Being an Instructional Leader

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“I came to the realisation that there was a major disconnect between leadership and teaching, and between teaching and learning. I realised I needed to know more about learning, how teaching facilitates this, and how teaching can be supported by leaders, whose main function shouldn’t be management.” (Dinham, 2016)
How to Get Your School MOVING and IMPROVING

Steve Dinham
LEADING LEARNING and TEACHING

Stephen Dinham

‘If educators are to LEAD learning and teaching, then this is the must-read book.’
Professor John Hattie

Foreword by Professor Viviane Robinson
Written by the author of How to Get Your School Moving and Improving
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“Up until the mid-1960s, the prevailing view was that schools made almost no difference to student achievement. What students could achieve in their education was largely predetermined by heredity, where they lived, their socio-economic background and family circumstances. Measured ‘IQ’ was considered a powerful predictor of student achievement and seen as largely innate and fixed by the time young people got to school.”

(Dinham, 2016)
• Equality of Educational Opportunity Study (1966) [Coleman]
  http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/06389

  “…concluded that the quality of schooling was responsible for only about 10 per cent of the variance in student achievement. The powerful conclusion drawn from this study was that schools could exert only a small influence on student accomplishment.”

  (Dinham, 2016)
• Heavy investment in education post WWII.
• Concern over the varying performance of students and schools.

“When ‘like’ schools were compared, despite similar clientele, resources, curricula and administration, some schools were clearly more successful than others when it came to student performance on standardised measures. Whatever was responsible for this disparity, it wasn’t just the students, and it wasn’t just resources.” (Dinham, 2016)
“While attention was focused for a time at the school level – including the influence of leadership … as researchers began to ‘drill down’, it was becoming apparent that student achievement also varied considerably within seemingly successful schools, and in fact within all schools. It was found that the differences within schools were actually greater than the overall differences in student achievement between schools. (This phenomenon remains true in most schools to this day.) … By the late 1980s, the belief that schools, and by implication teachers, made no difference to student achievement had been powerfully refuted.” (Dinham, 2016)
Prof John Hattie (UoM): Meta-analysis of Studies

*Major sources of variance in student achievement:*

- **Student**: accounts for 50% of variance in student achievement
- **Home**: 5-10%
- **School**: 5-10% (principals, other leaders an influence)
- **Peer Effects**: 5-10%
- **Teachers**: 30%
‘... the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher. ... The immediate and clear implication of this finding is that seemingly more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor’.

As a result, there has been a major international emphasis on improving the quality of teachers and teaching since the 1980s.

We now know how teacher expertise develops and we know what good teaching looks like. However we also know that teacher quality varies within schools and across the nation.

A quality teacher in every classroom is the ultimate aim, but how to achieve this is the big question and challenge.
“Thus, the major challenge in improving teaching lies not so much in identifying and describing quality teaching, but in developing structures and approaches that ensure widespread use of successful teaching practices: to make best practice, common practice.” (Dinham, Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2008).
What is Teaching?

Thomas Edison

Thomas Edison invented the phonograph in 1877. He predicted recordings would make teachers redundant.
“Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important.”

Bill Gates
Four Fundamentals of Student Success
(Dinham, 2008; 2016)

FOCUS ON THE STUDENT
(Learner, Person)

QUALITY TEACHING

LEADERSHIP

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
The Declaration articulates two important goals for education in Australia:

- **Goal 1**: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence
- **Goal 2**: All young Australians become:
  - Successful learners
  - Confident and creative individuals
  - Active and informed citizens.
• SES and home environment do have moderate/large effect sizes (= 0.52)
• SES *is* about:
  – Foundations/advantage
  – Opportunity
  – Support
  – Role models and encouragement
• SES *is not* about:
  – Innate ability
  – Social-biological determinism
  – Potential
Poor student performance is spread across the SES spectrum.

Schooling represents an obstacle course. Some students have certain advantages and others have obstacles.

“Life isn’t fair, but good teaching and good schools are the best means we have of overcoming disadvantage and opening doors of opportunity for young people.”

(Dinham)
“This is a working class school in a working class area. Don’t expect too much and you won’t be disappointed”.

- Principal to new teacher (2013)
The teacher and the quality of his or her teaching are major influences on student achievement, along with the individual student and his or her prior achievement (all have large effect sizes).

School-based influences (beyond the classroom) have weaker effects on student achievement.

Structural and organisational arrangements (open vs traditional classrooms; multi-age vs age graded classes; ability grouping; gender; class size; mainstreaming) have negligible or small effects on student learning. It is the quality of teaching that occurs within these structural arrangements which is most important.
Examples of ‘active teaching’ (reciprocal teaching; feedback; teaching self-verbalisation; meta-cognition strategies; direct instruction; mastery learning; testing) have large to moderate effects on student achievement.

