the enactment of collective leadership.
Collective Leadership in / on / from a Planning Meeting

Successful interactions are associated with positive emotional energy, which manifests itself in feelings of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action (Collins 2004). Emotional energy results from the participants’ mutual focus on their common activity, entrainment of emotion and attention, and the presence of solidarity or a feeling of membership. During successful interactions participants synchronise their gestures, and speech patterns and voice features become rhythmically aligned as if a metronome guided the rhythm of conversation. ‘At peak moments the pattern tends to be jointly shared among all participants: in high solidarity moments, bodies touch, eyes are aligned in the same direction, movements are rhythmically synchronised’ (Collins 2004: 135). Typically, successful interactions are likely to involve the coordination of synchronous embodied and verbal action. Yet it is also possible to recognise positive synchronous moments in either embodied or verbal actions. This might occur, for example, in a lecture where the speech and aligned body animation (e.g., hand motion) of the lecturer elicits synchronous nods of approval or applause from the students. In contrast, failed interactions (e.g., a planned student debate that fell flat) and forced rituals (e.g., early morning advisory classes) are not sources of positive emotional energy and can be energy draining (i.e., sources of negative emotional energy). At these moments ‘bodies turn away from each other, heads turn downward or inward toward one’s body, eyes look down or away’ (Collins 2004: 135).

In successful interactions between Carambo and some teachers, the emergence of solidarity was noticeable at both meso and micro levels, in speech patterns, gestures and body movements. With other teachers, especially senior teachers from the previously independent charters⁹ that merged to form SEM, there was discernible evidence of asynchronous interactions and associated negative emotional energy. Carambo endeavoured to minimise the incidence and duration of such interactions and so too did the teachers. Furthermore, Carambo and the assistant principal made it clear that teachers
who did not want to remain in SEM and did not share its philosophy should consider relocating within the school or to another school. Hence, there was a tendency to avoid confrontation along philosophical lines and to regard disagreements between faculty as best resolved by transfer. This suggests that previous failed or forced interactions, even in cogenerrative dialogues, may limit the realisation of collective leadership in affected teams, classes, academies or schools. Fortunately, as teachers transferred out of SEM teachers who, like Bryant, shared a commitment to collective leadership and classroom practices like cogenerrative dialogues replaced them.

In this section we focus on interactions between Bryant and Carambo in an endeavour to understand whether and how their interactions contributed to collective leadership. Collins (2004) identified four main structures or initiating conditions for successful interactions: bodily presence between the speakers, a boundary shielding of outsiders, mutual focus on an artefact like a document, and shared emotional experience. These structures feed back on each other, especially as the participants become more tightly focused. According to Collins, the key process in the evolution of solidarity is shared positive emotional experience.

Analyses of the video clips demonstrated how resources for the emergence of solidarity were produced in interactions between Bryant and Carambo. By drawing on his observations of the successful practices of a colleague (i.e., Ms. Campeze) in SEM as a possible resource for action, Carambo and Bryant cogenerated structures or plans for action intended to serve the expressed interests of Bryant’s students. If other faculty could access these structures it would be possible for solidarity to build among SEM teachers and students, that is, for generalising collective leadership across SEM.

For the reader’s convenience we select just one video vignette (in two extracts) for discussion. This is situated in Bryant’s classroom, with Carambo and Bryant seated adjacent to each other at the corner of a table (figure 1). Bryant was to the left of Carambo who positioned himself to have eye contact with Bryant. Each teacher had a
notebook in front of him and there was a two-page document between them that listed suggestions offered by the class during a recent cogenerative dialogue session in which they participated. The meeting between Carambo and Bryant was conducted after school hours at about 3.45 P.M. and both participants had missed lunch, and admitted to feeling weary.

Vignette—Accessing resources from the collective

Socially cohesive communities ‘where members all work collaboratively with a high degree of commitment toward department goals’ (Siskin 1994: 99) are ‘bonded’ departments or academies. When teachers work together for the benefit of the collective in bonded academies they are able to access resources, individually and collectively, that are shared between faculty during professional discussions and collegial observations (Ritchie and Rigano 2003). Even though SEM started as a split academy, Carambo’s discourse below is a sign of a tangible shift towards sharing resources in the collective interests of SEM. Immediately prior to the first extract below, we had observed synchrony of gestures and rhythmic turn taking between Carambo and Bryant during their conversation about observed practices of another teacher (Ms. Campeze10) who regularly telephoned parents about her students’ progress. We later observed Campeze’s practice ourselves in the faculty lounge. Because Carambo is the only speaker during the first extract (Column 2), the significant actions of both teachers, as observed from the videotape, are reported in parentheses, and line numbers (rather than turns) are listed in Column 1 for reference purposes.

