Working Together to Enhance School Outcomes: An Australian case study of parallel leadership

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ABSTRACT: *This paper reports on the emerging organisational outcomes of a whole school improvement project – IDEAS (Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievements in Schools) engaged in by a large Australian secondary school. Prior to IDEAS the school had enjoyed a favourable reputation in the community and although still considered a successful school the internal pressures for change were becoming increasingly evident. The newly appointed principal saw a once innovative school struggling and in need of a process that would help the school community work through issues and to decide on a clear direction for the future. IDEAS engages the whole school in transforming processes and this paper relates the experience of the engagement with IDEAS from two perspectives. The principal provides one perspective with the other coming from the teacher-led IDEAS school management team (ISMT). Both the principal and the teacher group report on the whole school benefits from the experience.*

Introduction

The pressure for ongoing change within the educational system is relentless. The 21st century is the age of an information revolution and schools are becoming self-managing, partly self-funded, networked and global (Beare, 2001, 2006; Caldwell, 2005). Drucker (1994) argues that as the world moves into the post-corporate world of discontinuous change where the main form of work is knowledge creation, 'education will become the centre of the knowledge society and the school its key institution' (p. 9). The teacher within these *schools of the future* will be a self-managed professional, moving away from an individual working in a 'classroom cell in the egg-crate' (Lortie, 1975) to a collaborative individual– one who is a life-long learner, a self-knowing professional who works together with others to achieve a shared purpose (Limerick, Cunnington & Crowther, 1998). The teacher-educator of the future will work within a professional learning community (Hargreaves, 1999; Hargreaves, 2000, 2003; Louis & Marks, 1998).

New Demands and New Forms of Leadership

Recent literature has indicated that if schools of the 21st century are to become knowledge

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[1] This case is taken from a major study that was completed by a team of researchers from the Leadership Research Institute (LRI), University of Southern Queensland. The team included Professor Frank Crowther, Associate Professor Dorothy Andrews and Doctoral Students Joan Conway and Allan Morgan.

generating (Drucker, 1994; Senge, 1994) then new conceptualisation of professional knowledge and new forms of school leadership are required. Linking new forms of school leadership, including teacher leadership, to the enhancement of school outcomes through successful organisational learning have been outlined by Hargreaves, 2000, 2003; Harris and Muijs, 2003; and Lambert, 2003. Also research from University of Wisconsin-Madison CORS Project (Newman & Wehlage, 1995) indicates that school-based leadership is viewed in conjunction with the concept of professional learning community (Louis & Marks, 1998). New forms of leadership is further explored by Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson and Hann (2002) who develop the concept of parallelism, that is, different working relationships between teacher leaders and the principal. Parallelism is based on mutualism, a sense of a shared purpose and allowance for individual expression. Professional learning and hence professional development takes on new constructs as teachers work is reconceptualised or reframed around these concepts, that is collaborative individualism (Limerick, et al., 1998), professional learning community (Andrews & Lewis, 2002; Hargreaves, 2000, 2003; Louis & Marks, 1998; Schmoker, 2006; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell & Valentine, 1999; Stoll, 1999; Stoll & Louis, 2007) and teacher leadership (Andrews & Crowther, 2006; Crowther, et al., 2002).

School systems have changed in response to the wider global restructuring (Beare, 2001; Hargreaves, 2002). Significant restructuring initiatives such as devolution and site-based management have involved teachers in school-based decision making and increased the expectation that they will operate on a more collaborative, collegial basis (Beare, 2001; Caldwell, 2005; Kalantzis, 2002). This increasing involvement of teachers in whole school matters represents a different focus for teachers, one beyond the classroom (Harris & Muijs, 2003; Lambert, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

Society has expectations for continual responses to an ever increasing pace of change, responses of school communities to the demands of the 21st century external to the school often motivate little to no response from those within schools. Stoll (1997) describes these schools as either 'cruising' or 'strolling' in times of rapid change. The 'strolling school' is moving towards some kind of improvement but the 'improvement is often ill-defined and sometimes conflicting aims that inhibit improvement efforts' (p. 8). This paper reports on such a school, one that gives the appearance of being effective but is ineffective for a significant number of its students. This school embarked on a whole school improvement process, called Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievements in Schools (IDEAS). Involvement in IDEAS was initiated by the new principal.

IDEAS – A School Improvement Process

Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievements in Schools (IDEAS) is a whole school revitalisation project developed by University of Southern Queensland's Leadership Research Institute. Fundamental to IDEAS are the insights provided by Newmann and Wehlage in their 1995 report on Successful School Restructuring. In this report they indicated that:

a. The most successful schools were those that used restructuring tools to help them function as professional communities, that is, these schools found a way to channel staff and student efforts toward a clear, commonly shared purpose for student learning; they created opportunities for teachers to collaborate and help one another achieve the purpose; and teachers in these schools took collective – not just individual – responsibility for student learning.

b. Schools with strong professional communities were better able to offer authentic pedagogy and were more effective in promoting student achievement (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

That insight, that the professional community of the school be given responsibility for school improvement and reform, remains fundamental to IDEAS today.

