Australian Principal Instructional Leadership:
Direct and Indirect Influence

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Abstract
From the case studies of the International Successful School Principalship Project, and linked to a model of successful school leadership derived from the Australian case studies, three examples of instructional leadership from Australian schools are described illustrating both indirect and direct instructional leadership. Leadership of schools is complex, and whilst there are examples of direct instructional leadership by principals, the more typical path is indirect, working through and with others. Clearly articulated values, beliefs and vision, fostering of good relationships, developing staff, and understanding the broader context surrounding schools were all features of the work of the principals.

Key words author
Successful School Leadership, Principal Instructional Leadership, School Improvement.

Key words plus
Australia, Leadership Educational, School Superintendents and Principals, Leadership Educational, Influence.

Transfer to practice
Instructional leadership has a long and rich history, yet is a concept that is complex, with multiple interpretations as to what an instructional leader does. All three principals reported in this research were clearly influential in terms of improving student outcomes, yet how they did this varied. This is encouraging for those that are, or aspire to be, principals as it is clear that there are many pathways to attaining outstanding student outcomes. The complexity of principal leadership shown in this research provides a useful counterpoint to the simple, but important, emphasis on core leadership dimensions contained in recent reviews of successful school leadership.

Palabras clave autor

Liderazgo exitoso en escuelas, liderazgo en la enseñanza por directores de escuela, mejoramiento de escuelas

Palabras clave descriptor

Australia, liderazgo educativo, administradores escolares, liderazgo educativo, influencia.

Resumen

A partir de los estudios de caso del Proyecto Internacional de Dirección Exitosa de Escuelas, y en relación con un modelo de liderazgo exitoso en escuelas derivado de estudios de caso australianos, en este artículo se presentan tres ejemplos de liderazgo en la enseñanza en escuelas de Australia, tratando tanto el liderazgo directo como el liderazgo indirecto. La dirección de escuelas es un asunto complejo y, aunque hay ejemplos de liderazgo directo en la enseñanza por los directores, el camino más común es el indirecto, trabajando con y por intermedio de terceros. Se encontró que los aspectos comunes del trabajo de los directores fueron los valores y las visiones claramente definidas, el fomento de buenas relaciones, el desarrollo personal de los empleados y el entendimiento de contextos amplios alrededor de las escuelas.

Transferencia a la práctica

El liderazgo en la enseñanza cuenta con una larga y abundante historia; sin embargo, es un concepto complejo, con múltiples interpretaciones sobre el quehacer de un líder en la enseñanza. Los tres directores cuyo trabajo se trata en este artículo claramente fueron importantes para el mejoramiento de resultados de los estudiantes, al lograr esto de maneras distintas. Esto es importante para las personas que son (o aspiran ser) directores de escuelas, puesto que se deja en claro que hay muchos caminos para llegar a excelentes resultados. La complejidad del liderazgo que presenta esta investigación resulta ser un contrapunto al énfasis hecho en los aspectos principales del liderazgo en recientes estudios sobre liderazgo exitoso en escuelas.

Mots clés auteur

Leadership à succès dans les écoles, leadership dans l'enseignement par des directeurs d'école, amélioration d'écoles.

Mots clés descripteur

Australie, leadership en éducation, administrateurs scolaires, leadership en éducation, Influence.

Résumé

A partir d'études de cas du Projet International de Direction d'Ecoles à Succès et en rapport avec un modèle de leadership à succès en écoles, issu d'études de cas australiens, on présente dans cet article trois exemples de leadership dans l'enseignement aux écoles australiennes, abordant autant le leadership direct comme le leadership indirect. La direction d'écoles est un sujet complexe et même s'il existe des exemples de leadership direct dans l'enseignement par les directeurs, le chemin le plus courant est l'indirect qui travaille avec et grâce à des tiers. On a trouvé que les aspects communs au travail des directeurs ont été: des valeurs et des visions clairement définies, la promotion de bonnes relations, le développement personnel des employés et l'entente de contextes amplifiés autour des écoles.

Transfert à la pratique

Le leadership dans l'enseignement compte avec une longue et abondante histoire, cependant c'est un concept complexe, avec diverses interprétations sur le savoir-faire d'un leader dans l'enseignement. Les trois directeurs sujets de cet article ont été bien importants pour l'amélioration du travail des étudiants, l'ayant abouti de diverses manières. Ceci est très important pour les personnes qui sont (ou désirent être) directeurs d'école, vu qu'il est clair que les chemins vers d'excellents résultats sont très variés. La complexité du leadership présenté dans cette recherche se présente en tant que contrepoint á l'emphase faite dans les principaux aspects du leadership en récentes études sur leadership à succès dans les écoles.

Palavras-chave autor

Liderança exitosa em escolas, liderança no ensino por diretores de escola, melhoras das escolas.

Palavras-chave descritor

Austrália, liderança educativa, administradores escolares, influência.

Resumo

A partir do estudo de caso do Projeto Internacional de Direção Exitosa de Escolas, este artigo, relacionado com um modelo de liderança exitosa de escolas derivado de estudos de caso australianos, apresenta três exemplos de liderança no ensino das escolas australianas, abordando tanto a liderança direta como a liderança indireta. A direção de escolas é um assunto complexo, e ainda que no ensino, entre os diretores, existam exemplos de liderança direta, o caminho mais comum é o indireto, onde se trabalha com e através de terceiros. Encontrou-se que os aspectos comuns do trabalho dos diretores foram: valores e visões claramente definidas, o fomento de boas relações, o desenvolvimento pessoal dos empregados e o entendimento de contextos amplos arredor das escolas.

