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Successful School Leadership in Australia: A Research Agenda

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Abstract: The Australian education context is characterised by increasing public scrutiny of school performance and an expectation that all schools should, within contextual boundaries, produce high level student outcomes. Whilst discussion of successful schools and successful school leadership is a relatively recent phenomenon, it is now an important concept for research, policy and practice. This paper reports on models of successful school leadership developed over the past decade, and associated issues of instructional and sustainable leadership, and leadership preparation.

Keywords: School Leadership, Successful Schools, School Improvement

Introduction

AUSTRALIA IS IN the grip of a new era in of school performance accountability. In all states and territories, and at the federal government level, there is considerable interest in developing successful schools in all contexts, for all students. Drivers for this focus include increased accountability (both locally and increasingly internationally through world-wide testing programs and country comparisons through organisation such as the OECD), competition between the public, Catholic and independent sectors, tensions between the state/territory and federal governments, greater knowledge as to what works in schools, and, above all, a desire to provide quality school education. At the Federal level there is a range of new initiatives focussed on improving schools through improving the quality of teaching, measuring school performance, and helping disadvantaged school communities, continuing a path that has been in place for several years across both left and right-wing governments. In Victoria, every school is now listed on a publically available website (www.vrqa.vic.gov.au) and this site has links to individual school pages that describe the school and report on school performance, and a link to a national website that describes school performance on national test programs (www.myschool.edu.au). Government school sites include their school annual report and a government school performance report, which provides details of outcomes in student learning, student engagement and wellbeing, and student pathways and transitions. Importantly, for each piece of data there is a comparison judgment of performance against similar schools. School leaders need to be able to interpret and respond to questions about these data, as even a seemingly high performing school may be judged as performing below expectations compared to similar schools. A sophisticated and supportive school review process addresses development issues, but school performance is now very public and at the forefront of the work of school leaders. Whilst the concept of

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producing league tables is not part of the focus of the work of governments in implementing these initiatives, there is the potential for these to be collated by private individuals, adding additional pressure to the work of schools leaders. What this environment is doing is focusing attention on school leadership, and that of principals in particular. It is within this context that this paper explores several areas associated with the concept of successful school leadership including a short history of the study of this area in Australia, and our ongoing research which has described a model of successful school leadership and which is now exploring associated issues of the role of instructional leadership, sustainability of success, and the preparation of future school leaders.

Successful Schools, Successful School Leadership

The study of both successful schools and the leadership that helps to foster this has a relatively short history in Australia (Gurr, 2009), beginning with the pioneering research of Walker at the University of New England (Walker, 1966) and Bassett at The University of Queensland (Bassett, Crane & Walker, 1963, 1967). Whilst this research explored school leadership broadly, it relied on overseas research and a somewhat unsophisticated view of school leadership, with the overwhelming view that this resided in the male head of a school, in an individualistic and positional pursuit to influence others to improve: '[a] good school has good staff … Given a reasonable basis on which to work, the headmaster can *create* a good staff' (Bassett, Crane and Walker, 1967, p. 3); '[e]ven if he [the Headmaster] (sic) already has a good school, he can look forward to leading an infinitely better one' (Bassett, Crane and Walker, 1967, p. 32). In the following decades research and writing remained focused on principal leadership (Simpkins, Thomas, & Thomas, 1982), with only occasional interest in the work of deputy principals (e.g. Badcock, 1977). Nevertheless, at the start of the eighties research emerged which heralded a 25-year interest in successful school leadership. Beginning with a major study of Australian school principals - *The Australian School Principal: A National Study* (Duignan et al., 1985) - that provided a model relating principal role to improved student learning. This began a research path can be traced through the following books and papers:

- A book on principals and change that connected with the emerging school effectiveness and improvement research fields to explicitly explore how school leadership could lead to improved student learning outcomes – *Principal and Change: The Australian Experience*. (Simpkins, Thomas & Thomas, 1987).
- A series of three books by Caldwell and Spinks (1988, 1992, 1998) that explored self-managing schools, with one volume. *Leading the Self-managing School* (1992), devoted to exploring the leadership required to ensure school success.
- A synthesis of the school effectiveness and improvement literature focused on school success - *Creating an Excellent School* (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1989).
- A major Australian-wide survey of parent, student, teacher, principals and school community views of effective schools – *The Australian Effective Schools Project*(McGaw, Piper, Banks, & Evans, 1993a, 1993b).
- A large survey-based study exploring leadership, organisational learning and student outcomes - *Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes* (LOLSO) (Mulford & Silins, 2003, Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004).