As further findings from the Wisconsin research and other international research (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Stringfield & Herman, 1996) and Australian projects (Crowther, et al., 2002; Cuttance, 1998; Hill & Crevola, 1999) became available, they were explored in the context of the IDEAS trials with Queensland state schools. The conceptual model that informs IDEAS was originally reported in Crowther et al. (2002, p. 44) and was further refined (refer Figure 1). This model represents the relationship between contextualised processes that engage people in organisational-wide and individual learning; culture building, school-wide pedagogical development and leadership in ways that enhance the schools overall capacity to sustain improvement. The role of the principal in IDEAS schools is twofold. As a metastrategic principal the approach to strategic management integrates the processes of vision and identity management with the more customary processes of strategic design and implementation (Limerick, et al., 1998). Teacher leader(s) provide pedagogical leadership, mobilising colleagues and developing a professional learning focus in the teaching community.

FIGURE 1: SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: THE IDEAS WAY
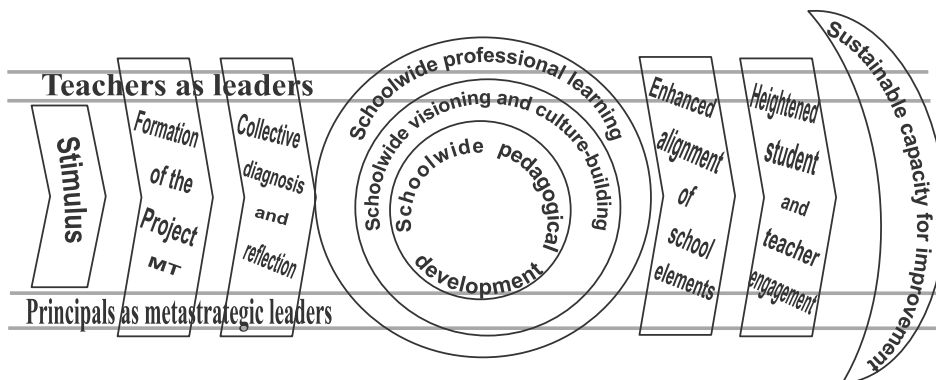
Source: Crowther & Andrews, ARC Research Report (2003)

The essential IDEAS concepts, reported in this paper, were generated out of this developmental work and refined over the period as the school experiences expanded and to date cover over 180 schools in Queensland and state and private schools in NSW, Canberra and Western Australia.

What is IDEAS?

IDEAS is an approach to school improvement that is distinguished by use of three interdependent components, namely, the image of a successful school (the Research-based

Framework for Enhancing School Outcomes); the *ideas* process and Parallel Leadership.

   The Research-based Framework for Enhancing School Outcomes (RBF) synthesises significant current research to build the framework of a successful school (refer Figure 2). Working with IDEAS, schools are challenged to create an image of what they want their school to become and collectively work towards building this envisioned future. When schools commence working with IDEAS they collect a comprehensive data set made up of a 70 question survey of the perceptions of teachers, parents and students. The survey (called the Diagnostic Inventory) provides information about each element of the RBF and their interrelations.

FIGURE 2: THE RESEARCH-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING SCHOOL OUTCOMES

The Research-based Framework for Enhancing School Outcomes
(LRI IDEAS Team April 2002)
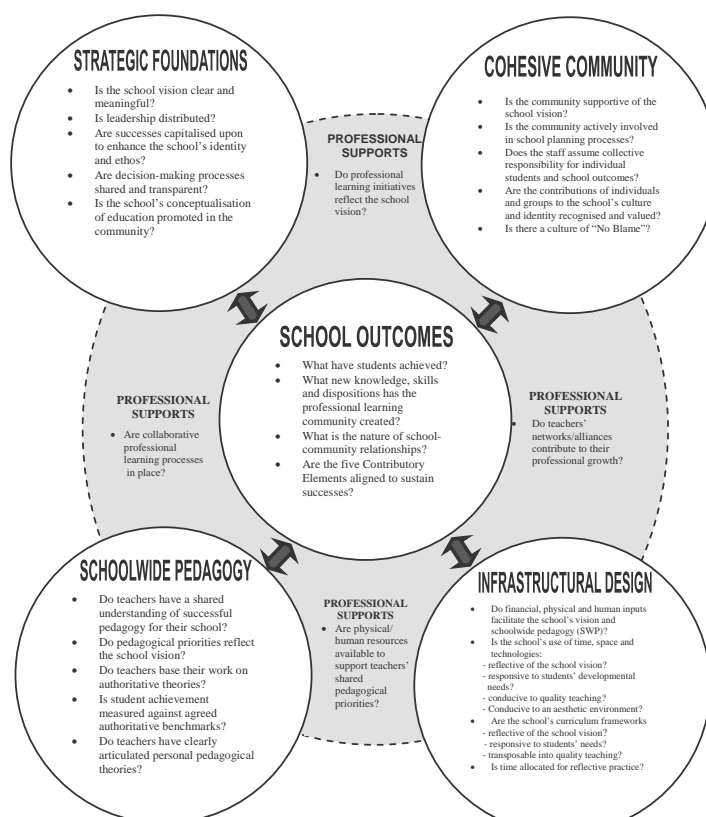
This framework has been developed through a five-year strategic alliance between the University of Southern Queensland's Leadership Research Institute and Education Queensland. The University of Wisconsin-Madison's longitudinal studies of successful restructuring in American schools (e.g. Newmann and Wehlage, 1995; King and Newmann, 2000) have been particularly helpful.

