From Structural Conflict to Sustainable Innovation in School

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Current Reality
Accountability, Data and Standardization

The Future We Want
Personal, Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary Learning

Structural Tension
Tension, conflict, systems thinking and the creative process

Case Studies of Innovation
Teachers as collaborators, leaders and researchers

Conclusions
Scaling learning
A broad definition

System leadership is seen as the contribution of educational leaders to collaborative learning and action that is focused on improving student outcomes at a school and system level (Hopkins, Elmore et al. 2008).
“We often take great teachers and turn them into mediocre managers…”

Professor Emeritus Manzoor Ahmed
Key questions

1. What seem to be promising approaches for helping educational leaders to be more effective in improving system outcomes?

2. How can effective system leadership be developed and supported?
## The challenge

### System leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outdated systems</th>
<th>New definitions for quality education</th>
<th>System leadership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internationally, over the past twenty years, there has been a growing, frustrated recognition that our outdated education systems are ill equipped to address large-scale, systemic issues related to improvement and innovation in schools.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The emergent vision for education retains aspects of a traditional focus on discipline-based outcomes, while broadening its scope to include the personal, emotional and social learning of students, as well as the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in areas such as digital literacy and global citizenship.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Our existing education systems are ill equipped to address the challenges being presented by these new definitions for quality education, and that it is time to develop a more supportive, sophisticated and flexible approach, if large scale reform is to be effective in realising this new vision for quality education.</strong></td>
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Four Ways of Change

1960s - 70s
The First Way
Individualism and autonomy

1980s
The Second Way
Standards and accountability

1990s
The Third Way
Data-driven decision making

2010 -
The Fourth Way
New vision for ed. reform
Global Education Reform Movement
Sahlberg, 2011

- Accountability
- Data driven improvement
- Standardisation of educational and pedagogical practices
Disruptors and inhibitors for innovation
Hargreaves and Braun, 2013

Although educational accountability is meant to contribute to improvement, there are often tensions and sometimes direct conflicts between the twin purposes of improvement and accountability.

› **System level tensions**
  - Accountability versus Capacity Building

› **School level tensions**
  - Individual Performance versus Collaborative Effort
Integrative Solutions
Fullan, 2011; Masters, 2011

› Not either or, but a question of context and dominance
  • Top down accountability **and** teacher responsibility
  • Improving individual teacher quality **and** collaboration
  • Standard methods for assessment **and** deep learning
Education for the future we want
Systemic challenges and critical capabilities

Globalisation
- trade, migration, knowledge
- climate change, inequity

Advancing technology
- ICT, bio-tech, nano
- continuous, rapid innovation

Cultural collision
- language, beliefs, hegemony
- conflict, discrimination

Creative
- problem solving, partnerships
- within and across disciplines

Technical
- participation, ethics
- discipline expertise

Intercultural
- diversity
- cultural literacy
Global Education First Initiative
Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 2012

*Education empowers people with the knowledge, skills and values they need to build a better world.*

1. Putting every child in school
2. Improving the quality of learning
3. Fostering global citizenship
Innovating to Learn, Learning to Innovate
OECD, 2008

Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Competences in mathematics, science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression

Learning Environments

- Customised Learning
- Availability of diverse knowledge sources
- Collaborative group learning
- Assessment for deeper understanding
Future-focused student learning

Learning needs of educators

Learning Environments

Network development

Learning dispositions, life-long learning, 21st century skills

Action research, learning communities, teacher inquiry

in and beyond school, authentic, real-life

Local, regional and system change
Innovation and the Global Innovation Barometer
General Electric, 2014; Wagner, 2012

GE:

• Business need for high levels of creativity and technical competence

• Business concerns for lack of entrepreneurship and access to talent

Successful innovation…comes from having some expertise, but it also comes from the ability to listen well and empathetically, to ask good questions, to model good values, to help an individual more fully realise his or her talents - and create a shared vision and collective accountability for its realisation
Structural tension
Fritz, 1993

Dynamic Tension is created when you identify the distance between current reality and your envisioned outcome or goal.
Structural conflict
Fritz, 1996; Senge and Hanig, 2014

Goals & Beliefs

Current Reality

Goals & Beliefs

Goals & Beliefs

Personal Professional

Organisational Vision

Institutional Education

Emergent needs of students in a complex world

Common Societal Expectations

Educator Expectation and Aspiration
Vertical Transformation

Scharmer (2007)

Everyday Creativity and 4 Phases of Conversation

1. **Downloading**
   - Talking nice
   - What others want to hear

2. **Debate**
   - Talking tough
   - What I think

3. **Dialogue**
   - Reflective inquiry
   - "I am not right, my point of view seeing myself as part of the whole"

