Leading pedagogical enhancement: The power of SWP in times of demographic change

Overview of the paper presented at CCEAM Conference June 6 – 10, 2014, at the University of New Brunswick (UNB), Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.
Full paper submitted to International Studies in Educational Administration (ISEA)

Dr Joan Conway

Senior lecturer and Associate Director (Research)

Leadership Research International (LRI)

Faculty of Business, Education, Law & Arts

University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia.

Joan.Conway@usq.edu.au

Dr Dorothy Andrews

Associate professor and Director

Leadership Research International (LRI)

Faculty of Business, Education, Law & Arts

University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia

Dorothy.Andrews@usq.edu.au

ABSTRACT

When teachers debunk the traditional conception of teaching in the 'privacy' of their classroom, and begin to embrace the power of collaborative pedagogical work - planning, teaching, learning and assessing, the power of a whole of school approach can be realised. And, when principals place the core of education – teaching and learning, at the centre of school management and leadership, the quality of whole of school outcomes raises the potential for the future of highly relevant schooling education. Never before has this approach been more urgent, as schools of the world embrace the rapidly changing demographics of their communities and learn to meet the needs of teaching and leading the learning of their diverse and multi-characteristic enrolments.

This paper presents a response to these challenges, the development of a construct, Schoolwide Pedagogy (SWP) and its implementation. Both the development of vision driven SWP and its implementation is firmly embedded in the mutualistic relationship between teacher leaders and the principal. Drawing on recent research conducted in Sydney Catholic Education Office system in Australia (Crowther, Andrews, Morgan, & O'Neill, 2012) there is evidence of relationship between the development and implementation of SWP and student achievement. This paper focuses on the way schools have used their visions and pedagogical frameworks to enhance whole of school quality outcomes. It illustrates the power of teacher leaders taking responsibility for pedagogical development and implementation, and the power of parallel leadership when the meta-strategic

leader takes responsibility for unleashing and trusting the creative expertise of teacher leaders in line with strategic management.

Leading pedagogical enhancement: The power of SWP in times of demographic change

When teachers debunk the traditional conception of teaching in the 'privacy' of their classroom, and begin to embrace the power of collaborative pedagogical work - planning, teaching, learning and assessing, the power of a whole of school approach can be realised. And, when principals place the core of education – teaching and learning, at the centre of school management and leadership, the quality of whole of school outcomes raises the potential for the future of highly relevant schooling education. Never before has this approach been more urgent, as schools of the world embrace the rapidly changing demographics of their communities and learn to meet the needs of teaching and leading the learning of their diverse and multi-characteristic enrolments.

After a decade of research and development with the school improvement project, IDEAS, the Leadership Research International (LRI, USQ, Australia) team has documented the history and concept of Schoolwide Pedagogy (SWP). The construct of SWP and its implementation is firmly embedded in the mutualistic relationship between teacher leadership and the principal. Teachers are the key to in-school pedagogical influence when there is an agreed statement of priority teaching, learning and assessment principles across the school. And, principals who articulate and practice meta-strategic leadership in support of an agreed school vision are leading with clear purpose for the whole of school enhancement and a healthy professional learning community.

This paper draws on recent research conducted in the Sydney Catholic Education Office system in Australia, and published in Leading and Managing (Crowther, Andrews, Morgan, & O'Neill, 2012, 18(2)) and Schoolwide Pedagogy: Vibrant new meaning for teachers and principals (Crowther, Andrews, & Conway, 2013). The research highlighted the impact of IDEAS (Innovative Design for Enhancing Achievement in Schools) on school improvement within a high performing system. There is evidence of relationship between the development and implementation of SWP and student achievement. This paper focuses on the way schools have used their visions and pedagogical frameworks to enhance whole of school quality outcomes. It illustrates the power of teacher leaders taking responsibility for pedagogical development and implementation, and the power of

parallel leadership when the meta-strategic leader takes responsibility for unleashing and trusting the creative expertise of teacher leaders in line with strategic management.

Background Literature on a School Improvement Project

The study from which this paper is drawn reported on schools that had actively engaged with the whole school improvement project (IDEAS) as designed, implemented and researched by members of the LRI. This project, IDEAS, is designed to enable school leaders to manage developmental processes in their schools with a view to enhancing and sustaining success – in teacher professionalism, in community support and in student achievement (http://ideas.usq.edu.au). In implementing IDEAS, members of the LRI IDEAS Team work with the school's professional community to illuminate the work of teachers and assist teachers and school administrators to achieve clarified direction, shared pedagogy and aligned infrastructures.

