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Introduction

Welcome back to Day 2 of annual conference. When we were planning this conference it seemed a good idea to shake things up a little and change the President's speech to the beginning of Day 2 rather than opening conference. What I hadn't factored into that were the delights of the annual dinner on Friday evening and the early get up this morning! I hope that you had a good evening whether at the annual dinner or with colleagues and friends dining out in Birmingham.

I hope you enjoyed the pupils of Skinners' Kent Primary School singing their school song. They truly represent for me the 'Next Generation'. They are not even Generation Next - our current secondary aged students. All of the young people in that film have been born since 2010! Those in Reception class will complete their GCSEs in 2028 and leave secondary education in 2030! And it is the next generation of leaders who will lead them towards their futures.

Yesterday was about the significant challenges which we face in our system:

- The politics and the policies;
- The influence which we can and should bring to bear on those who oversee the system;
- How we step up to taking the lead ourselves in times of change and deliver on the profession-led self-improving system.

Today is about reflecting on the kind of leaders we need to be now. It is about the responsibility we have to grow the next generation of school and college leaders. And most importantly it is about reminding ourselves (because it can get forgotten in the mire of challenge, concern and conflict) why we do the job we do, why it is the best job in the world, why it matters... namely the very great privilege of educating the next generation.

Today, I want to span the generations and explore the importance of cross generational understanding. Some of us can still count ourselves as Baby Boomers. We are the ones creating the demographic squeeze on the leadership pipeline because we have the audacity to think about retirement! There are many in the audience who are Generation X, born between 1966 and 1979, who have stepped up into senior leadership and increasingly, although not enough of you, to headship and indeed executive headship. I am also delighted to welcome many Generation Y middle and aspirant senior leaders who are joining us today for the parallel event of Leading the Future, jointly sponsored with Ambition School Leadership. You are warmly welcome - you are very much part of our fellowship. And then there is of course Generation Next, the young people we are currently educating. Too often we go to education conferences and no mention is made of our students. They need to be right front and centre in my view. They are our *raison d'être*.

I was determined that my year as ASCL president should be a year of possibility and indeed action. It is a very great privilege to represent one's colleagues and an equal responsibility. You think and care about it deeply. You want to do your best. And of course you can't always predict the future... it has not exactly been a quiet year since we all last met at annual conference, even in ASCL! We were aware of the challenges of funding, teacher supply and curriculum and qualification reform, but I am not sure we could feel then the acute pressures and stretch within our schools and colleges. They are indeed serious, the most serious I have known.

I am not sure sitting at conference a year ago that we would have really believed the seismic shifts which have occurred politically. At times it has felt like a weird mix of fantasy meets reality show. It has most definitely made one question what is real, what is true, what matters... I am sure you will be glad to know that I will not be claiming the largest attendance ever at an ASCL conference in our new venue of the ICC, no alternative facts or indeed photographs will be required to assuage my ego! We do indeed live in strange times. What kind of a world are we living in where it seems

acceptable to say untruths? Is this the role modelling we would wish for our young people? The culture and ethos of our schools and colleges must counter this troubling feature of our world. There are some values and principles which we need to hold on to whatever our generation. I would argue now is the right time to reaffirm the spirit of ethical leadership and why ASCL is proud to announce it will lead a year-long commission, led by our Honorary Secretary Carolyn Roberts, to develop an ethical code of leadership for our profession.

Many consider Gandhi as one of the most ethical and compassionate leaders the world has seen. He said 'In a gentle way, you can shake the world'. Gandhi was a leader who had the ability to step into the shoes of others allowing him to gain an understanding of issues from different perspectives. Next Generation Leadership must have at its heart compassion and empathy. We too can shake our world and we should have the courage to place at the heart of that change the needs of those we work with and for, above our own self-interest or indeed that of our politicians.

Next Generation Leadership - what kind of leaders do we need to be?

Whilst holding firm to my strong sense of what can be, of possibility, this year has made me wonder a great deal about what kind of leadership is needed to build the education system of which we can be proud and which is sustainable for the future. I think it is a good time to reflect on whether we have the balance right in what matters in leadership of our schools and colleges. Are we being driven by the right principles? Are we role modelling these principles for our future leaders? Are we focussed sufficiently on the needs of all our young people? It leads me always to the core moral purpose of what we do - educating young people to prepare them for a bright future - and to the importance of holding true to that moral purpose.

