

Podcast series

Leadership in Focus

Episode 7 – Leading complexity with adaptive expertise

Discussion guide

The School Leadership Institute's Leadership in Focus podcast series shines a spotlight on school leadership and explores the key issues and challenges that leaders face. This episode focuses on the way school leaders respond to the complex challenges through the lens of adaptive expertise.

[SLI Leadership in Focus Podcast Series](#)

Speakers

Joanne Jarvis: SLI Director and host of the series

Helen Timperley: Professor, University of Auckland

Discussion points

For individuals

- Think of an example of a complicated and a complex challenge in your context. How might your understanding of the differences between complex and complicated challenges help you to address such challenges?
- The Principal Leadership Learning Resource outlines the core leadership principles and the key drivers of leadership effectiveness. These highly interrelated elements underpin the effective enactment of adaptive expertise in addressing complex situations. Thinking about the example that Professor Timperley gave, reflect on your approaches to community engagement. How do you ensure authentic community contribution in identifying issues, framing a response to address these, and leveraging the expertise of the community to deliver the response?
- The situation faced during the COVID-19 pandemic provided leaders with unique challenges along with a vulnerability that exists from not having all

the answers. It also provided unique opportunities. Thinking about your school's response to the pandemic, identify ways in which this response could be evaluated as routine or adaptive.

- As lead learner, how do you seek the knowledge you need, to meet the challenges within your setting?

For teams

- What assumptions have you challenged about your own approaches when faced with a complex situation?
- Reference is made in this episode to both the 'new normal' post the pandemic and the new curriculum implementation as examples of contemporary complexity. To what extent are you continuing to use existing routines to do new things? What might you do differently?
- Consider how the key driver of inquiry can guide an adaptive approach to complex challenges. How can you measure the extent to which genuine inquiry, driven by curiosity, is evident in the teams you lead? Is it focused on what is happening for learners? How do you know? Is it focused on making the connections between leadership and teaching practices, and student outcomes?
- How might the evaluation of your school's COVID-19 response guide your leadership team's response to future complex challenges?

For your reference

Timperley, H. (2023). *Leading schools with Adaptive Expertise* in [What's New? Principal Leadership Learning Resource](#), School Leadership Institute, NSW Department of Education.

Further reading about NSW School Leadership Institute's Core Leadership Principles and Key Drivers of leadership effectiveness is available.

[Principal Leadership Resource](#)