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Action (Utterance and Gestures)</th>
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<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>(Both teachers are resting their chins on their left hands. They hold mutual focus on the document for 1.6s when Carambo sits upright with hands in lap and Bryant lifts his gaze to make contact with Carambo, a movement completed at 3s) You know what is amazing about this? It’s Peezie11. I learn from Peezie. I learn from Peezie about calling parents. She calls parents constantly. (Carambo’s left open hand is moved in a gentle chopping motion before sliding backward and forward across the</td>
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</table>
And what she’ll do. The prep. Just the prep. When you get the prep. (Bryant
looks away and begins annotating his notebook at 16s) She’ll leave her classroom
and she’ll go on the phone. And in 15 minutes she can call seven to eight parents just
to say. #I watch her#. (Carambo continues to slide fingers of left hand back and forth
six times up to 34s) She says: ‘So and so was in class and you know, they were great
today. You know we did this’, and then she would chuckle, chuckle ‘that’s 5
minutes’. Seven times five, that’s 35 minutes. That’s a third of her class. And the
ripple effect is extraordinary (Carambo makes a broad sweeping motion with his
left hand on ‘ripple effect’ at 36s before the left hand collapses to the table. Bryant
begins to nod 0.5s after the collapse and nods again as Carambo raises his left hand
at 37s). And when the parents come in they say: ‘Oh yeah, you’re the one who called
me. I remember you’. (Carambo reaches out to touch Roger’s left forearm for 0.2s at
39s) So, I think calling them is the most important thing. (Bryant nods and turns
away to make another annotation at 43s) And just to call them just to say: ‘Hey, I’m
Mr. Bryant. I’m your son’s you know ‘it was a nice time in class and’ something
like that.

Throughout the entire 54 second clip Bryant did not speak. It can still be taken as a
successful interaction because there was synchrony of gestures between Bryant and
Carambo, leading to a positive emotional outcome for both. Carambo’s remarks were
accompanied by varied gestures used for emphasis. For example, he swept his left arm in
front of him and parallel to the desk to illustrate the ‘ripple effect’ (line 13) of building
rapport with both parents and students through regular contacts with parents12. Bryant
accepted Carambo’s suggestions (delivered as an emphatic monologue) by adopting the
role of learner—attending to what was said and recording key points, which in turn
seemed to reinforce Carambo’s positional role as the coordinator of the academy in this
meeting. That is, the actions of both produced ‘a lecture’. Evidence of Bryant’s
attentiveness includes holding eye contact, and nodding in synchrony with Carambo’s left
hand sliding action, when Carambo touched his forearm (line 18), and Carambo’s
repeated left hand up and down action in lines 19 and 20.

By drawing on Campeze’s practices and acknowledging that he learned from her (line
4), Carambo positioned himself as a learner with respect to his colleague. This seemed to
be salient to Bryant because in lines 7 and 8 he looked away to make an annotation in his
notebook.
Through the combination of his body posturing (e.g., line 02), dramatic gestures, and metrical speech throughout the meeting, Carambo exuded confidence and positive energy despite feeling weary and even uneasy. Carambo’s positively charged emotional energy through his gestures and facial expressions (e.g., holding his smile after laughing through ‘because’ in the second extract below in turn 33) were matched not only with his speech patterns, but also the content of his discourse; that is, throughout turn 33, he emphasised the use of positive comments to parents rather than making any negative calls because these used up too much energy. In a follow up interview, Bryant unsurprisingly confirmed that this meeting with Carambo resulted in a positive emotional experience for him: ‘Good, it was reassuring’. As Collins (2004: 126) observed:

Frequently, the positive emotions (joy, enthusiasm, humor) are generated by a group leader, an individual who takes the focus, who is able to propagate such a mood from his or her own stores of emotional energy. This individual thus serves very much like an electric battery for group emotional expressiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Carambo: (Carambo sits up abruptly as he moves his left hand towards his chest.)</td>
<td>I don’t know how to do this because I would feel odd if someone were telling me... additional things to do. What I think is that this is one thing you might try to consider feeding into. (Carambo’s open palm makes contact with his chest on “this”. Bryant lifts eyes and Carambo motions his left hand in three small circles.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Bryant: Uh... yeah. I think. I agree. It is important that I take it as. It only supports yourself. It gets more people involved outside, outside influences on the students. (As Bryant makes several right hand rotations, Carambo nods in time)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Carambo: (Carambo shakes his head, makes a sweeping arc with his outstretched left arm and sits upright) #Even, even# if you don’t make a negative one, negative ones. Because the negative ones take up too much energy. So leave the negative ones during the day. (Bryant holds eye contact and nods three times.) Don’t even make them the negative ones. Just say I’m goin’ to call these five parents today and tell them I like these kids... And Peezie says the best thing is when she gets the machine. (Sitting upright with hands in lap, Carambo rocks gently from side to side and laughs through the second syllable of “because” and holds the smile.) Because she says=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Bryant: =You don’t have to tell them=</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Carambo: You can just leave it on the machine. She can just leave a message on the machine. So—

Bryant: Yeah.

This extract shows dialogical interactions between Bryant and Carambo, that is, it exhibits those utterances that invoke the text of another speaker who in turn had grounded the conversation in another speaker’s utterances (Wertsch and Toma 1995). Such utterances provide resources for the other to consider and build upon for subsequent use in the collective production of discourse. The pairs of turns (i.e., 31 and 32; 33 and 34) provide a sense of emerging solidarity between Carambo and Bryant. In turn 32, Bryant agreed with Carambo’s suggestion (turn 31) and built on the content dialogically by predicting how his application of Campeze’s practice might affect his rapport with students when parental resources are accessed. Again in turn 34, Bryant completed Carambo’s unfinished sentence from the previous turn that was acknowledged in the next turn by Carambo (turn 35) as the intended message of turn 33.

While Carambo engaged successfully with Bryant in conversations about the curriculum, it was a concern for Carambo that he had not found other faculty initiating such conversations: ‘People don’t talk about the curriculum. They don’t talk about it, everybody doing their own teaching’. Yet following on from his positive meetings with Bryant, Carambo indicated the possibility for similar conversations with several other teachers within SEM, especially with a mathematics teacher: ‘I will speak to him because his class is too, what’s the word, it’s too loose. It’s not structured enough, it needs to move and I think because he is new, and he is a nice man, we can talk about that’. This demonstrates the reciprocal benefits of realising solidarity between faculty within the academy; Bryant came away from the meeting with a new strategy to try to build rapport with students and Carambo emerged with enthusiasm to engage in similar meetings with other faculty. These successful interactions then produced schemas with the potential to frame the actions of other teachers in the service of the collective interests of the SEM
Collective Curriculum Leadership 24

academy. In the next section, we explore the extent to which solidarity emerged from successful interaction chains among students and teachers within SEM.

**Collective Leadership within the Academy**

Within the SEM academy cogenerative dialogues have built up student expectations for continued opportunities to contribute to the shaping and re-shaping of agency and structure. As well, Carambo and the assistant principal reinforced student expectations by encouraging students to voice concerns purposefully, publicly, and respectfully wherever problems arose.

I think when we [current assistant principal and Carambo] first came up to this floor, kids were very strident. And their mode of expressing discomfort and disrespect or lack of challenge or whatever was to act out. And so it was very strident and very discordant on this floor as a rule. . . . We give kids the ability to say ‘this is what is happening’, ‘I was wrong’ or ‘you were wrong’ or ‘let’s work this out’. . . . That’s what we do. We always tell kids over and over again and we just hammer that into kids, ‘This is your education, this is your school’. (Carambo—Interview)

At the time of the intensive observation phase of our study, the coordinator of SEM in collaboration with the assistant principal was in the second year of encouraging students to do their part in assuming collective responsibility for the learning environment.

According to Carambo, the work of encouraging students has paid off in making the climate on the third floor more amenable to learning.