Transferência à prática

A liderança no ensino tem uma história longa e abundante. No entanto, é um conceito complexo, com múltiplas interpretações sobre os afazeres de um líder do ensino. Os três diretores cujos trabalhos são abordados neste artigo foram claramente importantes nos melhores resultados dos estudantes, conseguindo isto de maneiras diferentes. Isto é importante para as pessoas que são, ou aspiram ser, diretores de escolas, já que se deixa claro que há muitos caminhos para chegar a excelentes resultados. A complexidade da liderança apresentada nesta pesquisa resulta ser um contraponto à ênfase feita nos aspectos principais da liderança em recentes estudos sobre liderança exitosa em escolas.

Introduction

The concept of 'instructional leadership' has had a long history. Its origins can be can be traced back to the 19th century under the inspection systems that existed in North America, England and Australia. It rose to prominence again in the United States in the 1970s when the instruction dimension of the role of the principal was emphasised. Since the 1970s the concept has continued to evolve, although its definition remains somewhat confusing. From the 1960s onwards, definitions ranged from any activity in which the principal engaged in order to improve instruction, to certain types of activities or actions such as classroom observation (Gorton, 1976, pp. 72-73). During the 1970s and early 1980s, textbooks on educational administration focused on 'supervision'. The literature promoted the view that effective supervision of instruction could improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Supervision existed for the primary purpose of improving instruction (Neagley & Evans, 1976, p. 104). The key responsibility of the principal was instructional leadership and curriculum improvement.

The eighties and early nineties

Instructional leadership perhaps reached its zenith in North America during the eighties when the focus of leadership studies concerned the instructional leadership role of the principal (Murphy, 1990). Often this was tied into the school effectiveness literature, with, for example, evidence that the extent of instructional leadership is one differentiating aspect between high and low achieving schools (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Heck, Marcoulides & Lang, 1991). Many (e.g. Murphy & Hallinger, 1992) believed that principals needed to be trained in instructional leadership; in one state in the USA, instructional leadership was mandated as the primary function of the principal (McPherson & Crowson, 1994, p.61).

In a major review of the instructional leadership literature that included studies of administrative work activities, analyses of administrative training programs, and investigations of administrative coordination and control, Joseph Murphy (1990) proposed a framework for viewing instructional leadership which included four major dimensions:

• **Developing mission and goals** which included framing and communicating school goals. Effective principals were described as having vision and the ability to develop shared purpose through the way they communicated their vision for their school.
• **Managing the educational production function** which included promoting quality instruction, informally supervising instruction, evaluating instruction, allocating and protecting instructional time, active involvement in coordinating the curriculum, extending content coverage by developing and enforcing homework policies that require regular homework, and actively monitoring student progress.
• **Promoting an academic learning climate** which included establishing positive expectations and standards, maintaining high visibility in the classroom and around the school, providing incentives for teachers (e.g. increased responsibility, personal support, public and private praise and encouragement) and students (e.g. school-wide recognition systems, special emphasis on academic excellence), and promoting and encouraging professional development of teachers.

• Developing a supportive work environment which included creating a safe and orderly learning environment through emphasising effective discipline programs, providing opportunities for meaningful student involvement (eg. system-wide activity programs, formal recognition for successful student participation, use of school symbols to bond students to school), developing staff collaboration and cohesion through having clear goals and opportunities for teachers to be involved in professional interchanges and decision making, securing outside resources in support of school goals, and forging links between the home and the school.

In this description of instructional leadership there is a strong theme of supporting the school instructional program, with emphasis on quality teaching and academic learning. The two issues of developing mission and goals and developing a supportive work environment are seen as necessary for the core activities of teaching and learning to be effective. Yet despite the apparent importance of instructional leadership, North American research suggested that principals devoted relatively little time to it (Murphy, 1990). Decentralisation and an emphasis on school-based management was emphasising instructional leadership, yet increased administrative tasks limited what principals could do (Murphy & Hallinger, 1992). Joseph Murphy (1994) was especially concerned about this trend given the link between instructional leadership and school performance established by previous research.

Current conceptions

This view of instructional leadership, the 'strong, directive leadership focused on curriculum and instruction from the principal' (Hallinger, 2003, p. 329), was criticised because it tended to focus on the principal as the centre of power and authority. In recent times the conceptualisation of instructional leadership has spread beyond North America and broadened to include all activities that affect learning. Whilst educational leadership is perhaps a better term, as it provides a clear distinction from earlier conceptions of instructional leadership, the current views of instructional leadership are rich and comprehensive and, in many cases, can be seen as part of the educational leadership discussion.

In Australia the term 'instructional leadership' is seldom used. The preferred term is 'educational leadership'. There is a growing body of research in Australia that indicates that school principals have an indirect yet significant impact on student achievement. Peter W. Hill (1997) contended that principals have a central, if indirect role by helping to create the "preconditions" for improvement in classrooms, including

setting direction, developing commitment, building capacity, monitoring progress and constructing appropriate strategic responses. Drawing on Australian research, Brian Caldwell's (1998) analysis of educational reform in Australia during the 1990s showed that principals played a key strategic and empowering role in linking structural aspect of reform to learning and teaching and student outcomes. More recently Halia Claudia Silins, Bill Mulford and Silja Zarins (2002), Mulford and Silins (2003), and Pamela Bishop (2004) provide evidence and models which trace the impact of the principal's educational leadership on student outcomes.