- Exploration of middle-level leadership through case-studies of 50 secondary school subject departments and cross-school programs – *An Exceptional Schooling Outcomes Project* (ÆSOP) (Dinham, 2005, 2007).
- An extensive and on-going school improvement project that has developed a framework for establishing professional learning communities to improve school outcomes — *Initiating, Discovering, Envisioning, Actioning and Sustaining* (IDEAS) (Andrews et al., 2004; Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002; Crowther, Ferguson, &Hann, 2009; Lewis & Andrews, 2007).
- Several small-scale case studies of successful school leadership exploring innovation and success (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997), market-centred leadership (Drysdale, 2001, 2002), and leadership of a successful Christian school (Twelves, 2005).
- Publication and distribution to all Australian schools of a book of seventeen stories about the exhilaration of being a principal, with all the principals highly regarded and successful school leaders – *Leading Australia's Schools* (Duignan & Gurr, 2007).

The Australian School Principal study and the LOLSO project both highlight the complexity of representing leadership, and do so nearly twenty years apart. In both the leadership of the principal clearly remains important. Whilst the AESOP and IDEAS projects support this emphasis on the importance of principal leadership, they also clearly identify the leadership roles of other school leaders, especially in terms of the more direct influence on teaching and learning shown by teacher leaders, and leaders of departments and program areas (Crowther, Ferguson & Hann, 2009; Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002; Dinham, 2005, 2007). The LOLSO research extends this more inclusive view of successful school leadership in that it identifies leadership of the administrative team and teachers, and the concept of organisational learning, as important for developing student learning success. This combination of ideas is not dissimilar to the concept of professional learning communities promoted by Stoll and Louis (2007).

What we have left out of the discussion above is our research on successful school leadership. Since 2002 researchers from The University of Melbourne and The University of Tasmania have been involved in the *International Successful School Principalship Study* (ISSPP; www.ils.uio.no/english/research/project/isspp). The ISSPP is a large and important body of research that currently contains more than 80 case studies across 14 countries, and several thousand survey responses across eight countries, and has produced two books (Leithwood & Day, 2007a; Møller & Fuglestad, 2006) an additional seven book chapters, two special journal issues (*Journal of Educational Administration*, *43*(6), 2005; *InternationalStudies in Educational Administration, 35*(3), 2007), and more than 60 refereed journal papers. It is a study that emphasises the contemporary interest in successful school leadership, and the Australian involvement was a logical extension of the research interest that had been developing since publication of findings from *The Australian School Principal* (Duignan et al., 1985).

Australian involvement in the ISSPP has been through production of 14 case-studies, and surveys of principals and teachers – [Discussion of the case studies can be found in: Drysdale, 2007; Gurr, 2007a, 2008; Gurr & Drysdale, 2007, 2008; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006, 2007; Gurr et al., 2003; Mulford& Johns, 2004. Tasmanian survey data have been reported in Ewington et al., (2008), and Mulford et al., 2008.]. Currently, the principals from the Victorian case studies are being re-visited to explore the sustainability of success, findings

of which are reported below. For the current discussion we want to turn to a model of successful school leadership that we have been refining (Gurr, Drysdale, Di Natale, Ford, Hardy & Swann, 2003; Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2006; Mulford & Johns, 2004; Mulford & Silins, 2009).

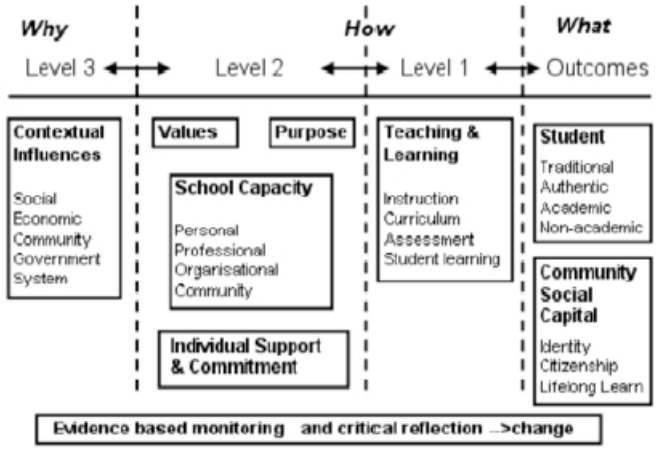

Figure 1: Simplified Australian Model of Successful School Leadership (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2006)

