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## **A Preliminary Model of Successful School Leadership**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents a preliminary model for examining successful school leadership, derived from the Australian (Tasmanian) part of the International Successful School Leadership (ISSL) project. Success was defined by a combination of factors, including the reputation of the school within the senior ranks of the State Department of Education and with other school Principals, the reputation of the current Principal, and State and national recognition of success in terms of outcomes for students, including outcomes for students at risk.

The interactive and sequential model presented is set within a context that includes community and system understandings and requirements. It first focuses on the Principal's values which link to individual and school capacity and the development of a school vision. The context and principal's values represent the 'why' and the individual and school capacity and vision represent the 'how' of successful leadership. The model then progresses to the 'what' or outcomes of successful leadership, which include teaching and learning, a range of student outcomes, and community social capital. These three foci are linked by evidenced-based monitoring and critical reflection, which could lead to change and/or transformation of the why, how and/or what. This model is consistent with, but develops with greater complexity, other recent overviews and models of successful educational leadership.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper first examines a number of recent overviews of and models developed from research on successful school leadership. It then outlines the methodology and findings from case studies derived from the Australian (Tasmanian) part of the International Successful School Leadership (ISSL) project.<sup>2</sup> Finally, from this literature and rich case study data base, the paper presents a preliminary model for examining successful school leadership. This preliminary model is seen as being consistent with, but developing in greater complexity, other overviews and models of successful educational leadership.

### **RECENT LITERATURE ON SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Two sources have been used in this paper to overview recent literature on successful school leadership. The first consists of characteristics of successful school leadership arising from the

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<sup>2</sup> Details of the International Successful School Leadership project can be found at  
<http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/~schoolleadership/ssl.html>

recent papers from the American Educational Research Association's Division A Task Force for the Development of an Agenda for Future Research on Educational Leadership. The second consists of models, or sequences, of such characteristics in four recent research projects - leading schools in times of change, successful school leadership, leadership for school-community partnerships, and leadership for organisational learning and improved student outcomes.

### **Task Force for the Development of an Agenda for Future Research on Educational Leadership**

In setting the stage for the American Educational Research Association's Division A Task Force for the Development of an Agenda for Future Research on Educational Leadership, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) provide a comprehensive review of knowledge about successful school leadership based upon academically sound quantitative research studies, multiple case studies, and systematic single case studies. Employing a production function model situated in a rationalist paradigm, they described six claims that they believe could be defended by the research evidence, that are generalisable to most school contexts, and from which future research in the area should be developed. These claims are described briefly as follows:

- Successful school leadership makes important contributions to the improvement of student learning. Leadership effects are primarily indirect working through the organisational variable of school mission or goals and through variables related to curriculum and classroom instruction.
- The primary sources of successful leadership in schools are principal and teachers.
- In addition to principals and teachers, leadership is and ought to be distributed to others in the school and school community.
- A core set of 'basic' leadership practices is valuable in almost all contexts. This includes setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organisation.
- In addition to engaging in a core set of leadership practices, successful leaders must act in ways that acknowledge the accountability-oriented policy context in which almost all work.
- Many successful leaders in schools serving highly diverse student populations enact practices to promote school quality, equity, and social justice. These practices include building powerful forms of teaching and learning, creating strong communities in school, nurturing the development of educational cultures in families, and expanding the amount of students' social capital valued by the schools.

However, as the authors themselves point out, a number of aspects of school leadership that have not been the subject of much formal research and/or that are drawn from other paradigms are not addressed in their analysis. These aspects include moral and spiritual dimensions of effective school leadership, the ability of the school leader to understand and engage the complex social forces impinging on schools, and the contributions of chaos, institutional, political and critical social theory. (See also Gronn, 2003.) In addition, whilst their claims were meant to be robust and generalisable across contexts, most of the literature reviewed was from the USA. or the UK and, in respect of principal leadership, typically relied on principals as the source of evidence<sup>3</sup>.

Driscoll and Goldring's (2003) task force paper sees the current era of educational reform as one in which those outside schools attempt to change those inside. Employing the literature on the 'new science' of learning, social capital and school and community development, they identify critical questions relevant to research on school leadership. Three of these questions are: How do leaders create bridges between the professional communities in their schools and the network of broader community interests, in ways that improve student learning? How broadly do we define the outcomes of learning? (See also Feinstein, 2000 and Mulford & Silins, 2003.) How does

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<sup>3</sup> Principals have been found to overestimate the effectiveness of reforms when compared with their teachers. (McCall et. al., 2001, Mulford et. al., 2000 and 2001)

leadership distributed throughout the system develop awareness of different contexts and align them to create the best possible conditions for student learning?

Furman and Shields (2003) argue that the concepts of social justice and democratic community have become major concerns for educational researchers and practitioners at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (also supported by the Reyes & Wagstaff, 2003, paper for the task force, as well as by others, such as Murphy, 1999). Their task force model suggests that leadership grounded in the moral purposes of democratic community and social justice in schools is, first and foremost, about pedagogy—a socially just pedagogy that is both created and sustained in the context of the processes of ‘deep’ democracy. For them ‘deep’ democracy involves respect for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions, reverence for and proactive facilitation of free and open inquiry and critique, recognition of interdependence in working for the common good, the responsibility of individuals to participate in free and open inquiry, and the importance of collective choices and actions in the interest of the common good. Arising from their analysis, Furman and Shields (2003, pp. 35–36) summarise five dimensions of leadership as ethical and moral, communal and contextual, processual, transformative, and pedagogical.

In their contribution to the task force Firestone and Shipps (2003) are interested in the ways educational leaders create coherence out of many accountability demands. From their examination of six types of accountabilities, Firestone and Shipps (2003, p. 4) ‘suspect that one reason for the heavier emphasis on political, bureaucratic and market accountabilities are the slippery definitions of professional and moral accountabilities, vagueness that poses operational difficulties for researchers’. They demonstrate that multiple types of accountability within one policy, as opposed to clear-cut demands, can create confusion for school leaders.

Prestine and Nelson’s (2003, p. 3) task force paper suggests that leadership inquiry will likely encompass three major directions: ‘further exploration of deepening understandings of distributed leadership, balancing demands of the designed and emergent parts of the organisation, and expanding definitions of learning and learners in schools’. They see a need to build ideas, as well as models of schools and leadership, around learning (something with which other writers, such as Silins and Mulford, 2002a & b and Stoll et. al., 2003, would agree). They also see issues surrounding how leaders promote and support teaching and learning as being situated in a culturally defined matrix of purposes and values. Prestine and Nelson (2003, pp. 33–34) conclude that the ‘substance and process of leaders’ efforts should build on and reflect the shared understandings and negotiated meanings derived from collaborative social interaction accomplished in communities of practice’.

In the final contribution to the task force, Stein and Spillane (2003) contrast the very long history of research on student and teacher learning with the more recent research on educational leadership. They maintain that research on educational leadership has remained isolated from these bodies of work on student and teacher learning and that now is the opportune time to build bridges between them. These bridges would explore the relationship in, between and among student, teacher and educational leader thinking processes and practices, the interactive social context, and learning outcomes.

### **Models Developed from Four Research Projects of Successful School Leadership**

The second source used in this paper to overview recent literature on successful school leadership consists of models developed in four research projects on leading schools in times of change, successful school leadership, leadership for school-community partnerships, and leadership for organisational learning and improved student outcomes. These research projects model, or sequence, many of the characteristics of successful school leadership identified in task force reports.

The first research-based model of successful school leadership is by Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford (2000). These researchers investigated successful headteachers in a sample of 12 effective schools in times of change representing a wide range of contexts and leadership challenges in the United Kingdom. From their study emerged a post-transformational model of leadership emphasising personal and organisational values and the contextual nature of leadership. This values-led contingency leadership model included:

- Values and vision – with personal and organisational alignment of;
- Integrity - consistency and integrity of action involving optimism, respect, trust, care, encouragement;
- Context – understanding internal/external environments, adaptive, balance between involving others and taking individual action;
- Continuing professional development - power with and through others; and,
- Reflection - developing the self, critical thinking, emotional intelligence.

In their model, Day et al. (2000) found leaders were primarily people centred and expert at being able to manage seven competing tensions: leadership v management; development v management; internal v external change; autocracy v autonomy; personal time v professional tasks; personal values v institutional imperatives; and, leadership in small v large schools. Leaders were also found to be expert at managing three dilemmas: development v dismissal; power with or power over; and, sub-contracting v mediation.

