

## Leading with Moral Purpose: Teacher leadership in action

Joan Conway and Dorothy Andrews

University of Southern Queensland

[Joan.conway@usq.edu.au](mailto:Joan.conway@usq.edu.au)

+61 7 4631 2350

[Dorothy.andrews@usq.edu.au](mailto:Dorothy.andrews@usq.edu.au)

+61 7 4631 2346

### Abstract

Mutualistic goal setting enables members of the school community to reinvigorate and build on the past in order to establish clear goals for the future. That past in the case study schools of this chapter is steeped in the various foundations of the schools and manifests in explicit values for action, bringing life to the moral purpose of the school. Teacher leaders emerge from the process with zest for open and active work in parallel with their meta-strategic leaders. They lead with members of the professional community, bringing to life in classrooms the underpinning values of the school's vision for learning. This chapter draws on examples of teacher leaders working in schools that have engaged with the school improvement process of IDEAS (Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievement in Schools) and are leading significant new pedagogical action. Guided by the school improvement process based on building capacity for the alignment of school components through parallel leadership, mutualistic goal setting and collective responsibility, these teachers exemplify leadership that is underpinned by allegiance to an explicit set of values guided by a vision for learning.

Each school is different and each teacher leader demonstrates recognised qualities of critical self-reflection, networking, and advocacy for improved student achievement from a contextually relevant vantage point of moral purpose. The result is an identified style of leadership, underpinned by moral purpose, whereby teacher leaders in concert with their metastrategic principal actively engage in the articulation of their school's values and vision for learning through pedagogical leadership and strategic planning.

### Introduction

At a time when schools are being pressured to improve, and to juggle competing demands, whilst global agendas are controlling the purse strings on resourcing in response to school achievement outcomes, it takes a deal of energy and enthusiasm for school communities to keep their focus. In fact, this tension calls on a high level of integrity by school leadership to establish and achieve contextually relevant goals:

surely the call to action must be grounded in “what matters”. So, what is it that matters in school communities? Who knows “what matters” in school communities? And, who leads “what matters” in school communities?

In response to the question, “why do you teach?” or “why did you choose the profession of teaching?”, it is common to hear responses akin to “I want/ed to make a difference in the lives of children” or “I want to do the right things for our kids”. So, again the questions arise: What guides this aspiration? Who decides what this guidance is? And, how does one make this difference in the daily life of schooling?

There is much said about shared leadership, setting goals, and collaboration, which in most cases falls on the path of the school leader. Much literature and debate surround the concept of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2008; Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2006) which is contested through various understandings and resulting models of effective leadership. Of paramount importance is the commitment of leadership to a set of values underpinning a clearly articulated and enacted vision that provides a moral compass upon which all mutualistic goal setting is orientated. As principals and teacher leaders together set their moral compass with collective responsibility and parallel leadership, the capacity for teacher leadership and metastrategic leadership is enhanced, leading to sustainable school improvement (Crowther & Associates, 2011). It is this commitment to moral purpose resulting in capacity building for sustainability that captures the interest of many, but presents the most challenge in times of irrepressible change and time-poor agendas.

Of significant interest is the capacity for teachers as leaders to commit to whole-school improvement in their context. Specifically, evidence reveals that it is the core business of teacher leaders to advocate for improved pedagogy, to be willing to engage in critical self-reflection, and to network both within and beyond their school environ (Crowther, Conway, & Petersen, in Crowther & Associates, 2011, pp. 119-124). These are the constructs of capacity building for teachers who demonstrate commitment to and clear articulation of leading with moral purpose. So, what better place to start than with successful case studies where teacher leaders in concert with their principals have taken the lead in school improvement processes.

## **Background to the Case Studies**

The three school stories related in this chapter have been drawn from two longitudinal research studies in two school systems, one public and one independent (Catholic), in Australia. Schools within these systems had been engaged in a whole-school improvement project, IDEAS (Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievement in

Schools) (Andrews et al., 2004; IDEAS website, <http://ideas.usq.edu.au/>) for more than three years and had shown evidence of sustainable improvement in school outcomes – in particular, student achievement and student well-being, and enhanced teacher professionalism and community alignment.

### **The contextual experience: The IDEAS Project**

The IDEAS Project is a school improvement initiative that is designed to enable school leaders to manage developmental processes in their schools with a view to enhancing and sustaining success – in teacher professionalism, in community support and in student achievement. Since its inception in 1997, IDEAS has been implemented in over 300 schools across Australia and internationally, with a multitude of claims of “success”. In implementing IDEAS, trained facilitators and resource persons work with the school’s professional community to illuminate the work of teachers and assist teachers and school administrators to achieve clarified direction, shared pedagogy and aligned infrastructures.