In this model, principals and others in leadership roles, exert an influence on broadly conceived student and school outcomes (Mulford, 2007) through a focus on teaching and learning which is driven by their own values and vision, an agreed school vision, elements of transformational leadership (individual support and commitment, critical reflection, modelling of appropriate values, beliefs and behaviours), a focus on increasing school capacity across four dimensions (personal, professional, organisational and community), taking into account and working within the larger school context, and using evidence-based monitoring and critical reflection to lead to change and transformation. The school capacities of level 2 each have four elements (what we have termed a four by four (4X4) approach to capacity building because a piece of 4X4 is a piece of wood that is used as a strong structural element in building):

- *Personal capacity* - self management; professional networks; individual professional pedagogy; knowledge creation and construction;
- *Professional capacity* - professional infrastructure; teachers as leaders; professional learning teams; school-wide pedagogy;
- *Organisational capacity* - distributed leadership; culture of organisational learning; organisational structures; building a safe environment; and
- *Community capacity* – social capital; community networks and alliances; parent-school partnerships; relationship marketing.

This model is complex but provides some guidance as to how school leaders can help improve student outcomes, especially through capacity building to promote teacher effectiveness. The next stage of research is to gather further empirical evidence to confirm and/or modify

this model, and to provide a model that is more widely applicable to school leaders other than principals.

Continuing Research Agenda

In addition to developing our successful school leadership model we are currently exploring three related areas: leadership sustainability, instructional leadership, and leadership preparation.

Leadership Sustainability

The notion of sustainability has become in recent years a popular concept. It is, of course, most often associated with ecologically sustainable development as evidenced by debates on climate change, environmental degradation, and the capacity of biologically systems to endure. As with many maturing concepts, the application of the concept widens to a point where it seems that it can be applied almost to anything and everything, even to educational leadership (Blankstein, Houston & Cole, 2009; Davies, 2007; Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Currently in the educational leadership literature there is little consensus about the concept of sustainability, however, the notion, if not the term, is inherent in both the change management and the school improvement literature.

Over the past thirty years there has been a considerable body of literature on change management. The focus has been on initiating, implementing and maintaining change. The notion of sustainability has been embedded in the literature, whether it is to deal with general problems with change (Fullan, 1982; Sarason, 1972), teacher resistance to change (Datnow, 2000: Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall, 1987; Huberman, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1989), large scale district change (Elmore & Burney, 1997), system level change (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988, 1998), or change at the national level (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). The major issue implicitly or explicitly associated with all the change initiatives is 'How can it last?' (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998).

Recently, writers on change management have explored sustainability issues through two approaches. The first focuses on internal and external change forces that impact on the school, and which affect the ability of the school to maintain its change program (e.g. Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). The second is a focus on the school leadership and the ability of the leader(s) to implement and maintain change over time. Davies' (2007) book of collected chapters from eminent writers in educational leadership illustrates this. Each contributor applies the concept to their own research agenda and knowledge, with the orientations so different that it confirms the view that sustainable leadership is conceptually at an early stage of development. A few examples serve to illustrate this. Hargreaves and Fink (2007) build their approach based on environmental and corporate sustainability literature. Day and Schmidt (2007) associate sustainability with resilience. Caldwell (2007) uses the perceptions of school leaders to explore how they foster a sense of exhilaration to sustain their leadership. Fullan and Sharratt (2007) use their work on a district-wide literacy reform to argue for the importance of sustaining leadership as a continuous force for improvement. Deal (2007) takes a different position and outlines that education has a remarkable capacity for sustaining the status quo. Hopkins (2007) focuses on system level change and sustainability. A similar pattern of conceptual ambiguity emerges in Blankstein, Houston & Cole's

(2009) edited book, *Building Sustainable Leadership Capacity.* Again there are a variety of approaches by the contributors, as shown by the following examples. Sparks (2009) argues that sustainability cannot be enduring without teamwork and professional learning. Lambert (2009) questions what happens after leaders leave the school. Her answer is reciprocal leadership, learning communities and leading networks. Fullan (2009) argues that for sustainability there needs to be moral purpose that is translated into reality. Fink (2009) notes that today's leaders need to cope with outmoded structures and simultaneously lead schools to become learning communities. While these perspectives maybe interesting they do not point to a consensus concerning a research agenda and leave sustainable leadership as a concept in need of development.