4. **Collective Creativity**
   - Generative flow speaking from what is moving through

Transforming the Ordinary to Extraordinary

In moments of possibility

DeWitt Jones

- Otto Scharmer

Leadership connects to the entire spectrum as needed by a situation

21C Institutions

21C Leaders

21C Teachers

21C Students
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## Case studies

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<tr>
<th>Lutheran Education Australia</th>
<th>Cognita Schools</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 84 schools, 56 early childhood centres</td>
<td>• 67 schools in 8 countries worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Over 3,000 staff &amp; 40,000 students</td>
<td>• Over 4,500 staff &amp; 30,000 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National, faith-based school system in Australia</td>
<td>• International school group, based in UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Representation in every state and territory</td>
<td>• Representation in Europe, Asia and South America</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Executive leaders learning hub</td>
<td>• Mid-level leadership program</td>
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Theory, methods and tools

Fifth Discipline (Peter Senge)

- Systems Thinking
- Team Learning
- Shared Vision
- Personal Mastery
- Mental Models

Learning Organization

Theory U

- Leading from the Future as It Emerges
- The Social Technology of Presencing

The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization
Cross study comparison
In each of the case studies, a focus on personal mastery was important in developing the participants’ ability to question their assumptions about the current reality of their practice and performance. In particular, the nurturing of this capacity for reflection helped leaders to transcend their habitual ways of seeing and past patterns of behaviour, in order to engage with diverse perspectives and consider new ways of approaching improvement. It was also interesting to note that the use of public forums for the promotion of self-development helped leaders to surface, articulate and test their personal ‘theories of action’ (Argyris and Schon 1978). In this regard, the forums were seen as important in fostering the building or deepening of trust between colleagues, as well as the subsequent development of the support and knowledge networks that helped leaders to overcome subsequent personal professional challenges.
In both the LEA learning hub and the LTT program, an emphasis on team learning helped to create greater alignment among leaders and enhanced their ability to work collaboratively on common goals. It is important to note that the forums did not work to eliminate disagreements or enforce conformity in the participants’ views and beliefs. Instead, the focus on team learning in each setting was seen to build a sense of belonging to a team and a shared commitment to the success of that group’s collective endeavours. Learning about the use of dialogue, along with the development of skills in relation to listening and questioning, were important contributors to team development in this area.
In each of the case studies, a focus on shifting leaders’ attention beyond the normal parameters and concerns of their individual roles helped to develop their ability to see the complexities and dynamics of the larger system in which they worked. This movement was seen as important in enabling leaders to develop a greater appreciation of the ways different parts of the system influenced each other and impacted on their domain. Leaders in each setting reflected on how building their capacity for systems thinking had often helped them to identify the root causes of issues, instead of focusing on their more visible or obvious symptoms. As a result of this learning, many leaders also displayed a greater willingness and commitment to work with others on projects that targeted significant systemic change, with the understanding that their own domain would also benefit from such organisational improvement.
In both the LEA learning hub and the LTT program, many leaders broadened their understanding of the process for creating a shared vision beyond a traditional focus on the leader’s ability to ‘sell’ their argument for a given initiative towards the development of a collective capacity to co-create a preferred future. It is important to note that the leaders in each study did not abandon their conviction of the need to sometimes provide formal direction to a team, but rather deepened their belief in the power of effective collaboration to define and achieve mutually valued goals. Many leaders reported that this focus helped to re-energise their practice and commitment to working with their teams. In this regard, the leaders often commented that the process helped to place their current challenges in context to the overarching goals for their work, and shift their focus from the experience of individual issues to collaborative approaches for systemic improvement.
Conclusions and recommendations
This paper illustrates the potential of structured approaches to leadership learning to build individual and collective capacity for effective system leadership. The evidence presented indicated that system development was promoted through sustained collaborative engagement with learning experiences that integrated a focus upon self-development, team learning, generative dialogue and systems thinking. In this regard, in each case study, it is important to note that the process for learning was as important as the content for learning in driving outcomes, with learning design a critical focus for those interested in the adaptation and transfer. The paper also highlighted the importance of maintaining a drive to action as part of this learning, in order to ensure its practical impact on system improvement.
In exploring the promise of different approaches for supporting educational leaders to become more effective in improving system outcomes, we should not be searching for a perfect, universal solution. Instead, it is important that we place our attention on gathering a range of effective strategies that can help inform the development and practical repertoire of both system leaders and those interested in supporting their work. With this work, the study of the approaches that effectively promote learning about system leadership and the application of this learning to practice is of paramount importance. In this way, we will not only help develop our understanding of how systems work and the ways in which they can be improved, but also how we can support each other to become more effective leaders of these systems for the benefit of all stakeholders – leaders, teachers, students and families.
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<th>Focus</th>
<th>Tensions</th>
<th>Parallel System</th>
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<tr>
<td>‣ Renewing teaching and learning</td>
<td>‣ Depth of practice versus initiative overload</td>
<td>‣ Knowledge and support networks</td>
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<td>‣ Adoption of a holistic, constructivist approach</td>
<td>‣ Individual accountability versus collective responsibility</td>
<td>‣ Prioritisation and alignment of goals</td>
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<td>‣ Introduction of a new state curriculum</td>
<td>‣ Hierarchical versus distributed leadership</td>
<td>‣ Leadership engagement and participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>‣ Restarting a failing reform</td>
<td>‣ Sustained versus episodic focus for reform</td>
<td>‣ Adaptable and generative</td>
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Victorian Essential Learning Standards

