

## Technology Integration Facilitator and role of Educational Leadership

Leadership takes on many forms at different levels. With each leader contributing to the success of our school. The levels of leaders start with the classroom teacher who guides students, team leaders help to guide teachers, special support teachers who help both students and teachers, all the way to the administrators who help to guide and support staff, teachers, students and parents. Each person at any level of the leadership at QA uses different skills and models several types of leadership styles depending on the given situation whether they realize it or not. All teachers by default of choosing this profession have also chosen to be in a position of leadership. Understanding your role as an educator and what your strengths and weakness are will then help to impact and change the environment in which you have influence on. Throughout this paper I will endeavor to address which is the best leadership style for a Technology Integration Facilitator (TIF) in Education with in my current school within an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. Focusing on in particular what are the most suitable leadership tools to use and how as a TIF I can help facilitate leadership growth and change.

I believe the first key to being a good leader is to understand different leadership styles and how they are currently working in the school environment in which you are working in. Then understanding what your strengths and limitations are as a leader. Not all people can be all things to every person and nor should one try, but if we work within our own capacity then we are more likely to succeed in our given leadership role. For leadership is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people (Clark, 2004). The TIF's role in the Middle Years Program (MYP) and for that matter the whole of IB school is a very important one, especially with the rate of change that education faces with new and emerging technologies. It becomes increasingly difficult for a teacher to keep on top of or aware of the tools available. Having said that a TIF faces the same challenge but must still display the necessary skills to assist

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teachers, as well as provide them with skills to be able to deal with these challenges. A TIF must also be able to adapt their approaches to meet different situations because we work with a lot of teams and must accommodate for the different leaders within those teams. Having said that, there are two leadership styles that stand out to me that TIFs at QA can benefit from developing. These are transformational leadership and team leadership.

Firstly a TIF is a transformational leader, because it is in the process of transformation a TIF can help enable changes to happen to individuals and to groups, but administration and teachers need to be able to invest into this process for it to really work and they must be strongly involved in the process (Northouse, 2006, p.170). If the administration and the teachers don't see Information Communication and Technology (ICT) as an important and essential part of being a 21st century school then a TIF's expertise cannot be fully utilized because the opportunities to help others won't be there. For it is in the transformation of process that we can help empower the teacher to be a user of technology for the benefit of developing their student's skills and at the same time developing their skills as well.

The second leadership style a TIF must be familiar with is Team Leadership, which is as important, if not slightly more important when it comes to our situation here at QA. With a school as big as ours having as many students and teachers that we do it would be impossible to supply support to everyone when they need it every time. So as a TIF it is our responsibility to help empower other classroom teachers to be more effective when using technology in the classroom. Ideally I think to help facilitate change we could develop a 'subject based TIF' approach by empowering an individual to be classroom based TIF. This would help different departments integrate technology to meet their specific needs within their area of expertise as well as give teachers an opportunity to call on someone when the other TIFs are occupied facilitating technology in another department. I

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believe they would also have more curriculum credibility, to use some battle field terminology ‘they are in the trenches with the other soldiers’ or teachers, so they know the curriculum, the student and the frustrations that other teachers are facing. They would share a common goal but must still coordinate their activities centrally in order for them to achieve or accomplish the goals set by the school (Northhouse, 2004, p.203 ). In essence creating a TIF team force that would help in the facilitation of technology across the school curriculum helping to develop a truly interdisciplinary curriculum within the MYP program. This would also help facilitate change in the educational context by connecting peers with purpose (Fullan, 2008), which in return would help to accommodate for a more diverse professional development program with teachers learning inside the school environment.

Fullan’s book ‘The Six Secrets of Change’ looks at what leaders do to help their organization survive and thrive. He identifies six secrets that can be easily transferred directly into any leadership position or be used to help screen advise from other leadership literature (Fullan, 2008, p.15). In my position I see great value in the six secrets and think they add great insight into any leadership position. Two of the secrets that I relate to the most as a TIF and will endeavor to further develop within my position of leadership are; connecting peers with purpose and learning is the work. I think it is imperative that QA tries to develop a continuous and positive purposeful peer interaction (Fullan, 2008, p.45). My role as a TIF has strong links to this venture as mentioned before when I wrote about subject based TIF’s. This would be a great way to empower individuals with the necessary skills as well as providing them with support to succeed in their subject area. This would enable greater success for the whole school because we could keep the more competent users of technology in the classroom teaching in their specialist area. This then flow on almost seamlessly into secret four, learning is the work.

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When it comes to providing professional development in education, research indicates that for schools and teachers to really benefit from it then it needs to be in context of the learning environment. Understanding what constitutes as effective professional development and then to offer continuous professional learning opportunities that provides teachers more meaningful and fruitful learning within the context of the working environment (Cole 2004, p.2). A lot of what we see as professional development in actual fact does not develop anyone, but should help to advance the knowledge, skills and understanding of teachers in ways that lead to changes in their thinking and classroom behavior and practice (Fenstermacher cited in Cole, 2004, p. 4). I see my role, to help deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to the teachers at QA that can help develop them and advance their knowledge and understanding of tools they can use within their planning of relevant 21<sup>st</sup> century tasks for their students. I believe many teachers see my role as a manager of technology but there is a very big difference between a manager and a leader and this needs to be addressed.

Understanding the difference between a leader and a manager is very important, because it is not a TIF's job to manage others on how to use technology but rather help lead and empower teachers in using technology on their own. This draws strong connections to the ethical challenges leaders face. Bennis and Nanus highlight that managers are those people who do things right and leaders are those people who do the right thing at the right time (1985, p. 21). I am in no way implying that it always happens like that but I believe it is our intention as leaders to endeavor to do the right thing in the right situations. This is the same when I try to assist teachers using technology in the classroom, I like to ask them how they are going to measure the success of the task and what is the learning value in the task itself? Because if there is no real learning value in the task then sometimes, but not all the time, we need to evaluate why we are choosing to use that tool.

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My Goal as a TIF essentially is to do myself out of a job by helping those who are doing poorly at integrating technology do well and help those who are doing well do even better. Through out this paper I have addressed several elements of what it means to be a leader in the 21<sup>st</sup> century school and how we should best facilitate change to accommodate for the rapid need of support when it comes to using technology in the curriculum. I think the development of a Learning Community would help to facilitate the changes we need as a school to become more efficient in the way we deliver professional development and would also provide a vehicle for communication and training that would help to move the school forward as a international school in the 21st century .

### Citation List

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