As a conceptual model for school improvement the RBF has been developed in full cognisance of significant global research findings about successful organisational reform (Cuttance, 2000; Hill & Crevola, 1998; Kaplan & Norton, 1996; King & Newmann, 2000; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). It is constituted of five Contributory Elements (Strategic Foundations, Cohesive Community, Infrastructural Design, Schoolwide Pedagogy (Andrews & Crowther, 2003), Professional Supports and a School Outcomes) which when implemented in a school community survey provide relevant data as a starting point in generating an image of what the community aspires their school to become. Enhanced school outcomes (student achievement, knowledge creation, development of community relationships and sustainability) come as a result of alignment between the contributory elements.

Parallel Leadership in IDEAS schools engages teacher leaders and administrator leaders in collaborative action, while at the same time encouraging the fulfilment of their individual capabilities, aspirations and responsibilities. Based on the characteristics of mutualism, a sense of shared purpose and allowance for individual expression, it leads to strengthened alignment between the school's vision and the school's teaching and learning practices (Crowther & Andrews, 2002; Crowther, et al., 2002). Parallel leadership facilitates the development of a professional learning community, culture building and school wide approaches to teaching and learning. It makes possible the enhancement of school identity, teachers' professional esteem, community support and students' achievements in the quest for enhanced action and sustainability. Unifying and underpinning this school improvement process is a leadership relationship based on parallelism. This leadership construct acknowledges the diversity of roles of people in a 21st century organisation and in particular the changing roles of teachers as knowledge creators (Crowther, et al., 2002).

The *ideas* process (Figure 3) as an approach to school improvement comprises five phases: initiating, discovering, envisioning, actioning and sustaining (***ideas***). Journeying through these phases enables groups of professionals to work together to create understandings that could not easily by created by individuals. In conceptualising *ideas* four sources have been used, namely, Metastrategy (Limerick et al., 1998); Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1996); Action Learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Zuber-Skerritt, 1990); Professional Conversations (Isaacs, 1999; Senge, 1994) and Organisational Capacity Building (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Newmann, King & Youngs, 2000).

The *ideas* process, a process of organisational and individual learning, enables the creation of an envisioned future for the school developed through a collective commitment to building this future. The professional community develops a shared approach to pedagogy (Andrews & Crowther, 2003) that enables a school wide approach to teaching, learning and assessment, that focuses the work of teachers and the infrastructure and professional development that supports their work. The creation of the new image of the organisation is the result of teacher leadership of the professional community in mutual relationship with the strategic work of the administration, that is, parallelism (Crowther, et al., 2002). This approach to school improvement has been supported in recent times by the work of Louis, 2007; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; and Mulford, 2007. These authors explore the concept of social capital and in particular relational trust that develops during school improvement processes that enable effective school improvement within the professional community of the school and that community's relationship with the principal.

Engagement in IDEAS and the *ideas* processes manifests a spirit that is exemplified in its five operational principles –

- teachers are the key to successful school revitalisation;
- professional learning is best thought of as a shared collegial process within each individual school;
- a "no blame" mindset should permeate organisational problem-solving;
- a "success breeds success" approach should guide teachers' analyses of their professional practices;
- the alignment of school processes is a collective school responsibility.

The observance of these five principles is asserted to provide a deliberate basis for educational professionals to create renewed purpose and revitalised practices in their workplaces. The processes of internal support networks, focused dialogue and professional sharing develop a strong bonding relationship (Mulford, 2006) within the school's professional community.