Leadership construct

Leadership in the IDEAS project is conceptualised as a distributed entity and reflects the shift "from a single person, role orientated view to a view of leadership as an organisational property shared amongst administrators, teachers and perhaps others" (Smylie & Hart, 1999, p. 428). Many authors support this broader conceptualisation of leadership, for example, Spillane (2006), Gronn (2008), Fullan (2005), Murphy (2005), and Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2008). Distributed leadership, Hargreaves and Shirley (2007) claim, is a Fourth Way [SL] construct because it ". . . builds capacity and develops leadership succession in a dynamic and integrated strategy of change" (p. 97).

In the IDEAS project, the term, parallel leadership is used to capture the mutualistic relationship that is developed between the principal and teacher leaders in engagement with whole school improvement. Parallel leadership is *a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action for purposes of schoolwide development and revitalisation to enhance the school's 'capacity'* (Crowther et al., 2002, 2009). Teacher leaders' functions in parallel leadership emphasise pedagogical enhancement, particularly schoolwide pedagogical enhancement (Crowther et al., 2002, 2009; refer to Table 1).

Table 1 Teachers as leaders framework

Teacher leaders …… *Convey convictions about a better world by* articulating a positive future for all students *Facilitate communities of learning by* encouraging a shared, schoolwide approach to core pedagogical processes *Strive for pedagogical excellence by* showing genuine interest in students' needs and well-being *Confront barriers in the school's culture and structures by* standing up for children, especially disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups *Translate ideas into sustainable systems of action by* internal and external networking *Nurture a culture of success by* acting on opportunities to emphasize accomplishments and high expectations

Source: Adapted from Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3

Principals' leadership functions in the construct of parallel leadership are conceptualised as 'metastrategic' (Crowther et al., 2002, 2009) and are outlined in Table 2. Meta-strategy is drawn from the work of Limerick, Cunnington and Crowther (1998) that links vision, identity, configuration (strategy, structure and identity) and systems of action. It is the enabling processes of the principal that builds significant leadership capacity within the school (Crowther & Associates, 2011; Dawson, 2010). Harris (in Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2010) has a similar view of school leadership:

> Meeting the needs of the twenty-first century schooling will require greater leadership capability and capacity within the system than ever before. It will demand that principals concentrate their efforts on developing the leadership capabilities and capacities of others. (p. 62)

TABLE 2: The Five Metastrategic Functions of the Principal in School Improvement

|	
Function One	Envisioning inspiring futures
Function Two	Aligning key institutional elements
Function Three	Enabling teacher leadership
Function Four	Building synergistic alliances
Function Five	Culture-building and identity generation

Source: Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009, p. 71

Capacity Building

Schools that have engaged in IDEAS have informed Crowther & Associates (2013) definition of capacity building, that is, "an intentional process of mobilizing a school's resources in order to enhance priority outcomes and sustain those improved outcomes" (p. 20). Fullan (2005) acknowledges that capacity building is a central component of the strategy for large scale reform. Further, Hopkins and Jackson (2003) claim that "without a clear focus on "capacity", a school will be unable to sustain continuous improvement efforts or to manage change effectively" (p. 87).

The *ideas* process enables the emergence, maturation and influence of three developmental processes – professional learning, SWP and culture-building – as indicated in Figure 1. It is through the power of these processes that heightened school outcomes are made possible.

