**Organisation, secondary schools, and home-school partnership: the systemic challenge**

**Abstract**

**Purpose –** The purpose of this conceptual paper is to explore the relationship between structure and the organisational capacity of secondary schools to grow collaborative home-school partnership. The intention is to add a systems thinking and complexity framework to such collaboration and to show why home-school partnership is an essential feature of school improvement and reform.

**Design/method –** This paper offers a critical overview of the academic literature regarding contemporary approaches to modelling home-school partnership. A systemic analysis draws on complexity science to explain how the choice of school structure impacts differentially on a school’s capacity for individual and organisational learning. The paper reveals capacity and learning differences between traditional same-age schooling and a multi-age approach to organisation that schools call a vertical tutoring (VT) system.

**Findings -** Same-age organisational structures or grade systems cannot develop the organisational capacity to harvest, store, and access tacit information and knowledge from participating actors (staff, students, and parents). Such schools act to reduce the complexity of system demand to the detriment of learning. Multi-age organisation enables the formation of open and complex socio-learning relationships (complexity), whereby participating actors create the learning capacity their same-age structuration denied.

**Research Implications –** If researchers are to continue investigating the frailties of home-school partnership, it is essential to have a systemic understanding of organisation.

**Originality –** This paper intimates that the current “what works” agenda is ineffective without fundamental reconsideration of schools as organisations and their capacity to liberate management and agency.

**Keywords**

Secondary schools; systems thinking; complexity theory; parent partnership; vertical tutoring

**Introduction**

At a deeper level, this paper concerns a search for authenticity, lost values, and community attachment; in the words of Wilber (2014: xviii), it speaks to those who "yearn to bring more consciousness to the way we run organisations but wonder if it is possible and how to do it".

The paper draws attention to two secondary school models describing how organisational architecture impacts differentially on their capacity to build viable and effective home-school collaboration and enable individual and organisational learning. The first model is the traditional and widely-recognised ‘year’ or ‘grade’ system, one that has changed little from its Prussian inheritance over 180-years ago, separating students by age for teaching and administrative purposes. The second is a multi-age organisational model exemplified here by the ‘vertical tutoring system’ (VT), one developed by individual schools in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand.

While both models retain same-age grouping for teaching purposes, the VT system initiates a change process by repopulating tutor groups with students from all year-groups for a brief time each day. This paper explores how organisational grouping sets in motion a chain of events that either limits or enables home-school partnership and thereby the capacity for individual and organisational learning. It concludes by showing why home-school partnership is critical to any process of school reform and offers a cultural view of pedagogy.

***Organisation of this paper***

This paper begins with a review of the literature (RL) focusing on attempts to model home-school partnership. The concern is not to extol the benefits of home-school collaboration or the challenges facing schools and families, but to highlight systemic issues regarding outreach, implementation, and practice; particularly, the degree to which a school’s organisational capacity enables or disables the involvement of participant actors (staff, students, and parents) in learning. At a systemic level, any substantive increase in home-school collaboration involving the need to listen and respond to a multiplicity of participant voices (complexification) requires a matching improvement in the school’s capacity to cope (complexity absorption). This can be likened to Ashby’s Law of Requisite Variety (1956) whereby the complexity of the school’s organisation matches the complexity of learning demand on its system.

At a socio-learning level, the research literature highlights major concerns surrounding the implementation of home-school collaboration and particularly parental involvement (PI) but rarely refers to the effect on learning of school systems, organisation, and structure. The research literature appears to assume that the same-age model and its associated mindset is salvageable with hard work and improvements to practitioner “will and skill”. Critically, far from enabling participation in the learning process, home-school practice can stifle agency, restrict social mobility, and perpetuate inequality by privileging some socio-economic groups over others (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 2005; Hill and Tyson, 2009; Hornby and Lafaele, 2011; Gazely, 2012; Hoskins and Barker, 2014; Crozier and Reay, 2005; Crozier and Davies, 2017; Goodall, 2019). The critical focus of the literature review concerns systemic weaknesses regarding the modelling of organisations and structure.