FIGURE 3: THE *ideas* PROCESS
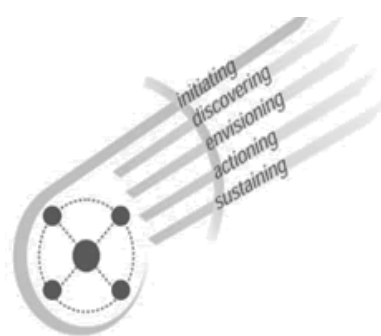
*i*nitiating: resolving to become an IDEAS school, establishing a management team (Ideas School Management Team - ISMT) and appointing an IDEAS school-based facilitator (s);
*d*iscovering: revealing your school's most successful practices and key challenges and sharing collective responsibility for the situation in a no blame environment;
*e*nvisioning: picturing a preferred future for your school - an inspirational vision, and an agreed approach to pedagogy;
*a*ctioning: implementing plans to align school practices and structures with your school's revitalised vision;
*s*ustaining: keeping the revitalisation process going by building on successes and embedding processes into organisational operations and management structures.

(Source: Crowther, Andrews, Dawson & Lewis, 2001)

IDEAS Research

The case study presented in this paper is drawn from a multi-study research project conducted by a research team attached to the Leadership Research Institute, University of Southern Queensland (Crowther & Andrews, 2004). The purposeful sample was taken from Queensland schools involved in the IDEAS Project for longer than two years. Each case study involved:

- School-based researchers keeping a record of events and the journey in the process over a period of two years.
- The construction of a narrative by the school-based researchers. The narrative included documentary evidence of events and data evidence on school outcomes.
- Collection of a comparative data set (Diagnostic Inventory – DI) at the beginning and the again at the end of a three year period.
- Interviews and data collection at the end of a two year period by the external research team.
- The co-construction of the case study by the internal and external research teams.

The qualitative research used insider-outsider research qualitative methodology (Usher & Bryant, 1987) and a data acquisition and analysis process of backward mapping based on the unfolding matrix concept developed by Padilla, et al., 1996. The following narrative is one of the co-constructed case studies and was selected from the cases as an example of a school that was classified as having some measure of success before they embarked on the whole school improvement process. It was, using Stoll's classification, a strolling school.

IDEAS at Tall Peaks High School

Tall Peaks High School (TPHS) is a large secondary state school located in a township north of the capital city in Queensland, Australia. The school was established in 1992 and services a wide catchment area drawing on students from 34 feeder primary schools. As a young school meeting the needs of a large number of feeder primary schools in the area, Tall Peaks High has gained and enjoyed a favourable reputation in the community. The closing of the decade brought a change of principals. The new principal speaks highly of what he inherited and he knew that the previous principal had been well respected with a very dominant style of leadership.

However "new eyes" brought a new perspective and he saw a once innovative and go ahead school struggling to maintain the past at a time when energy was needed to build a new future.

> The school was a very good school, very hard working, great outcomes, but at a very high cost and it wasn't sustainable (principal).

The school in the last five years experienced rapid growth in its population, with students being drawn from residential areas associated with the encroaching urban sprawl changing the school community from its traditional rural base. The world beyond the school had moved on and the school needed to reassess and re-focus. He commented:

> there were lots of indicators… a lack of trust in my leadership…staff were very cautious... high turnover of staff... a culture of confrontation… disciplinary actions skyrocketed and the kids were of the belief that because you didn't talk loudly this was a sign of weakness… we needed some way to renew the school (principal).

The process begins

The principal spoke of needing something, a process to help work through all the issues and to decide on a clear direction for the future. IDEAS, he believed, could provide that process for the school. Therefore he involved the school with IDEAS and appointed three staff members as IDEAS facilitators. The selection of the facilitators was based on their known ability to complement each other, move out of comfort zones and challenge the need to perform successfully. It was a difficult period with lots of criticism and a lack of staff trust in the process. The first RBF Diagnostic Inventory stated in essence that TPHS had a competent and dedicated professional teaching and support staff. However, there was a quagmire of multilevel committees and working parties that did not have a shared understanding of where the school was heading. The staff were essentially exhausted by the demands placed upon them by a school with very high standards and had evidence of past successes. The teaching staff also reported a lack of a shared vision and lack of a shared approach to pedagogy.

Changing relationships

Over the course of first year of the *ideas* process the IDEAS facilitators established an IDEAS

school management team (ISMT) and together they worked to address the issues highlighted through the Diagnostic Inventory. The first challenge the ISMT faced was to convince a very sceptical staff that the visioning process needed to occur before any progress could be made towards resolving other issues. This staff had been subjected to years of top-down decision making from the previous administration and therefore over the course of 12 months the ISMT took time and developed a process that enabled genuine staff involvement in decision making. They established a forum approach to setting questions about where the school wanted to go and the vision and values that should underpin that direction. This approach required a new set of operational skills to engage staff in decision-making. Using the art of professional conversations, dialogue (Isaacs, 1999) and in particular skilful discussion (Senge, 1995) the ISMT removed the power of the principal from setting the scene at staff forums. Such opportunities enabled IDEAS facilitators to challenge other staff to express their understanding of the issues facing TPHS and allowed the staff to present their own alternatives in a no blame environment. The leadership required at this stage in the IDEAS process evidenced the emergence of parallel leadership.