FIGURE 1: LINKING PARALLEL LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESSFUL CAPACITY-BUILDING
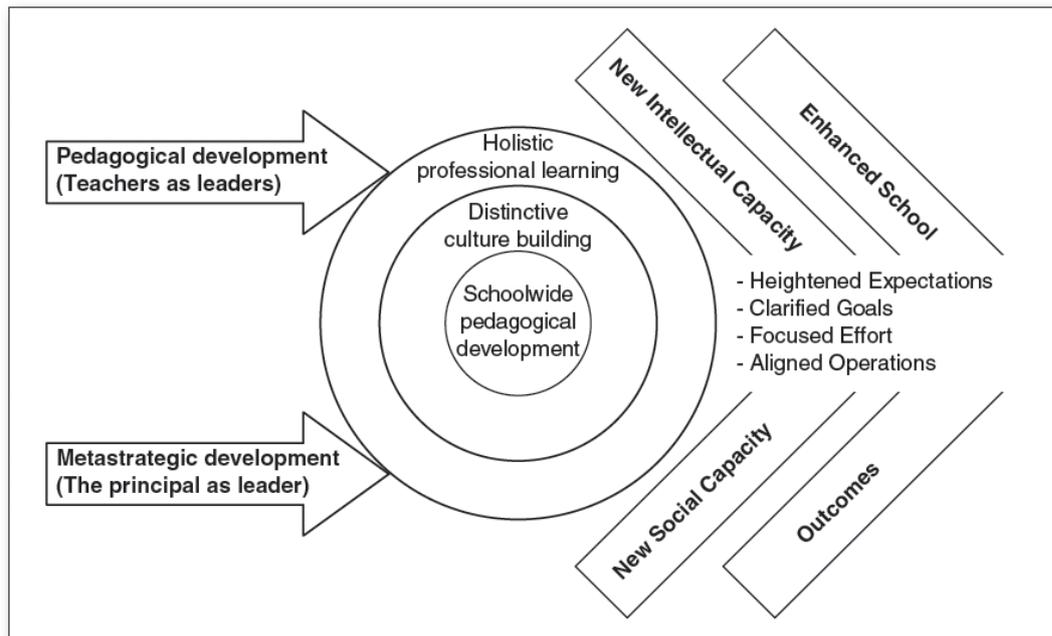
Source: Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009, p. 60

The Research Approach and Design

This research study used mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) that integrates the collection and analysis of both quantitative numeric data and qualitative (in this instance) case study data. The purpose was to initially establish a quantifiable measure of success, isolate out those schools (cases) that had achieved and sustained this success and then use this identification to build on an understanding of in-school influences that reportedly contributed to the successful outcomes (qualitative data). This process we have called "*drilling down*".

The research study in 2010 investigated the implementation of IDEAS in two cohorts of schools in the Sydney CEO, 2006-2007. The first cohort, comprising 10 primary schools, began IDEAS in 2006. The second cohort included 15 primary schools and five secondary colleges, and began the process a year later in 2007. The participating schools were mainly located in the highly multi-cultural, low SES, and high level of ESL assisted learning. The Sydney CEO system has experienced specially in the inner west and surrounding west and southern regions services a growing number of students coming from recently arrived, often refugee families. This change in demographics has brought with it many challenges for teachers in these schools to embrace the System's vision of increasing and sustaining the level of academic achievement for all students within their system
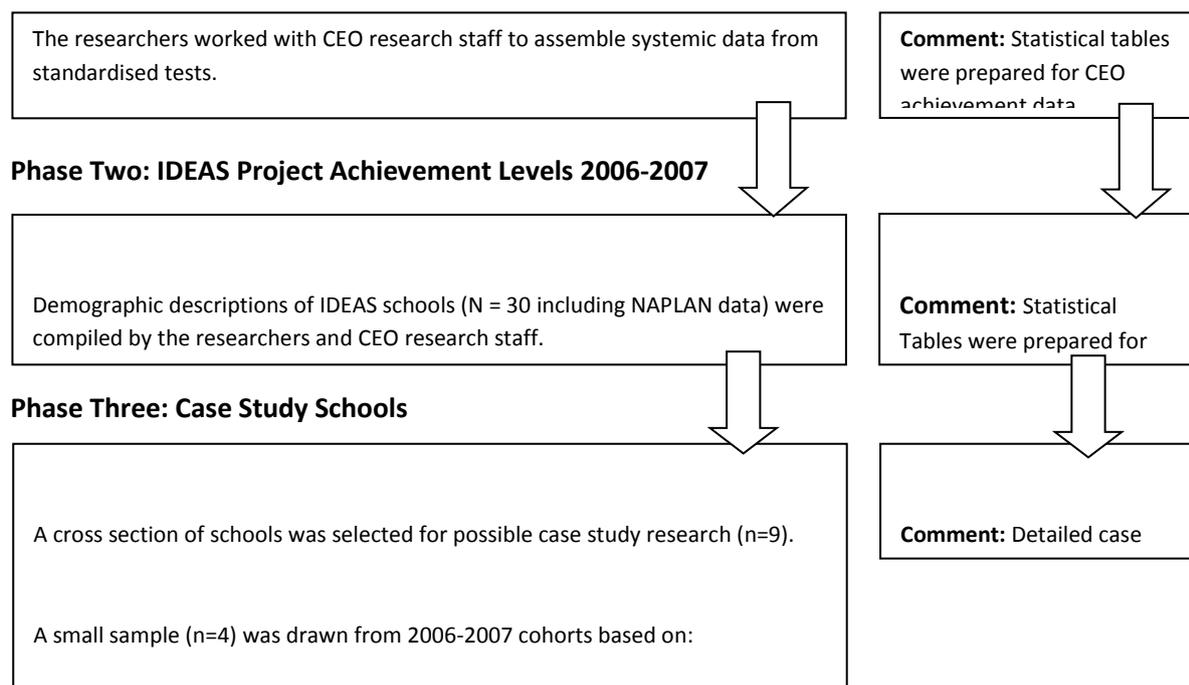
(http://www.ceosyd.catholic.edu.au/Pages/Home.aspx). Given the nature of the student population, when the LRI research team engaged with some preliminary case studies of IDEAS schools, we found that many of these schools were achieving well above most "like schools" and for some well above the schools within the CEO high performing system. The research sought to explore the internal and external factors that contributed to the schools' reported successes. The research process as captured in Diagram 1 included the following phases:

Phase one and two of the research included examination of standardised test results from CEO schools compared with NSW and National test results (NAPLAN) assembling systemic data from standardised test results of the 2006-2007 IDEAS cohort (n=30). These results were compared with System, State and National norms. Reports on student learning outcomes in literacy (reading) and numeracy (mainly NAPLAN, 2008 to 2010) were compiled on a school-by-school basis according to two criteria: (i) trends over time; and (ii) growth over time.

Phase three – a sample of nine case study schools was selected through analysis of the phase one and two research database. The sample selection was made on the basis of an interrogation of this database and subject to schools' availability and willingness, or otherwise, to be involved in the research. From these case studies, a smaller sample selection (four) was made for in-depth case study. Selection was based on achieving statistically significant improvement in Reading and/or Numeracy over a three-year period.

DIAGRAM 1: RESEARCH PHASES: A DRILLING DOWN PROCESS

Phase One: Systemic Phase – CEO Achievement Levels, 1997-2007

The researchers worked with CEO research staff to assemble systemic data from standardised tests.	**Comment:** Statistical tables were prepared for CEO achievement data

Phase Two: IDEAS Project Achievement Levels 2006-2007

Demographic descriptions of IDEAS schools (N = 30 including NAPLAN data) were compiled by the researchers and CEO research staff.	**Comment:** Statistical Tables were prepared for

Phase Three: Case Study Schools

A cross section of schools was selected for possible case study research (n=9). A small sample (n=4) was drawn from 2006-2007 cohorts based on:	**Comment:** Detailed case

Findings

A whole school improvement process and subsequent establishment of systems of action in the school have enabled ongoing organisational, professional collaborative and individual learning. This has resulted in sustained success in student leading outcomes. The outcomes at St Kilda's Primary School (pseudonym) are the result of the mutualistic action of teacher leaders and their principal.

Evidence of Success:

> We could define success at St Kilda's Primary School as the involvement of teachers, students and parents working together in line with contemporary pedagogy to create new knowledge and ideas. (Principal and IDEAS Facilitator)

School evidence of success includes: the

- open and engaging learning environments grounded in contemporary pedagogy;

- changes to teaching programs;

- students having a voice in their learning, through learning centres, personalising teaching programs, inquiry based learning;

- parents invited to give their opinions at forums;

- establishment of professional learning teams; and

- research findings that show evidence for success based on growth in reading and numeracy outcomes and trend data as measured by the NAPLAN Australian national literacy and numeracy testing program.