Stemming from the literature review, the next section draws on complexity science to show the interdependency of structure, agency, and learning capacity. This systemic analysis describes a substantive link between a school’s choice of organisation and its capacity to create, access, and deploy the information needed for individual and organisational learning. This section presents a virtuous (hermeneutic) circle showing how communication, collaboration, complexity, capacity, and culture, are interdependent and interconnected

The fourth section provides a brief description of VT as a viable and alternative model, one able to both create and absorb the complexity of home-school collaboration. Examination of this model provides comparative insights into the deficits of the same-age model that VT schools abandoned.

As a footnote, the third and fourth sections are reversable! Concluding remarks follow.

**Literature review**

***1. Defining the organisational landscape***

Zeleny (2005) describes ‘organisation’ as behavioural networks of interactions, reactions and (learning) processes, and ‘structure’ as the rules and conditions that govern their co-ordination. The key to system change (structure + organisation) begins by altering organisational behaviour, “Organisation drives the structure, structure follows organisation, and the observer imputes function” Zeleny (2005: 197). However, if structuration acts in restricted autopoietic ways that prevent agentic participation (Luhmann, 1986 and1992; Magalhäes and Sanchez, 2010), organisation cannot inform structure. This paper has two propositions. First, same-age organisation, 180 years old and continually beset by unresolved problematics, stifles agency. It cannot cope with complexity, so it reduces (smoothes) it. Second, a multi-age organisation (like the VT system) creates a structure that is complexity dependent, enabling agentic participation and able to develop the capacity to absorb the complexity it creates. Critical here, is the idea of “communication as the producer of organisations”, (Putnam et al, 1999: p. 126; Schoeneborn, 2011).

As Lumby (2019: 14) says, "The interaction between human behaviour and organisational forms creates an imperative to seek those forms that are most likely to result in behaviour with positive outcomes for learners", (see Senge, 2006; Fullan, 2020; Weick and Westley, 1996). This makes the form of organisation and any approaches to home-school modelling critical to building systemic capacity for learning.

Cowan *et al*., (2004: p. 201) define home-school *collaboration* as “working together toward a common goal”, one that “recognises that parents are invaluable members of the educational team”, describing home-school *partnership* as a relationship “based on the premise that coequal power and coequal participation are prerequisite conditions for meaningful collaborative endeavours” (Cowan *et al*., 2004: p. 208). This idealised definition with its association to Senge (2006) and the learning organisation, hints at a non-linear organisation, more complex-adaptive in form and democratic in approach (see Glouberman and Zimmerman, 2002). What seems a common-sense approach – a sharing of power, information, and responsibility – hides complications concerning the extent to which structure either release of stifle the agentic capacity of participating actors (staff, students, and parents), and how such reciprocity is achieved (Giddens 1984).

Johnston and Clarke (2001: 68) continue the theme of collaboration noting four partnership requisites. These are:

* **Two-way communication**: including the ability to listen carefully to the other
* **Trust**: the degree to which one partner depends on the work or recommendations of the other
* **Intimacy**: the extent to which each partner shares their plans and strategies
* **Rules:** a mutual acceptance of how this relationship operates.

This conceptual paper accords with the idea that effective home-school collaboration is not only desirable but essential for individual and organisational learning (Christenson and Sheridan 2001: Fan and Chen 2001; Seginer 2006; Hill and Tyson 2009; Hill and Chao 2009). Not only is the evidence for home-school partnership ‘consistent, positive, and convincing’ (Henderson and Mapp, 2002), but effective partnerships can increase attainment, build self-esteem, and raise aspirations (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; McClellan and Kinsey, 1997)). This paper further accepts that when participant actors are enabled to combine their agentic roles, dispositions to learning improve including increased self-regulation, positive school attitudes, and improved study habits (Fan & Chen, 2001; Harris and Chrispeels, 2006; Henderson *et al*., 2007). It also accepts that meaningful home-school collaboration supports academic, social, and behavioural adjustment (Izzo *et al.* 1999; Christenson and Sheridan 2001; Ingram *et al*., 2007; Harris and Goodall, 2008; Hill and Tyson, 2009).