People will often come up here and say, ‘What happened here’? Because when I was in the basement I would not come to this floor. . . . This place was just creepy. There was screaming and the kids were not nice and I just didn’t want to come up here. I really think we were brought up here because we do this thing, we make things civil. (Interview)

We have already discussed how students in SEM have shown greater preparedness to assume collective responsibility for classroom structures. Furthermore, from the previous section (i.e., turns 32–36 in the preceding vignette) we illustrated how Carambo and Bryant engaged in collective action to articulate strategies as potential resources for
Bryant’s future actions in his engineering classes. Joint or collective action is a spontaneous, unselfconscious, unknowing (although not unknowledgeable) kind of activity, the outcomes of which are structured in such a way that the restraints and affordances they make available ‘influence, that is to say, “invite or inhibit”, people’s next possible actions’ (Shotter 1993: 47). In this section, we focus on the extent to which these examples of collective action (and leadership) spread across the academy; that is, how other teachers engaged in collective action to construct new structures.

For SEM structures to be outcomes from collective activity, it was necessary for someone initially, in this case Carambo, to take personal action for the benefit of the collective, to create a space where SEM faculty could share ideas and construct new procedures that might improve conditions for the collective. As argued by Burns (1996) and Avolio et al. (2003), transformational leadership can occur at both the individual and collective levels. While the individual has been the focus of traditional leadership discourses, teams also can act jointly for concern of others. ‘Specifically, team members can collectively exhibit concern for each member’s needs and development’ (Avolio et al. 2003: 145). A collective leadership perspective then does not necessarily exclude individual action. This means individuals can and should take transformational stances when required for the benefit of the collective. But this should be possible only when ideas and visions are first shared so that better outcomes for the collective can be achieved. It should be remembered that SEM was a split academy at the start of our observation period where individual teachers were ‘asocial’ in that they competed for rather than shared scarce resources. As one teacher explained:

Carambo’s connections with the vice principal created a mixed feeling among the teachers. Since he was working with the vice principal downstairs and came to the third floor with her and became the coordinator when she became vice principal, teachers had a feeling that whatever happens on the third floor goes directly to the principal’s office. This created a lack of sincerity among the teachers on the third floor, on the surface every thing looked calm but teachers didn’t communicate with each other as before, teachers
shared their ideas only to those teachers whom they trusted (creation of isolated groups of three or four teachers). This was not a healthy situation, but was advantageous for Carambo. Because of the lack of communication among teachers, they accepted changes such as restructuring of the chem lab without their input.

Through their developing collective leadership realised during faculty meetings, SEM faculty gradually became ‘allies in the possibility of overcoming common restrictions’ (Osterkamp 1999: 390).

The following vignette describes several noteworthy interactions involving SEM faculty that raise the possibility of teachers sharing their visions for a relevant school curriculum and building bridges for a bonded academy.

Vignette – The first faculty meeting in the rejuvenated lounge

At the beginning of the observation period at City High it appeared that SEM teachers remained in their own classrooms during lunch breaks and preparation periods. Faculty did not have access to a shared common space (e.g., faculty lounge) where they could meet to share ideas and teaching resources or to gather socially to celebrate personal achievements and milestones. Carambo too, as acting SEM coordinator, had been working out of his own classroom for administrative duties like chasing up late students, assisting substitute teachers to locate rooms and resources, dealing with students who had been sent to him by teachers for breaches of discipline codes, and tutoring students who had missed work.

Carambo also had expressed concern that there were few opportunities to discuss curriculum issues with fellow teachers and it was difficult to excite faculty about new projects in one-on-one conversations. Following one brief conversation where we discussed the possible advantages of creating a faculty-lounge, Carambo spent an entire weekend cleaning out a disused room with an adjacent office (occupied previously by the former coordinator) for the purpose of using this space as the faculty lounge. In the following week the rejuvenated room contained three dining room tables with chairs, two
old but comfortable couches, a microwave oven, bookcases and a desk with telephone. A week later, there was a room ionizer and a pot plant with lamp. Teachers began dropping in for lunch and students arrived at all times, sometimes accompanied by professional support staff (e.g., social worker).

The first SEM faculty meeting was held in the rejuvenated faculty lounge. The meeting began with Carambo announcing that his appointment as SEM coordinator was now official. The news was greeted warmly as the faculty applauded spontaneously. After teachers were invited to identify concerns for discussion, one teacher requested fine-tuning procedures for photocopying, and another teacher suggested setting up a roster chart for booking the computer rooms. These two proposals led Carambo to suggest that a photocopy machine be located in the faculty lounge and the computer room roster could be set up as a wall chart in the same room. His comment, ‘Would it be great to make this room ours to hang out?’ evoked synchronous actions such as head nods and affirmative comments from faculty—signs of the emergence of solidarity and positive emotional energy. And so, like a wildfire, suggestions about access and supervision led to agreement as to how the room should be used and the need for twelve keys to be cut, one for each SEM teacher.