Testing the new relationships

As indicated earlier, facilitating the creation of a collaboratively developed and shared vision and values was the primary focus of the ISMT. Through formal staff forums, feedback boxes and informal staff room visits, the ISMT engaged the staff in the visioning process. It is important to understand that had they not pursued all staff to engage in the visioning process, it is unlikely that at the watershed moment the staff – regardless of whether they believed in the worth of establishing a *Vision and Values statement* – would have had the confidence to articulate their level of concern, and their sense of betrayal by the executive. The IDEAS process, while not complete, had moved many staff from scepticism to trust through persistence. At the watershed moment, this was at risk of being undone.

At the end of the second year of IDEAS, a watershed moment occurred in the life of TPHS. The imposition of mandatory staffroom change was redirected back to the executive as completely contrary, in two ways, to the values that had been developing over the preceding year. The IDEAS process had created an understanding that transparent communication was of paramount importance to school renewal in terms of reducing scepticism. Furthermore, at the heart of developing their vision and values was the key element, trust. At that point, the IDEAS process as a vehicle for school renewal came into question. How could the executive impose mandatory change after it had become so evident that staff did not want to change?

Thus, at the end of the year it looked to be the end of IDEAS and the vision and values that had been developed throughout the preceding 12 months (Figure 4). However, from the ashes of this apparently backward step, IDEAS did re-emerge the following year. The teacher leaders and the ISMT used what they had created, the vision and values, to dialogue with the administration about the already negotiated way of working in an IDEAS school. Therefore the real power of the vision and values lay in the **process** of engaging and valuing all staff in the decision making process and from this time on no further changes would occur without consultation.

There emerged a TPHS definition of good parallel leadership, and the principal saw the value of parallel leadership in moving the school forward. He recalls:

> I had to be prepared to 'live and breathe' the vision and values that were emerging in the staff development. I had to demonstrate trust by nurturing the good work of the IDEAS process despite the lack of consensus amongst the administration. I had to

step back and let others take the lead (principal).

Stepping back and letting the teachers take the lead
This understanding is best evidenced by the manner in which the executive led the school's approach to Middle Schooling. The principal explained how he deliberately did not attend any meetings of the Middle Schooling group. After he had opened up dialogue about the systematic requirement for the school to address Middle Schooling, he stepped back and gave the teachers the authority to research, develop, report and thus own a model for Middle Schooling.

The school staff were now in a position to embrace the Middle Schooling philosophy. They had developed a futuristic vision and values as well as having control of its development. From the outset, the staff were well aware that a Middle School pilot program would be initiated in 2003. The principal ensured that all staff were educated in the ethos of middle schooling and understood the necessity for change. The development of the Middle Schooling pilot was aligned to the vision and values that had been established through IDEAS and teacher ownership and professionalism was integral to its success. The principal communicated his belief that the teachers, who took ownership of the Middle Schooling program, would make the program work.

FIGURE 4: VISION AND VALUES

The action by a dedicated team of teachers in identifying what the middle school at TPHS would look like and the development of the pedagogy was markedly different to pre IDEAS approaches. In the past, new initiatives would be more likely to have followed a top down
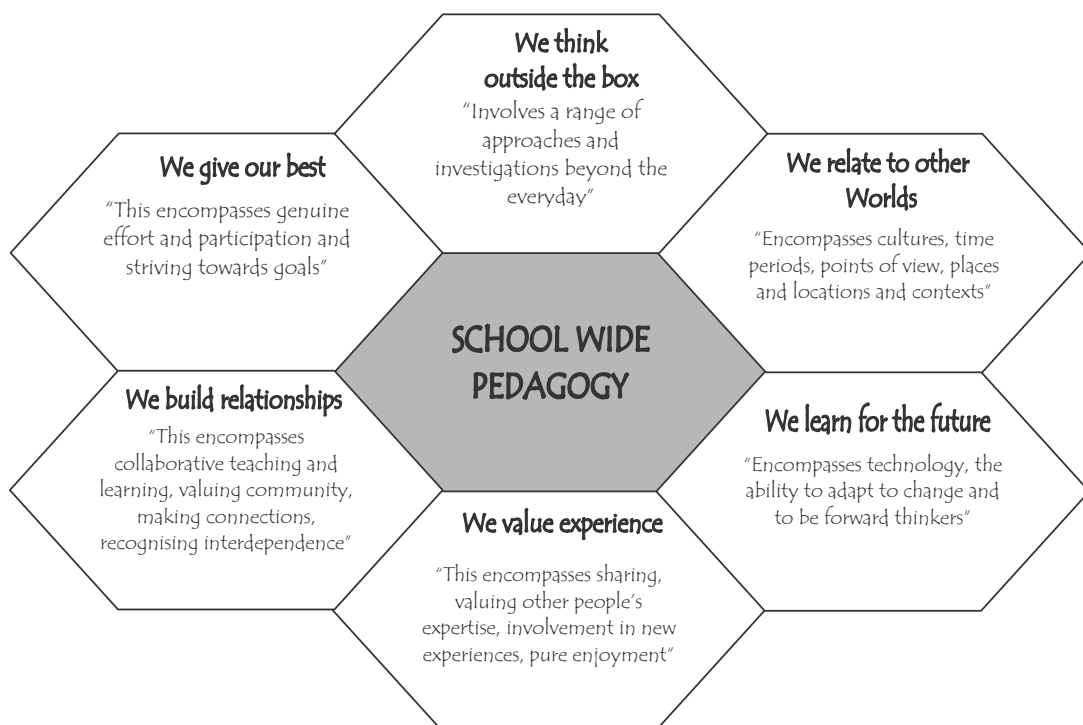
approach where teachers were not involved in the design of either pedagogy or organisational structure.