In more recent research, which probes further the relative strength of 12 United Kingdom principals in a range of different types of schools who had raised the levels of measurable pupil attainment and were highly regarded by their peers, Day and Naylor (2004, p. 43-44, emphasis in original) found that successful principals saw ‘the problems faced by their schools as being deeply rooted in the broader and more localised social and political contexts’ and that they ‘understood, articulated and challenged external definitions of success and failure’. In brief, they mediated external change. These principals also had strong *‘moral and ethical commitments to ensuring pupils’ holistic development; ... they were committed to principles of equity and social justice.’* They ‘promoted care’ and were ‘characterised by hopefulness.’ In other words, their ‘lives were informed by core sets of values and practices’. Going beyond the use of charisma, these principals also developed a ‘focus upon setting and sustaining directions, developing people through informal and formal support and modelling, and where appropriate, redesigning the organisational structures so that staff participation, collaboration and sense of individual and collective belonging and ownership of the organisational vision and strategies were fostered.’ Day and Naylor (2004, p. 44) summarise their findings as a ‘highly political valued-led contingency model of transformational school leadership.’

The second research based model is from Gurr, Drysdale, Natale, Ford, Hardy, and Swann (2003, p. 18). They argue that their contemporary educational leadership model ‘moves away from the traditional, narrow notion of instructional leadership that focused on teacher supervision and suggests that the principal can make interventions in a range of areas that contribute to student outcomes’. In order to make more sense of the leadership exhibited by successful principals in three Victorian primary schools, the model identified student outcomes as a key focus of schools (Level 1). Capacity building is identified as a Level 2 impact because of its potential impact on teaching and learning. The model identifies four capacities: ‘personal, professional, organisational, and community’. The final impact on student achievement (Level 3) is labelled ‘Other Influences’. They found that these other influences varied across schools, but included several internal and external aspects: ‘policies and programs of governments, employers and other organisations; schools characteristics such as school size, facilities and resources; demographic and socio-economic factors; community resources; and stakeholder interest and priorities’.

In their conclusion, Gurr et al (2003, p. 35) note that, ‘whilst each of our principals had different personalities and interpersonal styles, they all were expert at working with and through others to improve their schools. There was evidence that they had a significant impact on student learning through a number of key interventions that focused on teaching and learning and building professional commitment and capacity.’

The third model of research-based successful school leadership is Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford and Falk’s (2002) stages of the leadership process in implementing school–community partnerships. This research focused specifically on case studies of the process and outcomes of exemplary partnerships between five rural schools and their broader geographical communities. Community partners included individuals such as parents, as well as representatives of a variety of community sectors, including local government, business and industry, and voluntary organisations. Specifically, the study documented the broad community social capital outcomes of the partnerships, rather than focusing on student outcomes in isolation, in an attempt to highlight the symbiotic nature of school–community relationships and the importance of leadership in developing and sustaining these relationships.

Because of its focus beyond leadership within schools, this model helps to fill a gap in educational leadership research, identified by Leithwood and Riehl (2003, p. 19) as a lack of ‘empirical evidence ... at least for building level leaders and regarding external constituents other than parents’ in respect of the ‘boundary spanning roles for leaders’. The model highlights a leadership process that moves gradually from individual to collective leadership, in which both formal and informal school and community leaders participate in the development of a shared vision and develop collaborative structures for working together. It highlights the importance of ensuring a match, or at least some measure of congruence, between school and community leadership processes and practices. Other features of the model include the critical role of the sustainability stage in leading partnership development, where visions and goals are evaluated and/or renewed, giving rise to possible changes in the way things are done, or to the development of new ways of doing things. The leadership process is therefore a cyclical and dynamic one, driven by, and resulting in, ongoing learning and changes both individually and collectively.

The fourth, and final, research based model is Mulford and Silins’ leadership for organisational learning and student outcomes (LOLSO) (Silins, Mulford, Zarins, & Bishop, 2000; Silins & Mulford, 2002a & b; Silins, Mulford & Zarins, 2002; Silins, Zarins, & Mulford, 2002; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004). LOLSO’s research design required four phases of data collection and analysis conducted over four years and allowed for iterative cycles of theory development and testing, using multiple forms of evidence. In phase 1, surveys of 3,500 Year 10 students and 2,500 of their teachers and head teachers were conducted in half the secondary schools in South Australia and all the secondary schools in Tasmania (a total of 96 schools). In phase 3, South Australian Year 12 students, teachers and head teachers were resurveyed.<sup>4</sup>

In brief, LOLSO found that leadership that makes a difference is both position based (principal) and distributed (administrative team and teachers). But both are only indirectly related to student outcomes. Organisational learning (OL), or a collective teacher efficacy, is the important intervening variable between leadership and teacher work and then student outcomes. That is, leadership contributes to OL, which in turn influences what happens in the core business of the school—the teaching and learning. It influences the way students perceive teachers organise and conduct their instruction, and their educational interactions with, and expectations for, their students. Pupils’ positive perceptions of teachers’ work directly promote participation in school,

<sup>4</sup> For the results of phases 2 and 4 which involved the development of case studies of best practice and problem-based professional development material see Mulford, et al., 2004.

academic self-concept and engagement with school. Pupil participation is directly and pupil engagement indirectly (through retention) related to academic achievement (as measured by a five subject aggregate Tertiary Entrance Score at the end of Year 12).

The LOESO research demonstrated clearly that the best leadership for OL and a range of improved student outcomes were a principal skilled in transformational leadership and administrators and teachers who are actively involved in the core work of the school (shared or distributed leadership). What is especially important is that staff is actively and collectively participating in the school and feel that their contributions are valued.

The transformational school principal was found to focus on:

- Individual Support—providing moral support, showing appreciation;
- Culture—promoting an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff;
- Structure—establishing participative decision making and distributed leadership;
- Vision and Goals—working toward whole-staff consensus on;
- Performance Expectation—having high expectations;
- Intellectual Stimulation—encouraging staff to reflect on what they are trying to achieve and models continual learning in his or her own practice.

OL was found to involve a clear sequence of factors:

- from establishing a trusting and collaborative climate,
- followed by having a shared and monitored mission,
- and then taking initiatives and risks
- within a context of on-going, relevant professional development.

LOESO also found that whether the principal was male or female and the teachers' years in education and their schooling, age and gender were not factors promoting leadership or OL. However, school size does: the larger metropolitan schools of over 900 students did not provide the environment most conducive for principal transformational and teacher distributed leadership or for student participation, although having a larger school was positively related to students' academic self-concept. Another important contextual factor was found to be the socioeconomic status (SES) of the school. SES had its expected positive relationship with student academic achievement, retention and academic self-concept. Interestingly, SES had a negative relationship with student perceptions of teachers' work. On the other hand, the students' home educational environment (having a space and aids for study at home as well as having discussions and help with school work and conversations about world events) had a stronger relationship than SES to students' academic self-concept but also a strong positive relationship with students' participation in school and students' perceptions of teachers' work.

## Conclusion

Even in this selective and, of necessity, brief overview of recent literature on and models of successful school leadership one can identify commonalities. In its shortest form, these commonalities centre on the need for successful educational leaders to be able to understand and act effectively on 'why' and 'how'. 'Why' involves

- understanding, engaging and mediating the diverse, pluralistic, multicultural, global, complex technological, economic, social, and political forces impinging on schools. Of particular note is the attention needed to be given to the wider community and accountability. This situation could be seen increasingly as one of 'outsiders' attempting to change those 'inside' schools;
- a broadening of what 'counts' for effective schools and effective educational leadership with issues of equity and social justice very much to the fore.

The ‘how’ involves educational leaders who are able to create, acquire, communicate, and use knowledge wisely, for example by being able to translate the ever-evolving understanding of the knowledge society into school/community goals and processes. The material reviewed suggests this is best achieved through ability to:

- choose and prioritise (for example, to ‘make’ rather than ‘take’ on the basis of evidence, social justice, and ‘deep’ democracy);
- provide balance (for example, between leadership/management, designed/emergent);
- provide bridges (for example, between the professional and other communities);
- provide coherence; achieve shared understandings, ownership and responsibility;
- care for others, collaborate and negotiate (for example, in, with and for community and through distributed leadership and responsibility); and,
- most important of all, learn. Learning involves an ability to critique, assess and be accountable and, if necessary, constantly change. It can involve both development and transformation.

What has been discovered from the case studies in the Australian (Tasmanian) part of the International Successful School Leadership (ISSL) project and how do these findings compare with this recent literature? It is to the methodology and findings from these case studies that we now turn before using the results of both the literature and case studies to present a preliminary model for better understanding what is involved in successful school leadership.

## CASE STUDIES FROM THE AUSTRALIAN (TASMANIAN) SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROJECT

### Methodology

#### *Site selection*

Five Tasmanian State government schools demonstrating successful leadership were selected for study. Criteria for selection included the reputation of the school within the senior ranks of the State Department of Education and with other school Principals; the reputation of the current Principal and in three cases, of the previous Principal also, and evidence of success in terms of student outcomes. These outcomes were measured in a variety of ways, including traditional academic outcomes such as comparative state-wide testing results, as well as outcomes relating to student participation, engagement and satisfaction, measured by rates of school attendance, retention, suspension, and transition from school to work. Success was also measured in terms of local, state-wide and national recognition of successful school programs. Schools were also selected to represent diversity in terms of type, location, size, and socioeconomic status. A brief overview of the key characteristics of each of the five schools follows.

