Parallel Leadership: The key to successful school capacity-building

FRANK CROWTHER
University of Southern Queensland

Email: crowthef@usq.edu.au

ABSTRACT: This article addresses the somewhat contentious issue of distributed leadership. It derives from a comprehensive 3-phase research project that focused on the implementation of the IDEAS Project in Victoria, Australia. The article presents a process-based model of capacity-building that was developed out of phases one and two of the research project. In phase three of the research, the leadership underpinnings of the six 'dynamics' in the capacity-building model were explored in detail. Fresh insights about distributed leadership derived from this phase of the research and are outlined in the article.

Based on the research, the article takes the position that distributed leadership is essential to successful capacity-building. It takes the further point that a particular form of distributed leadership, parallel leadership, is worthy of very serious consideration as a leadership model for school improvement processes.

Introduction

Concern for capacity-building has been a dominant topic of inquiry in international educational research over the past decade. The reason for the concern is well-captured by eminent British researchers Hopkins and Jackson (2003, p. 87):

Without a clear focus on 'capacity', a school will be unable to sustain continuous improvement efforts or to manage change effectively. That we know.

But what, exactly, is 'capacity'? Why is it important? How is it created? How is it sustained? And what forms of leadership underpin it? These questions provide the raison d'être for this article. In the article I take the position that the questions have concrete, encouraging answers. Indeed, taken together, the answers suggest that the education community now possesses the insights to ensure that school leaders can have a greater sense of strategic purpose during the next decade than was possible for the most part during the past decade.

To set the scene, I outline briefly what is known about school capacity-building. I also provide an up-to-date summary statement regarding distributed leadership, which is widely accepted as necessary for successful school improvement. I then proceed to describe the parameters of a recent research initiative that focused on a well-known school revitalisation process - the IDEAS Project (Crowther, Andrews, Dawson & Lewis, 2002) - in two Victorian (Australia) Education Department regions. The outcomes of the research are delineated and the features of a capacity-building model (labelled COSMIC C-B) that derived from the research are presented and discussed briefly.
The key component of the article follows from that discussion. That is, the leadership qualities that are associated with each of the six dynamics of the COSMIC C-B (capacity-building) model are outlined. To conclude the article, the educational implications of the research for the construct of distributed leadership, and parallel leadership in particular, are discussed.

Sustainable School Capacity – What we know

It was probably Peter Senge who first introduced capacity-building into the organisational and management literature. In attempting in 1990 to demonstrate a logical link between the concepts of knowledge society and organisational development, Senge asserted that two conditions must be met in the work of 21st century organisations: first, the notion of professional learning community must be accepted as integral to organisational development; second, professional learning communities, once established, must accept that their core purpose involves the creation and sustainability of significant ‘new knowledge’. Out of these dual premises the concept of educational capacity-building was born. For, according to Senge, when the professional community of an organisation such as a school creates significant ‘new knowledge’, and sets in place processes to ensure the ongoing refinement and dissemination of that knowledge, the organisation’s ‘capacity’ to achieve and sustain success is enhanced.

In the two decades since Senge’s pioneering thinking, capacity-building and its two key subordinate concepts - knowledge-creation and professional learning community - have become fundamental organisational constructs. The sequence of development in education can, I believe, be linked to six key milestones:

**Milestone one - 1995** – The idea that a school’s ‘capacity’ influences the nature and quality of student learning was introduced into the educational literature in 1995 by University of Wisconsin-Madison researchers, Fred Newmann and Gary Wehlage. Subsequently, Bruce King and Newmann (1999, pp. 1-4) undertook nationwide research that enabled them to assert that a school’s capacity to affect the quality of instruction in classrooms comprises four distinct but interrelated dimensions:

- teachers’ knowledge, skills and dispositions
- professional learning, focused on: (i) a concentration on student learning; (ii) collaborative planning and decision-making; (iii) sustained effort; (iv) teachers learning as a community
- program coherence
- technical resources.

**Milestone two - 2001** – The notion of ‘spheres of capacity’ was developed by Canadian researchers Coral Mitchell and Larry Sackney. Their model is based around three ‘spheres’, each of which they assert must be developed if a school’s overall capacity is to be enhanced:

- the personal sphere - in which individual professionals establish connections between their practices, values and knowledge, through reflection
• the **interpersonal** sphere - in which groups and teams share knowledge about both good practice and how to build effective teams

• the **organisational** sphere - in which shared leadership, schoolwide collaborative practices and associated supportive mechanisms are conceptualised, trialled and refined.

Mitchell and Sackney's research (2001) has revealed that sustaining the connections between the three spheres presents a particularly challenging leadership issue for schools. Nevertheless, their ‘spheres of capacity’ model is regarded by some authorities as perhaps the most comprehensive model of capacity-building yet devised (Hadfield, Chapman, Curryer & Barrett, 2002).

**Milestone three - 2001** – The concept of ‘capital’, now widely regarded as fundamental to school improvement and capacity-building, was probably first introduced into the school improvement and capacity-building literature in a landmark publication by British researcher David Hargreaves in 2001. Hargreaves’ model for school success has four central concepts:

• **outcomes** - the achievement of overt and unanticipated goals

• **social capital** - the school’s socio-cultural (trust) and structural (networks) components

• **intellectual capital** - the sum of the knowledge and experience of the school’s stakeholders that can be deployed to achieve the school’s goals

• **leverage** - the relationship between teacher input and educational output, as a function of teachers’ invested energy.