Effect sizes are negligible or small for ‘facilitory teaching’ (simulations and games; inquiry-based teaching; individualised instruction; problem-based learning; differentiated teaching for boys and girls; web-based learning; whole language reading; inductive teaching).

Strategies to promote and remediate literacy figure prominently. Literacy is the foundation of student achievement.
Implications

- No instant recipe for teaching success, yet much can be learned from successful teachers and faculties – a framework for reflection and action.
- “Overall, the quality of the teacher and the quality of teaching (large effect sizes) are much more important than structural or working conditions (negligible or small effect sizes), demonstrating the futility and waste of ‘fiddling around the edges’ of schooling without sufficiently addressing the quality of teachers and the quality of teaching within schools and classrooms.” (Dinham, 2008)
- “Quality teaching matters and it’s time we started acting like it.” (Dinham, Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2008)
“Learning and leadership are indispensible to each other.”

John F. Kennedy
‘… leadership is the ‘big enabler’ in successful schools. You can have good teaching without having a good school, but you can’t have a good school without good leadership … professional learning is the lever that helps leaders create the conditions in which teachers can teach effectively and students can learn.’” (Dinham, 2010)
Marzano, Waters and McNulty found (2005):

A highly effective school leader can have a dramatic influence on the overall academic achievement of students. ... a meta-analysis of 35 years of research indicates that school leadership has a substantial effect on student achievement and provides guidance for experienced and aspiring principals alike.

Yet Hallinger (2005) observed that despite interest in instructional leadership - leadership of and for teaching and learning - arising from research into effective schools going back as far as the late 1970s (2005):

During the mid-1990s, however, attention shifted somewhat away from effective schools and instructional leadership. Interest in these topics was displaced by concepts such as school restructuring and transformational leadership.
However findings from international research have caused a re-examination of the worth of instructional leadership. Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe concluded from their work on the impact of various leadership approaches (2008):

The comparison between instructional and transformational leadership showed that the impact [on student outcomes] of the former is three to four times that of the latter. The reason is that transformational leadership is more focused on the relationship between leaders and followers than on the educational work of school leadership, and the quality of these relationships is not predictive of the quality of student outcomes. Educational leadership involves not only building collegial teams, a loyal and cohesive staff, and sharing an inspirational vision. It also involves focusing such relationships on some very specific pedagogical work, and the leadership practices involved are better captured by measures of instructional leadership than of transformational leadership.
While original conceptions of instructional leadership focussed predominantly on the principal, the notion of distributed leadership – the leadership practices and effects of others in formal leadership positions in schools.

Attention is increasingly turning to the impact of teaching and leadership on student outcomes along with teacher leadership – has become prominent.

Hattie found (2009):

‘School leaders who focus on students’ achievement and instructional strategies are the most effective … It is leaders who place more attention on teaching and focused achievement domains … who have the higher effects.’
• Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) offered a similar view: ‘The more leaders focus their influence, their learning, and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes.’

• Barber et al. (2010) found: ‘High-performing [‘top’ 15%] principals focus more on instructional leadership and developing teachers. They see their biggest challenges as improving teaching and curriculum, and they believe that their ability to coach others and support their development is the most important skill of a good school leader.’
However penetrating the often closed classroom door remains a challenge for principals and other leaders. Wahlstrom and Louis have commented (2008):

‘In the current era of accountability, a principal’s responsibility for the quality of teachers’ work is simply a fact of life. How to achieve influence over work settings (classrooms) in which they rarely participate is a key dilemma.’
The AESOP Project
• Principals and other leaders facilitate quality teaching, student achievement and school renewal and improvement through:
1. External Awareness and Engagement

- Openness to Change and Opportunity
- Develop Productive External Links
2. A Bias Towards Innovation and Action

- Using Discretion, Bending Rules, Procedures
- Bias to Experimentation, Risk Taking
3. Personal Qualities and Relationships

- Leaders have positive attitudes which are contagious
- Intellectual Capacity
- Moral Leadership
- Assist, Feedback, Listen to Staff
3. Personal Qualities and Relationships

• Treat staff, others professionally
• Expect high standard of professionalism in return
• Model professionalism
• Others don’t want to “let down”
• Provide professional, pleasant facilities
Other Personal Qualities

- High level interpersonal skills
- Generally liked, respected, trusted
- Knows, use names, shows personal interest
- Demonstrates empathy, compassion
- Available at short notice when needed
- Epitomises the “servant leader”, yet unmistakably in control
- Work for school, students, staff, education, rather than for themselves.
4. Vision, Expectations, Culture of Success

- “Expect a lot, give a lot”
- Clear, agreed, high standards
- The standard things done well
- Recognition of student, staff achievement
- Creates a culture, expectation of success
5. Teacher Learning, Responsibility and Trust

- Investment in Teacher Learning
- All Teachers can be Leaders
- Responsibility recognition, empowerment, staff development
- Trust an aspect of mutual respect
6. Student Support, Common Purpose, Collaboration

- Centrality of Student Welfare
- Support by leaders essential
- Leaders Find Common Purpose
- Pockets of like-minded staff, collaboration
7. Focus on Students, Learning and Teaching

- Focus on students as people (personal, academic, social)
- Teaching and learning prime focus of school
- Creates an environment where teaching and learning can occur.
7. Focus on Students, Learning and Teaching

- Leadership Takes Time
- Leaders Build on What is There
- Consistency, Yet Flexibility in Policy
- Stand for Something!
• Two aspects to leadership:
  – Highly **responsive** to people and events
  – Highly **demanding** of self and others

• Principals and other leaders help create conditions, climate, where success can occur.