- *Billabong Primary School:* This is a small suburban primary school of 225 Kindergarten to Year 6 students, located in a low socioeconomic status (SES), public housing estate in a northern suburb of a regional city. It has one of the highest Indigenous enrolments in the State (16–17%). The school has high levels of poverty (82% of students receive government financial assistance) and single parent families (45%), and a range of attendant social problems including child abuse, substance abuse, criminal activity, and an overwhelming sense of social isolation. The Principal was in her third year at the school and in her first Principalship. Very few staff had been at the school for more than two years. The Principal is a passionate campaigner for social justice through the public education system, and a banner in the main corridor proclaims what the school is all about—‘All children matter’. There is a strong school wide focus on four key areas: literacy, numeracy, the arts, and behaviour management. Student and community empowerment is high on the agenda. The school has won local and State awards for excellence in terms of its afternoon craft and activity program.

- *Eastman High School:* With an enrolment of 561 students, this high school serves students from Years 7 to 10 and is located in a low SES northern suburb of a regional city. Billabong Primary School is one of its feeder primary schools. The school has a diverse enrolment and wide-ranging student abilities. The largest group of students come from three public housing estates, characterised by relatively high levels of unemployment (from 24–33%) and single parent families (between 33–50% of families). Some two thirds of Eastman students are in receipt of government financial assistance. Issues of poverty, unemployment, and lack of extended family support impact on student learning. The Principal was in his third year at the school and at his third Principalship, a person committed to ‘doing whatever it takes’ to provide opportunities for students. There is a low staff turnover rate, and at least half of the staff has been teaching for ten years or more. Literacy, and a variety of programs targeted to meet the current and future needs of students (including a school-to-work transition program) are high on the agenda. There is a strong sense of community ownership of the school. An award-winning partnership with a number of local businesses provides students with access to social and employment networks.
- *Pleasant Grove District High School:* This is a rural district high school, with an enrolment of 520 students from Kindergarten to Year 10. There is little ethnic diversity in the region, and a declining traditional rural industry base. Half of the student population qualify for government financial assistance. The Principal was in his third year at the school and in his first Principalship. Twenty percent of the teaching staff is new teacher graduates. Pleasant Grove District High has a commercially viable school farm, emerging information and communication technology (ICT) program, and a strong literacy focus. Its early childhood literacy program won Department of Education awards in 1999 and 2001. School and community have enjoyed a mutually supportive relationship for some years, represented by a strong school council, a range of community-based programs that have assisted in retaining students at risk of early school leaving, and a number of shared school–community facilities, including an E-learning centre (shared library, online access centre and online learning centre).
- *Windmill High School:* Located in an outlying, low SES suburb in the State’s capital city, this small high school has experienced decreasing enrolments for a number of years, currently catering for 263 Year 7 to 10 students. It has a diverse student body in terms of ability and socioeconomic background, with the majority from public housing estates, characterised by high levels of unemployment (37%) and single parent families (42%). Some two thirds of students are in receipt of government financial assistance. The female Principal was in her third year at the school and in her second Principalship, and had actively sought the position so she could assist ‘students who might otherwise have a fair bit of difficulty with school’. There is a relatively high staff turnover rate, with one third of the teachers classed as ‘temporary’. Pastoral care is high on the agenda. School successes in literacy were recognised by funding from the Department of Education to establish a literacy centre. The centre utilises best practice and provides leadership in literacy best practice to other schools. The school offers an innovative curriculum, including a diverse range of online subjects. It is proud of its historic connections with the early settlement of the city.
- *Watersedge High School:* This high school, with an enrolment of 485, is located in a higher than average SES suburb, in the State’s capital city. The unique position of the school in a corridor of single sex and private schools, which are attractive to the area’s high SES residents, places pressure on Watersedge High to maintain its share of enrolments. Despite the apparent wealth of the community, 28% of students are recipients of government financial assistance. The Principal was in his fourth year at the school. This was his second placement at Watersedge, having been Assistant Principal there in the early 1990s. He has also been principal of a number of schools including Windmill. The age of staff is above the State average, and transfer rates in and out of the school are low. Watersedge High seeks

independence in its students, many of whom have a strong sense of civic rights and duties. It has a reputation as being academically successful, and as a result of this reputation, some students travel from other suburbs and rural towns to attend. The school also prides itself on giving all students access to a diverse range of leadership, educational and extra curricular opportunities.

### **Data collection**

Interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, not just school principals, were the major source of data. For each school, the following were interviewed:

- Principal (two interviews);
- Assistant Principal(s) and/or senior teacher(s);
- A sample of classroom teachers responsible for teaching senior classes (Year 6 in primary school and Year 10 in secondary school), selected on the basis of their availability and willingness to participate. At Billabong Primary and Pleasant Grove District High, early childhood teachers were also interviewed on the recommendation of the Principals. Where the timetable permitted, classroom teachers were interviewed in groups of approximately 3–4 per group;
- Coordinators of specific school programs and any other key staff/community members, identified by school Principals as integral to the success of the school (e.g. the social worker in one low SES school, and a community representative on the school farm management committee at the rural school);
- Chairperson or other representative from the school council or parent association;
- Group interviews with senior students (one group of 3–4 students at Billabong Primary and Windmill High, and two groups of 3–4 students each at the larger schools);
- Group interviews with parents of senior students (one group of 4 parents each at Billabong Primary, Eastman and Windmill High schools, and two groups of 3–4 parents at Pleasant Grove District High).

Prior to conducting interviews the research team spent an afternoon in the school familiarising themselves with school layout and discussing the proposed visit with the Principal. Approximately three days were then spent in each school conducting interviews, collecting written documentation and taking photographs. All interviews were recorded on audiocassettes and later transcribed. Transcribed interviews were returned to participants for checking, amendment and addition of material as necessary. The research team then revisited the school between six to 12 months after the interviews were conducted, to present some preliminary findings, in order to check the validity of our analysis.

### **Findings**

Findings from the five case studies confirm that successful school leadership is an interactive, reciprocal and evolving process involving many players, which is influenced by and, in turn, influences, the context in which it occurs. In fact, all of the sections that follow are set within or, in the case of monitoring, interact with the context of understandings and requirements of and support from the environment—that is, the community (local to global) and the employer. Rather than discussing environment in a separate section, examples of the influence of context (environment) are embedded within each of the sections, to reflect the integral nature of context to the leadership process.

Further, the findings demonstrate that successful leadership is underpinned by the core values and beliefs of the Principal. These values and beliefs inform the Principals' decisions and actions regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building, and capacity building at the school level, including school culture and structure. The Principal's core values and beliefs, together with the values and capacities of other members of the school community, also feed

directly into the development of a shared school vision, which shapes the teaching and learning, student and social capital outcomes of schooling. In addition, a key part of the process is monitoring and critical reflection, which can lead to further change and/or transformation. These key stages of successful school leadership and their relationships are presented and illustrated from the case studies in the following five sections, and are summarised in Figure 1 (see page 26).

### ***Principal's values and beliefs***

Principals in each of the five schools are characterised by beliefs and values that can be broadly grouped into three categories: innate goodness and passion demonstrated through honesty, empathy and commitment; equity (everyone matters) demonstrated through being open and flexible; and other-centred (all can learn) demonstrated through dispersed leadership and responsibility.

Findings from the case studies described Principals in terms such as 'visionary' or 'inspirational', whose creativity and lateral thinking inspires the same qualities in others. Although differing in personality and leadership style, all display a number of similar characteristics, including honesty and openness, flexibility, commitment, empathy with others, and a sense of what the Eastman High Assistant Principal described as 'innate goodness'. Passion is another shared characteristic; with the comment from a senior teacher at Watersedge High that 'you need a passionate person in charge' echoed in each of the case study schools.

Regardless of school context, each of the school Principals clearly articulated a framework of core personal values that was at the heart of their leadership practice. This framework comprised two core values: the need to ensure equity in and through education, and the belief that the knowledge required to lead schools is dispersed and that everyone within the school community has both a right and a responsibility to participate in decision making and leadership of their school. Principals' values were strongly child-centred, based on the belief that 'all children can learn' (Principal at Pleasant Grove), and that 'all children matter' (Principal at Billabong). The Principal of Billabong continued:

*Why should kids have to have such a rough trot simply because they're on the wrong side of the tracks here or anywhere? Public education ought to always be about justice and giving kids a chance.*

All Principals believed that the responsibility for youth should be shared by the school community, there needs to be a sense of shared direction amongst staff, students and parents, and the outcomes of schooling should be equitably distributed.

*The three broad values of innate goodness, equity and other-centeredness and are reflected in the way the Principals act. For example, each Principal clearly articulated their values framework within their schools, as the Assistant Principal of Eastman confirmed:*

*... [the Principal] finds it very hard to pull the plug on a child ever and that rubs off on the staff. He can see good in people ... Everything that [the Principal] does is modelled and it rubs off. It's important that a leader is good. There's a lot to be said about having a good person at the top.*

All Principals' actions and decisions are based on their clearly articulated values framework. The framework acts as a filter as Principals attempt to reconcile the requirements of and level of support from the community and their employer, with the need to ensure equitable and successful outcomes for all students.