The case for effective home-school collaboration in a child’s learning seems unequivocal. In their 'authoritative' review of the evidence, Goodall and Vorhaus (2011), use the words of Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) to restate the importance of the home as a learning environment:

Parental involvement in the form of 'at-home good parenting' has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation.

“When schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and like school more” (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). The unfortunate reality is that children experience the ‘at-home good parenting’ differentially. In systemic terms, the challenge of home-school partnership revolves around the relationship between the institutions of school and home and how the two communicate. In their “Review of the Best Practice in Parental Engagement”, Goodall and Vorhaus (2011: p. 46) say, “Attempts by schools to engage parents in their children’s learning are unlikely to be successful if they represent a ‘bolt-on’ to mainstream activities”. It is misleading to suggest, however, as Goodall and Vorhaus (2010: p. 46) do, that “Teachers often lack the confidence and knowledge to work with parents” without first reflecting on the extent that schools enable the formation of learning relationships between participating actors. Too often, the form of organisation is omitted or assumed rendering teacher will and skill inadequate.

***2. Modelling home-school collaboration and building partnership***

While the benefits to participating actors are clear, building an effective home-school relationship faces challenges. Where structure dominates at the expense of agency as in a same-age form of organisation, capacity is fixed. Any increase in complexity emanating from the need to listen and respond to a multiplicity of participating voices (staff, students, and parents) invariably unheard, has to be strickly controlled (smoothed) to allow the system to function as normal. Complexity is not absorbed in ways that improve structure, but reduced in line with the school’s fixed capacity for learning with its high dependence on teachers. Without an understanding of organisation, structure, and capacity, and the absence of an alternative organisational template, the research literature tends to reify the existing system.

The discussion of six meta-analyses (Jeynes 2018) describes the difficulty of grasping the many variables of home-school collaboration and ascertaining impact. Jeynes (2018) proposes a Dual Navigation Approach (DNA) whereby 'the concept of parents and educators working together in perfect harmony is the goal' (referencing Wright *et al*., 2007). Such *a model* unifies the school’s outreach task, engaging with the parental need to be involved. However, how this is achieved at a practical level is uncertain so remains conceptual rather than systemic.

Results of a meta-analysis of 37 studies across all school age-ranges in English-speaking countries suggests that the most active association between parental involvement and school performance comes from high academic expectations, the ability to generate parent-child conversations about school experiences and activities, and the encouragement of reading habits (Castro *et al*., 2015). It is fair to question, therefore, the role played by schools in enabling such discussions and how any resulting and encapsulating model might work. A major review on home-school collaboration by Axford *et al*., (2019: p. 166) discovered flaws in all research papers on home-school collaboration. On a positive note the report stated that “The majority of schools surveyed recognise the importance of parent engagement, with the vast majority (80%) believing that engaging parents is the responsibility of all staff”. However, the report is concerned that good intentions do not translate into practice indicating a systemic problem with organisation not with practitioner will and skill.

This suggests that any reductional (bolt-on) approach to building a collaborative system is fraught with difficulty. While the need to generate conversations about learning among those most capable of making an impact is clear, an enabling model remains absent.

The *explanatory model* of Hornby and Lafaele (2011) lists four major barriers; parent and family factors, parent-teacher factors, child factors, and societal factors, whereby “teachers and parents bring to the melting pot of PI personal attitudes deeply rooted within their own […] experience” (Hornby and Lafaele (2011, p. 45, cited by Fan *et al*. 2018: p. 124). In this *explanatory model*, how the hypothetical melting pot functions as a means of communication is unknown. In their reformulation of the explanatory model, Fan *et al.,* (2018) explore the challenge of interconnectivity, the connecting feedback loops between the complex variety of participating actors. The intention is to further the understanding of barriers to PI and reveal the “confounding effects of different factors” Fan et al., (2018, p. 121).