To bring several suggestions to a close, Carambo summarised joint decisions in point form before making a request. ‘May I ask you a favour?’ he started. Teachers now were asked to provide substantive work to be done during absences so that substitute teachers could keep students gainfully employed. After refining the procedures for this practice through several suggestions from teachers, Carambo linked the practice to lesson planning more generally—a concern of the assistant principal. As if on cue, the assistant principal bustled through the door, and apologised for not attending the entire meeting. Without inviting comments or suggestions, she asked for help in getting classes started on time, even if it meant leaving home fifteen minutes earlier. She noted that some teachers had been arriving as late as 8.15 A.M. and this practice had led to a flow-on effect with
students and discipline throughout the school. She concluded with the statement: ‘We all have to run this school’. At about that time, the noise levels in the halls were increasing as students began arriving for class. Without a formal closure to the meeting, teachers began standing in readiness to greet their students—there seemed to be recognition between the teachers that the meeting was over and they had work to do.

**Towards a Collective Leadership for Transforming SEM**

Carambo fulfilled his organizational leadership role by taking up the suggestion to create a common space where teachers could share ideas for teaching and learning. This suggestion was enacted because Carambo believed that change was required and this might be a visible sign to all, that change was possible. In Carambo’s words:

> My ulterior motivation for getting a simple thing like the rooms cleaned and accommodated is to convince people that change can be accomplished in small increments. Fixing the room will go a long way towards cementing us (I hope) as a group. There is much solidarity to be gained when people feel that their basic needs are being met. (Personal Narrative)

After presenting the preliminary findings of this project to the larger research group, one of the members of the research group and a teacher in SEM confirmed that teachers were now using the faculty lounge more regularly as a venue for lunch and informal discussions about curriculum issues. The teacher later supported these comments with an email message, consistent with our observations that change was taking hold in SEM. She wrote:

> In your presentation you talked about the tension on the third floor, which were absolutely right but I think the tension is slowly fading away. Since the uncertainty factor is gone (who is going to be our next coordinator), teachers are once again discussing teaching practices and problems. On last Thursday (11/6/03) I mentioned to Carambo some new practices which I am going to implement in my classroom. This is something which I always did with [a former coordinator of SEM] (I taught in his programme for seven years). Surprisingly I never had these types of conversation with my previous coordinator.
Carambo did not blame students for the problems teachers were experiencing in SEM. Because discussions between faculty about the curriculum were not common place, the curriculum appeared to lack coherence and faculty did not enact a shared vision through the curriculum. Carambo expressed his vision for SEM in the following way.

The problem here is not the kids; the problem here is the curriculum. It is not right. Even though I am against scope and sequence, now, I am going a little towards it, just because it’s too flimsy, it’s sort of all over the place. That is the first thing I want to see, a good tight curriculum.

Rather than contemplating radical and abrupt changes to the curriculum, Carambo proposed gradual but observable changes over the course of the next year at SEM, as indicated by the following extract from his narrative.

Most of my intentions are toward the building of rapport and solidarity. That has always been my modus operandi as teacher / person / and now, semi administrator. Little by little I will allay fears of territory, respect, trust, to build a more collegial sense of community. . . . My work re curriculum will begin with the mathematics teacher. That is our worst problem as the eleventh grade class is the class whose test scores will determine the viability of our school\textsuperscript{14}. The curriculum issues all centre on the eleventh-grade classroom.