Principals' values are also linked to staffing choice, and each describes how they seek staff with similar values to themselves. This match is important in all schools, but particularly in low SES schools, as the Principal of Billabong explained:

*I expect them to be able to conceptualise and imagine and think creatively and innovatively plus look at things from multiple angles and to be able to empathise. That's very important and, to me, that's about higher level thinking ... a typical response of lower level teachers is that they get into blaming the kids.*

At the same time, appointing the 'right' people is not always easy, given the need for State government schools to comply with Departmental policy in relation to transfers and teaching appointments. Principals describe the importance of raising awareness of their school in the broader community (school public relations) in order to attract quality teaching staff.

Evidence from the case studies, and implicit in the quotations used in the following sections, indicates that the Principals' values affect individual support and capacity building, organisational capacity building, and school vision/mission.

### ***Providing individual support and building individual capacity***

Broadly, all leaders demonstrated a balance between the provision of three types of support: one-off or crisis support, support for individuals as they undergo change processes, and ongoing support in the form of acknowledging others. Case study evidence also indicated that individual capacity building is a three-stage process through which leaders support/encourage others to undertake leadership roles, encourage staff to accept responsibility for their own professional learning, and foster and support professional learning for groups (for example, senior staff). These actions result in staff feeling valued and cared for. The context in which support and capacity building occurs is important, in that successful leaders match the level and type of support to staff needs and staffing profile. These broad observations regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building by school leaders are reflected in extracts from interviewees discussed in detail below.

Principals were described as providing both personal and professional support to individuals, both in respect of particular problems or issues, and on an ongoing basis. For example, the Principal from Windmill High excused herself from our interview to lend support to a younger, valued staff member who had become involved in a situation that may have made it difficult for her to remain at Windmill High. In all schools Principals and senior staff provided a support network to assist staff through change processes. The Principal at Watersedge summed it up when he described how important it is to

*tap into teachers' skills and be a sounding board, to be the magma plasm for their boil [a term his grandmother used]. Let them purge, purge what they want to purge out and then utilise their skills and let them build, build their confidence, build their ego, build their self esteem.*

Principals also regularly gave feedback acknowledging the contributions of individuals to the school. The Principal at Eastman explained:

*this is a really high energy environment and the people here in our school work really, really hard. ... I think the level of satisfaction of being part of a place that's vibrant and exciting is really important for the staff here. I'd like to think that I acknowledge and recognise that at every level when I get the opportunity to do that.*

The Assistant Principal at Watersedge High noted how the provision of individual support by the Principal facilitates staff collegiality and team work:

*When ... you respect them and know their strengths and build on their strengths and give them support ... and feedback, which is what [the Principal] does, then people work much better together.*

Consistent with their beliefs about shared decision making and distributed leadership, school Principals provided extensive support to staff, students and parents to facilitate their participation. Individual professional development was a key part of capacity building, and individuals were encouraged to take responsibility for their own professional learning needs. The Principal of Billabong explained:

*... we had a little bit of money and I turned that over to teachers and said ... you can choose your own PD. Some people took that on and some people didn't, but it was part of trying to genuinely empower teachers to make some decisions about being active learners and learning in a way that would help their practice ...*

In particular, Principals placed a high priority on building the capacity of senior staff by providing professional learning opportunities focused on:

*encouraging their thinking, stimulating them, getting them listening to what other people are saying ... broadening our understanding and improving our overall knowledge because they're the people who are going to ask the questions of the classroom teacher, it's not going to be me asking that. (Principal of Eastman High)*

In all case studies it was clear that the level of support provided by Principals to individuals within the school differed according to individual needs. The following comment from the Principal of Windmill is typical of other Principal's comments:

*... it's a matter of getting the best out of your staff and understanding how they tick and being able to support them and showing the right sort of leadership at the right sort of time, it's all that ... judgment and compassion and understanding of the stresses that staff experience here, and how they need to be supported in different ways and how the community needs support in different ways ...*

A high priority was also given to new staff induction processes.

### ***Building school capacity***

School capacity was built through good communication and a carefully managed process of change. Building school capacity involved attention to two key areas: school culture, and school structure.

#### **School culture**

Case study evidence indicates that successful school leaders promote a culture of collegiality, collaboration, support and trust, and that this culture is firmly rooted in their democratic and social justice values and beliefs. This links directly to a broadening of the outcomes of schooling that are valued by each of the five case study school communities. Successful leaders also promote a culture in which innovation and risk taking is encouraged and supported. These broad observations regarding school culture and leadership are reflected in extracts from interviewees discussed in detail below.

Each of the Principals has worked hard to build a school culture underpinned by trust, collegiality and supportive relationships, and free from intimidation and coercion, which in turn has facilitated innovation and risk taking amongst staff and students, and also amongst parents and the broader school community. This reflects the Principals' beliefs in the importance of empowering others to

participate in democratic processes. They have also worked to build and/or strengthen a learning culture within their schools, reflecting a commitment to ensuring equity in and through education.

Principals built trust through a number of activities, including articulating their own personal values and beliefs, their expectations of themselves and others, and their allegiance to the school community. This is illustrated in the following reassurance offered by the newly-appointed Principal of Eastman High at his first staff meeting:

*One of the first commitments I gave to the staff when I came here was that if there are issue that we need to discuss ... well then we will discuss that and we'll try and do that as openly as we possibly can, but I won't ever going running off to District Office ... and bag anyone in this school community. I don't care whether it's a student or a parent or ... a staff member, I just won't do it, that is my commitment to you.*

Principals built trust by facilitating collaborative decision-making practices to allow knowledge and power sharing across the school community. The social worker at Billabong Primary explained:

*[The Principal] is such an outstanding role model ... and I think because of her style there is a high level of trust for her but also from her to us. And there is the sharing of the knowledge and there is a sharing of the power, so I think that the governance is very much shared amongst staff. I feel that I am an equal partner in that amongst other staff and for someone who's lived at Billabong that's huge and that's very powerful ...*

There was an ethos of collegial support amongst staff within each school. At Watersedge High, for example, the Principal was strongly against put downs so that 'if someone falls here we put our hand down and pick them up, we don't kick them while they're down or say, "Jeez, that person's weak"! ... we're here to look after each other'. More broadly than this, however, the belief was expressed by Principals and echoed by staff, parents and students from each school, that people and relationships are what matter. In addition, all Principals described a range of improved behaviour management strategies designed to minimise confrontation and provide opportunities for negotiation and dialogue, consistent with their beliefs regarding equity in and through schooling.

Risk taking in a supportive environment facilitates change. The culture in each school was one of innovation and risk taking, without fear of reprisals. This culture extended to all members of the school community. It enhanced school capacity and encouraged experimentation with new curriculum options and teaching strategies. The following comment from the Principal of Windmill High was typical:

*I think you get a much more real and lively kind of school if people really are engaged and ... can express their views at a staff meeting without any fear that there's going to be any repercussions whatsoever, and that debate is welcome as something that's good.*

Students and staff in each school described a similar culture, illustrated in the following comments from Eastman High:

*[Staff] make you feel good about not knowing how to do [something]. (Year 10 student)*

*Eastman High School encourages ... risk taking not only amongst the staff and the wider school community but the students as well. So even to take the risk of allowing six students to walk off campus one and a half kilometres in the middle of the school day, there's not too many schools in Tasmania would let them do that. So here we are creating an environment where the kids are developing independence, self reliance, self discipline ... they don't*

*damage or vandalise anything on the way, there's consequences if they do, so that's coming from the top down .... (Senior teacher in charge of the school's off-campus program)*

Principals in each school fostered a learning culture. For example, on her arrival at Billabong Primary, the Principal focused explicitly on addressing the generally unfavourable attitudes of parents to education, and on turning around a prevailing school culture in which 'the naughty kids were put in front of a computer' and teaching was more about containment than education. At other schools, Principals worked on strengthening the existing learning culture.

### School structure

The findings in relation to the influence of leaders on school structure can be broadly categorised into shared decision making, distributed leadership, and school wide professional learning. From all case study sites there is evidence that successful leaders foster shared decision making to motivate and empower others. Their focus is on distributed leadership, which is facilitated by providing support for distributed leadership processes and practices, promoting a culture of trust which encourages enthusiasm and a sense of agency amongst staff, students and parents, and by careful planning to ensure distributed leadership practices are integral to teaching and learning, and other key areas of school operation. Successful leaders also facilitate school wide professional learning, which is central to the change process. Each of the three broad categories of Principal influence on school structure is discussed in more detail below.