Fundamental to Hargreaves’ thinking is that high levels of social capital strengthen a school’s capacity to create intellectual capital. As he sees it, an **improving** school increases its social capital (especially its capacity to generate trust and sustain networks) and its intellectual capital (especially its capacity to create and **transfer** knowledge) by learning how to use leverage strategies based on ‘what works’. An **effective** school, on the other hand, mobilises its social capital and its intellectual capital through the successful use of leverage strategies that are grounded in evidence-informed and innovative professional practice.

**Milestone four - 2003** – The idea that capacity-building is inseparable from - and an essential response to - the construct of discontinuous societal change is the basis of the **multidimensional** model developed by British researchers David Hopkins and David Jackson.

According to these researchers, the idea of ‘managing change’ is an outmoded notion: what is important in 21st century schools is much more demanding – managing change that is **rapidly occurring, unpredictable and non-linear**. Hopkins and Jackson assert that the key construct in creating the conditions to enhance leading and learning in contexts of discontinuity is that of ‘capacity’. Their capacity-building model contains five dimensions:

• **foundational conditions** - creating environmental orderliness and a sense of purpose

• **the personal** - building knowledge and skills and constructing new knowledge through reflective professional practice
• **the interpersonal** - working together on shared purposes and taking collective responsibility for each other's learning and well-being

• **the organisational** - building, developing and redesigning workplaces that create, maintain and sustain organisational processes

• **external opportunities** - becoming entrepreneurial, creative and resourceful with external agencies and initiatives.

Hopkins and Jackson maintain that without 'dispersed leadership' their vision of capacity is not achievable since the five dimensions cannot be effectively developed.

**Milestone five - 2005** – the responsibility of education systems (as opposed to individual schools) in capacity-building has been asserted particularly forcefully by Canadian researcher Michael Fullan (2005). Fullan asserts that sustainability is the capacity of an education system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement. He identifies eight system-level elements of capacity-building for sustainability:

• public service with moral purpose

• commitment to changing context at all levels

• internal capacity-building through networks

• vertical relationships that are co-dependent, encompassing both capacity-building and accountability

• deep learning

• dual commitment to short term and long term results

• cyclical energising

• the 'long lever' of leadership.

Fullan (2005, pp. 10-11) concludes that:

There is no chance that large-scale reform will happen, let alone stick, unless capacity building is a central component of the strategy.

**Milestone six - 2006** – The significance of leadership in sustained capacity-building has been explored comprehensively by Canadians Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink (2006), who have noted that the United Nations *Decade of Sustainability* (2005-2014) is now well advanced and that substantial progress is being made in conceptualising sustainable educational change (p. 2). These authorities have identified five core components of educational improvement that they assert are essential to sustained educational success and that require new and powerful forms of systemic and school leadership:

• reducing the excesses of standardized testing and emphasizing teacher-developed assessments

• becoming less punitive towards school underperformance, and emphasizing strong support systems for struggling schools

• restoring educational diversity by encouraging schools to develop specialist emphases and identities

• working to retain high-quality teachers by developing new recognition and reward systems for classroom teachers
• emphasising the importance of ‘schoolwide’ and ‘careerlong’ leadership forms (pp. 14-16).

Hargreaves and Fink’s practical, and politically-attuned, analysis is largely consistent with the recently expressed view of Australian educational authority, Bill Mulford (2010, p. 146) that:

All players in educational improvement...need to develop more realistic expectations about the pace and nature of reforms. Improvement in outcomes takes longer than an election cycle and accumulating evidence of success requires even more time.

Each of these six highly credible models has made an important contribution to our understanding of school-based capacity-building. Each model has distinctive features and thus will appeal to different educational leaders. The Victorian IDEAS Project borrowed from all six models and the ensuing research culminated in creation of a capacity-building framework (COSMIC C-B) that presumes to extend the core construct to a new plane of understanding.

Leadership as a Distributed Quality – Recent developments

David Hopkins and David Jackson (2003, p. 100) stated recently that:

Knowledge creation and knowledge-shaping are processes at the heart of leadership of collaborative inquiry. Capacity generation is the outcome – of both the process and the products.

*Knowledge creation and shaping....... leadership....... capacity-generation.......* In spite of the immense progress made by educational researchers’ and thinkers since Senge’s pioneering endeavours two decades ago, the intricacies, complexities and subtleties that link these three constructs continue to confound educational researchers, leaders and practitioners. But four particular insights that are relevant to the central role of leadership in school improvement and capacity-building have nevertheless emerged during this time.

*First* is the establishment of a direct relationship between leadership as a distributed quality and successful school improvement. Traditional constructions of educational leadership, focused on the principalship, are now regarded as unsuited to, and inadequate for, processes of organisational learning, knowledge creation and sustainability. Researchers such as Raelin (2000, p. 18) and Solansky (2008, p. 334), for example, have asserted that constructs such as ‘team leadership’, ‘leaderful organizations’ and ‘we the leaders’ are not only suited to socio-cultural values associated with modern liberal democratic life but are justified for school application on grounds of research into school effectiveness. There is also compelling evidence that distributed leadership can contribute to school effectiveness by developing learning communities. Harris (2004), Timperley (2005), and Mulford (2003) are leading international scholars who support this important conclusion.

*Second*, and seemingly in contrast with the first insight, is the lack of established clarity regarding what ‘distributed’ leadership actually means in schools. Hopkins and Jackson (2003, p. 97) have noted that:
Despite more than two decades of writing about organizational learning...we are still in a position of needing to develop understandings about what leadership really involves when it is distributed, how schools might function and act differently and what operational images of distributed leadership in action might look like.

In similar vein, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) have cautioned that distributed leadership has a variety of meanings and seems to have a variety of vague descriptors, including ‘devolved’, ‘dispersed’, ‘shared’, ‘teamed’ and ‘democratic’. Consistent with this theme, Leithwood and Jantzi (2000, p. 202) have asserted that:

One slice of the educational literature seems mostly to be about ‘leadership by adjective’; a new qualifier is added to the term leadership at least annually, creating the misguided impression that something new has been discovered.