From our own research on successful school principal leadership, it is our contention that the educational leadership role of the principal is now as important as at any other time. The unrelenting focus on student outcomes, increasing use of design approaches to school reform, and consideration of schooling for the knowledge society have forced principals to reassess their role and to reassert their instructional expertise. Within the Australian context this view is strongly supported. Peter W. Hill (2002) suggests that for schools to improve student outcomes principals need to devote more time to establishing preconditions and interventions directed at improving teaching and learning, and reduce time devoted to administrative and managerial roles. For John Munro (2002), principals need to be leaders *in* learning rather than just leaders *of* learning. He further suggests that principals need to understand contemporary theories of learning, have an explicit personal theory of learning, and be able to utilise this knowledge. Hedley Beare (2003) argues that seeing the future and setting a framework will be an essential educational leadership role. Brian Caldwell (2004, 2005) proposes that education leaders are likely to be the chief resource in preparing others in transforming learning in a short time and on a large scale. From New Zealand, Viviane M. J. Robinson (2006) calls for a reconceptualisation of the concept of educational leadership to have a stronger instructional focus and to construct this by backward mapping from what is desired at the classroom level to the type of leadership needed to support this.

The impact of instructional leadership on Student outcomes

One of the key issues raised by the instructional/ educational leadership debate is the impact of educational leadership on student outcomes. Early research was contradictory and unable to confirm the extent of impact, suggesting it was minimal at best (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988). Yet, the school effectiveness literature, as noted above, argued that

educational leadership was a key component of the characteristics of effective schools.

Most writers agree that the effect of educational leadership is indirect (Hallinger, 1989; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Bob Witziers, Roel J. Bosker and Meta L. Krüger (2003, p. 401) conducted a meta-analysis that showed the limitations of the direct effect, as 'the leader's contribution is mediated by other people, events, and organizational and cultural factors.' Kenneth Leithwood and Carolyn Riehl (2003) argue that educational leadership is mainly indirect because leadership is essentially an influence process where educational leaders are mostly working through or influencing others to accomplish goals:

> …the impact of educational leadership on student achievement is demonstrable. Leadership effects are primarily indirect, and they appear primarily to work through the organizational variable of school mission or goals and through variables related to classroom curriculum and instruction. While quantitative estimates of effects are not always available, leadership variables do seem to explain an important proportion of the school-related variance in student achievement (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 13).

In a further review Kenneth Leithwood, Christopher Day, Pam Sammons, Alma Harris & David Hopkins (2006, p. 5) conclude: 'leadership has very significant effects on the quality of school organisation and on pupil learning.' They also suggest that while school leaders have some direct effects on staff capacities, the strongest influences were indirect and based on providing supporting conditions that impacted staff motivation, commitments and beliefs.

Recent Australian research confirms this positive principal impact, including the impact on instruction. The Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes, LOLSO, research involving 96 Australian secondary schools, including over 5,000 students and 3,700 teachers and their principals (Silins & Mulford, 2004) found that leadership that makes a difference is both position-based (principal) and distributive (administrative team and teachers). But both are only indirectly related to student outcomes. Organisational learning, OL, involving three sequential development stages (trusting and collaborative climate, shared and monitored mission and taking initiatives and risks) supported by appropriate and ongoing professional development is the important intervening variable between leadership and teacher work and then student outcomes. That is, leadership contributes to OL, which in turn influences what happens in the core business of the school –the teaching and learning. It influences the way students perceive teachers organise and conduct their instruction, and their educational interactions with, and expectations for, their students.

The LOLSO research found that students' positive perceptions of teachers' work directly promoted their participation in school, and enhanced academic self-concept and engagement with school. Student participation is directly, and student engagement indirectly (through retention at school) related to academic achievement. School size is negatively, and socioeconomic status (especially student home educational environment) positively linked to these relationships. LOLSO has developed a well-defined and stable model accounting for 84% of variance in student engagement, 64% of student academic achievement and 87% of organisational learning.

A model of successful school leadership (described below) derived from our more recent Australian research reinforces the complexity of leading a school in the current climate and how principal instructional

leadership is typically indirect, mediated through a variety of processes. We now turn to consider this leadership model and describe the instructional leadership of three of our principals. In so doing, we are presenting two cases that confirm the typical indirect educational leadership role of principals, and one case which demonstrates a more direct influence. This paper builds upon an earlier and simplified version of this research (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2007).

The three cases

The following Australian case studies emphasise a complicated leadership model in which principals largely exert a strong but indirect influence on instruction –refer to Figures 1 and 2. In this model, principals exert an influence on student outcomes (broadly conceived) through a focus on teaching and learning driven by their own values and vision, an agreed school vision, elements of transformational leadership and increasing school capacity across four dimensions (personal, professional, organisational and community), taking into account and working with the school context, and using evidence-based monitoring, and critical reflection to lead to change and transformation. This model is explored in greater detail in David Gurr, Lawrie Drysdale and Bill Mulford (2006).