Accounting for the Sustained success:

1. Adoption of a process - the result of a long-term, multifaceted, complex process, which began with the principal's strong leadership and commitment to improving students' education and learning, and the decision to take action to make changes.
2. Acknowledgement of the needs of the community – that is, an acknowledgment of the nature of the learning situation for the particular context of ESL children and their families and community, St Kilda's needed to respond to its vast majority of ESL students who entered school with little or no English.
3. The development of a Schoolwide Approach to Pedagogy (ACTIVE Pedagogy) that enabled the facilitation of changes in practice to a schoolwide pedagogy that recognised the importance of developing language and thinking as a basis on which to facilitate students' acquisition and growth reading/literacy and numeracy.
4. Development of a teacher lead professional learning community – initially early in the process, the teacher-led process established a nucleus of committed people (including the principal) and the success of teacher parallel leadership to drive change and sustain the resultant new routines and ways of working well recognised in the school.
5. Developing ongoing systems of action – this included: a. the establishment of collaborative professional learning teams (as opposed to staff meetings) for which practices of professional conversations/skilful discussions provided support; b. teachers' professional development to

support pedagogical change. In conjunction with the principal (a member of the ISMT) managing the budget to achieve the appropriate deployment of resources, strategies and structures to facilitate the complexity of change was paramount; and c. to sustain practice because of loss of staff on long-term maternity leave and those leaving for promotional purposes it has been necessary to design an orientation program for incoming new staff.

6. Deepening pedagogy - following the construction of schoolwide pedagogy the implementation process involves the development of a shared pedagogical meta-language. All teaching has been underpinned by the common use of this pedagogical language and understanding of what St Kilda's pedagogy comprises. Also, through SWP there is further strengthening of pedagogy and a deepening through a common explicit practice where teachers contribute to and access timely internal and external assessment data. The pedagogical approach reflects a deeper understanding of the learners and teachers are better equipped to collaboratively develop their practice to meet the students' needs and so maximise their learning outcomes in reading and numeracy.

7. Leadership, in particular parallel leadership has ensured that ongoing professional learning with a focus on pedagogy and using the SWP lens for dialogue about existing, new, and systems-imposed practices has been a significant factor in sustaining success.

References

Bush, T., Bell, L., & Middlewood, D. (Eds.). (2010). *The principles of educational leadership & management* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crowther, F., Andrews, D., Morgan, A. & O'Neill, S. (2012). Hitting the Bullseye of School Improvement: The IDEAS Project at work in a successful school system*, Leading & managing Journal*, 18 (2), 1-33.

Crowther, F., & Associates. (2011). *From school improvement to sustained capacity: The parallel leadership pathway*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Crowther, F., Andrews, D., & Conway, J. M. (2013). *Schoolwide pedagogy: Vibrant new meaning for teachers and principals: Lessons from a successful school system.* Moorabbin, Vic.: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Crowther, F., Ferguson, M., & Hann, L. (2009). *Developing teacher leaders: How teacher leadership enhances school success (2nd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Crowther, F., Kaagan, S., Ferguson, M., & Hann, L. (2002). *Developing teacher leaders: How teacher leadership enhances school success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Dawson, M. (2010*). Becoming a Teacher Leader: A Grounded Theory Study*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership & sustainability: System thinkers in action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Gronn, P. (2008). The future of distributed leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration,* 46(2), 141-158.

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2006). *Sustainable leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2008). Distributed leadership: Democracy or delivery? *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46(2), 229-240.

Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2007). *Raising achievement: Transforming learning*. Boston: Lynch School of Education.

Harris, A. (2004). Teacher leadership and distributed leadership. *Leading & Managing,* 10(2), 1-9.

Harris, A. (2008). *Distributed school leadership: Developing tomorrow's leaders.* London: Routledge.

Hopkins, D., & Jackson, D. (2003). Building the capacity for leading and learning. In A. Harris, C. Day, M. Hadfield, D. Hopkins, A. Hargreaves & C. Chapman (Eds.), *Effective Leadership for School Improvement* (pp. 84-104). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Lieberman, A. & Friedrich, L. (2010). *How Teachers become Leaders: Learning from Practice and Research,* Teachers College Press.

Lieberman, A. & Millar, L. (2004). *Teacher Leadership*. Jossey Bass.

Liebermann, A., & Pointer Mace, D. (2009). Making practice public: Teacher learning in the 21st century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 77-88.

Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*. Nottingham: National College.

Limerick, D., Cunnington, B., & Crowther, F. (1998). *Managing the new organisation* (2nd ed.). Warrewood, NSW: Business and Professional Publishing.

Smylie, M.A., & Hart, A.W. (1999). School leadership for teacher learning and change: a human and social capital development perspective. In *Handbook of Educational Administration*, edited by J. Murphy & K. Louis, New York: Longman.

Spillane, J. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.