It can only be concluded that the international research agenda, both conceptually and empirically, in relation to distributed leadership in school contexts is far from complete.

Third is the rapidly evolving international policy context for distributed leadership practice. Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008) have noted that, as a result of the ever-growing phenomenon of the school as a learning organisation, interest in, and provision for, middle management is spreading and teachers are taking on a wide range of formal roles and responsibilities for leading and managing in schools. They note (pp. 78-80) that, in Spain, teachers with specialist skills are provided reduced workloads to assume the role of leadership assistants; in New Zealand, teachers have access to senior practitioner roles; in Finland, teachers assume district-wide educational coordination responsibilities; in the U.S., many jurisdictions have introduced ‘lead teacher’ classifications as a way of facilitating schoolwide curriculum and pedagogical development and mentoring junior and new staff; and, in Korea, ‘chief teachers’ take care of middle-rung supervision. In Australia, meanwhile, a recent Commonwealth proposal for the future teaching profession includes official designation of a ‘lead teacher’ classification, with both classroom and schoolwide professional and pedagogical functions.

In this rapidly evolving global policy context, featuring ongoing developments in the status, roles and core functions of teacher leaders, it is essential to recognise the established importance of leadership as a distributed quality but probably not productive to ascribe immutable meaning to it.

Fourth, Linda Lambert (2007) has postulated a major consideration for school leadership, given the capacity-building focus of this article. Lambert endorses the concept of distributed leadership but notes that leadership in different phases of capacity development requires different functions (p. 316). For example, if schools are at ‘instructive’, ‘transitional’ and ‘high capacity’ stages of development respectively, the form of leadership that is required - of both principals and teachers - is necessarily different.

Lambert is one of the very few international thinkers to construe school-based leadership for capacity-building this way. In so doing she makes a singularly important contribution to the practice of modern school-based leadership and also to the research that underpins this article.

In summary, leadership for capacity-building is best thought of as a distributed quality. That much is agreed upon in the literature. But distributed amongst whom? How?
And for what purposes? These questions remain largely unresolved though answers to them are hopefully clearer as a result of the research from which this article derived.

**The Research Design and Methodology**

Twenty-two schools undertook to complete the *IDEAS Project* in Victoria in the period 2004-8. Consistent with the key principles of the *IDEAS Project* they undertook to accomplish the following functions:

- implementation of a five-phase, 3-4 year revitalisation process - *ideas* (Figure 1), supported by descriptive professional learning materials and ongoing assistance and advice from the *IDEAS Project* consultancy team

**FIGURE 1: THE IDEAS PROCESS**

- **Initiating:** Why are we doing this? Who will facilitate the process? How will we manage the process? How will we know if we are successful? What outcomes do we want to achieve? How will we raise awareness in others?

- **discovering:** What do the Diagnostic Inventory data tell us? What are we doing that is most successful? What is not working as well as we would like it to? What are our challenges? What do other school data tell us?

- **envisioning:** What do we hope our school will look like in the future? What is our shared understanding of successful pedagogy in our school? How will we know if we are successful? How will we facilitate this?

- **actioning:** How will we implement our vision, values and SWP? What outcomes do we want to achieve? How will we work towards alignment of the school elements? How will we facilitate this?

- **sustaining:** What progress have we made towards schoolwide pedagogy? How should we further develop and align our successful practices? What challenges are now evident within our school? How will we sustain a commitment to and capacity for ongoing school improvement? How can we sustain leadership of successful school revitalisation?
- establishment of parallel leadership roles and functions to manage the *IDEAS* process, encompassing metastrategic principal functions, teacher leadership functions and a designated *IDEAS* Facilitator role
- use of an established framework for organisational alignment (the *IDEAS Project* Research-based framework for organisational alignment (RBF) – Figure 2) and validated diagnostic instruments to ascertain (and enhance) the school's 'index of alignment'

**FIGURE 2: THE IDEAS PROJECT RESEARCH-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANISATIONAL ALIGNMENT.**

**STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS**
- Parallel leadership roles and functions
- A powerful vision & defined values
- Clear systemic/University links and supports
- Recognition of 21st century teachers' professionalism
- An embedded revitalisation process
- Focused resource decision-making processes
- Promotional activities in the community

**COHESIVE COMMUNITY**
- Communities of support for the school's vision and outcomes
- High expectations, by the school's communities, for student & school outcomes
- Embedded community engagement processes
- Embedded school-community service links
- Celebratory activities

**OUTCOMES**
- Student achievement
- Students' individual wellbeing
- Teachers' sense of professionalism
- Community perceptions and attitudes
- The school's capacity for sustainable progress
- School resourcing

**SCHOOLWIDE PEDAGOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND DEEPENING**
- Exploration/enabling of teachers' pedagogical talents and gifts
- Schoolwide analysis of successful T.L&A practices
- The creation of a schoolwide pedagogical framework
- Validation of the SWP framework with reference to authoritative pedagogies
- Intensive expansion of pedagogical principles into implementation strategies
- Specialised adaptation of SWP principles in one or more designated learning areas
- Encouragement of student 'voice'
- Linking of SWP principles to emerging systemic policies and innovative programs

**GENERATIVE RESOURCE DESIGN**
- Recognition of teachers/specialist teachers'/para-professionals' expertise
- Design of learning environments – classroom, schoolwide
- Curriculum development and adaptation
- Technology supports & enriches SWP
- Arrangement of time – enables innovation
- Aesthetic environment
- Curriculum development & adaption

**HOLISTIC PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**
- Nurturing of parallelism in the school's approach to leadership
- Participation in external networks
- The school's recognition of the concept of Professional Learning Community (PLC)
- Adequate time, space and support allowances
- Emphasis on individuals' professional capability
- Embedded protocols for professional practice

**Supportive resources**

Source: LRI Team, March 2010
development of a distinctive school vision and schoolwide pedagogical framework (SWP)

• implementation of a range of professional learning strategies to transpose the SWP into enriched classroom pedagogical practices

• creation of internal and external networks, encompassing project clusters, parent involvement and student leadership teams.