In Australia, through the ISSPP, we have begun to explore sustainable leadership. Drysdale, Goode and Gurr (2009) report on the leadership of Jan Shrimpton at Morang South Primary School in Victoria. We first visited Jan in 2004 as part of the ISSPP, and then again in 2008 to explore the sustainability of the school's success and Jan's role. This paper describes the important interactions between internal and external change forces and the role of the principal as a precursor to sustainability. Whilst competing forces for change had the potential to derail reform programs at this school, the leadership of the Jan was a significant intervening factor that sustained success.

Although not completed, we have revisited another of our schools, this time exploring the leadership of Bella Irlicht at Port Phillip Specialist School (see Goode, Drysdale & Gurr, 2009; for earlier reports on Bella's leadership see: Gurr & Drysdale, 2003; Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2006; Gurr, Drysdale, Di Natale, Ford, Hardy & Swann, 2003). For both schools, despite political, educational and demographics changes over the five years since we first visited, these schools have maintained their improvement. South Morang Primary School maintained its performance, while Port Phillip Specialist School continued to improve significantly. The findings show that success in both cases was largely due to the principal, and in particular, their leadership style, personal values, and strategic interventions. An important variable though in why one school continued to improve, was the principals' attitude to change. At South Morang Primary School, where successful performance was maintained, the principal was controlled by change events. As with the findings of Giles and Hargreaves (2006) and Hargreaves and Goodson (2006), system reforms, demographic changes and the natural changes in the life cycle of the school had impacted on this school. Whilst the school was able to maintain its overall performance (which is in itself a significant achievement), it was not able to progress to a higher level of performance. At Port Phillip Specialist School, where the school continued to improve upon its history of success, the principal controlled the change events to the school's advantage. In both cases internal and external change challenged past success but the principals were able to accommodate the impact. Jan was described as a Restorer-Builder - she turned the school around and built a good school that maintained success in the face of external and internal changes. Bella was described as a Driver-Builder - she drove improvement through promoting change. She used the similar external and internal changes that had led to a plateau on improvement at South Morang Primary School as an opportunity to create further improvement.

We are continuing our research with other schools and principals that were involved in the earlier ISSPP research. We will explore the sustainability of school success in schools in which the principals have moved, and also follow the principals who have left to examine their sustainability as a successful leader in a new situations.

Instructional Leadership

One of the points of interest in our study for the ISSPP has been the extent to which principals exercise instructional leadership and the manner in which this is enacted (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2007). The Australian case studies confirmed the generally accepted finding that mostly instructional leadership is indirect, working through teachers to influence student outcomes. These principals were operating at level 2 of the model in Figure 1. But there were exceptions, with one principal in particular exerting a very direct form of instructional leadership, operating at level 1 and level 2. In Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford (2007) we described the work of three principals and it is worth visiting these to gain a sense of the subtlety of the indirect/direct influence argument.

Vicki Forbes

Vicki was the principal of a large Victorian secondary school. Vicki demonstrated an indirect form of instructional leadership and one in which much of her effort was focussed on level two initiatives. She had a clear vision, high expectations, fostered a positive and supportive culture, supported innovative teaching and learning, was good at attracting and retaining the right staff, built positive relationships with the school community, fostered professional capacity building, and showed leadership that 'walked the talk'.

Margaret Church

Margaret was the principal of a small Tasmanian primary school. She displayed an indirect form of instructional leadership, one that was centred on work within level 2, with some elements of level 3. There was also a strong emphasis at looking at student outcomes broadly. Success at Margaret's school was due to a committed and focused staff, and to a principal who was similarly committed and focused, a good role model, and a strong and purposeful leader. She worked to change teaching practice from a disengaged, child-minding style, to one with high expectation and purposeful learning. She also operated at a political level to both challenge and engage the Education Department to support the school.

