

---

# 4. Our Christian Inspiration: Reflections on 24 Leadership Practices

## 4.1 Leading Learning – Refining Judgement

**Leading in education starts with the call to learn and teach. A *head*-teacher demonstrates their vocational passion for learning by modelling effective practice in the skills and understanding of pedagogy. Leaders of learning need to be resourced by deep wisdom. Their professional development and personal growth are shaped and directed by well-informed, discerning judgement, and by ethical, accountable decision-making.**

### Leading Learning

---

The leader needs to be gripped, energised, and delighted by learning. This is a fundamental response to the wonder of creation, and to the amazing richness of the ways of appreciating it, knowing it, and living in it. Wonder is the beginning of wisdom. Curiosity, intrigue and the joy of discovery are at the heart of the spirit of learning that inspires good teaching.

The Bible personifies Wisdom as involved with God in creation and gives her a voice: “I was beside him, like a little child; and I was daily a delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race” (Proverbs 8:30-31). Solomon, the archetype of the wise person, represents the range of knowledge and understanding in a civilised education, not only embracing religion, human development and relationships, culture and the arts, politics, economics, and law, but also the natural world.

Transmission of knowledge and sharing of wisdom across the generations was central to the identity of ancient Israel, as it has continued to be in Judaism to this day (see for example Deuteronomy 6:1-7).

Jesus as a child was an eager learner in this tradition, “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers”. He “increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour”, and later is described as “greater than Solomon” (Luke 2:46-47, 52; 11:31).

Teaching was at the heart of his ministry, done through questioning, riddles, conversation and debate, responses to difficult issues, stories, discourses, sermons, challenges, symbolic acts, and personal example. The disciples (literally ‘learners’) he gathered regularly misunderstood him, often learned through going wrong, and only entered deeply into his meaning during the years after his death and resurrection.

A leader in education is called to love those who are being taught. The wisdom of love and the love of wisdom go together, and this means that the teacher longs for the full flourishing of the pupils. This desire motivates both a vocation to all-round education of the whole person and also keeping up with best practice in the field, acquiring better teaching skills, and drawing on relevant sources for improving our leadership.

Leading learning cannot be reduced to leading examination outcome improvement, or instructional pedagogical competence. Rather, it champions the craft and art of teaching, raises its status as a profession, and seeks wisdom in leadership across the whole curriculum. It places children at the heart of all decision making, in the face of the immense challenges of competing demands and scarce resources. The leader also proactively makes time and space for their own adult learning and professional development, prayer, reflection, refreshment, and rest.

1. How important is it for leaders in school to be (known as/seen to be) excellent classroom teachers?
2. To what extent do ‘wonder’, ‘curiosity’, ‘intrigue’ and ‘joy of discovery’ play a part in your school’s approach to pedagogy? What difference do these attitudes/experiences make to pupils’ progress?
3. What can we learn from Jesus’ approaches to teaching and learning?
4. How are you making space for ‘time and space for [your] own adult learning and professional development, prayer, reflection, refreshment, and rest’? To what extent do your colleagues see you as leading learning?