The most pressing curricular concern for Carambo was to improve student performance on the State standardized tests. Targeting changes in the eleventh-grade mathematics curriculum was a tangible way to address this issue. There were two ways that Carambo had planned to deal with the problems in the mathematics class. First, he had arranged for another mathematics teacher to collaborate with him and the teacher on ‘tightening up’ the curriculum and improving lesson planning and implementation. Second, Carambo had planned to convene a series of cogenerative dialogue meetings with this class, just as he had done with Bryant. By combining these two strategies, Carambo would be seen by faculty not only to enact responsibility for classroom learning and student discipline across the field, but also to share responsibility for improving the
curriculum in SEM. In this case, he would share responsibility for the curriculum with the two mathematics teachers and the students—a tangible shift towards a collective leadership in SEM. In the case of developing the new engineering curriculum, Carambo had already demonstrated his commitment to sharing responsibility with Bryant, students and engineering professors at nearby universities. It appears then that all stakeholders in SEM need to have the resources to enact responsibility for curriculum issues through sharing and implementing ideas and strategies designed to improve teaching and learning. Creating a shared space in the form of a faculty lounge was a first step. Collegial visitations to classrooms, cogenerative dialogues and other curriculum planning meetings are other strategies likely to build solidarity and improve student learning outcomes—a gradual evolution toward collective leadership.

An Individual | Collective Leadership Dialectic

In the first vignette (i.e., ‘Respect is a two-way thing’), Jennifer exalted that ‘we should be helping each other learn’ and protested the unjust structures in place within the class that constrained learning. She articulated responsibility not only for her peers’ learning but the structures in place. Her expressed agency led to the renegotiation of classroom structures. Teachers like Bryant also enacted responsibility for improving learning outcomes for his students by engaging in cogenerative dialogues and initiating curriculum planning meetings with Carambo and external agents (i.e., engineering professors) who collectively might improve the engineering curriculum in SEM. Similarly, a fellow science teacher began discussing pedagogy with Carambo after his formal appointment as academy coordinator and two mathematics teachers collaborated to improve the quality of the teaching of mathematics. These actions were not mandated by Carambo, but would not have been possible without the generalisation of sociomaterial (e.g., sharing teaching resources and usage of the rejuvenated faculty lounge for curricular discussions) and schematic (e.g., employing cogenerative dialogues to resolve conflict) structures that provided stakeholders with opportunities for enacting
responsibility in these ways. For the continuing evolution of enabling structures within the field it is crucially important for faculty to exercise collective agency and, through this joint action, build solidarity. Even though Carambo was a catalyst in many interactions he did not distribute or disperse leadership opportunities to these actors. Rather, we have seen evidence of the emergence of collective responsibility for the curriculum across SEM, a responsibility enacted in the service of the collective interests of stakeholders—a collective leadership.

A recent position paper, which justifies distributed leadership as a useful theoretical framework for the study of leadership practices in schools, briefly refers to the practice of collective leading, involving multiple leaders working together, drawing upon different resources (Spillane et al. 2004). Our understanding of collective leadership that has emerged from our immersion in SEM at City High extends this practice and moves beyond descriptions of distributed leadership; it involves the shared responsibility of actors for the enactment of structures that afford agency to stakeholders to act in ways that will facilitate rather than constrain cultural transformation of a field. Collective leadership manifests not only as practices like cogenerative dialogues, but also as solidarity among participants, where interactions between participants generally lead to the production of positive emotional energy. Of course in any dynamic field, the structures need to be continuously researched and renegotiated. As well as being used in classrooms, cogenerative dialogues might also be applied in other contexts where actors enact collective responsibility for the field structures.

Collective leadership will not happen by itself within a hierarchically structured organization like a school. Designated leaders need to participate in successful interaction chains so that solidarity with faculty and students can grow, establish a climate for sharing visions, and negotiate structures with stakeholders to produce positive emotional energy. So there is an interesting tension or dynamic between individual and collective actions for collective leadership to be realised: the actions of individuals generate
resources for collective leadership to emerge and collective leadership empowers stakeholders to act in the interests of the collective. Perhaps there is a case to avoid advocating yet another leadership construct, albeit one that has been refined through our study. Rather, leadership practices in authentic contexts might best be studied dialectically at both individual and collective levels—avoiding the constraints of adhering to a single leadership construct. The application of the individual | collective leadership dialectic warrants further exploration in actual school sites.

Coda

Even though Carambo initially felt uncomfortable mediating between stakeholders and enacting his organizational leadership roles, he became more confident in his new coordinator position, and to initiate cogenerative dialogues with teachers, with each successful interaction. He declared:

I am getting used to the idea that as leader, I have to effect a vision. I ask everyone on the floor to help develop the vision, but a vision must be created and effected. I understand that I have to be responsible for the implementation of the vision. If anyone [teacher or student] endangers that vision then I have to do something about it. The assistant principal is correct when she says that ‘we all have to run the school’.