Figure 1
Australian Successful School Leadership Model
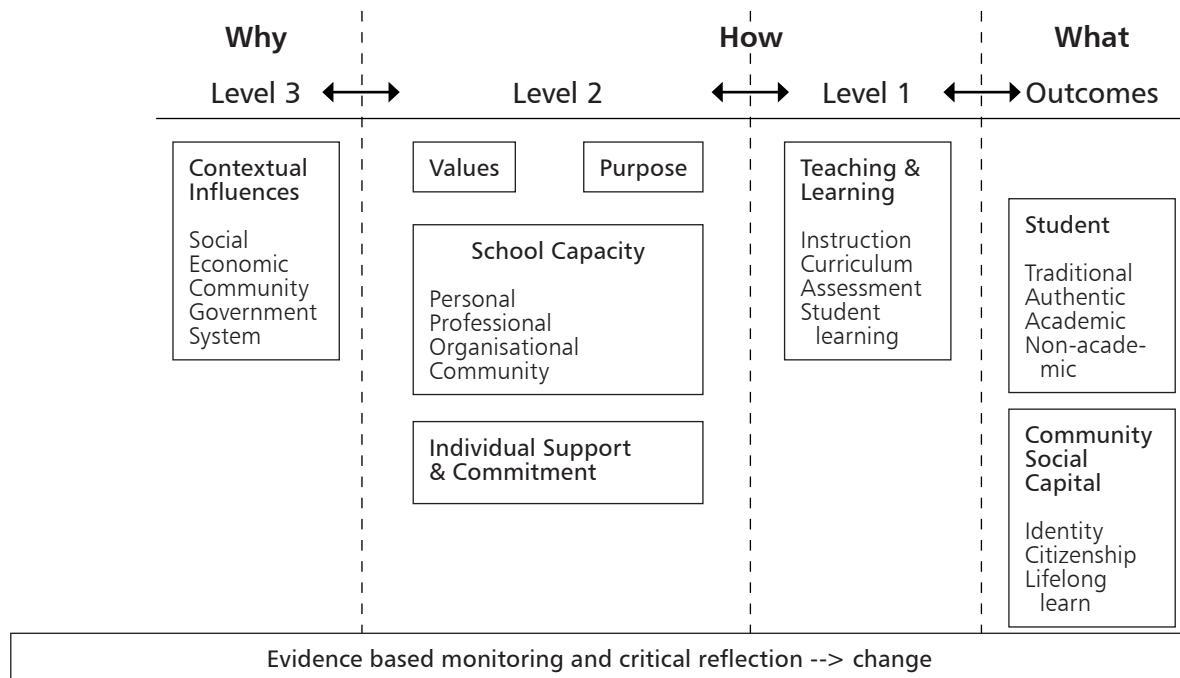
Source: Own elaboration.

The three case studies originate from Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford's (2005) fourteen case studies that formed the Victorian and Tasmanian qualitative contribution to the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP: further information about this project can be found in the special issue of the *Journal of Educational Administration, 43* (6), and in Day & Leithwood, 2007). The three case used in this paper were chosen to not only illustrate the powerful but largely indirect instructional leadership of principals (Vicki Forbes and Margaret Church), but to also highlight the possibility of direct instructional leadership (John Fleming).

For the Australian case studies, the selection of schools in which the principals meet the criterion of providing 'successful' leadership was an important element of the research. Whilst the schools did not have to be the most successful, they all had to meet certain criteria. In this respect, 'successful' referred to the richness of student and teacher learning experiences and the levels of school and student attainment, with three sources of information used where possible:

- Schools that had received a 'positive' school review report particu larly with regard to the leadership provided by the principal.
- Schools that, on the basis of statewide test and examination re sults (where available), could be shown to be improving their per formance over time at an exceptional rate.
- Schools in which their principals are widely acknowledged by their professional peers (through the local, regional and national net works of professional associations) as being 'successful' leaders. For each multiple-perspective case study, data included:
- Documents illustrating school achievements and student attain ment.
- Individual interviews with the principal (two interviews), assistant principal, curriculum coordinator (or equivalent), up to six other teachers, school council/board chairperson, and a school council/ board parent member.
- Group interviews with parents (two groups of 8-10) and students (two groups of 8-10).

Figure 2
School Capacity Building
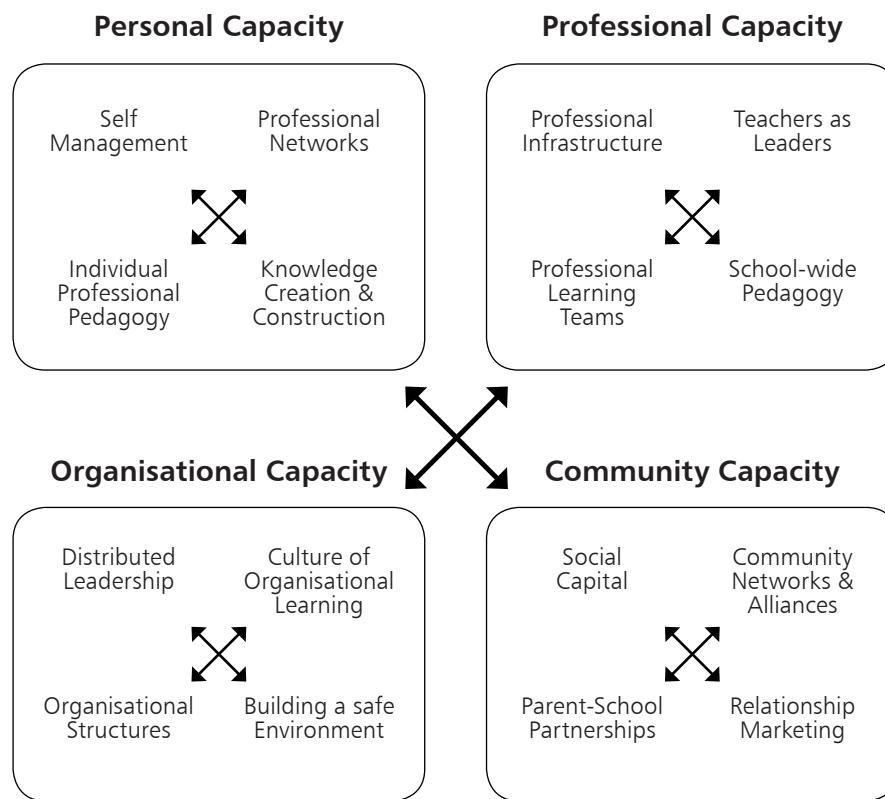
Source: Own elaboration.

Generally, two researchers conducted each interview. Interviews were recorded and notes taken by the second researcher. In addition to the collection of primary data, evidence was also obtained from such secondary sources as school development plans, school prospectuses, inspection reports, newsletters and examples of media coverage. These sources will be used to contextualise the empirical data and as a means of confirming their validity and reliability.