Motivation and empowerment of staff, students and others within the school community, were central to organisational change. The following comment from the Principal of Windmill High was typical:

*As a leader if I can empower people in my school, whether it's student leaders or teachers or the cleaner or the bursar to feel that they are confident in doing their job and developing and trying things out and knowing that I have confidence in them to do that and will help them, then I think I get change and progress a lot faster than if I say, 'Right, this is what we're going to do'.*

All Principals articulated a firm belief in shared decision-making, distributed leadership and collaborative work practices, the provision of individual professional development to increase the capacity of individuals to work collaboratively, and facilitation of school wide professional learning. The following comment from a staff member at Pleasant Grove describing how shared decision making creates a trusting and supportive environment conducive to change was typical:

*... how you're treated creates the culture here in the school, if your leaders are consultative and they look after you and they listen to you ... it tends to flow down, it just creates an ambience in the school of being listened to and being valued.*

Staff from each school confirmed the structured and focused nature of shared decision making, and noted that they were involved in 'more school wide decisions than ever before'. At the same time, the right of staff to reject suggestions from the Principal was respected, with a teacher from Watersedge High commenting that 'the give and take in discussion is fantastic!'.

Students in all schools were also consulted on a regular basis about decisions relevant to them, leading to student empowerment and further contributing to school capacity. The Windmill High School Assistant Principal described how student participation in decision making embodied broader democratic processes, and facilitated student empowerment and ownership of decisions:

*we ... teach the kids the importance of being involved in decisions ... with curriculum and activities that we run, we give a lot of student choice. [W]e have the representational process ... and we try very hard to make sure that that's just not a tokenistic thing so, for*

*example, if you've got a uniform change or an activity that people want, it actually happens, the kids see the results ...*

Principals noted that while shared decision making was desirable, it was not possible to lead in this way all the time, due to a range of contextual factors such as the confidential nature of the issue under discussion, or issues requiring an urgent response.

Success within each school is related to the extent to which leadership opportunities are distributed throughout the school community, utilising the skills and experience of school staff, students, parents and other community members in a variety of ways. An example is the way in which the Principal of Watersedge High reshaped the school management team. Previous Watersedge Principals had considered that the school's senior teachers (AST3s) 'were either over the hill, dinosaurs, and weren't up-to-date, au fait with current education philosophy' and had effectively excluded them from playing a meaningful role in leading the school. The current Principal believed his task was to 'give these people a sense of belief again ... a real role, and tap into their strengths'.

For most schools, School Councils also facilitated distributed leadership, providing opportunities for parents, staff, students and broader community members to have input into the direction of the school. The Council at Pleasant Grove, in particular, had a significant effect on school direction/vision, and had done so for a number of years, due to the background and commitment of Council members and the strong support of both the former and current Principals for the role of the Council.

Within each school there was a range of teams or committees, responsible for providing leadership in areas including school management, literacy and numeracy, pastoral care, and staff professional development. In addition, all schools had teams responsible for facilitating discussion, decision making and planning regarding curriculum, and in most cases, assessment. These curriculum teams facilitated collaborative planning and curriculum cohesion across the school. The Assistant Principal at Pleasant Grove explained:

*... out of that [examination of teaching and learning practice through the curriculum groups] has come some professional development that has resulted in teachers starting to work together and get a more integrated view in what they're trying to do in classrooms and they realise that they've actually got things in common and, why are we doing this individually with the door closed when it would be a lot easier if we work together ...*

Leadership of teaching and learning by teachers was important because it built trust between Principal and staff, acknowledged the professional expertise of teachers, and placed them at the centre of teaching and learning, and student outcomes. It also impacted positively on staff in terms of providing conditions conducive to innovation and risk taking. At the same time, with the increased level of control of teachers over teaching and learning, came greater accountability for their actions.

The various distributed leadership practices and structures within each school were the result of strong Principal support, as well as high levels of enthusiasm and sense of agency of all individuals involved. This is illustrated in school documentation from Eastman High:

*Our school provides a wealth of opportunities for staff to assume particular responsibility for various aspects of school life, and everyone is encouraged to become involved. ... As well, there are many specific roles which require leadership, coordination and organisation, and where possible, these roles have been filled by staff who has indicated their interest in taking on that role.*

In most schools, distributed leadership opportunities, or what some referred to as leadership density, were carefully planned to ensure leadership succession. The Assistant Principal at Eastman High explained:

*we acknowledge each other's strengths and weaknesses and support each other in that way .... People really are in a position to say 'Oh next year I'd like to have a go at that'. Leadership density is something that we're always thinking about ... and making sure that things don't just happen by chance, we're always planning ahead and getting people to fill people's shoes ...*

Professional development opportunities in all schools were linked to the school vision/mission, and facilitated school wide professional learning which was central to the change process. Such opportunities were designed to increase teacher commitment to change, and to encourage them to become leaders and participate actively in the professional learning of themselves and others. For example, the focus on curriculum and pedagogical review within the five schools involved individual professional development and extensive school wide professional learning, and was a high priority in terms of school resourcing. Comments from the Principal of Billabong Primary regarding the importance of professional learning to school capacity building were typical:

*Teachers really believe we are going in a strong direction and a solid direction ... they are saying they are being professionally challenged and shifted here in a way that's productive ...*

In another example, the school wide refocusing of behaviour management strategies to facilitate stronger staff-student relationships at Windmill High, was accompanied by a structured and ongoing program of formal and informal professional learning.

#### ***Towards a shared school vision/direction***

Evidence from the case studies indicates that school success derives from the development of a shared or collective vision for the school. In most schools the vision comprises four aspects of school direction: (1) focus (individual focus on each child) (2) environment (e.g. safe, caring, positive relationships) (3) expectations (school values regarding actions/behaviours of students, staff, parents) (4) scope (lifelong learning, community social capital). The focus of the school vision/direction is reflected in the school curriculum and in teaching/learning strategies, and is underpinned by a pastoral care or similar supportive school environment strategy evident within each school. Evidence from the case studies indicates that each school's mission and vision is articulated and reinforced on a regular basis to ensure a cohesive and holistic school focus.

All schools demonstrated an individual focus on each child through their pastoral care and similar programs, as well as their diverse curricula, ranging from traditional academic courses to general interest and practical courses such as photography and automotive studies, as well as a wide range of leadership and extra curricular activities, and special school programs such as the afternoon craft and activity, and visual arts programs offered at Billabong Primary. A teacher at the school confirmed that 'those sorts of initiatives are definitely leading to that feel of success and students that maybe weren't being catered for getting more opportunity to have successes. At Windmill and Pleasant Grove, because of their small size and rural location respectively, information and communication technology (ICT) was a key tool in providing an increased range of curriculum options to meet student needs and interests.'

Central to each school's vision was the provision of a safe, caring environment for students, staff and parents, and the promotion of respectful relationships between students and adults. At Watersedge High, for example, such an environment was facilitated by grade level coordinators who followed student cohorts through their four years of high school, and by teaching and learning activities where 'student opinion is listened to and respected'.

Within each school, behaviour management, and teaching and learning outcomes, derive from a framework of clearly articulated school community expectations. For example, at Billabong Primary a senior teacher commented that

*behaviour management has moved miles ahead ... I think most of the people in the school ... are actually working together to provide a situation that is safe for children, but set in boundaries so they know what is expected of them ...*

In the same way, the development of a learning culture within the school provides clear direction and expectations for students, staff and parents about teaching and learning. For students, the Principal explained that this means 'you go into class to have an engaging experience that is academically focused and you are treated as an individual, respected, and you are expected to perform as a student'.

In terms of scope, the vision of each school extends beyond the provision of education for students for a prescribed number of years, to include a focus on encouraging and nurturing lifelong learning amongst all within the school community and on contributing to the development of community social capital<sup>5</sup>. The Principal pf Pleasant Grove described how a broadening of the school curriculum to accommodate post-compulsory students (including adults) in vocational education and training programs, facilitated through shared school and community ICT facilities, was a good example of the role of the school in adding 'to the social capital of the community by facilitating lifelong learning'.

The case studies showed clearly that the development of a shared school vision/direction occurs simultaneously as school capacity is built. The Principal of Pleasant Grove described an approach to developing a shared vision and direction that is similar to that described by the other Principals:

*[It is] a deliberate strategy to talk ... so that slowly you get a common view evolving. It is not about me going out there saying this is the direction in which I think we should be going. ... it's about building the structures in the school so that people feel that they can have their say about where we're going and to listen to them, and to make sure that it is as much as possible we and not I ...*

At Pleasant Grove, as in the other case study schools, a senior teacher described how

*the Principal pulls us back to the general vision very often, tries to have us think about the big picture a lot, like what we're doing, why we're doing things, what's the relevance, what we're doing in the classroom ... as a school we do look at that bigger picture a lot ... more now than we did a few years ago..*

The school vision acted as a filter for school decision making, particularly regarding the effectiveness of current educational programs and the 'fit' of potential new programs and initiatives. The Principal at Pleasant Grove described the vision as the 'glue that holds all programs together' while the Principal at Eastman described how the development and articulation of a shared vision allowed the school to move away from its previous 'pimples on a pumpkin' approach to curriculum, in which opportunities or additional programs became ends in themselves often driven by the availability of external funding, rather than complementary and coherent components of a broader school vision. A good example is the new school wide approach to teaching literacy at Eastman High that fits with the school focus on providing an 'inclusive environment' and on the development of individual potential as a 'community responsibility'. The Principal described how and why staff agreed to adopt the literacy program:

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<sup>5</sup> Social capital is defined as the 'networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups' (OECD 2001, *The Wellbeing of Nations: The role of human and social capital*, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris, p. 41).