John Fleming

John was the principal of a small Victorian primary school. A clear learning and social framework, backed by research evidence, practical experience, and a combination of presence, passion and energy, allowed John to create an aligned and energised learning community, one in which students were able to do their best. He had a clear vision and established excellent school community alignment, managed the educational production function in a very hands-on manner, had high expectations about academic learning, and was expert at developing a supportive work climate. He was a very 'hands-on' and direct instructional leader, working at levels 2 and 1.

All three principals centred their efforts at level 2. The principals' values, beliefs and vision were clear, understood and supported by all in the school community, and were used to drive improvement. John had perhaps the most clearly articulated and integrated view of teaching and learning, Margaret had very strong social justice values, and Vicki saw the

need to work with and through staff. They emphasised the importance of developing relationships, particularly the interactions they had with students as this sent important messages to the students about the sort of values, beliefs and behaviours that would help them succeed. John had a more direct influence on students within classrooms than the other principals in the study. The three principals worked well with staff, understanding them as individuals and helping them to develop their personal and professional capacities. Again, John seemed to have a more direct impact on classroom instruction, yet both Vicki and Margaret were effective in improving the quality of instruction, curriculum and assessment. Margaret worked well within the broader context (level 3), especially in buffering the staff and students from anything that did not fit her and the school's clearly articulated and communicated objectives. John was the most direct leader of the three in that he spent a lot of time in classrooms working with teachers and students to improve the teaching and learning.

All three principals were clearly influential (indeed, most in the school communities believed that the success of these schools was largely due to the efforts of the principals), but how they influenced student learning was different; Vicki and Margaret worked more through others to influence teachers, student and parents to influence student outcomes, whilst John was more directly involved, working in classrooms often. This is encouraging for those that are, or aspire to be, principals as it is clear that there are many pathway s to attaining outstanding student outcomes. In other words, the three case studies demonstrate that educational leadership makes a difference in different ways. This finding is supported in a cross-nation analysis we are conducting as part of the ISSPP for a forthcoming book. In comparing the instructional leadership in Australia, Denmark and the USA findings across these countries suggest that successful instructional leadership involves both direct and indirect practices, and the balance of direct-indirect leadership is influenced and shaped by the context in which it occurs. Again, there is no 'one way' to be a successful leader, and good leadership is about responding to and influencing the context. What was clear across the countries was that the principals all defined success broadly, were concerned with promoting social equity and authentic curriculum for the whole child, and all were deeply committed to contextually sensitive democratic participation and community development.

Leadership Preparation

In Australia, a four-year teaching qualification and registration are the only formal requirements for school leaders. This places Australia at odds with countries such as England, or many of the school districts in the USA, which have licensure requirements, often satisfied through graduate study programs. Whilst higher qualifications are not mandatory in Australia, possession of such qualifications may lead to promotion to leadership roles (Anderson, Kleinhenz, Mulford & Gurr, 2008). For example, an internal evaluation of the 160 participants in the first four cohorts of the Master of School Leadership at The University of Melbourne, suggested between 29 to 50% had gained a formal promotion during the duration of the program (Anderson & Gurr, 2008). Whilst these figures are impressive, the case for graduate qualifications relies more on belief than empirical evidence of effect. For example, Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson (2005) found that leadership preparation programs in the USA tended to be research-based, had curricular coherence, provided experience in authentic contexts, used cohort groupings and mentors, and enabled collaborative activity between the program and area schools. There were multiple pathways for leadership devel-

opment described with programs run by universities, districts, third party providers, and in partnerships between stakeholders. Importantly, they noted that there was a paucity of evidence about the efficacy of the different programs, which their on-going research program has only partially addressed (see Darling-Hammond, LaPonte, Meyerson & Orr, 2007). So, whilst there are many stakeholder groups offering programs, and there seems to be agreement on the features required of these programs, the evidence of effectiveness is weak.

School leadership development in Australia has for too long relied on an apprenticeship model in which aspiring school leaders gain the necessary skill and experience on-the-job as they moved up the ranks to the principal class (Su, Gamage & Miniberg, 2003). The findings of the ISSPP in Australia confirm this, with principals describing pathways that did not include formal requirements to gain knowledge outside of the school experience. However, what is evident with these successful principals is that they were all intellectually restless and actively sought new ideas to supplement their significant on-the-job training. The pathways they chose varied and we share three examples.