IDEAS is based on five principles of practice – teachers are the key; professional learning is the key to professional revitalisation; no blame; success breeds success; and alignment of school processes is a collective school responsibility (Crowther & Associates, 2011, p. 173).

Integral to the project are four key components. These include:

1. **Component One:** Organisational alignment: The Research-based Framework for Enhancing School Outcomes (RBF) (Crowther & Associates, 2011, pp. 175-176; Crowther, Andrews, & Conway, 2013, pp. 36-38).
2. **Component Two:** A longitudinal strategy for school revitalisation (*ideas* process). The *ideas* process is a five-phase strategy, spread over a 2-3 year period that enables school leaders to manage processes of implementing their own school priorities. *ideas* draws on highly authoritative sources such as metastrategy (Limerick, Cunnington, & Crowther, 1998); appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1996); action learning (Kolb, 1984; Zuber-Skerritt, 1990; Argyris & Schon, 1996) and organisational capacity building (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2001). Each of the five phases – *initiating*, *discovering*, *envisioning*, *actioning* and *sustaining (ideas)* – centres on the professional work of teachers, both pedagogically and in relation to leadership (Crowther & Associates, 2011, p. 174; Crowther et al., 2013, p. 37).
3. **Component three: 3-dimensional pedagogy (3-D.P)** - The work of the 21<sup>st</sup> century professional teacher is conceptualised in the IDEAS Project as 3-dimensional, that is, as encompassing the integration of personal pedagogy (PP),

schoolwide pedagogy (SWP) and authoritative pedagogy (AP) (Andrews & Crowther, 2003, reproduced in Crowther et al., 2013, pp. 18-19).

4. **Component four: Parallel leadership** - is conceptualised in the IDEAS Project as: *a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action for purposes of schoolwide development and revitalisation to enhance the school's 'capacity'* (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009; Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002).

Teacher leaders' functions in parallel leadership emphasise pedagogical enhancement, particularly schoolwide pedagogical enhancement (Crowther et al., 2002, 2009 – refer Table 10.1).

Table 10.1. Teachers as Leaders Framework

<p><b>Teacher leaders .....</b></p> <p><i>Convey convictions about a better world by articulating a positive future for all students</i></p> <p><i>Facilitate communities of learning by encouraging a shared, schoolwide approach to core pedagogical processes</i></p> <p><i>Strive for pedagogical excellence by showing genuine interest in students' needs and well-being</i></p> <p><i>Confront barriers in the school's culture and structures by standing up for children, especially disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups</i></p> <p><i>Translate ideas into sustainable systems of action by internal and external networking</i></p> <p><i>Nurture a culture of success by acting on opportunities to emphasise accomplishments and high expectations</i></p>
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Source: Adapted from Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3.

Principals' leadership functions in the construct of parallel leadership are conceptualised as "metastrategic" (Crowther et al., 2002, 2009) and are outlined in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2. The Five Metastrategic Functions of the Principal in School Improvement

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

Source: Crowther et al., 2009, p. 71

Leadership in the IDEAS project is conceptualised as a distributed entity: leadership where principals and teacher leaders come together in a special professional relationship that is bound by trust, respect and allowance for individual expression. The *ideas* process enables the emergence, maturation and influence of three developmental processes – professional learning, SWP and culture building. It is through the power of these processes that heightened school outcomes are made possible (see Figure 10.1).

Figure 10.1. Linking parallel leadership and successful capacity-building.