Vicki Forbes: Polishing the silver

Vicki was appointed as principal of Brentwood Secondary College in 2000 after having been an assistant principal for five years in a high profile 'successful' school that enjoyed a reputation in the community for academic excellence. Brentwood Secondary College is a co-educational, single campus school established in 1969 in a residential eastern suburb of Melbourne. By the mid 1990s the reputation of the school had declined in comparison with other high profile schools in the area. The school viewed itself as a dumping ground for those students that no other school wanted. By 1997 the school had launched a marketing campaign which saw numbers increase from 700 to 800 when Vicki became principal in the year 2000. Whilst the reputation of the school had improved, Vicki believed that the school was underperforming and she set about improving the school's performance in a number of areas, particularly student achievement.

Under Vicki's leadership school enrolments have continued to increase (currently 1350 in 2007), student achievement in English and mathematics in years 7 to 10, and performance across most study areas at year 12 has continued to improve and is well above state and like school benchmarks (based on socioeconomic and English language background status), the percentage of students progressing to tertiary education has increased, and there is improvement in other areas such as sport. The school is now regarded as one of the top performing government schools in the state. Much of the success was attributable to Vicki's role as an educational leader. This and other aspects of Vicki's work are fully described in Angeliki Karvouni (2005).

Most of Vicki's impact on student outcomes has been indirect, focussing more on work within level 2 of the model in Figure 1. Values, beliefs and vision are important, as they were in John's leadership. Vicki focuses considerable energy into attracting, retaining and developing staff, promoting shared leadership and decision making, developing personal and professional capacity of staff through a focus on improving teaching and learning, and building relationships. It is in this last aspect that she has a direct impact on students as she directly influences their values and beliefs about school, which leads to improved learning outcomes.

Values, beliefs and vision

Vicki demonstrated the importance of values and beliefs in making an impact. She had an ethos of a learning community and believed it was possible to integrate a focus on high academic achievement with a caring and trusting environment.

> I think we have mistakenly believed that you can't have high expectations, rigor and care and support and trust running together and integrated and that has been a mistake that we have made in the way that schools have been managed... I think the real challenge is to have the two integrated and I think that is what I have tried to do.

These values and beliefs were manifest in her vision for a better school. Vicki set a vision for an academic school. Her vision was for the school to be the leading secondary school in the area and school of first choice. Her moral purpose was to change the culture to one of high expectations and academic rigour: to pursue excellence but at the same time care about people. She also saw the need to create a culture where teachers saw themselves as professionals, able to make judgements based on evidence rather than the intuition so often used.

> My personal vision is that all of the teachers in the school would have the skills and capacity to be excellent class room teachers and therefore create learning experiences for students that would help them to achieve their personal best... (to)... create a culture where teachers see themselves as professionals who are able to look at evidence and act upon that evidence with respect to what's happening in the class rooms.

Vicki said she made sure the vision was re-enforced and repeated again and again until 'they got it'. The fact that it was transparent and people did get it was acknowledged by all stakeholders interviewed in the study.

Vicki was seen as successfully 'walking the talk' and used language, words, symbols and actions to re-enforce the vision. She used the language of high expectations with teachers and students.

> This is where the language we use is so powerful. It is not just about a achievement, it's about being the best you can be, it's about challenging and stretching yourself.

Developing personal and professional capacity: A focus on teaching and learning

When Vicki arrived at the school she believed the school was 'coasting'. Consequently she made 'teaching and learning' a major focus. The challenge was to 'get inside the classroom door to improve teacher and student learning.' She attempted to 'break down the silos' by to encouraging peer observation:

> Well we must be the only profession in the world that doesn't learn through observation. You have to encourage people to go into each others classrooms … It is that sharing and the trust that you have with that colleague that will enable you to

develop your own skills. Ultimately it is about the quality of the teaching that happens in classrooms.

Other strategies included: establishing professional learning communities, challenging staff to reflect on current practice, debating issues in staff forums, and reading and exchanging new ideas. She was specifically concerned that teachers should examine evidenced based data to inform decisions on pedagogy.

A change in culture in staff meetings also helped to focus efforts on improving teaching and learning. Rarely was that time now used for administrative matters. Meetings were held once a fortnight with every second meeting devoted to teaching and learning. The Head of Teaching and Learning described these meetings as characterised by 'ten minutes of shared reading and by think, pair, share' sessions about 'what we believe about teaching and learning.'

Attracting, retaining and developing staff

Because the school was growing Vicki selected key leadership people and was influential in selecting beginning teachers. Appointing the right staff was viewed as an important element in the school's success by most staff as the Professional Development Manager indicates:

> When Vicki arrived she was very much mindful of choosing the right person for the right job and by doing that it meant that the vision that she wanted to achieve was able to be implemented more fully. So she very much ensured that she had the key personnel where they should have been and also then got that group to work collectively.

Developing staff was a crucial strategy. While she believed the school was underperforming she recognised that there were talented teachers whose potential was untapped. She commented that it was 'like finding the silver in the cupboard and polishing it.' She consistently challenged staff to be their best.

Student relationships: Changing values and beliefs

Relationships with teachers, students and the community are a cornerstone to Vicki's leadership. Students have been encouraged to develop a strong work ethic, the success of which is evidenced by the high Year 12 results. But just as importantly,

> …there is an enormous amount of encouragement to get the best out of the students so that in a way we do make a success of it whether we get the results or not (Head of Department).

> Students come here to learn so this inspires teachers to produce their best (School Council President).

One area in which her leadership that could be described as having a 'direct impact' on student outcomes was her relationship with students. Whether it was in the school yard, in her office, or at other school and social activities, she made a point of establishing a trusting relationship with students and influencing how they viewed school. She used the language of high expectations with teachers and students:

> This is where the language we use is so powerful. It is not just about a achievement, it's about being the best you can be, it's about challenging and stretching yourself.