This is not easy when the school transformation agenda in recent years has had as its backdrop the ideological and dramatic aspirations of labour, coalition and conservative governments, continual shifts and change in performance and accountability measurements, and the revolution and devolution of the way in which schools are organised.

Yesterday Malcolm addressed the specific challenges we are facing in the sector. We are in the eye of a perfect storm: levels of funding which are quite simply insufficient. We need more money to educate our young people to the high levels we all aspire to. Then we can talk about equitable funding and the national funding formula. We need teachers and we should not be paying extortionate advertising and recruitment fees. I argued 20 years ago when a head in Essex for a national recruitment website. Surely we can find a way to achieve this? We should be spending that money not on recruitment fees but on high quality professional development to retain our teachers and shape them into tomorrow's leaders. And finally we are managing generational curriculum, qualification and assessment change. The combination can make school leadership look somewhat daunting for our future leaders, leave alone ourselves.

We will only succeed in this environment if we are authentic in our leadership, true to ourselves and to what we believe in - our collectively held values and behaviours must be strong enough to support us within this environment.

But it is not just about values and behaviours, it is also about the skills and knowledge we need to be successful in our leadership of the system. Next Generation is a term which is used by technology companies to describe their new improved versions. It is about making improvements to what is already there, an upgrade. As the current generation of leaders - whether in schools or colleges or as school business leaders we need to continually 'upgrade' what we are doing. As José Mourinho, that well known philosophical leader and sometime football manager, says: "If you stand still, you get left behind". And to continue the sporting theme ice hockey superstar Wayne Gretzky once said: "I skate to where the puck is going, not to where it has been".

We need to do that as school leaders. The challenges leaders face have changed substantially not incrementally. As Steve Munby and Michael Fullan note in, *Inside out and Downside Up*: "We need leaders who do not just accept the context but act in ways that change the context". We need to embrace change and seek continuous improvement, not because of external accountability pressure, but because it is our professional responsibility to do so. We must use change to deliver an education system which is of the highest quality.

There is an acronym, coined originally in the US Army, but used in the business operating environment, which could equally be applied to our education system. It describes well the context in which we operate and the one into which our future leaders are stepping. The acronym is VUCA: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. This combination makes leadership harder than ever. We are under unprecedented scrutiny, the pace of change is not just increasing. It is frenetic. If we are not only to manage this environment but to "change our context" there is a need for a different style of leadership. Command and control will not work. In complexity, you cannot know everything as a leader. Our job is to empower the right people to make the right decisions and do the right thing. It is about a collective moral purpose, collaboration and capacity building.

Many of you may be familiar with Simon Sinek's "Start with Why" approach to marketing and business. He sets out a hypothesis that too many organisations start with what they do and how they do it, but do not engage their customers/clients in their core purpose, their cause, their 'why do we get up in the morning', their WHY. A compelling WHY is vital if we are to succeed in leading our schools and colleges through the current challenges and changes. It provides a shared vision and sense of purpose. It overrides cynicism and fatigue. The WHY is crucial in making education leadership attractive to the next generation of teachers, middle leaders and aspirant senior leaders.

A school leader has to be ambidextrous in balancing innovation with accountability. There is no doubt that leading in a VUCA world is exhausting and requires resilience. At times the mental and physical strains can seem intolerable. Our own work life balance needs to be protected if we are to be successful in this environment. Easier said than done and governors need to play their part in ensuring that their care of us as leaders is a high priority and not a nice to have. ASCL in its dual function of trade union and professional association can and does support its members when the times get tough. But I think we can do more to help redress the balance and reset the button on what is acceptable in terms of workload. If we do not we will not address one of the main barriers to future leaders stepping up to headship. We hold the baton and we need to ensure it is a baton they wish to grasp and run with.