How schools are to absorb the myriad reductional constituents of both models without recourse to smoothing (limiting) the complexity of the information pathways and their contexts remains unclear. Again, capacity to absorb complexity is critical to organisational modelling but no substantive mention is made of schools and the traditional day-to-day same-age management model most operate. This makes it all too easy to focus on participant will and skill (a deficit model) rather than deconstruct the existing same-age model and co-construct a form of organisation better equipped to facilitate learning conversations and capacity to release dormant agency.

Otherwise, difficulties continue to emerge in the literature regarding modelling and implementation, particularly how to shift from conceptual frameworks to working practices. Lists of attributes are reductional components, and without a structure (a viable model) they must be somehow attached to the existing same-age structural platform. It remains problematic, therefore, how to enable home-school partnership so that it informs structure. For Hornby and Lafaele (2011: 1), “Parental involvement in education is notable for the extensive rhetoric supporting it and considerable variation in the reality of its practice". Jeynes (2011: 748) too notes the challenge of enablement, noting that most potent aspects of PI reflected in meta-analyses are frequently subtle and relate to parental expectations and the way they communicate with children:

'…an increasing body of research suggests that the key qualities necessary for schools to foster parental involvement may also be subtle (Mapp et al., 2008; Sheldon, 2005). In other words, whether teachers, principals, and school staff are loving, encouraging, and supportive to parents may be more important than the specific guidelines and tutelage they offer to parents.

If Jeynes (2011) is correct, this has social implications for the way school outreach strategies might work and how organisational relationships might be enabled. Rather than examine the problem from an integrated whole-school perspective as Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) argue, there is a temptation to seek out personnel deficits that act as perceived barriers to home-school relationships. These include the call for more specific teacher training concerning 'hard-to-reach' families (Crozier and Davies, 2007; Boag-Munroe *et al.,* 2012; Barrett, 2008; Watt, 2016), advice on tackling time issues, improving methods of communication, understanding the attitudes of actors to each other, and ascertaining partnership purposes and priorities. Crozier and Davies (2007) posit the idea that it is schools that are hard-to-reach, not families. If the challenge of home-school partnership is organisational as Jeynes (2011), Bryk (2010), and Barnard (2013) suggest, asking staff to work harder and training them to operate the existing same-age model better and are unlikely to bring about the relational changes needed.

The outreach challenge is to release the agentic reciprocity of participating actors (staff, students, and parents) in ways that support learning, improve outcomes, and reduce inequity (Boutte and Johnson 2014; Connors and Epstein, 1994; Hindin and Mueller, 2016; Sheriden and Kim, 2015). Unsurprisingly, there is a laudable focus in the literature on how and why home-school collaboration should be improved (how parents might become more involved in their child’s learning) and no shortage of recommendations and strategies for school leaders (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 2005; Souto-Manning and Swick 2006; Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011; Goodall and Montgomery, 2014; Bryk 2010; Tschannan-Moran, 2020). However, thinking and modelling beyond the unrecognised limitations of the same-age mindset are absent.

The failure to address issues of organisation and capacity leads to various forms of othering. Epstein (1995) suggests that parents should involve themselves through parenting, communicating, volunteering, home-learning, decision-making, and community collaboration, adjuncts who know their place and enter the school by the back door. Hornby (2000) offers eight strategies: communication, liaison, education, support, information, collaboration, resourcing, and policy-making. Again, how these strategies combine into collaborative organisational practice is unclear. Sauto-Manning and Swick (2006) describe a client-based perspective suggesting a six-point strategy based on ‘an appreciation of families’ that recognises the time constraints on schools and families that limit participation. The Connecticut School-Parent Compact provides a not untypical example of a ‘standard’ home-school agreement, promoting a ten-step guide, while Lucas (2013) offers thirty-five ways of assessing parental engagement criteria in schools. Such reductionist approaches, although helpful as guides, make no mention of the systemic capacity needed to meet such exacting lists of service/client demands, just that they should. It is all too easy to drown schools in a sea of inspectorial tick-lists and reductional concepts that dismiss organisational causality. When faced with complexity, the same-age school responds by smoothing such demand. For Pondiscio (2021, p. 10) “With every new demand or concern placed in the laps of schools and teachers, the likelihood decreases that they will be effective at any of them”. Because home-school partnership represents a significant demand on time and human resources, any increase requires a concomitant reduction in demand elsewhere. To be cost effective, therefore, such a partnership commitment must impact significantly on learning behaviour. Schools remain reluctant to fully commit unless this cost-benefit analysis is realised.