*as a staff we agreed ... when we put that tender in that we weren't interested a literacy program that was going to be for literacy teachers. This was going to be a literacy program that operated across all learning areas and across all grades. So that meant that everybody gave that commitment to be part of it.*

At the same time, a variety of school and external contextual factors influence the extent to which individuals within the school community share the school's vision/direction. In particular, issues such as the relatively high turnover of teachers at Windmill High due to their temporary status make it more difficult to achieve cohesion amongst staff than in schools with a more stable staffing profile.

### **School outcomes**

The individual and school capacity building activities described earlier, as well as a clearly articulated and shared school vision/direction, are linked to a range of successful outcomes for school communities. The following comment from a teacher at Eastman High School describes a situation common across all five schools:

*... we can within our planning actually make sure that there are student outcomes linked to our planning. So that we're not planning in isolation if you like, there is an overall vision, an overall goal of where we want to be.*

Successful school outcomes that are valued by the community can be categorised into three groups: teaching and learning outcomes, student outcomes, and community social capital outcomes.

### Teaching and learning outcomes

Findings in relation to teaching and learning outcomes illustrate clear links to the Principals' values and the school vision/mission, in that successful teaching and learning outcomes derive from a social justice framework, and focus on student responsibility for their own learning. Evidence from each case study indicates that successful teaching and learning outcomes included meaningful tasks, collaborative/inquiry-based activity, and negotiated student outcomes. Four key influences on teaching and learning outcomes were identified: Principal/staff expectations, teacher involvement in instructional leadership, school context, and the external policy context (specifically, the *Essential Learnings* statewide curriculum framework). Each of these broad findings is discussed below and is illustrated with interview extracts from the case study sites.

The focus of teaching and learning in all schools was on providing equitable opportunities for all students through working in heterogeneous groupings, fostering student responsibility for their learning, and engaging students in meaningful tasks. For example, the Assistant Principal at Windmill High explained that the school's online learning program

*is very much linked to an equity issue to offer the kids here the choice and the opportunity to study a subject with a teacher who is an expert, online ... you can have a heterogeneous group of kids working and learning in a flexible learning environment of different abilities and they are there because they are interested in what they are doing. And they have got a commitment to what they are doing.*

Effective teaching and learning at Windmill High and the other case study schools was collaborative and inquiry-based, characterised by classroom environments of mutual support and increasingly focusing on the achievement of negotiated outcomes.

In each school, the importance of teaching and learning was reflected in the high expectations by staff of students, which in turn reflected the high expectations of staff and students by the Principal. It was also reflected in the strong focus on teacher involvement in instructional

leadership, which was seen by staff as recognition and affirmation of their expertise in this area. The team approach to teaching and learning and the innovative and risk-taking culture evident in each school, has encouraged staff to reflect on and extend their repertoire of teaching practices to better meet the needs of students, and has made them more accountable for their teaching. A teacher at Eastman explained how the team approach

*affects my teaching because of the close knit nature of the team ... we share resources and we bounce ideas off each other so I've learnt a lot from the people around me which has enabled me to experiment with new approaches and new ideas that I probably wouldn't have been exposed to. ... because we are in such small cohesive groups we do have a lot of meeting time and a lot of sharing and supporting each other time ... I think it probably also helps make us more accountable for what we're doing and keeps us on the ball ...*

Changes to teaching and learning within the five Tasmanian schools are set within the context of the government mandated *Essential Learnings* curriculum framework. Professional development linked to implementation of the *Essential Learnings* framework has encouraged a number of staff to trial new teaching strategies designed to facilitate deeper learning, and to utilise a range of cooperative learning and critical thinking strategies. Moreover, it has facilitated a process of school wide professional learning. Discussion of learning styles and experimentation with new teaching strategies has been important for all teachers, but particularly for those who have been in the classroom for some years. The following teacher from Pleasant Grove noted that the review of curriculum and pedagogy at her school 'has pulled me right back into what we're here to do and that's to teach children and to find the best way to teach them through the content. So yes, less is more, but do it well ...'.

In addition to leadership, a range of other factors also influence teaching/learning. Of these, school context is at the forefront. In schools serving low SES communities, the 'very nature of their constituency' is a powerful force for pedagogical change. The Principal of Billabong Primary explained:

*... our kids have low tolerance for didactic teaching, they have to have constructivist learning .... So it's got to be something that grabs their attention and interest and then the technicalities of literacy and numeracy can be taught.*

### Student outcomes

The findings indicate that most student outcomes are relevant across all school contexts: achieving individual potential, student engagement, self-confidence and self-direction, sense of identity, sense of community and belonging, and literacy and numeracy outcomes. However, there are also indications that some outcomes are more important and/or more valued in certain school contexts. For example, academic achievement is more valued at Watersedge High, a high SES school, than in the low SES schools, although the Principal of Watersedge emphasised that academic success was only one of a number of equally important indicators of success, including happiness and a sense of belonging, opportunity, and the quality of relationships. On the other hand, student outcomes in four areas assumed particular importance in low SES case study schools: social learning, school attendance and retention, improved behaviour and attitude, and reduced vandalism. In all schools, evidence indicated that student outcomes were influenced by five factors: school context, relationships between students and staff, high teacher expectations, curriculum options, and teaching and learning strategies.

The range of valued student outcomes was closely linked to the school's vision/mission that each child should reach his/her potential, and reflected the beliefs of each school community that academic achievement is only one of a range of valued student outcomes. Academic scores vary in their importance according to school context, assuming greater importance in high SES schools like Watersedge High, where 97% of students continue to tertiary education. In lower SES schools, where students face a variety of social and economic disadvantages, academic

achievement scores are seen as a less relevant way of measuring student progress and outcomes, due to their inability to account for differences in student ability levels, mobility of the student population, and what is important in students' current or future lives.

The focus in all schools, regardless of SES, location, or size, was on developing confident, self-motivated learners and on building a sense of identity and self-worth in students. This was achieved through a supportive school culture in which staff-student relationships are fundamental. All schools identified literacy (and numeracy) as an important means of allowing students to reach their potential, and addressed these issues on a school wide basis, channeling considerable resources, both financial and human, into these areas. Steady improvements in literacy and numeracy scores in all five schools indicate their efforts have been successful although, particularly for low SES schools, measures of success need to be calibrated according to the background and abilities of the students.

Student self-confidence and self-worth were built by offering a range of curriculum options in which all students could experience success, again a feature of all five schools. High teacher expectations were also vital in building student self-confidence and encouraging them to reach their potential. The following comment from a parent of a Windmill High student was typical:

*[Staff] seem to believe so much in the child and encourage them so much ... even if they [students] think that they can't achieve it ... I feel that they [staff] give them a lot of encouragement to at least try.*

Student participation in school decision making and management resulted in a range of positive benefits, including greater connectedness and sense of community within the school, reduced levels of vandalism, and an overall improvement in student behaviour and attitude. The team approach to teaching and learning evident in all schools provided a sense of belonging and identity for each individual (staff and students). A senior teacher at Eastman High explained that

*Our strength is in our team and I believe then with our children their strength is in their sense of belonging. ... if you ask them – well, we are Year 9s and that's who we are and that's our block and this is our classroom and our space and these are our team of teachers, and we are very recognisable for being that.*

These outcomes are described as being particularly important in schools located in lower SES communities, such as Eastman and Windmill High Schools.

In all schools, students, staff and parents reported increasing levels of student engagement in their studies, brought about by a challenging and diverse curriculum, a variety of teaching and learning strategies utilised to meet student needs and backgrounds, and the usefulness and relevance of subjects to students' lives and likely futures.

Teaching strategies that foster group work, and a culture in which school community members 'look out for each other' have given rise to increased social learning for students, as the following comment from a senior teacher at Windmill High illustrates:

*I work in proximal groups so that kids have all worked with other members of that class. I have a real feeling that by doing that it eliminates bullying and it gets kids knowing that working in teams is such an important part of working in life ...*

Increased school attendance and retention rates were linked to a more diverse and engaging curriculum and positive and supportive staff-student relationships. Regular attendance at school impacted positively on student achievement levels, an issue of importance in all schools but particularly in low SES schools, as the Principal of Windmill High notes:

*if the child is simply coming to be destructive or not coming [to school] or being booted out as soon as they step into the classroom, you're just not getting anywhere.*

### Community social capital outcomes

While the findings from each site indicated that successful school leadership focused on building social capital within the school, in terms of facilitating collective action based on shared values, norms, and understandings, there was also evidence to indicate that these outcomes extended well beyond the school, to include the school community and the broader geographical community in which the school was located. These community social capital outcomes included an increased sense of community identity and empowerment which was particularly important in low SES areas, and a wide range of social, education, training and employment outcomes for all community members. Community social capital outcomes were facilitated by school leaders with a firm belief in the role of schools as centres of lifelong learning for the whole community, who were willing to access and create opportunities with a focus on building active and engaged citizens. These outcomes did not come about by chance, but were closely linked to the values of the Principal and form part of the vision of the school, that responsibility for youth should be shared by the school community, and that the school has a responsibility to its broader community.