Growing the next generation of school leaders

We all have a responsibility to ensure the growth of the next generation of leaders. Such matters cannot be left to chance. As you can probably gather this theme is rather dear to my heart, having been privileged to work with Steve Munby and Toby Salt at the National College for School leadership. Steve and Toby did not leave leadership succession planning to chance. Nor must we.

It is linked to the teacher supply challenges we face. We need to develop a strong pipeline of teachers into the profession, retain them and grow them into the leaders of the future. Sounds such a simple plan doesn't it! The School Leadership Challenge 2022 report, produced by Teach First, Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders, suggests that by 2022 England could need 19000 more school leaders. The challenge is how we fill the gap, how we attract well motivated, able people into our profession, provide opportunities for them to develop and enable them to step thoughtfully and confidently into leadership roles at all levels?

First and foremost positive messages must be given around public service and the teaching profession. We all have a responsibility to deliver on those messages, from those of us who lead schools and colleges, to those of us who lead our country. Teaching needs to be seen as a high value profession. We cannot afford to denigrate teachers and leaders. We must talk warmly and

with pride about the work they and we do, the achievements and successes of the vast majority of our schools and colleges and the positive impact they have on generations of young people.

Just as the plethora of routes into teaching has caused confusion for potential teachers so we need to pay attention to creating career pathways for all those working in our schools and colleges. They are our future school leaders. Professor John Howson and Chris Waterman said in their report in 2013 on teacher education: "While a hundred flowers are blooming, with a diversity of routes into teaching and a diversity of maintained schools, we must ask whether a wild flower meadow offers any guarantee that it will meet the needs of the school system. We suggest that the concept of a well-planned and cultivated vegetable garden (with room for a few herbs) is what is needed." I would argue we should apply the same strategy to leadership development. Immaculate and very well cared for 'leadership allotments' should be the norm, providing integrated and clearly understood professional progression from the early years of teaching through to headship, taking note of key transition points to shape a professional learning ladder which supports teacher recruitment, teacher retention and leadership succession planning.

CPDL and career development is highly dependent on the quality of leadership in any individual school or college. A well led organisation will give this a very high priority indeed. It will see professional learning as a vital component of their improvement journey as well as the way in which they can retain teachers and grow them into leaders, both for the benefit of their own school, but also the wider system. However, we have to accept that this is not universal practice and even where it is, financial pressures see professional development as one of the first areas to be cut. As a result many teachers remain undeveloped, don't progress their careers into leadership roles or even worse leave the profession. Governors and leaders must understand their responsibility in this regard. Our future leaders need to be continually developed and feel that we are investing in them. We need to nurture them. We need to make them feel valued.

March 8th was International Women's day and it reminds us that we must embrace diversity within our leadership succession challenge. We must not limit our view of who can and should be stepping up, of who has the capacity and capability. We must build on the legacy and strength of those currently leading our schools and colleges and encourage those who may have ruled it out, particularly those who are under represented groups, including women, and black, Asian and minority ethnic leaders and indeed those who may feel they have left it too late. Next generation is not necessarily age related. The next generation of leaders will need to come from the widest spectrum of context and background. We need to be actively encouraging a more diverse cadre of leaders to embrace the challenges and delights of senior leadership, so that our schools and colleges are led by individuals, not only with rich and diverse experiences and perspectives, but far more reflective of our society.

Our future leaders value the opportunity to network with role models further on in their careers as the School Leadership Challenge report sets out. We need to provide them with ongoing support to develop them as leaders in the context in which they are working. However, on the job training and development must not mean 'on your own' learning. Learning from experience needs to have a good foundation. If we are to get leaders 'ready' to lead and succeed in the VUCA world, we must rethink what is fit for purpose, focussing on the needs of future leaders rather than on what has made leaders successful in the past. Long term, strategic and nuanced planning is vital to ensure the pipeline is secured.

The Foundation for Leadership in Education given an official launch yesterday by Sir Michael Barber is the profession's opportunity to lead this work and ensure high quality support and development for all leaders at whatever stage they are in their career so that they are well trained and prepared for the challenges ahead.