While the research literature is precise regarding the benefits of home-school collaboration, consensus on affirmative action to build and sustain home-school partnership is less secure, and non-specific. According to Buchanan and Buchanan (2017: p. 237), "The building of meaningful relationships with families is the overlooked piece of the puzzle". For Buchanan and Buchanan, "The failure of the teaching profession to grow in partnering with families is a persistent and puzzling challenge in education”. Epstein *et al.,* (2011) argue that progress in building an "authentic partnership" between schools and home has changed hardly at all in the last twenty years.

Such a challenge shifts the conversation from personnel issues to organisational matters and the degree to which the form of organisation enables the release of agency. While reformers accurately identify the straight edges of the home-school jig-saw, connecting the less obvious pieces is uncertain, increasing concerns that current approaches to home-school collaboration may be counterproductive (Goodall, 2019 and 2018; Hornby, 2000; Jeynes, 2018; Harris and Goodall, 2008; Henderson *et al.,* 2007; Crozier and Davies, 2007; Rasbash *et al.*, 2010)).

Two small ethnographic studies go to the heart of the problem. A study of four secondary schools (Walker, 1998) describes parents' report evenings as "a unique interactional event which creates a problematic interface between the power bases of home and school, concentrating on the assessment of a (frequently absent) individual." The title of her study, *Meetings without Communication,* references examples of mistrust, anxiety, and confrontational approaches far from the notion of partnership, joint enterprise, and commonality of purpose schools often claim. A dozen years on there has been little progress with home and school irretrievably locked in boundary maintenance issues. For MaClure and Walker (2010), "The complex negotiations and skirmishes that take place during these encounters testify to their precarious location on the boundary between the two institutions of home and school".

***3. Towards a model of partnership, involvement, and engagement***

In such cases, the complexity of parent partnership and collaboration reducesto a brief annual meeting between teachers and parents, an information output system based on limited information in which the learning relationship between participant actors has no opportunity to develop. What worked well in lower schools quickly disassembles in the larger more complicated secondary school where a student might have ten or more teachers.

In this context, Goodall and Vorhaus (2011: 20) affirm the need to rebalance the agentic role of home, school, and child within the learning process, while Torre and Murphy (2016: 205) reject the "categories of parental involvement that have defined school-parent relationships (e.g., Epstein, 1996)". They note, "For the past century, the scaffolding for school-parent connections has been constructed from an ideology based on the principles of hierarchy, bureaucracy, and institutionalism, as opposed to strong family and community relationships (Murphy, 2005)". Torre and Murphy (2016, p. 217) call for "a community of engagement", one with "shared values of trust and respect, authentic membership, collective workload, and vision". Palaiologou and Male (2017) suggest an "empowerment paradigm of partnership" one based on ecological principles. Like Torre and Murphy (2016), their critical analysis of previous models provides a laudable list of components, but without a working alternative, issues of implementation lack a working template.