Shared leadership and decision making

Vicki describes her style as consultative and people oriented. She noted that you can have high expectations but still be caring. She explained

how she encouraged and tried to motivate people to take risks. She also noted that she used a delegating style in order to empower staff to take responsibility, for example, she noted that she often had to 'accept a lesser job' than she would normally do herself in order to 'let go and learn to delegate.' While she thought that leadership was as much an art as a science, she believed that you had to be strategic:

> Having that understanding between when the timing is right and when it is not is something that you would have to listen to other people, listen to some of your senior staff or the movers and shakers which don't have to necessarily be the senior staff, but seek advice. Go with you gut a little bit. What may work in one situation may not work in another situation.

Students confirmed her style as 'consultativ''; they saw her has being very 'professional', 'very focused and motivated', 'open door', and 'business like'. They felt that they could 'say anything to her' and that she was 'easy to interact with'. Teachers also described her as being collaborative, but one who was prepared to make hard decisions. Other described her style as 'transformational' or of modelling 'distributed leadership'. Shared leadership was particularly evident amongst the senior leadership team. For example, the senior leadership team acknowledged that teachers needed to be supported and reassured in times of change especially in developing new skills and adopt new pedagogies, and that it was the responsibility of the whole leadership team to dot this.

Summary

Vicki demonstrates an indirect form of instructional leadership and one in which much of her effort is focussed on level two initiatives. She has a clear vision, high expectations, fosters a positive and supportive culture, supports innovative teaching and learning, is good at attracting and retaining the right staff, builds positive relationships with the school community, fosters professional capacity building, and shows leadership that 'walks the talk'.

Margaret Church: Daring to be different

Margaret Church and Billabong Primary (all names in this case study are pseudonyms) were selected to highlight indirect instructional leadership in the context of a successful suburban Tasmanian primary school in a very low socioeconomic area. Traditional measures of academic achievement are less relevant in this school, with success measured more broadly in terms of a range of equally important, but largely non academic, outcomes. Billabong's success was found to be built upon a number of interacting factors, including the development of a new learning culture, and governance and structures within the school that facilitated democratic decision-making. Margaret's

leadership manifest itself in a strong, open, consistent style characterised by distributive leadership practices. What stood out was the principal's courage in daring to be different for the sake of her students. That this has been successful is indicated in gradually improving literacy levels, increased student self esteem and empowerment, improved social learning, greater sense of community within the school, and increased engagement with school.

Values and beliefs

Coming from an impoverished childhood herself, the only child of 'fabulous, caring' but older adoptive parents, the thing that strikes you about Margaret was her empathy with the Billabong students and their families. Specifically she was a passionate campaigner for social justice through the public education system:

> Why should kids have to have such a rough trot simply because they're on the wrong side of the tracks here or anywhere? Public education ought to always be about justice and giving kids a chance.

> Margaret described her motivation simply in the following way: 'I love kids, I want them to do well. I can show them how to get there if they don't know the rules of the game'. Margaret unashamedly instilled amongst staff a strong belief that 'nothing is too good for our students…nothing but the best'.

Driving change at Billabong Primary was Margaret's passionate commitment to social justice for her students. Literacy coordinator Lesley Garrison explained:

> She [Margaret] would not miss an opportunity to talk to us at staff meetings, to parents, to community members about our vision of where the school is going. Now, that vision entails valuing every child and it entails doing the utmost best that we can for every child in this school. We have high expectations of children's learning and their behaviour, I will say that they are high but they are realistic. Every child is seen as an individual. Teachers understand the context of where these children are operating from.

She also has a strong belief that the school has a key role to play in empowering the community by building social capital, vital in an area that was so economically and socially impoverished, and marginalised from mainstream society. Billabong Primary was promoted as a place where adults were made welcome, where their lack of faith and trust in authority can be restored, and where lifelong learning was encouraged and supported.

Building relationships, and showing individual support and commitment

Students, staff and parents found her approachable, a good listener, and someone who always had time for others. Early childhood teacher Christine Jago described Margaret as:

very welcoming to children. If a child brings a piece of work up to her office … she makes a big deal out of it and it's often those children that need a little bit of encouragement that we send up…

Not surprisingly, her office door was very rarely closed. Each interruption we witness, and there were many, was dealt with cheerfully, respectfully and fully, with Margaret making no apology for that fact that her priorities are always: (1) students (2) teachers (3) parents and other staff, and (4) district and central office demands.

Margaret was particularly good at recognising and valuing the efforts of students and staff alike. Literacy coordinator Lesley Garrison, who had taught at the school for eight years, found this 'odd at first because I wasn't used to it, to receive positive comments, verbal positive compliments from a Principal'.

She was upfront regarding her expectations, and liked to 'play with a straight bat', as she described it. The staff was in no doubt about her expectations of them, as Lesley Garrison recalled:

> …she has told us that it is no reflection on us but if we feel that we can't give that 100 percent that these children need, no negative thoughts about that on her behalf, but it might be time to move to a different school.

Understanding the wider contextual influences

Her openness and honesty —some would call it outspokenness– was not always appreciated, and caused some problems in her relations with others, including Department of Education personnel. For example, her decision, supported by her staff, that Billabong Primary would not officially join the Department of Education's Curriculum Consultation project as a project school. Although supportive of this department-initiated change, Margaret believed the school was already working towards major curriculum and pedagogical change, driven by intrinsic motivation to do the 'very best we can for our kids', not by the financial rewards attached to project participation. District and central office personnel criticised her decision, but Margaret was convinced that the school vision would be best served by continuing on the path of change begun two years earlier. She recalled:

> I think we're seen as off the mark slightly. Perhaps even bordering on resisting, which is an irony … because of the nature of [the school] context, this is actually groundbreaking here. So, far from being resistant and belligerent, this is highly progressive, but this is quality stuff that is happening here.