It is worth noting Karen Edge's work in this regard. Her study of Generation X leaders working in schools in London, Toronto and New York gives us insight into their aspirations and their

development needs as well as the barriers to them taking up more senior roles, including Headship. There is no doubt that our high stakes accountability system and the highly pressurised environment of education leadership may create disincentives to many men and women to apply for leadership roles. We know only too well there is a sense of having to do more seemingly in less time. A school leader today has to be responsive to a greater range of demands from external sources than ever before and has to meet a wider range of targets and performance measures. We know that Generation X and I suspect Y too, quite rightly prioritise a more balanced life - they actually think a life beyond work is important! This surely creates a tension when considering senior leadership roles. This is perhaps even more the case for women, although not exclusively so. Workload is an issue for us all and needs to be addressed. ASCL has already begun to provide practical guidance in regard to teacher workload and we can now move to thinking about leadership work life balance in a similar fashion.

This note of caution aside, Karen Edge's research highlights that these future leaders have energy, fresh ideas, and are receptive to change. They are collaborative by nature - their use of social media to network is evidence of that. They are relationship focussed, more globally minded and of course techno savvy! We need such people to lead our schools into their brave new future. They have a sense of having to prove themselves so they are credible to their older peers. We need to be mindful of this. Our approach to their growth and development should be balanced, thoughtful and measured, so that they feel supported, but not rushed, so that they can make mistakes, regroup and move forward with renewed confidence.

Our young people and their future

And so to Generation Next and the collective moral responsibility we have to deliver the very best education system for the young people we educate. It is their future. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, encapsulates this far better than I can:" There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace". We should never waver or be distracted from the brilliant business of educating young people!

But do we really understand those we are educating? The Young People Omnibus Survey of 2734 secondary school pupils was carried out by the National Children's Bureau and Ipsos/Mori in 2014. It gives us an insight into their views, concerns and values. These 11-16 year olds have grown up in a context of significant global challenges: economic collapse; rise of terrorism; climate change; over consumption of natural resources and a growing world population. They have also been born into the most advanced technological era. They are the true digital natives. The world's information is at their fingertips. They are the most information intensive generation yet. The survey reveals that whilst they share some of the concerns of their parents' generations, they also have their own particular challenges. They are anxious about getting good grades and place a high value on academic success. 86% believe it is a very important factor in securing their long term future and obtaining a good job. Interestingly given my comments about workload, they worry that their parents work too hard! At the same time there is real hope for a future society led by these children. They are fundamentally optimistic and do not see gender or ethnicity as holding them back from gaining employment. 84% say it doesn't matter what background you are from - anyone can be a success if you try hard enough. 72% are confident that they will be able to do what they want at 16 or 18 when they finish school. They recognise the challenges but remain positive and look forward to their adult life. They have much to tell us and we should listen carefully and value their thoughts as should those who lead our country. They are the future of our country, tomorrow's workforce. Their opinions now and as adults will shape and change society.

It is not only our Prime Minister who has concerns about social mobility, Generation Next do too. Their high aspirations for their careers and openness to diversity and the opportunities available to them can be dampened by concerns about disadvantage or their own circumstances. We

experience this in our schools. A young science teacher at Skinners' Kent Academy emailed me in the half term holiday and summarised beautifully both the challenge and the great joy we have in our work with young people, especially those who feel their disadvantage. She said: "It makes me proud to work with our young people and help them become the individuals they never thought possible. Some of them still think they are not worth enough, intelligent enough, capable enough, and I hear them comparing themselves to other schools when they really shouldn't. If only they knew how unique they are. I am in awe of our students; of how polite they are, how caring, how able, how smart. I am proud of them when they get it wrong but find ways to get it right. Working with our students is so hard but so rewarding". She knows her students. She is on their side. She wants the best for them. These fine young teachers are in all our schools and colleges leading the learning. We need them to become our future leaders.

So what does this all mean for the kind of education we need to provide for this generation and those to come? Are we educating for a world we have known, for a world which we hark back to in a rose tinted spectacles kind of way? Are we educating for a world which reflects the present, the uncertainties, the dangers, the worries, the concerns, the conflicts, the division? Or are we educating for a world which takes us forward, which is bold, which accepts the challenges but seeks solutions, which reflects the world as seen and lived and experienced by many of our young people?