> Everyone was comfortable to say their own things… most people were not holding back if they were not agreeing with something ... .previously we didn't have that facilitation.

> We were given the responsibility for building our own curriculum in a shared situation... we had been through the IDEAS process and we were given the responsibility and developed parallel leadership (Middle School teachers).

The SWP developed by teaching staff at TPHS was directly linked to their vision and values and equally important, allowed all staff the opportunity to contribute to a shared understanding of excellence in teaching and learning (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5: SCHOOLWIDE PEDAGOGY (SWP) AT TALL PEAKS

We think outside the box
"Involves a range of approaches and investigations beyond the everyday"

We give our best
"This encompasses genuine effort and participation and striving towards goals"

We relate to other Worlds
"Encompasses cultures, time periods, points of view, places and locations and contexts"

SCHOOL WIDE PEDAGOGY

We build relationships
"This encompasses collaborative teaching and learning, valuing community, making connections, recognising interdependence"

We learn for the future
"Encompasses technology, the ability to adapt to change and to be forward thinkers"

We value experience
"This encompasses sharing, valuing other people's expertise, involvement in new experiences, pure enjoyment"

The school's unique SWP was created by the staff engaging in the *ideas* process. The initial steps towards an SWP involved professional dialogue about what teachers were doing well. Operating in a "no-blame" environment the teachers were encouraged to share successful practice and to build on their strengths. It was not about identifying failures or weaknesses in individuals. It was about allowing teachers the opportunity to communicate openly about what practices worked well for them. In the past, opportunities to share with colleagues who were outside of one's own faculty were virtually non-existent. The *ideas* process allowed a level of confidence to develop whereby teachers can (and do!) actively seek professional dialogue with colleagues on an inter-faculty basis.

Sustaining Schoolwide Pedagogy: The framework for new initiatives

The TPHS-Wide Pedagogy has provided a vehicle for enhanced teaching and learning at Tall Peaks High. The process of building the SWP was essential in staff owning a shared understanding of excellence in teaching and learning as indicated by a middle school teacher survey conducted in the third term, three years after they commenced IDEAS. Responses from 80% of the staff were received and Table 1 captures the most frequently occurring responses as they relate to the impact of SWP on teaching practice and what they see as its benefits and limitations.

TABLE 1: MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SWP

Analysis factor	**Teacher responses**
Teachers' practice	I tend to try to vary learning experiences
	Consolidated and gave support for what my teaching aimed to achieve
	Encourages more student centred learning
Benefits of SWP	It provides direction with ownership
	Consistency
	Increased engaged learning for students
	Integrated/more unified school approach
	Involved a team approach
	More creative/proactive
Limitations	Only if newcomers and outsiders don't see the link.

The SWP provided a framework to build the middle school curriculum. Furthermore, in designing and implementing the curriculum for the middle school, professional conversations (based on rules of 'skilful discussion') and parallel leadership are routine.

> It is so much a part of the school culture, that regardless of whether key staff who led the ideas process leaves the school, the culture will remain (Year 8 Teacher).

The school completed another RBF Diagnostic Inventory just over three years after commencing IDEAS. The results are presented in Figure 6 and they illustrate the significant change in the way the staff see several key issues at TPHS. Teachers indicated the main gains were:

- feel encouraged to design learning environments that facilitate high quality teaching;

- feel that an agreed definition of what excellent teaching is has been created;

- are aware that a whole school approach to professional development encompasses all staff and administrators;

- know that the contribution of individuals and groups to the school are celebrated;

- feel that professional dialogue can resolve most issues;

- believe that the school's administration (executive) are active and visible in promoting excellence in the school and the broader community; and

- demonstrate a sense of pride in the school's achievement.