Preliminary analysis of Victorian Department of Education SAS (Student Attitudes to School) and SOS (Staff Opinion Survey) databases in late 2008 indicated that the 19 schools that completed the project appeared to demonstrate substantial improvements in teacher esteem and morale, as well as student attitudes and engagement, in conjunction with the project. Following discussion with senior Department officials, an 8-member University of Southern Queensland research team was established and a comprehensive 3-phase research design was agreed upon. The research problem that guided the Phase A research was:

What changes, if any, in school outcomes can be attributed to the research schools' implementation of the IDEAS Project, 2004-8?

The improvements in teacher and student data, 2004-8, that had been observed were found to be statistically significant (Andrews, 2009). Given that 17 of the 22 schools had been designated as ‘targeted’ or ‘underperforming’ by system officials in 2004, this conclusion was deemed to be worthy of detailed further investigation.

As an exploratory step in this regard, the SOS and SAS statistical data were grouped into three categories and the explanatory diagram that is contained in Figure 3 was created.

In interpreting Figure 3, three important (and somewhat contentious) hypotheses were developed by the research team:

Hypothesis One: When a school’s level of social capital increases, improvements in pedagogical practice will be at least as great.

Hypothesis Two: When the perceived quality of a school’s pedagogical practice increases, perceived improvements in student engagement will be at least as great.

Hypothesis Three: Improvements in student outcomes that occur in conjunction with a school improvement process take a minimum of 3-4 years to achieve.

With this broad conceptual picture in place, a second formal phase of research was undertaken. The Phase B research problem constituted an extension of the three hypotheses that were developed out of the Phase A research. It was as follows:

What lessons for school improvement can be learned from the experiences of schools that have achieved enhanced outcomes in conjunction with implementation of the IDEAS Project, 2004-8?

The Phase B research comprised case study analyses of the documented and validated achievements of five of the 22 schools. It was undertaken by the University research team with the support of Professor Bill Mulford in the role of methodological and conceptual validator. In analysing the case study data, the research team found that each of the five schools had experienced particular critical junctures - or turning points, or moments of truth - in implementing the IDEAS Project. In addressing the critical junctures successfully, each had been enabled to progress further through the five stages
of the IDEAS process. This was so even though each of the five schools had approached implementation of IDEAS in a relatively distinctive manner, reflecting its unique contextual considerations. As a result of the insights derived from the Phase B research, the research team, along with representatives of the five case study schools, developed the following definition of 'success':

School success is constituted of enhanced school outcomes in agreed high priority goal areas, based on (i) documented evidence of those outcomes and (ii) teachers' expressed confidence in their school's capacity to extend and sustain the outcomes into the future (Andrews et al., 2009).

**FIGURE 3: A DIAGRAMMATIC EXPLANATION OF THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ‘SUCCESS’ IN VICTORIA’S IDEAS PROJECT SCHOOLS, 2004-2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2004 level</th>
<th>2008 level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth in perceived social capital (trust, respect, shared responsibility)</td>
<td>Growth in perceived student engagement and learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research team then proceeded to develop the following definition of ‘capacity-building’:

Capacity-building is the intentional process of mobilising a school’s resources in order to enhance priority outcomes – and sustain those improvements (Andrews et al., 2009).

The six-dynamic capacity-building model that is contained in Figure 4 was then fleshed out by the research team and representatives of the five case study schools. The six dynamics that comprise the model have precise meanings, based on developments, events and decisions associated with the six critical junctures:

- **Committing to school revitalisation** - the first capacity-building dynamic - requires that school leaders engage in intensive values interrogation, resulting in justification of a priority need for revitalisation in their school. That need is then articulated with a spirit of hope, energy and purpose.

- **Organisational diagnosis and coherence** - the second capacity-building dynamic - involves development within the school community of a sense of shared understanding of the level of alignment of the school’s key elements.

- **Seeking new heights** - the third capacity-building dynamic - involves creation of a projection of the future that is grounded in confidence and hope. This projection manifests in two interrelated forms – a vision statement and a schoolwide pedagogical framework.

- **Micro-pedagogical deepening** - the fourth capacity-building dynamic - involves teachers engaging in one or more of three forms of pedagogical practice: intensive reflection on personal gifts and talents; conceptual expansion and exploration of the school’s pedagogical principles (SWP); and refinement and implementation of strategies relating to the SWP.

- **Invoking reaction** - the fifth capacity-building dynamic - involves the dissemination of significant new school-based knowledge through critique, networking and advocacy. It provides important mechanisms for refinement of the school’s creative products.

- **Consolidating school success** - the sixth capacity-building dynamic - is made possible by the embedding of core processes that have contributed to the enhancement of school outcomes. The processes involve strategic, professional learning and enculturation strategies.

To conclude Phase B of the research, the researchers labelled the model *COSMIC C-B* (based on the acronym for the six dynamics) and identified a series of features that they believed to be critical to it:

*First*, it contains the core requirements (i.e. the six dynamics) that any school should ensure are in place as it proceeds through its school improvement process.

*Second*, the six dynamics have an interlocking relationship, although they have individual conceptual meaning.