Organisational capacity: Developing a learning culture, trust and risk taking

On arrival at Billabong, Margaret 'pledged two things: that in the first year the key aim would be to shift the learning culture and number two there would be democratic decision-making and I've held to those'.

Developing a learning culture within the school meant reviewing the curriculum for relevance and coherence, and identifying four priority areas for school-wide attention. These areas were behaviour management, literacy, numeracy, and the arts. A cohesive and consistent approach to each area was being developed, with early indicators of success particularly evident in behaviour management and literacy. Predictably, these two major changes caused upheaval and discomfort amongst a staff that had 'done things in one way for a very long time'. Some formed a 'ginger' group intent on preventing change. While they did 'get a couple of scores on the board', they were largely unsuccessful in their attempts. A number of them have since left the school.

The new direction that the school is moving in, supported by a strong evidence-informed professional development program, depended very much on the development of a risk taking culture amongst staff, supported by Margaret. The confidence to risk take is based on the extent of trust within the school, which began with the level of trust between principal and staff. Teacher Annabel Hunter explained:

> I think we're trusted as teachers. I mean Margaret made me feel so wonderful when I came … and I just straight away started to think, she trusts me, she trusts me to do a good job, that helps us to feel confident in what we're doing… I'm sure when you feel that you're trusted you are more confident to take risks, try new things and openly discuss outcomes.

Risk taking is further supported by increased staff collegiality, where teachers work together to 'share the good practices and seek out other ideas'. The extent to which the school supported risk taking is confirmed by a 2002 staff survey which found that 82 percent of participating staff 'strongly agree' that 'staff is willing to take initiatives and try new teaching strategies to help students learn better'.

Summary

Margaret displays an indirect form of instructional leadership, one that is centred on work within level 2, with some elements of level 3. There is also a strong emphasis at looking at student outcomes broadly.

The success of Billabong Primary is due to a committed and focused staff, and to a principal who is similarly committed and focused, a good role model, and a strong and purposeful leader. As Margaret argued, deeper engagement of students in their learning is evidenced by 'thousands of examples of highly skilled practitioners engaging actively with children and making school life … a really enjoyable experience'. It is also supported by findings from the Grade 5/6 student survey:

- 96 percent agreed/strongly agreed that teachers make work interesting;

- 90 percent agreed/strongly agreed that their teacher is enthusiastic about school work; and,
- 88 percent agreed/strongly agreed that they give their best at school.

This success signifies a radical shift in teaching practices which were, as one teacher explained, previously based on 'just keeping them [students] quiet and putting the naughty kids in front of the com-   put-er'.

Sometimes it does pay for a school leader to 'dare to be different'!

John Fleming: Hands-on and direct instructional leadership

John knew early in his career that he wanted to be a principal because he is passionate and driven in his quest to make a difference to the lives of children, and being principal gives him the most influence on what happens in a school. After 15 years as a teacher, John became the assistant principal (1992) and then principal (1996) of Bellfield Primary School, and more recently, the head of the K-10 Berwick campus of Haileybury College (2006). Bellfield is a small (220 student) government school in a high poverty suburb of Melbourne, whilst Haileybury College is a large (more than 2,500 student), high-fee, independent school in Melbourne. The contrast between these two schools is dramatic. Yet, and this is perhaps the central feature of John's work as a principal, his passion, purpose, mission and fundamental views about education remain the same —to ensure that the children are provided with an environment in which they can do their best. John epitomises the 'instructional leader' concept that came to prominence in the educational literature in the eighties. He has exceptionally high expectations and a very positive, 'can do' attitude. He demonstrates a strong belief that every student can learn and achieve in all areas. He demonstrates a high level of energy, excellent pedagogical and curriculum knowledge, and a capacity to develop and align staff. He is ever present, regularly visiting classes to work with students and teachers, to help them improve. The following focuses in particular on John's work at Bellfield Primary School, and illustrates many of the elements of levels one and two from Figure 1. John's clearly articulated values, beliefs and vision, focus on providing teachers with individualised support and developing their personal and professional capacity are level 2 impact. There are also organisational and community capacity elements that John has emphasised, especially building a physically and emotionally safe environment, building social capital and developing parent-school partnership; these and other aspects of John's work are fully described in David Gurr, Lawrie Drysdale, Elizabeth di Natale, Patricia Ford, Richard Hardy and Russell Swann (2003), Richard Hardy (2006) and Brian Caldwell (2006). Of course level 2 is where most principals direct their influence. John is different from most principals in that he can demonstrate direct influence on the quality of instructional, curriculum and assessment and student learning —the level 1 impact. These dimensions of John's work also illustrate how John lives the four dimensions of instructional leadership mentioned above: developing mission and goals; managing the educational production function; promoting an academic learning climate; developing a supportive work environment.

Values, beliefs and vision

At Bellfield, John was actively involved in all aspects of school life. He was the driving force behind the success of the school. Part of the success was in John's clearly articulated beliefs about important aspects of the school such as expectations, pedagogy, relationships, and school structure, and his ability to align all with this vision. It is perhaps best to let John explain this:

> The school is here for the children to learn to their full potential. The curriculum side is very important —teach kids at their level. Social skills are very important for our kids —solving problems by negotiation and not aggression. The ethos of the school is based on two people: Canter's work on assertive discipline is important. In terms of managing the kids the emphasis is on effective relationships with the kids. All teachers have a very good relationship with the kids. The kids know that they are valued and respected. Slavin's work on whole school improvement is also important. The curriculum needs to be structured and explicit. It is clearly mapped out for teachers what is expected in terms of curriculum. Not only what students will learn, but also how they will learn it. Teacher responsibility to the kids is important, as is accountability to the principal -monitoring performance is important for both students and teachers. We are data driven, we benchmark the kids performance, and report regularly.