The Diagnostic Inventory data of 2003 clearly demonstrates that the school has moved forward since beginning IDEAS in 2000. There are three key developments that have occurred. Firstly, through the processes, skills and awareness that IDEAS provided the facilitators, the vision and values were developed. Secondly the vision and values underpinned the subsequent development of SWP that enhanced the professional learning community at

TPHS. And finally, the vision, values, SWP and parallel leadership have again underpinned the creation of a dynamic middle school pilot program.

FIGURE 6: TPHS 2000-2003 RESEARCH-BASED FRAMEWORK (RBF) COMPARATIVE DATA
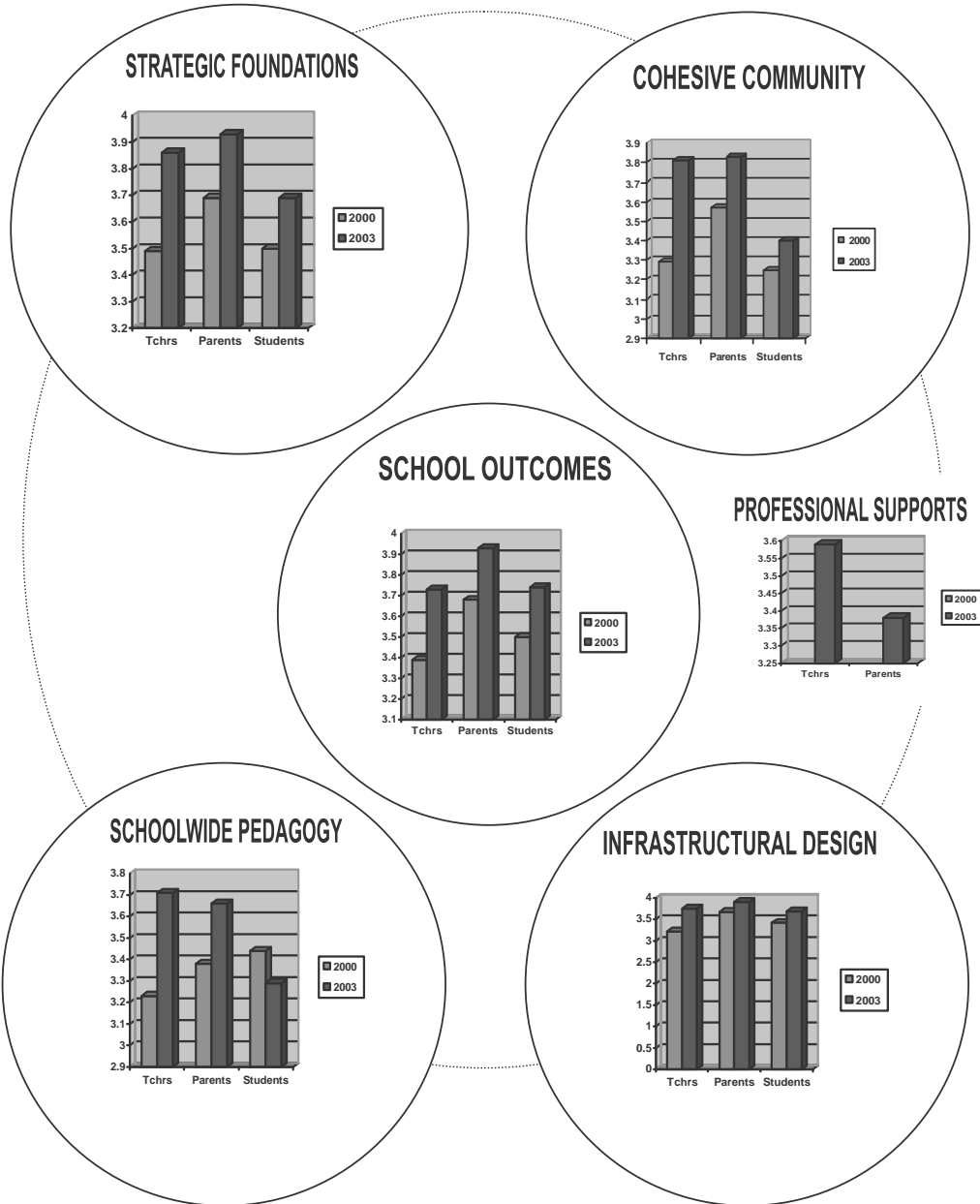
However, the surprisingly lower result in the students' perception of teaching (refer Figure 6) was suspected to lie in the fact that the students, particularly those of the current middle schooling cohort, have become more discerning about pedagogy. Further clarification was sought from students and in response to the question: *what sorts of changes would you like to suggest for your teacher's teaching styles?* Year 8 students were keen to volunteer suggestions. The students reported that they used the artefacts created (the Vision and Values and the school's SWP) as a means of communicating with teachers in regards relationships and what they consider works for them to enhance their learning. These results confirmed what was suspected. Enhanced engagement of students in the middle years was strongly evidenced by dramatic decline in student suspensions over the past two years (refer Table 2).