*Third*, the centrepiece is the fourth dynamic, *Micro-pedagogical deepening*. It is this dynamic where teaching, learning and assessment constitute the unequivocal focus of concern.
Fourth, it is underpinned by distributed ('parallel') forms of leadership. (The increased size of the arrows linking the six dynamics in the diagram in Figure 1 connotes the growth in the importance of parallel leadership as the capacity-building process unfolds.)

Fifth, it is concerned for ensuring that success, once achieved, is sustained.

Sixth, it asserts that each school is essentially responsible for its own improvement.

FIGURE 4: THE COSMIC C-B MODEL.

The Phase C research was then undertaken by the University research team. Eight IDEAS Project schools that had achieved significant outcomes in conjunction with their engagement with IDEAS were selected for analysis in terms of their underpinning leadership processes. The research problem that guided the Phase C research was:

What forms of principal and teacher leadership are associated with successful implementation of the six individual dynamics in the COSMIC C-B model?

The database for Phase C comprised four sets of data for each of the eight schools:

- empirical and descriptive evidence of school outcomes, 2004-8
- descriptive evidence of the school’s implementation of the five phases of the IDEAS process
- descriptive data relating to key events and key players in facilitating IDEAS, derived from researchers’ observations and post facto interviews with principals and teachers
focus group analyses, involving representatives of the University research team and five of the eight schools. During these sessions, all six COSMIC C-B dynamics were explored in relation to four core questions:

(i) Why was this dynamic important in enabling your school to progress through the IDEAS Project?
(ii) How did this dynamic enable your school to progress through the IDEAS Project?
(iii) Who did what, and how, to facilitate achievement of this dynamic in your school?
(iv) What forms of leadership were explicit, and implicit, in achieving the dynamic in your school?

Broad generalisations regarding leadership principles and processes across the sample were then developed and submitted to the eight school leadership teams for validation. This done, the research team developed the 13 conclusions that are delineated in the section of the article that follows. A summary of the three phases of the research methodology is contained in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Methods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>N=22 Victorian IDEAS schools (i.e. the 2004-8 cohort). Analysis of school, cluster and systemic SOS and SAS data bases. Creation of a preliminary explanatory framework for successful school improvement. Postulation of three hypotheses for successful school improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>N=5 schools (that achieved documented improvements in student and teacher outcomes). Focus group strategies for data analysis. Expert validation of analytical tools and interpretations of data. Development of definitions of ‘success’ and ‘capacity-building’. Creation of the COSMIC C-B model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>N=8 schools (that provided evidence of each of the six COSMIC C-B dynamics in enhancing school outcomes). Post facto analysis of school data by research team. Validation of findings and conclusions by individual schools.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Leadership for Successful Capacity-building – Findings of the research**

The outcomes of the Phase C research are presented in Table 2(a) - 2(f). The research findings in relation to each C-B dynamic, along with conclusions and an interpretative statement, are outlined. Following the presentation of the research data relative to the Phase C research problem, a set of generic statements regarding leadership for successful capacity-building is presented.
TABLE 2: LEADERSHIP CONSTRUCTS UNDERPINNING THE CAPACITY-BUILDING DYNAMICS.

Table 2(a): The First C-B Dynamic – Committing to School Revitalisation

Findings

- A school leader, usually the principal, either discerned a serious concern relating to student achievement, or was alerted to a serious concern by systemic (regional) officers.
- A definitive decision to revitalise was made and articulated by the principal.
- The IDEAS Project was selected by the principal in part because of its No blame, success breeds success, parallel leadership and teachers are the key principles.
- Staff were invited to endorse the process, and mostly did so at a formal meeting.
- IDEAS Project staff attended a staff meeting and outlined IDEAS principles and support mechanisms for participating schools.
- An IDEAS School Management Team (ISMT), comprising administration and teacher representatives, was created usually with a teacher as Facilitator.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The principal was primarily the linchpin in mobilising the wholeschool revitalisation process.
Conclusion 2: Credible external support systems were essential in enabling the IDEAS process to gain momentum.
Conclusion 3: The involvement of teachers in IDEAS management roles was invited, and usually accepted by individuals and/or small teams.

Interpretive discussion

Almost without exception, the principal was the focal point in decision-making relating to 'Committing'. It was principals who identified a need for serious change and sought to get started by working with and through the teaching staff. But two forms of external support were also apparent at this preliminary stage. First, the provocation of systemic (regional) officers was an important consideration in at least half of the 22 schools. Second, the IDEAS Project was available as a fully-resourced process to guide the 3-4 year commitment.

Also important in leadership for the first C-B dynamic was the IDEAS Project's 'critical mass factor' – that if 40% (or thereabouts) of a staff are prepared at the outset to actively support a wholeschool initiative it can be successful, provided that the initiative has obvious educational merit, is managed by the PLC (professional learning community), is appropriately resourced and distributed leadership is promoted (Crowther et al., 2002, p. 7). Staffs were alerted to this important assertion during Orientation meetings, along with a statement of the expectations and responsibilities of the 'not so critical 60%'.

In almost all cases, potential teacher leaders were invited to explore IDEAS Project leadership opportunities further through IDEAS School Management Team roles but did not assume formal leadership roles at this early stage of the IDEAS process.
Table 2(b): The Second C-B Dynamic – Organisational diagnosis and coherence

Findings

- The IDEAS Project Principles of Practice were distributed, discussed and posted in staff rooms.
- The RBF (Figure 2) was introduced to the staff, and its integrity demonstrated, by the IDEAS Project team.
- The concepts of parallel leadership and teacher leadership were presented at school workshops and relevant materials distributed.
- IDEAS Project diagnostic inventories (DIs) were administered to teachers, students and parents.
- The ISMT managed all aspects of RBF/DI activities, including the calculation of the school’s Index of Alignment, wholeschool conversation on DI data using the IDEAS Project Rules of Skilful Discussion, and report card preparation.
- Principals stepped back from RBF-DI activities and encouraged Facilitators to view themselves as teacher leaders.
- The school’s major ‘alignment’ needs were identified and strategies for development proposed.