Vicki Forbes

Vicki was very career oriented. She set her sights to become principal early in her career. To achieve her goals she planned meticulously. Every experience was a learning experience. She planned her career and served her time as an assistant principal in high achieving schools. She applied for a number of principal positions before being successful in gaining Brentwood College. After each application she reflected and planned the next application making sure she researched the school she was applying for in order to get the best fit. She was deliberate in her strategy, continuously clarifying her vision and philosophy. It was only after she received her appointment as a principal that she embarked on a Masters in Educational Management. It demonstrated her quest for learning, but also her striving for perfection. She believed the formal qualification was important for her role and that it would enhance her credibility. Vicki is an example of someone with the personal drive, motivation, and determination to be a successful principal. Vicki always engaged in a significant amount of professional reading and reflection, and she continues on a learning journey by participating in professional learning programs both within the education department and through professional associations such as the Australian Council of Educational Leaders (of which she is a Fellow).

Jan Shrimpton

Jan's preparation for the principalship was based on her developing a personal leadership style, having a strong motivation to do well, participation in formal and informal professional learning programs, and the development of the ability to establish strong interpersonal relationships, and networks. She also built on her experience and developed a strong set of values.

Jan liked a challenge. She was drawn to the schools in the most challenging circumstances and she succeeded in taking on the toughest of assignments. It was at this stage that she started to develop a personal educational philosophy and set of values. They were based on her belief in making a difference with students of disadvantage. She believed that every child had the right to develop to their potential. Jan also had a love for learning and participated in as many formal and informal programs as possible. While she was a regional Student Welfare consultant she participated in a six-week intensive residential program run by the

Institute of Educational Administration. She explained how the program was life changing and gave her the confidence to stretch herself to take on the role of principal. Immediately after attending the course, Jan applied and was appointed as principal in school which she said was 'out of control'. Putting together her educational philosophy, learning, experience and newly acquired confidence, she took on the role believing that if she could bring the staff together as a team it would make a difference. Soon after taking up the role of principal she initiated a school merger and created a new school identity. Subsequently, she was asked by the Education Department to move to another school in challenging circumstances, South Morang Primary School; it was her work at this school that we investigated as part of the ISSPP. Throughout her time as principal she continued to engage in professional learning and networking. Jan retired in 2008 only to be recalled by the Education Department to lead yet another school in difficult circumstances.

Bella Irlicht

Bella Irlicht had been principal of this special school for students with multiple disabilities since 1986. During her time she achieved extraordinary things for the school and students. When she retired in 2009 she had transformed the school from a small school in a converted home with less than 20 students into a magnificent facility with an innovative curriculum and a world-wide reputation with 150 students. She was recognised with numerous awards including the Order of Australia (OA), CEO of the Year for Not For Profit Organisations, and Fellowship of the Australain Council for Educational Leaders.

In her time as principal Bella gained several formal qualifications including a Masters in Education, and Graduate Diplomas in Educational Administration, Curriculum, and Student Welfare. She travelled within Australia and overseas, and engaged in numerous professional learning programs. She was a superb networker, sought the counsel of many experts, and in her tenth year as principal engaged a coach, ahead of a trend to coaching that is now only gaining momentum.

The qualifications supported her knowledge and skill base, but it was her drive, determination, high expectations, and entrepreneurial spirit that were identified as the drivers of her success. She was described as a 'visionary doer'. It was not clear to what extent the courses, programs, and experiences added to the personal qualities and characteristics that distinguished her as a principal, but certainly her personal mission to make a difference to the lives of students with disabilities was influential. An example of how her combination of her inner drive to create a world-class school, and her quest for new knowledge helped the school is shown in a study tour she did in the 1990s to explore the concept of fully serviced schools. This trip was made possible through gaining a Fulbright Scholarship, the support of the Education Department, and her contacts with people such as Professor Caldwell at The University of Melbourne. The result of this trip was that she returned and created a school that now provides a fully serviced school, that is, integrated, educational, social and medical programs. Her continuing success as a principal can be attributed to her ongoing personal and professional learning – Bella epitomises the idea of life-long learning.