TABLE 2: YEAR 8 SUSPENSION DATA.

YEAR	Total Year 8 Students	Total Suspensions		
		Male	Female	Total
2001	221	61	21	82
2002	235	56	19	75
2003	229	18	16	34

Summary

TPHS has revitalised and in the process refocusing in a way that has enabled the school to effectively respond to the internal and external demands for change. Data presented in Figure 5 indicate significant movement towards a more cohesive and focused school community, while the qualitative data from middle school teachers indicate a heightened engagement in teaching and learning. Student feedback provided evidence of a more discerning and engaged student population. The *ideas* process reported on in this narrative indicates that mobilisation of professional community through teacher leadership has delivered a way of working at TPHS that has sustained a process of pedagogical improvement. Together with the teacher leaders, the principal has established processes to support the ongoing work the teachers. TPHS has built on its successes originally identified and through a process of organisation-wide learning enabled the professional community and the principal to focus energy and move the school towards a preferred future.

The whole school effects of IDEAS

Whilst this was a single case within a multi-case study project, this case highlights, in particular, the following understandings in relation to factors and processes that contribute to whole school improvement:

a. **Context and Time** – each school has a unique history and the socio-cultural life of the school and its broader community evolves with time. A shared understanding of the past, a shared acceptance of the present and a shared vision for the future have

been crucial to the development that occurred at this site. New eyes often see what those inside do not see, as was the case of the principal in this study. An understanding of the past conceptualisation of leadership and internal school relationships were crucial and an understanding that a process of renewal that defined roles and responsibilities would take time.

b. **Relationships** – an acknowledgement of sustained professional growth within the members of the professional community; significant teacher leadership and the growing mutualistic relations between the teacher leader and the principal. Students and teachers also reported enhanced engagement related to teaching and learning. Growth in professional relationships was also evidenced in the results of the second Diagnostic Inventory showing strong development of the professional community and a clear shared view of the strategic intent of the organisation. Growth in professional relationships has challenged the principal and the teaching staff to rethink their relationships. In particular for the principal to 'step back and let others take the lead' (Crowther, et al., 2002) and for the teachers to work together to provide a consistent approach to teaching and learning as well as developing new ways of working (refer Table 1).

c. **Processes that transform** – the processes that are used in the *ideas* process engage the school community in both individual and organisation wide learning. These processes, that is, school-wide visioning and culture building through schoolwide and individual learning enables the school community to develop a value based vision for the future (Figure 3) achieved through a schoolwide approach to pedagogy (Figure 4). Underpinning these processes are five operational principles (principles of practice) which develop a culture of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Louis, 2007).

    The development of a shared meaning framework also enabled students to have a voice in enhancement of their classroom experiences. Students reported considerable improvement in teacher-student pedagogical engagement.

d. **Leadership** – parallel leadership based on mutualism, shared values and beliefs and allowance for individuality recognises specific roles for the principal (Meta strategic) and for teachers (emergence of teacher as pedagogical leaders). The development of this form of leadership capacity was a crucial factor in the school transformation.

These factors enable an enhanced understanding of the school improvement processes that operate within the "black box" (Andrews & Crowther, 2002).

Conclusion

The case study presented illustrates that through their involvement in the *ideas* process the professional community, lead by teacher(s), develops contextualised knowledge and a shared meaning system (captured in the vision and schoolwide pedagogy). The increased capacity of the school and the individual to learn through engagement focused on the work of teachers is based on clear principles of practice, quality professional relationships and professional conversations that use dialogical processes (Isaacs, 1999). These processes also encourage ongoing learning, new ways of working and pedagogical actions that are contextually appropriate. Unifying and underpinning the school improvement process is a leadership relationship based on parallelism. This leadership construct acknowledges the diversity of

roles of people in a 21st century organisation and in particular the changing roles of teacher as a leader in pedagogical improvement.

The model for school improvement used in this study (Figure 1) illustrates that the capacity for school improvement is built through the adoption of a school improvement process (*ideas*), a heightened sense of professionalism through the school community taking collective responsibility for the organisation, parallel leadership and new ways of working together. Capacity is also enhanced by inclusive school wide dialogical strategies. The outcomes for the organisation are evidence of goal achievement, enhanced alignment and the creation of a new identity, that is, a clear sense of 'who we are'. Together principals and teacher leaders create schools of differentiated identity that are demonstrating sustainable capacity for improvement. Within these schools evidence exists of heightened student engagement in the learning process.

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