Conclusions

Conclusion 4: Principals provided big picture explanations to staff regarding their aspirations and support for IDEAS and the concepts of parallel leadership and teacher leadership.

Conclusion 5: Credible external agencies were important in explaining the RBF, mobilising diagnostic processes, facilitating No blame relationships and establishing the foundations for parallel leadership roles.

Conclusion 6: Preliminary teacher leadership functions were set in place through ascription to Project Facilitators of schoolwide diagnostic, analytical and reporting strategies.

Interpretive discussion

School report cards that were developed out of the Diagnostic Inventory (DI) analysis for the most part uncovered a wide range of school alignment needs, encompassing, visioning, pedagogical, stakeholder, curricular and professional learning elements. Principals invariably accepted that meeting these needs required complex forms of leadership that they could not meet individually. This realisation enabled them to justify stepping back from the activities associated with the ongoing analysis of the school’s Index of Alignment, and follow up to school alignment issues. The net effect was that the newly created ISMTs invariably stepped in to the breach to lead schoolwide developmental activities – thereby facilitating the emergence of potential teacher leaders.

A second leadership factor relates to the work of the IDEAS Project consultancy team. These credible educational professionals took the definitive position with school staffs that they could be depended upon to contribute to all aspects of the 3-4 year revitalisation process; assisted with the interpretation of the diagnostic inventory data; made clear that their project was grounded in cutting-edge and reputable research;
asserted that they were advocates for the teaching profession; and re-iterated that the concepts of parallel leadership and teacher leadership represented a vehicle for vibrant teacher professionalism and empowerment.

The final leadership factor in relation to the second C-B dynamic relates to the managerial construct, ISMT (IDEAS School Management Team). The key ISMT position, that of Facilitator, was invariably a teacher or middle manager, or combination thereof in several joint appointment cases. The organisation of diagnostic surveys, the analysis of the survey data, and the preparation of a school report card represented for many teachers their first opportunity to assume schoolwide leadership responsibility. Most Facilitators recognised that they were being provided with a unique opportunity to develop personal leadership capabilities and took steps to ensure that they used the opportunity to full advantage.

Table 2(c): The Third C-B Dynamic – Seeking new heights

Findings

- School and community values were explored through formal school workshops.
- Potential vision statements were generated using IDEAS resource materials.
- A school vision statement was developed, with strong principal involvement.
- The IDEAS Project Principles of Practice were posted in classrooms.
- The IDEAS Project Rules of Skilful Discussion were distributed.
- Creative materials were developed by ISMTs for pedagogical workshops.
- A schoolwide pedagogical framework was developed, facilitated by teacher leaders.
- The IDEAS team assisted with SWP workshops.
- Leadership theories, and parallel leadership concepts, were presented to IDEAS team members, ISMT members and Project facilitators.

Conclusions

Conclusion 7: Principals were the key agents in wholeschool vision development processes.

Conclusion 8: Teacher leaders led SWP developmental processes, using the school vision as the starting point.

Interpretive discussion

Achievement of the educational functions that are associated with the third C-B dynamic took, on average, in excess of a year to complete, thus allowing for the possible emergence of mature leadership forms in the IDEAS Project schools. Indeed, various forms of distributed leadership evolved in all eight of the Phase C research schools as leaders sought to elevate aspirations, heighten expectations and pursue ‘new heights’.

In all eight instances, principals, or deputy principals acting on their behalf, demonstrated very obvious energy, enthusiasm and educational passion in facilitating and shaping processes of visioning across a period of a semester or more. In all eight cases principals made a point of taking responsibility for the final product of the process (i.e. a
school vision statement). Teacher leaders, either as individuals or in small teams, demonstrated similar energy, enthusiasm and educational passion in facilitating and shaping the development of schoolwide pedagogical (SWP) frameworks. In no instance did this achievement take less than a semester to complete.

While teachers contributed heavily to principals’ visioning processes, and principals frequently made substantial contributions to SWP workshops, actual leadership/management of the visioning and SWP processes was quite discrete – by principals and teacher leaders respectively. But the processes of visioning and schoolwide pedagogical development were in fact dialectically linked, with vision statements being approved only after they were found to have potential for pedagogical applicability and SWP frameworks being developed with approved vision statements clearly in mind. Indeed, the two constructs that constitute the core of the third C-B dynamic may be regarded as constituents of one holistic process, linked through the potency of an emerging parallel leadership that has been defined elsewhere as:

...a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity. It embodies three distinct qualities – mutual trust, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression. (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 53)

Table 2(d): The Fourth C-B Dynamic – Micro-pedagogical deepening

Findings

- Activities associated with the fourth C-B dynamic involved three forms: whole school exploration of SWP principles through processes of action learning and professional conversation; exploration of personal pedagogical talents and gifts; creation of instructional strategies to facilitate schoolwide application of SWP principles.
- Activities were led by the ISMT as a team of equals (ranging from 2-10 in size); OR co-led by the ISMT and one or more heads of departments; OR co-led by the ISMT and principal.
- Because of the newness to most professionals of the concept of ‘pedagogical deepening’, the advice of IDEAS Project team members was solicited on a regular basis.

Conclusions

Conclusion 9: Teacher leadership took on a life of its own in most of the schools.
Conclusion 10: Teacher leaders solicited and used principals’ support and ongoing advice and involvement from the IDEAS Project team.