Three immediate organisational challenges emanate from the literature. The first concerns the same-age model and an intransigent mindset regarding how schools operate and what might be expected of them. The second is a failure to explore alternative multi-age templates that might lead to deconstruction and systemic renewal (reformational change). The consequence is tasking schools to bolt-on tick-box lists of reductional elements to their existing organisational platform rather than to think in systems, presenting lists of desirable home-school features as operational “models”. A third is the confusion caused by separating parent partnership (PP), parental engagement (PE) and parental involvement (PI) analysed by Goodall (2017, p. 139). The last is to

In her own reflective summary, Goodall (2019) argues that progress has stalled around the discourse of change, leaving key questions unanswered. For Goodall (2018 and 2019), the challenge to school leaders is to find a means of collaborating with parents and especially those whose children are at risk of underachievement. Goodall (2019) poses a provocative and unanswered question, "How can we support parents to engage with learning – and others to engage with parents – in ways that challenge, if not dismantle systemic inequalities?" Such a question deserves reflective analysis.

**A systemic analysis of organisational change in schools**

Based on the literature, home-school collaboration comprises an ongoing conversation between participating actors (school staff, students, and parents), one that supports and promotes the processes of individual learning and organisational learning needed to evolve a school’s social and operative structure. The challenge is to develop a form of organisation that enables the development of collaborative learning relationships (home-school partnership) involving a multiplicity of participating actors, all of whom have information to share, all of whom deserve to be listened to, and all of whom inform the relational architecture needed for individual and organisational learning. This is where the modelling ideas described in the literature fail to deliver complete answers.

From inside the same-age secondary school, all appears well. There is no need to change and re-form. Like Heidegger’s *Dasein,* practitioners enter a system that provides everything needed to repeat what the school has learned from its past (Heidegger, 1958). It is authenticity that is missing. The operative technical rationalist same-age system runs *smoothly, always* controlling communication to fit structure and reducing complexity of learning demand by separating students by age and ability. It establishes arbitrary time-limits on learning, standardises assessment, edits the curriculum to suit, pares information to data-sheets and grades, minimises feedback loops, and protects the classroom where it claims that the important learning occurs. The same-age secondary school is a simple, closed system preoccupied with a forlorn search for unattainable pedagogical laws and the belief that a research-based “what works” agenda might yet spark it into life (Sheldon, 2016; Smeyers and Depaepe, 2011; Biesta, 2010; Glouberman and Zimmerman, 2002; Banathy, 1991; Betts, 1992). Too often, home-school collaboration is a distraction to be minimised and controlled (*smoothed)* rendering it ineffective and unfair to those most in need of learning support.

The challenge is to lift organisational consciousness (Laloux, 2014) by increasing school leaders’ awareness of the reality of the school’s underlying assumptions and frames of (self)-reference endemic to the same-age mindset. For Depraz *et al*., (2003) reflection is insufficient and replaced by three “gestures”; suspension of existing beliefs, redirection to the source of the thoughts themselves, and a state of openness to perturbation and new thinking (see Sice *et al*., 2013).

Operative working assumptions exposed when school leaders become aware of a viable alternative that challenges their worldview and have cause to engage with sufficient reflexivity to become aware of unexamined working assumptions and frames of reference. Mezirow (2003, p. 58) calls this ‘transformative learning’ (TL) defined as “learning that transforms problematic frames of reference— sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change”. Jacobs (2019, p. 3) says “we experience transformative learning when we are able to reconcile contradictory information with our existing worldview to create a more comprehensive perspective that informs our future actions”.

It is the existence of a viable and alternative form of organisation exemplified by the VT system that provides what Mezirow calls ‘a disorientating dilemma’ (Mezirow, 1975) and Schein (1996) ‘a disconfirmation’. Both require a reflexive response to the assumptions and expectations underpinning any disorientation and disconfirmation. In other words, a multi-age system like VT requires same-age organisations to critically question and expose unexamined operational assumptions. Without VT and similar multi-age systems, the same-age mindset remains unchallenged avoiding any disorientation and disconfirmation.

Among the precepts that the VT system challenges are:

1. Claims that same-age schools *care* about student welfare.
2. Claims that such schools value and have an effective parent partnership system.
3. Claims to be learning organisations.
4. Claims to communicate well and share information.
5. Claims to distribute leadership.
6. Claims to enhance wellbeing and develop potential.