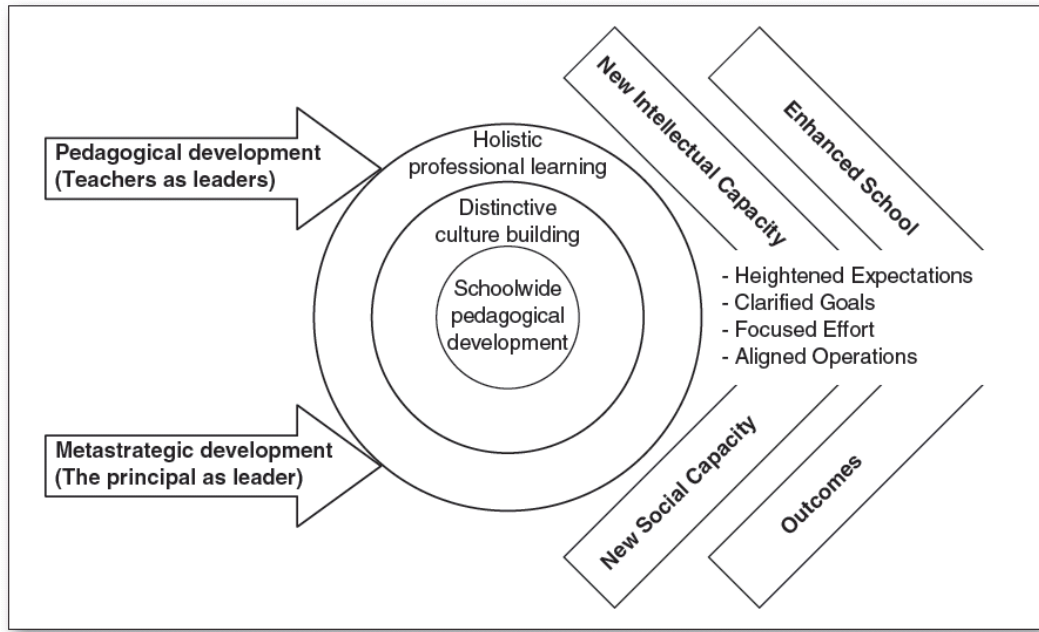


Figure 10.1. Linking parallel leadership and successful capacity-building.

Source: Crowther et al., 2009, p. 60, adapted from Crowther & Associates, 2011, pp. 178-179.

### The Research Approach and Design

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

## **Victorian IDEAS schools**

Twenty-two metropolitan region schools in the Victorian public school system in the period 2004 to 2008 who undertook to complete the IDEAS Project were followed up 2 years after completing the project. The research comprised two sequential phases.

**Phase 1:** Preliminary analysis of the Victorian Department of Education SAS (Student Attitudes to School) and SOS (Staff Opinion Survey) 2008 databases. This analysis indicated the 19 schools that had completed the project demonstrated statistically significant improvements in student attitudes and engagement, as well as teacher esteem and morale, in conjunction with the project (Andrews & USQ-LRI Research Team, 2009). It should be noted that 17 of the 22 schools had been designated as “targeted” or “underperforming” by system officials in 2004.

**Phase 2:** Research comprised case study analyses of the documented and validated achievements of 5 of the 22 schools. The 5 schools volunteered to be involved and consisted of a sample of 3 primary and 2 secondary schools. Case study data included evidence of success from the schools’ perspectives and included other statistical data, such as student achievement data (student suspensions and attendance), and documents reporting on teacher planning, action learning and student engagement. The researchers also carried out extensive interviews with teachers, students, heads of departments, teacher leaders, and the principal, as well as focus group sessions related to emerging themes.

## **Sydney Catholic Education Office (CEO)**

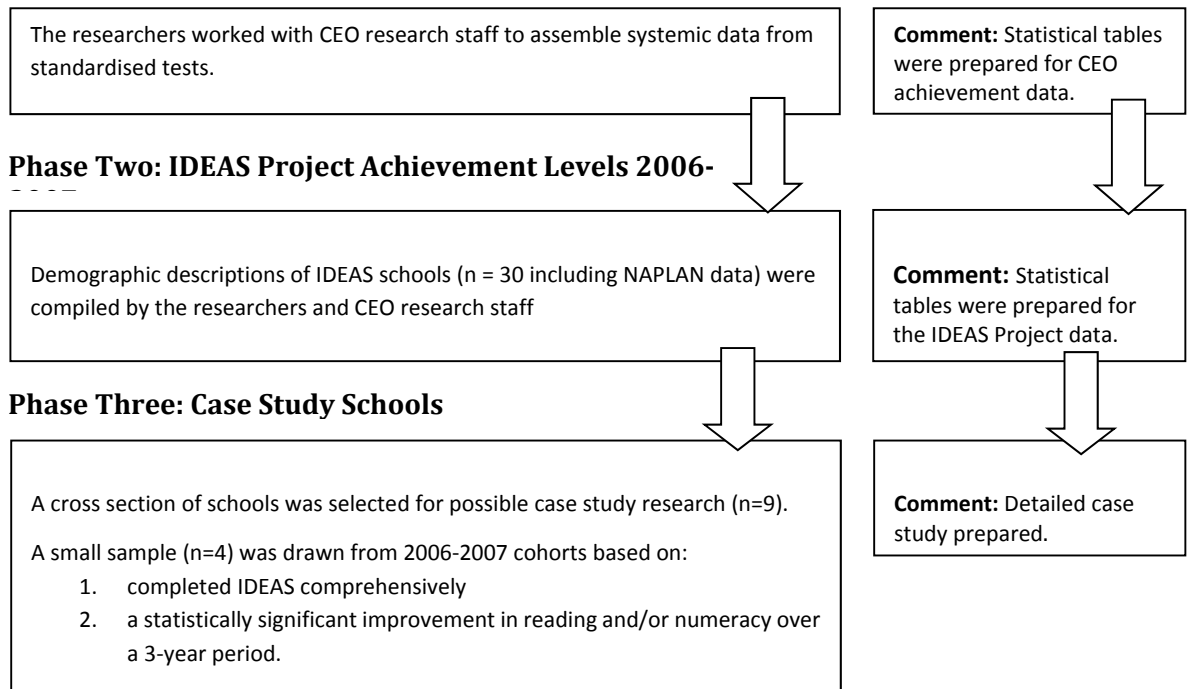
This research study investigated the implementation of IDEAS in two cohorts of schools in the Sydney CEO, 2006-2007. The first cohort, comprising 10 primary schools, began IDEAS in 2006. The second cohort included 15 primary schools and 5 secondary colleges, and began the process a year later in 2007. The research sought to explore the internal and external factors that contributed to the schools’ reported successes. The research process as captured in Figure 10.2 included the following phases:

**Phase 1 and 2** of the research included examination of standardised test results from CEO schools compared with NSW and national test results (NAPLAN) assembling systemic data from standardised test results of the 2006-2007 IDEAS cohort (n=30). These results were compared with system, state and national norms. Reports on student learning outcomes in literacy (reading) and numeracy (mainly NAPLAN, 2008 to 2010) were compiled on a school-by-school basis according to two criteria: (a) trends over time, and (b) growth over time.

**Phase 3** – a sample of 9 case study schools was selected through analysis of the Phase 1 and 2 research database. The sample selection was made on the basis of an interrogation of this database and subject to schools’ availability and willingness, or

otherwise, to be involved in the research. From these case studies, a smaller sample selection (4) was made for in-depth case study. Selection was based on achieving statistically significant improvement in Reading and/or Numeracy over a 3-year period.

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



*Figure 10.2.* The three research phases: A drilling down process.

Source: Andrews, Crowther, Morgan, & O’Neill, 2012, p. 51.

**Three School Case Studies**

Each of the three case study schools drawn from either one of the two research studies previously outlined in this chapter is unique and depicts specific instances and perspectives of the theme of this chapter – teacher leadership and moral purpose. There is no attempt to compare these cases, or draw generalisations for the greater good, but conversely each case presents an important glimpse of why teacher leadership enacted through moral purpose is an imperative of sustainable school improvement.

**Eacham High School case study: Where deeds count**

*The success of this process has been because of the leadership of this process by a leader other than the principal. Her passion and her commitment to the process ... the staff was ready for some intellectual rigour and challenge. (teacher)*

Founded in 1926, Eacham High School sits in the semi-rural fringes of Melbourne in an area once home to many creative and artistic people who sought an alternative lifestyle. While the local population today is more mainstream, values of **social justice, creativity and individual expression** are still evident as reflected in the school's long-standing "Deeds Count" motto. There is an unshakeable sense of *we know who we are and what we stand for*. Furthermore, there is now clear articulation of *who we are and what we stand for*.

However, prior to the adoption of IDEAS for school improvement in 2004, time had passed and the special culture of the school was realised, but could not be articulated. The expertise of long standing staff was apparent, but there was fear of losing this because of the isolation of teacher practice and the eventual departure of long standing staff members. The newly appointed principal sensed this long-term moral purpose, but could not pinpoint the articulation of what it was or what made it happen. And so, in recognition of the need for prioritising the school's history, achievements and initiatives, and for the creation of a teacher leadership culture, he committed the school to IDEAS, a school improvement project that generates parallel leadership.

With the adoption of the IDEAS processes, staff and students engaged in the development of their Purpose Statement (see Figure 10.3) with a sense of ownership and acceptance of the statement.

At Eacham High School each person feels safe to be themselves and challenged to think critically, to work in teams, show leadership and achieve success along many pathways.





**Figure 10.3.** Eacham High School purpose statement.

Source: Andrews & USQ-LRI Research Team, 2009, p. 93.