Interpretive discussion

Once the SWP had been completed, pedagogical deepening activities in the research schools were evolutionary and ongoing. In achieving successful pedagogical deepening, the ISMT was the dominant leadership agency, with four manifestations: (a) as a team of equals, working with all staff; (b) as a team, but led by the Facilitator(s); (c) as a team, with heads of departments; or (d) as a team, with the principal.
Although the ISMT at this juncture in the C-B process was the core leadership agency, the structure and function of the ISMT changed regularly to accommodate changing features in school contexts and personnel and also in response to specific characteristics of the schoolwide pedagogy (SWP). Regardless, the capacity of the full professional community of the school to work effectively together, led by the ISMT, invariably matured during this (pedagogical deepening) stage. Teacher leaders, either individually, in pairs or small teams, became articulate and, in some cases, assertive, placing high expectations on colleagues and establishing trusting relationships with principals and other administrators.

Overall, the principal was actively involved in Micro-pedagogical deepening in about 50% of cases, and relatively uninvolved in the remaining cases. In only one instance did the principal assume a superordinate responsibility for directing pedagogical deepening activities. It is also significant that, as pedagogical deepening activities evolved, middle management staff (i.e. HODs, deputies, co-ordinators) frequently became part of the school’s pedagogical leadership team, motivated by their interest in the development of schoolwide accountability systems and the integration of SWP principles with subject and curriculum requirements.

Is pedagogical deepening possible without authentic teacher leadership? The Micro-pedagogical deepening research data suggest that the answer to this important question is an unqualified ‘No’.

Table 2(e): The Fifth C-B Dynamic – Invoking reaction

Findings

- ISMTs, in conjunction with HODs, coordinated the within-Department review and refinement of SWP principles.
- Colourful IDEAS brochures and PowerPoint presentations were prepared for community awareness-building, forums and cluster meetings.
- Regional, State, national and international forums were convened.
- Books and international journal articles were published.
- Principals promoted and advocated for IDEAS at the system level.
- IDEAS school representatives visited IDEAS schools elsewhere.
- Student IDEAS leader teams were formed.
- National and international educational visitors were received and introduced to IDEAS processes.

Conclusions

Conclusion 11: Parallel leadership became highly visible, with principals, teacher leaders and middle managers working in unified teams to present newly created school knowledge (visions, SWP, strategies for classroom implementation) in professional and public forums, and refine it, using forum feedback.
Interpretive discussion

In the various Invoking reaction exercises in which schools engaged, the direct focus of attention was invariably on school-created visions, values and schoolwide pedagogical frameworks. At least four broad areas of leadership-related activity were apparent:

- the activation of within-school networks to facilitate intra-department and inter-department implementation of SWP principles
- the mobilisation of external forums, clusters and networks to facilitate circulation of school-developed IDEAS Project products and critique of those products
- the dissemination of newly-created knowledge - about the school vision and SWP - in brochures and media presentations, to clarify and consolidate the school’s culture and identity in local communities
- advocacy for the IDEAS Project with system officials.

Of significance is that parallel leadership appeared to consolidate and take on a life of its own at the Invoking reaction stage of the C-B process. Without exception in the research schools, principals and teacher leaders - comprising individual teachers in about half the research cohort, and teams of 2-5 members in the other half - demonstrated the core values underpinning the definition of parallelism (i.e. shared trust, mutual respect and allowance for individual expression) as they engaged in Invoking reaction activities.

The researchers’ analyses of leadership practices in relation to the Invoking reaction dynamic led them to conclude that it was characterised by a newfound maturity in teacher leaders’ behaviours. In particular, teacher leaders who engaged in Invoking action activities demonstrated noticeably high levels of aptitude in explaining complex processes of knowledge creation, in public presentation, a capacity in accommodating negative or cynical feedback and in providing facilitative assistance to colleagues in other schools.

Table 2(f): The Sixth C-B Dynamic – Consolidating successes

Findings

- The principal and ISMT were the key agents in the orientation of new staff (including principals) to the school’s vision and pedagogical developments.
- The ISMT was informally endorsed as ‘custodian’ of the school’s vision and SWP.
- The fundamentals of distributed leadership, metastrategic principalship and teacher leadership became widely understood and approved by principals and ISMT members.
- The IDEAS process was accepted as an umbrella for ongoing school decision-making.
- Pedagogical deepening was accepted as an essential ongoing school process.
- Transitions in ISMT membership, roles and functions were undertaken by principals and teacher leaders through formal induction activities.
- IDEAS Diagnostic Inventories were re-administered and followed up.
• Visions and SWP principles were incorporated into principals’ annual and triennial strategic plans.
• A ‘morphing’ of IDEAS products with emerging systemic priorities (particularly literacy and numeracy) was undertaken.
• Staff members were in some instances consulted in the appointment of the incoming principal.

Conclusions

Conclusion 12: The consolidation of success required the embedding of processes (strategic, professional learning, enculturation), not people. But people must still take responsibility for those processes, if they are to materialise in meaningful forms.

Conclusion 13: Principals and teacher leaders’ personal understanding of parallel leadership and SWP were important in facilitating consolidation of school successes.

Interpretive discussion

The researchers concluded that six leadership constructs laid the foundations for the consolidation of successes that had been achieved during the 3-4 years duration of the IDEAS Project.

First, the principal was the key leadership agent in formally incorporating visions, values and pedagogical statements into strategic planning documents.

Second, teacher leaders provided the main impetus in enabling pedagogical principles to be refined on an ongoing basis.

Third, both principals and teacher leaders were heavily involved in the creation of distinctive cultural meaning that captured their school’s new identity, using metaphor, imagery and symbolism, and transposition into brochures and electronic packages.