Direct influence on instruction, curriculum and assessment

John's clarity of purpose and process is perhaps best illustrated by the approach to literacy development used at the school with its strong focus on explicit instruction and the development of phonemic awareness.

> We believe in explicit instruction —we will teach kids how to do these things. Our kids are very strong readers, very strong spellers. They are strong spellers because they know how to break words up into parts and they know what letter sound combinations come together —very strong on phonemic awareness and very strong on phonics.

John was unapologetic about this approach and he expected all teachers to be doing this. The whole school was focussed on what John calls 'the four pillars'.

> We needed to get our pedagogy right and we needed to get our vision right and that is one of the things I did from the very start. In our triennial review in 1996 there was the data —more than 80 percent of our kids were failing. We needed to revamp and change what we were doing. Bellfield was right into the whole language at that stage and we have changed that around. We

believe in teacher directed learning and Bellfield has four pillars. I am sure any of the teachers at Bellfield could talk to all of our visitors about the four pillars. The four pillars are our vision and our pedagogy about how children learn. They are absolutely crucial to how we have turned this school around. The first pillar is that we believe in teacher directed learning, not child centred learning. The second pillar is that we believe in explicit instruction. Our third pillar is exceptionally important: we believe in moving kids knowledge from short term to long-term memory. Our fourth pillar states that none of the top three will take their place effectively unless you have very good relationships with your kids.

With the four pillars there were also 'six givens': excellent relationships between students and teachers, high expectations, excellent presentation skills, provision of feedback, display of student work, and setting the right tone for the school. Having a clearly articulated view concerning core pedagogical approaches is part of the story. John also has a clear understanding about the type of school environment that will promote learning. Students, he says, essentially need three things: they need teachers that care for them, they need friends, and they need to be given work at their level of ability.

Developing teacher capacity

John loves the challenge of helping people to develop, and particularly enjoys working with teachers to improve their practice. John works extensively with teachers and expects all to show commitment to the students and to the school, and to want to improve. He realises that not all the teachers will extraordinary teachers, but if they are willing to support the school direction and to work to improve their practice, then John will support them '100 percent'. For John getting the most out of teachers is about creating a high expectation, data-driven learning environment. As John describes, it is about creating 'a culture in which teachers are accountable, keeping data that is fair dinkum, setting high expectations, going in and watching teachers teach formally…' To lead a school, John believes that teachers want to see that a principal is passionate, determined and understands the work of classrooms teachers. Trust is an important element, and in terms of gaining the trust of staff, John talks about the 90/10 principle. Stated simply, to improve school practice focus on the 90 percent of things that are good, not the ten percent that needs improving. By doing this it shows faith in people and demonstrates an understanding of what they are doing. This gains commitment to then improve those ten percent of things that need improving; demonstrating rapport, and gaining credibility and respect are important in working with staff to change.

Summary

This clear learning and social framework –four pillars, six givens, three needs- backed by research evidence, practical experience, and presence, passion and energy, allow John to create an aligned and energised learning community, one in which students are able to do their best. He has a clear vision and establishes excellent school community alignment, manages the educational production function in a very hands-on manner, has high expectations about academic learning, and is expert at developing a supportive work climate. He is a very hands-on and direct instructional leader.

Conclusion

Principals are an important part of how schools help students to attain excellent outcomes. The model presented in Figure 1 and the three case studies provide a glimpse of the complicated yet important work of

Australian Principal Instructional Leadership: Direct and Indirect Influence

principals leading schools. 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 (but not necessarily by their employers, as in the case of Margaret), and used to drive improvement. John had perhaps the most clearly articulated and integrated view of teaching and learning, whilst 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. 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), yet 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 pathways to attaining outstanding student outcomes. In other words, the three case studies demonstrate that educational leadership makes a difference in different ways. The model presented in Figure 1 suggest how principals might exercise leadership by considering the different levels of impact on student outcomes within and evidenced-based, critically reflected environment focussed on change and transformation. The use of this model, along with others such as that derived from the LOLSO project, illustrate the complexity of leading schools, and provide a useful counterpoint to the simple, but important, emphasise on core leadership dimensions contained in models such as instructional leadership mentioned above, or the more recent work of Leithwood and colleagues who believe that leadership in schools is comprised of: building vision and setting directions; understanding and developing people; redesigning the organisation; and, managing the teaching and learning program (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

In the next stage of the ISSPP, the original principals (where possible) are being revisited approximately five years after the initial case study research to explore the sustainability of success. This will provide longitudinal and rich information about leadership and school success, and while the focus will still be on the principal, the original ISSPP research indicates that a broader view of leadership will also be needed. We have begun this research, with Lawrie Drysdale, Helen Goode & David Gurr (2009) reporting on the follow-up of a successful Victorian primary principal. However, this type of research is difficult because, in many cases by the time the principals attain the success needed to be part of this research they are also at stages of their careers where they are likely to move to other roles. For example, of the three principals mentioned in this paper, Vicki Forbes is on leave from her school and working as Regional Network Leader (a role in which she supports the work of up to 20 other principals and schools), Margaret Church is lecturing at a university, and John Fleming has taken a senior leadership role at one of Australia's largest independent schools (Haileybury College). In addition to the sustainability research, the ISSPP group is continuing to analyze the case studies from the original countries by conducting cross-country comparisons (e.g., Ylimaki, Gurr, Drysdale & Bennett, 2009) and to collect case studies from new countries (in addition to the original eight countries, by 2011 there are, or will likely be, case studies from Cyprus, Indonesia, Israel, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, Taiwan ,Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, additional States of the USA, and additional parts of China, including Hong Kong).

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