Summary of Leadership Preparation

In subsequent years to their appointments, the system in which these principals forged their careers has changed. Across Australia, credentialing and mandatory programs for principalship preparation are still not regulated or legislated by governments or educational systems. However, what has changed is a recognition that unless systems prepare and foster a new generation of principals, the education systems will be in crisis (Anderson, Kleinhenz, Mulford & Gurr, 2008). The process is no longer ad hoc and dependent on an individual's own ability to carve out their career. Education systems have developed a raft of programs including formal and informal programs, coaching, mentoring, and shadowing programs, regional based programs, internships and leave to attend international conferences and programs. Programs are designed to target various groups - emerging leaders, aspiring principals, beginning principals, experienced principals and leadership teams. There are sponsored formal qualification programs, including master-level programs, for aspiring and current principals. Various teacher and principal associations are also offering programs for their members. Education systems are also developing standards for the principalship and developing leadership institutes.

The state of Victoria, in which these three principals work, has over the last decade developed a comprehensive leadership development program that has been described in an OECD review as 'an outstanding example of large-scale reform...at the cutting edge' (Matthews, Moorman and Nusche, 2007, p. 28). The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) has established a leadership framework, *The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders*, that is based on five leadership domains; technical leadership, human leadership, educational leadership, cultural leadership and symbolic leadership. The framework is used for self-assessment, performance and development reviews, principal selection, coaching and mentoring, leadership induction and planning, and designing a range of professional learning programs that target different groups in terms of leadership development. Individual teachers and school leaders can access the iLead, 360 degree web-based survey to receive comprehensive feedback about their leadership linked to the leadership framework. The DEECD has recently developed a leadership institute that is to be fully functional in 2010 (the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership - www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/bastowinstitute) and which will be the vehicle through which a comprehensive set of new leadership programs will be provided.

This climate is very different from the experiences of our successful school leaders. So what does our research show us that is still useful today? Firstly, it shows that no matter what training and support is in place, personal motivation matters. Secondly, the successful principals in this study had a love for learning and participated in whatever formal or informal programs were available. Thirdly, they had a strong career orientation and they accepted personal responsibility for their development to create their own future. Fourthly, they demonstrated 'self-leadership' working from the 'inside-out'. They developed personally by reflecting on their practice and learning through experience. Fifthly they established a set of values and principles that guided their actions. Finally, they fully engaged in networks and regional and state committees of various kinds to offer their expertise, and to gain from the experience. Many of these are personal qualities and characteristics, and the question is can these be fostered and enhanced through the new preparation programs being established today?

Further Research

The ISSPP provided an opportunity to conduct extensive research into successful schools and successful principals in a wide range of countries, including Australia. For the Australian researchers it has provided the data to create a model that helped explain the phenomenon (Figure 1). Principals can directly and indirectly influence student outcomes. They can help set the educational agenda, influence teaching and learning, and build school capacity. The model (Figure 1) has been developed to achieve three objectives:

- to describe, explain and categorise various kinds of leadership interventions and outline their relationship and impact on student outcomes;
- to provide a conceptual map of the interventions used by the school's leadership; and
- to provide a framework for other practitioners to use as a guide to future action, including principal preparation.

The model also has applicability to other leaders in schools, with for example, middle-level leaders such as curriculum area leaders, able to use the level two interventions to help improve classroom practice; evidence from our sustainability research indicates that important roles that these leaders have in sustaining success. While the model (Figure 1) has been modified over time with new data, there is potential for further refinement based on the three areas of research outlined in this paper: instructional leadership, principal preparation, and sustainability of success. For example, with instructional leadership, the model does indicate the type of interventions required by leaders, but does not explain the complex interaction between the leader characteristics, the situation and the interventions. In terms of principal preparation, the model can provide an agenda for training and development purposes by identifying the interventions necessary to build school capacity. The model has the potential to include more of the personal qualities, characteristics and value systems identified with successful school leadership. The model indicates what interventions might modify the impact of external and internal change forces on the school. It does not explain why these interventions work in some circumstances and not in others, for example, the importance of the principals' attitude to change as indicated at Port Phillip Specialist School (Goode, Drysdale and Gurr, 2009).

There are other research agendas that could also contribute to Australian contribution in the region, and the researchers are open to explore these. However, the current model provides a framework for research. The three areas identified in the paper provide a sound foundation for further research that can build and refine the model to be more informative and prescriptive.

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