Fourth, the ISMT, led by teacher leaders, was the key ‘transition’ agent in orienting new staff (teachers and principals) to the IDEAS Project in their school.

Fifth, the interdependence of processes of revitalisation on the one hand, and leadership as a distributed concept on the other, was recognised and asserted by key players.

Sixth, systemic support for school-managed revitalisation processes was found to be essential.

The 13 conclusions that have been delineated, and discussed briefly, have major implications for school leaders who are committed to building and sustaining enhanced capacity in their schools.

Parallel Leadership and Capacity-building – New insights

Hopkins and Jackson’s (2003) observation that ‘...we are still in a position of needing to develop understandings about what leadership really involves when it is distributed’ (p. 97) has been taken very seriously in our analysis of the leadership underpinnings of the
COSMIC C-B model. It is the research team’s view that, in exploring distributed leadership functions in the context of specific C-B dynamics, the foundations have been laid to facilitate heightened understanding of an emerging educational priority, namely leadership for successful school capacity-building. To this end, four important implications are outlined.

First, the leadership functions of principals and teacher leaders in successful school capacity-building vary in accordance with the distinctive demands of individual capacity-building dynamics. In the research schools, the leadership of the principal was found to be overwhelmingly important in dynamic one and the leadership of teachers in dynamic four. Other dynamics were characterised by a range of principal-teacher leadership combinations. Moreover, teacher leadership was at times undertaken by individual teachers, at times by two or three collaborative colleagues and at times by a management team of variable size. Only in a minority of instances did one teacher leader retain the key Project Facilitator role throughout the 3-4 year process. It is concluded that leadership that is ‘distributed’ has role-based functions and organisational arrangements that vary in accordance with the particular phases of a school improvement and/or capacity-building process.

Second, existing definitions of teacher leadership and metastrategic principalship should be expanded to incorporate capacity-building functions. Accordingly, the Teachers as Leaders Framework that underpins the IDEAS Project has been expanded to include a new element (see Table 3, the last element - Element 7) and the IDEAS Project Framework for Metastrategic Principalship has been expanded to include the same element (see Table 4).

Third, middle managers (deputy principals, heads of department) are critical to the success of parallel leadership. Three middle manager roles were observable in the research schools:

- deputy principals and heads of department – as model teacher leaders in the early stages of the revitalisation project (i.e. IDEAS), and as nurturers of potential teacher leaders in subsequent stages
- deputy principals – acting on behalf of the principal in a range of strategic areas (and as de facto principal in one instance)
- heads of department – as critical friends to the process, providing inbuilt checks and balances (particularly in pedagogical deepening developmental work).

Fourth, parallel leadership was observed to grow in maturity and importance as the revitalisation project (IDEAS) unfolded, as reflected in the size of the arrows linking the six dynamics in Figure 1. Upon completion of the project, the concepts of parallel leadership and teacher leadership were regarded by the staff, including principals, in all of the research schools as fundamental to the outcomes they had achieved and as having observable impacts on teachers’ professionalism.

With these insights in mind, adjustments are proposed to the existing definition of parallel leadership (Crowther et al., 2009). The revised definition is:

Parallel leadership is a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build and sustain enhanced school capacity. It embodies four
distinct qualities – mutual trust, shared purpose, allowance for individual expression and a commitment to sustainable school success.

TABLE 3: THE REVISED TEACHERS AS LEADERS FRAMEWORK

Teacher leaders ....

Convey convictions about a better world by
  o articulating a positive future for all students
  o contributing to an image of teaching as a profession that makes a difference

Facilitate communities of learning by
  o encouraging a shared, schoolwide approach to core pedagogical processes
  o approaching professional learning as consciousness-raising about complex issues
  o synthesising new ideas out of colleagues’ professional discourse and reflective activities

Strive for pedagogical excellence by
  o showing genuine interest in students’ needs and well-being
  o continuously developing and refining personal teaching gifts and talents
  o seeking deep understanding of significant pedagogical practices

Confront barriers in the school’s culture and structures by
  o standing up for children, especially disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups
  o working with administrators to find solutions to issues of equity, fairness, and justice
  o encouraging student ‘voice’ in ways that are sensitive to students’ developmental stages and circumstances

Translate ideas into sustainable systems of action by
  o working with the principal, administrators, and other teachers to manage projects that heighten alignment between the school’s vision, values, pedagogical practices, and professional learning activities
  o building alliances and nurturing external networks of support

Nurture a culture of success by
  o acting on opportunities to emphasise accomplishments and high expectations
  o encouraging collective responsibility in addressing schoolwide challenges
  o encouraging self-respect and confidence in students’ communities

Facilitate school capacity-building by
  o contributing to school revitalisation processes in forms manifested in the six COSMIC C-B dynamics.
TABLE 4: THE REVISED FRAMEWORK FOR METASTRATEGIC PRINCIPALSHIP

- envisioning inspiring futures
- aligning key institutional elements (i.e. vision, stakeholder expectations, school infrastructures, pedagogical processes, and professional learning)
- enabling teacher leadership
- building synergistic alliances
- building cultures and identity
- contributing to school revitalisation processes in forms manifested in the six COSMIC C-H dynamics.

To conclude, parallel leadership, as a particular hybrid of distributed leadership, is clearly more definitive in nature than has usually been presumed. It connotes variations in roles and functions, for teacher leaders, middle managers and principals, as well as linkages to systemic agencies, that have not been taken into full account in leadership research and theory building in the past. But that deficiency can now be addressed. It can be addressed because the dynamics of successful school capacity-building are becoming clear and their underpinning leadership dimensions are beginning to take shape.

References