Now twelve months after this study was undertaken, the positive trends we noted have been magnified by changes in the faculty and growing solidarity among the faculty and the students. Carambo noted:

I have been successful in implementing a vision. The number of tasks that I’ve completed has given me the authority to enact ideas across the school. Thus I’ve been able to put into effect a vision, what has begun to win people over. I listened to everyone’s complaints and worked diligently to put them into effect. I have realised that I was wrong in saying that as leader I had to effect a vision. I know that what I instinctively did was to listen to those around me.

Carambo’s agency has been expanded by input from faculty, students and ongoing research. Accordingly, he has now assumed full control of the roster, thereby addressing
students’ concerns over not getting scheduled into classes they needed, and he also has interviewed students about their electives, thereby ensuring that what students study has relevance to their interests and goals (see Roth et al. 2005). In terms of collective leadership, Carambo and the assistant principal have continued to advocate for the expanded use of cogenerative dialogue to give voice to students and build collective goals, roles and actions. Yet, greater emphasis on trust-building successful interaction chains between SEM faculty that generate solidarity and collective identity (Collins 2004) is needed before collective leadership can be fully realised across the academy. In recent developments in SEM, the roles of students as researchers, curriculum developers and teacher educators have been expanded in a bold new study that promises to study further the dissemination of collective action and solidarity throughout SEM (Elmesky and Tobin, in press).

Acknowledgments
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2. Ritchie’s participation in the study was made possible by the conditions of the Special Study Programme (SSP) approved while he was employed by James Cook University in Australia.

Endnotes
1. City High was organized into academies—or schools within a school—each including about 300 students with the curriculum planned around a central theme or core idea (e.g., ‘health’, ‘business’, ‘information technology’). The Science, Engineering and Mathematics (SEM) academy was situated on the third floor of City High.
2. Some scholars argue against the use of distributed leadership because it implies ‘notions of power as a possession being given away in a zero-sum way’ (Lingard et al. 2003: 54). The notion of ‘dispersed leadership . . . better picks up on the sense of the formal leaders enabling leadership across the school in rejection of a zero-sum conception of power and in recognition of power as a practice involving relationships and operating in diffuse ways’ (p. 54).

3. Although Burns refers to the leader-follower binary here, we find that such a categorization fails to account adequately for the mutual influence experienced in teams between designated leaders and other team members; the binary is redundant.

4. Cogenerative dialogue was a strategy or tool first developed at City High by coteachers / co-researchers (Roth and Tobin 2002) to resolve conflict between students and teachers. Because it has worked so well in classrooms, it has been used more widely within the school in other contexts where contradictions and conflict may occur (e.g., between administrators and parents; see Roth et al. 2005).

5. Mr. Bryant was employed just two weeks prior to the commencement of the school year. Although he had a degree in engineering, the school did not have an engineering curriculum and there were few material resources that he could draw upon.

6. While the interactions in Bryant’s class illustrate both positive and negative aspects to the use of cogenerative dialogues (so that we can explore the limitations of the tool), we focus on Bryant to minimize the introduction of too many characters into the analysis for the reader’s convenience.
7. A mind map displays concepts around a related key concept; it is different from a concept map in that concepts are not arranged hierarchically. Mind maps are particularly useful to document ideas / concepts generated from classroom brainstorming activities.

8. Key to transcription conventions: # bounds passages said quickly; Underline for emphasis; Underline with a zigzag when speaker laughs through word; : stretched out sound; [ ] overlap of two speakers; = ‘latching’ or absence of pause between speakers; ( ) actions or gestures of speakers; and . . . pause.

9. In the introductory quote from the assistant principal we are told that two learning communities or independent charters were joined recently to form SEM.

10. Ms. Campeze was an English teacher in SEM.

11. Diminutive for Campeze.

12. The chopping and sliding action of Carambo’s left hand to emphasize key points was not only observed throughout this vignette, but also mimicked by students in an interview when they described how Carambo brought to their attention the importance of taking responsibility for their learning.

13. Unsurprisingly, the unsuccessful applicant for Carambo’s position did not display synchronous actions during the meeting.

14. The school was under pressure to improve the performance of eleventh-grade students on a state standardised test by ten percent or face possible takeover by a private corporation.

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