Close examination of policy statements when examined through the eyes of participant actors creates the disorientating dilemmas and disconfirmation likely to create the reflexivity needed to engage with the “gestures” of Depraz et al., (2003). Such a process relies on the existence of a viable alternative form of organisation capable of turning such claims into reality, one that many schools explore.

**The VT System as a viable system and alternative form of organisation**

The VT system employs a different strategy, intervening at the level of organisation to enable an ongoing conversation between staff, students, and parents, a process of systemic complexification. It is not subject teachers but form (homeroom) tutors who are key to unlocking the information needed to support learning and enable parental involvement. Such schools dramatically increase information and flow by restoring the multiple feedback loops between participating actors and building a relational system. Table 1 (below) indicates the basic organisational changes.

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| **Table 1. Organisational differences (based on Barnard, 2013, p. 154, figure 14.1)** | |
| **Multi-age Management Strategy of VT** | **Basic Organisational Changes** |
| Ensure that all school employees including the leadership team and non-teaching (support) staff are form tutors. | 1. Two tutors per group of 18-20 multi-age students  2. Every child known  3. Every child is both a mentor and mentee, leader, and follower  4. Leaders understand how such a system operates and its needs. |
| Introduce **deep learning conversations** (DLCs) between tutors, students, and parents at all critical learning/assessment times (at least once per year). | 1. Because the groups are multi-age, critical learning times are different for different years, spreading the liaison load.  2. Tutors meet parents and students for longer (minimum of 40 minutes) at key learning times.  3. Subject evenings are retained. DLCs follow soon after.. |
| Facilitate DLCs by providing tutors, students, and parents with the information needed to support learning and determine strategies for improvement. | 1. The tutor, parent, student decide what they need to discuss.  2. Information comes from a more sophisticated school assessment and reporting system that includes strategies for achievement.  3. Tutor time is the tutor’s time. PSHE is no longer needed.  3. The DLC determines strategies for improvement and how to support such strategies. |
| Change from a year/grade form of organisation to a vertical house system to create a safer more responsible form of organisation. | 1. Creates a nested system in line with social psychology and learning needs, schools within schools, reducing bullying and amplifying empathy & care.  2. Reintroduce competition, participation, and fun. |
| Change the role of tutors as the key players in learning and home-school collaboration. | 1. Tutors meet students every day and so know each student well.  2. The role of the tutor is to maintain home-school communication acting as an advocate and conduit of information. |

The overall effect is an incremental increase in information and communication traffic as the school complexifies. The capacity for producing, accessing, and storing information relies on multiple networks of learning composed of participating actors (staff, students, and parents). A virtuous circle forms concerning community, collaboration, complexity, capacity, and culture informing any enabling structure. Information is rerouted through tutors, the synaptic connection between home and school and stimulating intervention (see Dougherty, 1996). The effect is to rewire the tacit information feedback loops that are missing, mal-formed, and assumed by same-age organisation.

**Concluding remarks**

To truly develop home-school collaboration and build partnership in learning requires reflexive deconstruction of existing same-age practices and assumptions, and the reshaping of processes of power (Flood and Romm, 2018). This means distributing leadership to the organisational edge, the interface where the school, child, and parents meet. This means:

* Training and trusting tutors to make decisions and interventions as needed.
* Providing parents and students with the information needed to support learning.
* Liberating management to follow values rather than data alone.
* Redefining what it is to care and trust.
* Being organisationally, psychologically and socially coherent.
* Taking a causal, systems view rather than a bolt-on modelling and reductionist view
* Enabling actor participation in the learning process.

Sice *et al*., (2013, p. 17) see leadership as “shaping life-enhancing conditions, and thus promoting organisational wellness through a sensitive organisational culture”. Such leaders realise that the battle for learning is not the prerogative of the classroom alone but relies on the knowledge sharing capacity of participant actors to re-shape the school. To this end, leaders can expand their idea of pedagogy and learning to include school culture and organisational relationships. If this analysis is correct, home-school collaboration, not teacher collaboration alone, is critical to any school reformational process and the support families need and deserve.

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