Case study findings indicated a range of community social capital outcomes. For example, involvement of parents in their children's' education and in the school more broadly, increased community confidence and allowed for a sharing of skills and knowledge for the benefit of all. Particularly in low SES schools, the Assistant Principal of Windmill High explains how empowerment of both students and parents, and an attitudinal change to the value of education and training, ultimately gives rise to more positive and lasting student outcomes, than

*previous policies which have been very politicised and top down ... I think the key to higher learning outcomes ... is in empowerment of communities and ... supporting kids to be empowered, with commitment to learning, and [that's] part of the culture here.*

The various forms of community-based learning evident within most schools, and particularly important in low SES, and rural schools, also built community social capital. For example, at Pleasant Grove District High, the school farm and its related activities such as the annual school agricultural show, provided a strong link 'for kids and the community'. At the same time, the school's relatively new and expanding information and communication technology (ICT) program provided opportunities for post Year 10 online vocational education and training (VET) courses. Prior to offering online VET courses, these same young people may not have undertaken further education and training at all, or would have left the community to do so, and may not have returned. The Principal described how these activities, as well as the school's shared facilities with the community, including a recently opened e-learning centre, 'add to the social capital of the community by facilitating lifelong learning in the local community'.

In another example, community-based learning at Eastman High extends well beyond the immediate local community to include two other schools and their communities. Eastman High, located in the lowest SES area of the city, was also successful in winning Australian government funding to implement a one-stop shop for all young people (12–25 years of age) in the local and surrounding suburbs, allowing them to access a range of public services including health, welfare, legal services, and education and training. The project officer employed by the school explained that although it was beyond the scope of 'what a school would normally apply for', given the school's ethos as a 'community-centred organisation ... we applied for that money because no-one else was going to and we knew there was a need here'.

### ***Evidence based monitoring, evaluation, critical reflection and change/transformation***

Evidence from the case studies suggests that successful leadership is more than continuing to do the same thing well. In addition to continually reflecting on their own values and actions,

successful leaders facilitate monitoring, reflection and evaluation through broad-based governance structures, individual and school wide professional learning, and by utilising external drivers such as Departmental policy. Critical reflection on the ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘what’ of leadership is then used to inform change if needed.

All Principals outlined the value and importance of monitoring, evaluation and critical reflection as part of an ongoing process of individual and school wide continuous learning. The Principal at Watersedge High commented that he was ‘more reflective after seven years as a principal’, although conceded that ‘I have days of doubt, real doubt, and you think hell, what am I doing’, followed by ‘days of confidence’. He described a recent period of sick leave as vital in allowing him time ‘to get back into theory and get back into reading’, and commented that ‘sometimes you have to change sites [go home] to do it [reflect]’. In another example, the Principal of Billabong Primary described how the completion of her doctoral dissertation was central to the reflective process because it has ‘given me huge frameworks for approaching almost any situation ...’.

Monitoring and critical reflection were facilitated by shared decision making and broad-based governance structures in each school, in key areas such as curriculum and assessment, and behaviour management. A teacher at Eastman explained that the formation of learning teams has facilitated the regular monitoring and evaluation process:

*I think it's through continual evaluation of what we do and we're good at that, like we do a lot of evaluation. And after receiving that evaluation and lots of feedback we're very active in doing something about it.*

Key changes at Eastman High that have been informed by evaluation and critical reflection include the introduction of timetabling, structural and curriculum changes for Year 9 and 10 students that resulted in stronger staff-student relationships, increased student engagement, and increased opportunities for student extension. In other examples, two of Eastman’s key initiatives, the Work Plus community-based learning program, and the Burnley off-campus program, were expanded and extended, following a review of their activities and outcomes. Each program now has a broader, more holistic focus and involves a wider range of students than before. The programs are now more reflective of the Principals’ values and the school vision in terms of their social justice underpinnings, and are an integral part of the school curriculum rather than being seen as an ‘alternative’ curriculum.

Evidence from the case studies indicates that professional learning facilitates critical reflection on the link between vision, teaching and learning, and outcomes, and encourages staff to experiment with new ways of doing things. The following comment from a teacher at Billabong Primary is typical:

*... we are also analysing our approaches [to] what we're doing, so that will flow through to student outcomes. If we're reflecting on our practice and often after a staff meeting where we've discussed something I'm sure people go home and think, that's a really good idea, what can I do to address that, or [is] what I'm doing in the classroom really engaging the children, [and] if not, what can I do? So perhaps it flows through that way. Teacher enthusiasm, teacher knowledge flowing through to improve outcomes.*

At Billabong, the Principal explained that this reflection on classroom practice resulted in a school wide focus on constructivist learning ‘that grabs [students’] attention and interest’ because ‘our kids ... are not as resilient as they need to be when faced with not understanding new concepts’.

Evidence from the case studies identifies Departmental policy as a facilitator of critical reflection and evaluation, and all schools described how they were increasing their evidence-based decision making as a result of both mandated and voluntary record-keeping practices. For example, schools regularly monitored and evaluated the outcomes of their literacy and numeracy programs using

statewide literacy and numeracy tests, to ensure they were meeting the needs of students and to ensure accountability to stakeholders. As a result of this process, changes were made as necessary. At Pleasant Grove, the success of the early childhood sector's literacy program resulted in the school allocating more resources and increased autonomy for the sector, which is now a model for developments elsewhere within the school. However, external policy as a facilitator of critical reflection can sometimes have unexpected results. At Watersedge High, staff was involved in a review of curriculum prompted by the statewide Curriculum Consultation project. As a result of a review of the Health/Physical Education curriculum for senior students completing their Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE), the Principal in consultation with Health/Physical Education coordinator determined that the school would opt out of the TCE in Health/Physical Education because of an over-emphasis on criterion-based assessment. Such assessment required ticking off a series of boxes, and left little time for student enrichment. Watersedge High subsequently developed its own Wellness and Enrichment program that focuses on the social, mental, physical and emotional aspects of students' wellness.

Several of the Principals also described how they utilised mandated Departmental review processes such as the School Improvement Review (SIR). The SIR process provided for a year-long structured evaluation and critical reflection on the school's vision, structure, processes, and student outcomes. As part of the process, target outcomes for the following three years were identified. Knowledge about the process of review and change gained from the SIR has been utilised by Principals in their leadership of school change more broadly. For example, in terms of the process of introducing pedagogical and structural changes at Windmill High, the Assistant Principal described how the Principal

*led ... change, it hasn't been rushed, it's been a process that's deliberately set out over a period of time and I just think the thoroughness of it has impressed me because policies and changes that we've had have actually had some substance to them.*

## CONCLUSION: A PRELIMINARY MODEL OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Our case study research confirms Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) claims that successful school leadership makes important contributions to school outcomes and that these effects are indirect. However our research suggests that contribution occurs in a more complex way and with a wider range of outcomes than suggested by Leithwood and Riehl. Leadership in each of the five case study schools was driven by the Principals' core personal values, and by the development of a shared organisational values base. Although these core values were similar across school sites, the internal and external school context influenced the way in which they were translated into school practices and procedures. These findings support the highly politically values-led contingency model of transformational school leadership (Day et al, 2000; Day & Naylor, 2004). They also acknowledge the accountability-oriented policy context in which Principals operate (Leithwood & Riehl 2003) and the argument regarding the need for successful school Principals to bridge the gap between the professional and other communities (Driscoll and Goldring, 2003).

Successful Principals also displayed a core set of basic leadership skills regardless of school context, including developing a shared vision, individual capacity building and organisational redesign, supporting the findings of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) into the generic skills of school leaders. All Principals, but particularly those from low SES schools, promoted equity and social justice through the creation of strong school communities and socially just pedagogical practices (Furman & Shields, 2003), and by focusing on the development/reinforcement of a strong learning culture within the school community (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). One of the most powerful emerging concepts here is that of 'deep' democracy: respect for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions, reverence for and proactive facilitation of free and open

inquiry and critique, recognition of interdependence in working for the common good, the responsibility of individuals to participate in free and open inquiry, and the importance of collective choices and actions in the interest of the common good.

The extent of organisational learning (and therefore, school capacity) was found to be linked to the transformational leadership practices of successful Principals, and supports findings from other research (Gurr et al, 2003; Silins, Mulford & Zarins, 2002; Silins, Zarins, & Mulford, 2002; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004). Consistent with other who have researched the area, Principals' transformational leadership practices included the provision of individual support, development of a trusting and risk taking culture, implementation of structures to facilitate shared decision making and distributed leadership, development of shared goals and vision, and high expectations of students as well as challenging and providing intellectual stimulation for teachers (Leithwood & Hallinger, 2002; Silins & Mulford, 2002a).