This level of professional engagement gave rise to articulation of a unique culture for newer staff; a framework for discussing behaviour with students; a framework for aligning school procedures and processes; and the basis of a revamped marketing image for portraying the school’s culture to the community. As expressed by one teacher leader in reference to the knowledge generation processes which resulted in an across-school planning template (see Figure 10.4), “this is brilliant, it’s sharing ideas, it’s sharing materials and it’s contagious ... even for experienced staff”. Furthermore, it generated an approach by the teaching staff that empowered a sense of knowing they were leading with commitment to their shared moral purpose. Whereas previously it was “change being from the bottom up – like if I change my classroom then everything will coalesce and be better”, staff now view and participate in the spirit of their Purpose Statement:

It’s ‘let’s look at the big picture first’. Before IDEAS we flirted with [other initiatives] which concentrated on changing the classroom with tools, techniques to change the classroom to make it better, but there was no mechanism for ensuring that everyone understood why it might make us better. Whereas I think IDEAS has given us a change to the spiritual and psychological aspect of viewing change.

<b>EACHAM PLANNING TEMPLATE</b>	
<b>UNIT DESCRIPTION:</b>	<b>BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:</b>  <i>What interactive strategies do I need to focus on?</i>
<b>FOCUS ON INTELLECTUAL QUALITY:</b>  <i>What are the deep understandings (key concepts) that need to be gained?</i> <i>What skills and processes will be taught (including ICT)?</i> <i>What thinking skills will I focus on?</i>	
<b>CATER FOR DIVERSITY:</b>  <i>How will we determine students’ special needs and talents?</i>  <i>How will students’ different learning styles be catered for?</i>	<b>ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY, STUDENT INVOLVEMENT &amp; VOICE:</b>  <i>How will creativity be encouraged?</i>  <i>What choice will students have within the activities &amp; assessment tasks?</i>

<p><i>What enrichment / enhancement opportunities will I provide?</i></p> <p><i>What modification will I make for special needs students?</i></p>	<p><i>How will students' learning goals be negotiated, monitored and evaluated?</i></p>
<p><b>DEVELOP TEAMWORK &amp; COMMUNITY &amp; GLOBAL LINKS:</b></p> <p><i>Why will students see this unit as relevant now and in the future? What real life issues or problems will be explored?</i></p> <p><i>How will students be able to show leadership, work in teams?</i></p> <p><i>How can we link the students to the community?</i></p>	<p><b>USE VARIED ASSESSMENT “AS, OF &amp; FOR” LEARNING:</b></p> <p><i>What samples and modeling need to be provided for the tasks?</i></p> <p><i>How will students demonstrate their knowledge and skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>as they are learning (formative)?</i></li> <li>• <i>of the learning (summative)?</i></li> <li>• <i>for future learning (metacognitive)?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>How will success be celebrated?</i></p>

Source: Crowther & Associates, 2011, p. 118.

**Figure 10.4.** Eacham High School unit planning template

The principal played a key role in the strategic alignment for enhanced staff capability with the establishment of a structure that focused on the capacity for leadership across the school and contributed to an environment where teacher leadership was valued and encouraged. Teachers developed a sense of collective responsibility for the enhancement of student achievement by engaging in professional conversations around the school’s pedagogical framework with frequent reference to the use of data in decision-making processes and an agreed planning template as a schoolwide approach. Whereas, previously, teachers were suspicious about data, they now ask “what is the evidence? ... where is the evidence?” (see Table 10.3). Parallel leadership is evident, as in these words of a teacher leader:

The staff now has many more opportunities to be involved and to have real input into decision making. There is a stronger ‘network’ structure for consultation. The staff is consulted on all major decisions in a range of forums. The principal has devolved considerable authority to the various groups, especially the Leadership group and the Performance & Development groups.