Our curriculum in its broadest sense must allow young people to develop the skills and competencies to operate in the world, whether our politicians at home or abroad like it or not, where individuals move and will continue to do so freely across countries and continents. A world which embraces ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity. Young people if they are to prosper need to have a sense of place in this world and as educators we need to support them in achieving this.

The curriculum we offer needs to create a world of opportunities for our young people. We need to open frontiers for them. This is about instilling in our students the qualities of mind and character that will enable them to develop their understanding of the world, form judgements, take risks and make a difference, notwithstanding the set of subjects, assessments and qualifications our young people may take at one point or another in their school career.

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs report published in January 2016 considers the implications that the so called Fourth Industrial Revolution has for the future workplace. The report identified the top ten skills which will be required by the workplace of 2020 (only three years away!) as being:

- Complex Problem Solving
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- People management
- Coordinating with others
- Emotional intelligence
- Judgement and decision making
- Service orientation
- Negotiation
- Cognitive flexibility

Are we embedding these skills as we implement the curriculum reforms? Are these skills going to be how we will measure success in our schools and colleges? Are we being distracted from what we really need to do to prepare our young people for their futures? The time is now, not some distant future. They will not get a second chance.

There is no doubt that the quality of education, and particularly teaching and learning, has never been better. Over 89% of maintained schools are good or outstanding. Can we do more? My experience in working with many leaders and teachers over many years is that we are a profession who always wants to do more, to improve, to be better for their pupils and their students. It is in our DNA.

Our business after all is a people business. Qualities such as curiosity, tolerance, empathy and compassion will count as will the ability to determine the significance of information and the capacity to think inventively. For our young people academic study is just the start. We need to instil in them a love of learning which is not about exams but learning for its own sake. Curiosity should be the spirit that drives the curriculum as opposed to the grade at the end of it. That is what a principled education system should be providing. It is worth fighting for.

Concluding thoughts

I remember well having as my leadership bible in my first years of headship in the late nineties the trilogy of "What's Worth Fighting For" books written by Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan. They described the school environment in the late nineties as complex, turbulent, contradictory, relentless, uncertain and unpredictable. Plus ca change. They articulated the importance of teacher and leader advocacy and agency. We work in a context of rapid change and whilst this is challenging we need to be strong and remain committed to our principles and values as educators. It is also a unique opportunity to play a significant role in shaping our education system. This is not a philosophical ambition. We can and should be strong and powerful in voice as ASCL, your trade union and professional association, to determine our own and the system's future. Our collective and collegiate spirit must carry us forward into taking positive action and to advocate for an education system in which, as the guardians of the nation's young, we enable them to flourish. We need great teachers and great leaders who refuse to accept that disadvantage determines destiny. The young teacher I quoted went on to say that she wouldn't change her job for the world. Our teachers need to believe they have the best job. They have. We have. We need to develop them to be the leaders of tomorrow. We want them to pick up the baton we all hold so proudly and in so doing ensure many generations of young people will benefit from their care and leadership.

It is right that those young people have almost the final word...

Film of students and pupils of SKA and SKPS speaking of their ambitions and the importance of education in achieving those ambitions.

If we are to be successful in this business of educating young people then we have to be connoisseurs of the 'art of possibility'. Emily Dickinson wrote:

"I dwell in Possibility
A fairer House than Prose
More numerous of Windows
Superior for Doors
Of Chambers as the Cedars
Impregnable of Eye
And for an Everlasting Roof
The Gambrels of the Sky
Of Visitors the fairest
For Occupation - This
The spreading wide my narrow Hands
To gather Paradise...."

As leaders we endeavour every day to ensure that there are multiple doors and windows open for all those we educate, that they have a sense of all the opportunities available to them, close to

home and far away, that they might 'gather paradise'. To our future leaders I say: have a sense of the opportunities to lead, be ambitious for yourself, spread your own 'narrow hands' and seize and shape the future. As for our young people. They are just starting out on their journey of possibility. We have to give ourselves to our students as the means of their possibility to learn and grow, to inspire them, to light their spark. We need to be ready in turn to catch their spark, to be inspired equally by them. I am, every day.

Thank you.