Evidence from the case studies confirm Gurr et als. (2003) finding that Principals impact indirectly on student outcomes by working with and through others and using a range of interventions in terms of individual and school capacity building, as well as teaching and learning. Principals created bridges and formed linkages across the school community and beyond to improve student outcomes (Driscoll & Goldring, 2003). Specifically, the case studies provide evidence of the important boundary spanning role played by successful school leaders (Kilpatrick et al. 2002), which Leithwood and Riehl (2003) identified as a gap in educational leadership research to date.

The case studies also provide evidence of the importance of both distributed leadership and positional leadership (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Silins, Mulford & Zarins, 2002; Silins, Zarins, & Mulford, 2002; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Prestine & Nelson 2003; Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004). Findings indicate that successful leadership involves roles for both formal and informal leaders, similar to those suggested in Kilpatrick et als (2002) leadership model, and that the Principal's transformational leadership practices facilitate widespread participation in school leadership. In brief, they demonstrated a strong ability to work with and through others (Gurr et al, 2003).

Findings from the case studies indicate that when the whole school community is involved in school leadership, a much broader definition of the valued outcomes of learning emerges (Feinstein 2000; Driscoll & Goldring 2003; Mulford & Silins 2003), extending well beyond traditional measures of academic achievement. For example, the growing importance of community social capital outcomes is noted, supporting findings by Kilpatrick et al. (2002). Although other research (Silins, Mulford & Zarins, 2002; Silins, Zarins, & Mulford, 2002; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004) has not found a link between the community focus of schools and student outcomes, our study suggests that community social capital outcomes are important in their own right, particularly in low SES and rural schools.

Successful school leadership emerges as a process of learning, both by individuals and whole school communities (Kilpatrick et al 2002; Prestine & Nelson 2003; Stein & Spillane, 2003). The findings indicate that a key part of the process is regular evaluation of the school's context, individual and organisational capacity, vision and goals, and outcomes, as well as the ability to critically reflect on these findings and make changes accordingly. This supports earlier leadership models by Day et al. (2000) and Kilpatrick et al. (2002) and the need identified by Prestine and Nelson (2003) for successful leaders to balance the demands of the designed and emergent parts of the organisation. The evolving concept here is constructivism, which sees learning as a process of active knowledge construction, not something that can be handed to someone else. The process involves knowledge dependency, with current understandings used to construct new understandings, and social activity situated in specific contexts.

This more complex view of successful school leadership not only encapsulates the characteristics of transformational leadership but also most of the dimensions of leadership identified by Furman and Shields (2003), namely communal and contextual, processual, transformative, and pedagogical and the stages of organisational learning in schools identified by Mulford and Silins (2003), namely trusting and collaborative climate, shared and monitored mission, taking initiatives and risks, and on-going, relevant professional development. In encapsulating these models the case studies reinforce the suggestion that the characteristics are sequential or developmental.

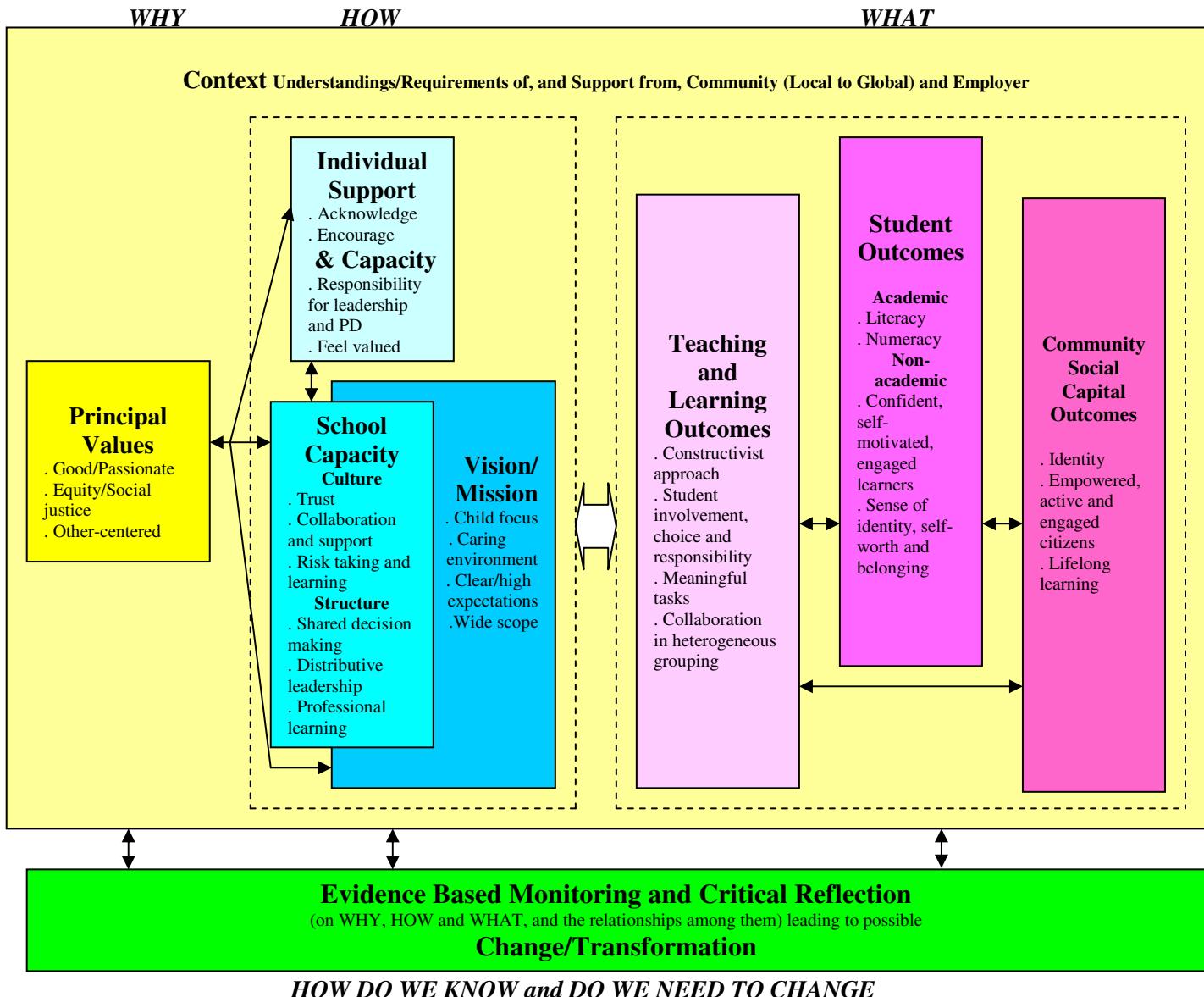
To summarise (see Figure 1 on page 26), the review of some of the literature on, and models of, successful school leadership and findings from the five case Tasmanian studies confirm that successful school leadership is an interactive, reciprocal and evolving process involving many players, which is influenced by and, in turn, influences, the context in which it occurs. Further, the findings demonstrate that successful leadership is underpinned by the core values and beliefs of the Principal. These values and beliefs inform the Principals' decisions and actions regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building, and capacity building at the school level, including school culture and structure. The Principal's core values and beliefs, together with the values and capacities of other members of the school community, feed directly into the development of a shared school vision, which shapes the teaching and learning, student and social capital outcomes of schooling. To complete the proposed model is a process of evidence based monitoring and critical reflection, which can lead to change and/or transformation. The context and the successful school principal's values form the 'why' of the model, the individual support and capacity, school capacity and school vision/mission the 'how', and the teaching and learning, student and community outcomes the 'what'. The evidence based monitoring and critical reflection on the 'why', 'how' and 'what' and the relationship among them forms the final section of the model, the 'how do we know' and 'do we need to change' element.

The preliminary model of successful school Principalship highlights the:

- Imbedded/contextual nature of Principal values, individual and organisational capacity, mission and outcomes;
- Interactive nature of principal values, individual and organisational capacity and mission on the one hand and outcomes on the other;
- Broad interpretation of outcomes, and their interaction with each other, to include teaching and learning, student academic and non-academic outcomes and community social capital; and,
- Separateness of evidence-based monitoring - implying that professional educators have a responsibility to not just accept for example what an employer and/or community may expect but to critical reflect and if necessary act on all aspects of the model, including the context, and their interrelationships.

Within the preliminary model, a start has been made on describing the nature of each characteristics involved in successful school principalship. For example, successful school Principal's values were found to involve being good and passionate, supporters of equity and social justice and being other centred. Clearly more needs to be done to flesh out these descriptions, for example to include the ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Furman and Shields, 2003). There also needs to be further work on the congruence and sequence among the characteristics (Mulford 2003a & c) and the issue of the ability of successful leaders to manage tensions and dilemmas (Day et al, 2000) within and between the characteristics.





**Figure 1: The Mulford-Johns Model of Successful School Principalship**

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