• Characteristics both *product* (output) and *process* (input) variables leading to upwards cycle of success.
The diagram illustrates the relationship between responsiveness and demandingness in leadership. It includes four leadership styles:

- **Authoritarian Leadership**: High responsiveness, high demandingness.
- **Authoritative Leadership**: High responsiveness, low demandingness.
- **Uninvolved Leadership**: Low responsiveness, high demandingness.
- **Permissive Leadership**: Low responsiveness, low demandingness.

The axes represent the levels of responsiveness (low to high) and demandingness (low to high).
Relative impact of leadership dimensions (Robinson et al, 2008)

1. Establishing goals and expectations
2. Resourcing strategically
3. Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum
4. Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development
5. Ensuring an orderly environment

Effect Size

- Establishing goals and expectations: 0.42
- Resourcing strategically: 0.31
- Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum: 0.42
- Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development: 0.84
- Ensuring an orderly environment: 0.27
1. Instructional leadership is learning-focused, learning for both students and adults, and learning which is measured by improvement in instruction and in the quality of student learning.

2. Instructional leadership must reside with a team of leaders of which the principal serves as the "leader of leaders."

3. A culture of public practice and reflective practice is essential for effective instructional leadership and the improvement of instructional practice.
4. Instructional leadership addresses the cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic and learning diversity in the school community.

5. Instructional leadership focuses upon the effective management of resources and of people — recruiting, hiring, developing, evaluating — particularly in changing environments

– [http://info.k-12leadership.org/4-dimensions-of-instructional-leadership](http://info.k-12leadership.org/4-dimensions-of-instructional-leadership)
There is a challenge for educational leaders to deal with situations where learning has atrophied.

– McBeath has noted (2006: 19):

“It is hard for teachers to shed an outer skin which has calcified over many years in the classroom where dialogue is a rare commodity no matter how hard teachers strive for it, and in which ‘instruction’ is the norm”.

• Building a learning community is not about ‘fixing’ teachers.
Conclusion

- Quality teaching lies at the heart of attempts to raise student outcomes and to close achievement gaps associated with factors such as socio-economic status, family background, geographic isolation, non-English speaking background and Aboriginality.
- Research findings are increasingly compelling on the relationship between instructional leadership, effective teaching and student outcomes yet much work remains to be done.
- As teaching becomes more evidence-based, clinical and interventionist in nature, it is imperative that school leaders are equipped to guide, support and lead teachers in this process. This central role is recognised in the Australian Professional Standard for Principals in Australia.
Conclusion

- Twenty First Century educational leaders need to be able to ‘talk the talk’ and more importantly, ‘walk the walk’ on approaches that place the individual student and his or her advancement at the centre of the school.
- In order to make best teaching practice common practice (Dinham, Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2008), preparation for and the enactment of instructional leadership must be congruent with teachers’ initial and ongoing professional learning to ensure evidence-based, clinical professional practice occurs in every classroom and for every student.
“The biggest equity issue in Australian education today isn’t computers, new buildings or equipment. It’s each student having quality teachers and quality teaching in schools supported by effective leadership and professional learning in mutually respectful local community contexts”.

Professional Certificate in Instructional Leadership [two subjects – Hattie & Dinham]

Master of Instructional Leadership [eight subjects]

- http://education.unimelb.edu.au/study_with_us/professional_development/course_list/instructional_leadership
Current Project “I’m The Principal”

“I’m the Principal”
Principal Learning, Action, Influence and Identity

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Available:
ACER Press 2018
I'm the Principal
Principal learning, action, influence and identity

I quickly learned that you can have an impact, a positive impact on a larger number of students in your community by going into leadership roles. If you want to have a positive impact on your students, leading teachers and leaders for ideally the rest of your life.

While we certainly needed the role of a principal principal in some schools and regular staff options, teacher accountability is a core accountability area for students. This means that this role isn't a new one. However, what we need to think about is how we can support students in this role.

The I'm the Principal project was an Australian Professional Standards for Principal (APS) project. It was a collaborative project led by partners and collaborators to principal learning, action, influence and identity through a review with 70 participating principals drawn from the five existing schools of Australian schools, educators.

For the Principal, it was a study of the work of the principal today containing principles, leadership competencies, values, beliefs and contexts, and evoking the narratives of the student's of the roles.

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