Dimensions of Learning

DIM 1 ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS
DIM 2 ACQUIRE & INTEGRATE
DIM 3 EXTEND AND REFINES
DIM 4 USE MEANINGFULLY
DIM 5 HABITS OF MIND

Physical, Personal and Social Learning
Knowledge, skills and behaviours in Health and Physical Education; Personal Learning; Interpersonal Development; Civics and Citizenship

Discipline-based Learning
Knowledge, skills and behaviours in The Arts; English and Languages Other Than English; The Humanities; Mathematics; Science

Interdisciplinary Learning
Knowledge, skills and behaviours in Communication; Design, Creativity and Technology; Information and Communications Technology; Thinking
Berklee School
Integrating staff evaluation and development (Martin and Edwards, 2005; Owens, 2010, 2013)

Focus
- Low levels of teacher collaboration and inconsistent practice
- Lack of engagement with research and networks
- Introduction of a new state curriculum
- Habits of Mind
- Improvement in student engagement

Tensions
- Sustained versus episodic focus for reform
- Individual freedom versus stewardship
- Formal versus distributed leadership
- Sustainability versus fad-ism

Parallel System
- Focus on continuous improvement in learning for all stakeholders
- Development of shared understandings and common approaches
- Leadership engagement and participation
- Systems thinking
A culture of collaborative inquiry
(Owens, Burton, Mandziy and Hall 2012; Owens, 2013)

Focus

‣ New pathways for professional development
‣ Collaborative teacher inquiry
‣ Promote a culture of learning
‣ Classroom innovation for future-focused learning

Tensions

‣ One-size fits all PD versus personalised learning
‣ Cost of PD versus professional want
‣ Structure versus flexibility
‣ Hierarchical versus distributed leadership

Parallel System

‣ Clear focus on continuous improvement
‣ Sustained time for deep exploration
‣ Study of student work samples
‣ Skilful facilitation of structured collaboration
‣ Systems thinking
Core Elements

Provocation and Planning

- Teaching
- Shared understandings
- Common approaches
- Inquiry development

Independent Work

- Implementation
- Classroom trials
- Research
- Resource development

Collaboration

- Sharing samples of teacher and student work
- Analysis
- Public reflection
- Structured discussion

Conference

- Knowledge sharing - key learning
- Presentation of findings and recommendations
- TIG participant-driven
- Q & A
Digital Provocations
Differentiation in Primary Mathematics (Carmody and Gibson, 2014)

Focus

- Catering to diverse, individual learning needs
- Integration of ICT
- Improvement in learning, engagement and wellbeing
- Provocation, exploration & strategies (Sullivan, 2014)
- Collaborative lesson study

ICT

Use of video and multimedia to provoke student thinking, capture it and support the discussion of effective strategies

Lesson study

Lesson design, trial, peer observation and team teaching, feedback and shared reflection
Integration of ICT, driven by pedagogy

Differentiation in Mathematics

Team teaching and lesson study
Common Characteristics
Successful innovation for future focused teaching and learning in schools

- Culture of continuous improvement, with high leadership expectations matched by high levels of teacher support
- Use of multiple points of data to inform the development of teacher practice, judgement and expertise
- An explicit focus on skilful facilitation of structured collaboration
- Ongoing inquiry into formal and distributed leadership
- The use of systems thinking for organizational learning and development
Final thought

Core purpose

We need to ensure that we maintain a central focus on developing systems that scale up continuous learning for all stakeholders, from students to educational leaders, for the future we want in education.
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