**Table 10.3.** Eacham High School Success Indicators

<b><u>Improvements in Student Attitudes to School, 2006-08</u></b>	
<u>State (Secondary) means</u>	<u>Eacham means</u>

<u>2006</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Improvement</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Improvement</u>
69.02	70.95	1.93	69.60	72.27	2.67
<p><i>NOTE:</i> The Statewide SAS improvement (1.93) was significant at 0.01. Eacham's SAS improvement exceeded the State improvement, in numerical terms.</p>					
<b><u>Improvements in Staff Opinions of School, 2004-08</u></b>					
<u>State (Secondary) means</u>			<u>Eacham means</u>		
<u>2004</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Improvement</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Improvement</u>
55.79	57.24	1.45	56.43	63.75	7.32
<p><i>NOTE:</i> The Statewide SOS improvement (1.45) was significant at 0.05. Eacham's SOS improvement was approximately five times the State improvement, in numerical terms.</p>					

Source: Andrews & USQ-LRI Research Team, 2009, p. 96

Of equal significance for enhanced student achievement was the concept of parallel leadership extended to incorporate the role of students in providing opportunities for student leadership. Students from across the year levels expressed their sense of self-worth and leadership with key focus on the whole commitment to its moral purpose:

There are different pathways for us to find our way – if you think you can do it, you can – you figure it out for yourself at different times in different ways – our elective programs are bigger than any other schools.

The 'pursuit of excellence' is a big one and our teachers encourage us to look at things in a different way.

You're challenged to think outside the box at Eacham High School – you're always figuring out how to think differently.

I feel safe to be myself, contributing my ideas and not just going along with the flow of others.

With the development of a special orientation process, assurances now exist that new staff and students understand the culture and the values of Eacham High. The school

is proud of its purpose and values and wants to ensure that new members are familiar with what makes this school special – there is a clear sense of purpose advocated and supported by the willingness of staff to form networks both within and beyond the school community (Crowther & Associates, 2011, p. 124). There is clear evidence of enhanced capacity of staff to lift expectations of themselves and their students, and to share openly with others. In no small way is this attributed to teacher leadership derived from their collective commitment to their moral purpose, together with the principal’s key role in leading a belief that all staff can reach an enhanced potential (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3) with his final comment being, “I think the focus on the school values has been very important – it has encapsulated all that we’re about”.

### **Greenfield Primary School case study: Where we build bright futures**

*We were targeted as a low achieving school. As a staff we made a commitment to go out with a BANG not a whimper and to give our students every opportunity for a bright future. (teacher leader)*

A strong commitment to their community and their Vision - *Learning Together to Build a Bright Future*, empowered this school to move from “fractured to dynamic” (teacher leader) in 3 years, despite the fact that at the time of data gathering in this school, they were to merge with three other schools within the next few years.

Located in one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities in Australian urban areas, Greenfield Primary School had a multicultural mix with a large number of highly transient families ranging from recently arrived immigrants and refugees with little to no English, to students from families who have experienced generational unemployment. With enrolments on the decline due to uncertainty about the school’s future and safety issues creating concerns for both staff and parents, together with a group of teachers who had no collective understanding for teaching and learning in this context, Greenfield Primary School entered the IDEAS Project in late 2004 with government funding. The principal made a commitment to improving the culture of the school from one of toxicity and unsafe behaviour (“For nearly two years I just did not want to walk in from the car park. I would be terrified to walk in here as I did not know what the students might do”), to that of a brighter future where all students achieve no matter where they come from: thus the created community vision *Learning Together to Build a Bright Future* (see Figure 10.5).

**Figure 10.5.** Greenfield Primary School vision.



Source: Andrews & USQ-LRI Research Team, 2009, p. 76.

The principal's capacity for metastrategic thinking encompassed dealing with defining the school's purpose and identity, enabling others to take and make opportunities, being aware of the needs and strengths of the staff, using opportunities to positively work through obstacles and barriers, and networking with the community. She focused on "picking the right people" who are seen and respected by others to have relevant experience, and who work with passion for building healthy relationships.

Encouraged by the principal, and professionally strengthened by the support of the robust school improvement processes of IDEAS, teacher leaders gradually encouraged the teaching staff in general to take responsibility for enhanced professional dialogue, and generated a shared sense of "the way we do things around here". It was noted that this was a highly accomplished and confident staff of teachers who had previously held positions of responsibility in other schools and the system, but were working as individuals without success as echoed by the words of one teacher, "how do we teach these students?". As classrooms began to open and a focus on sharing practice in support of individualisation of student learning needs emerged, a number of teachers expressed the opinion that they could not return to their old ways of working "within the seclusion of four walls". The attributes of **respect**, **celebration** and the **embracing of cultural diversity** became an integral part of developing the inclusive and positive school culture. A focus on individualised learning resulted in substantial data trend improvement in literacy, social well-being and morale, and the creation of community connections moved the school culture from one of negativity and uncertainty to that of a school with a positive outlook which celebrates learning. As captured in the words of one teacher, "Celebrating success was not a part of our school culture previously – now it is". Teacher perception data showed improved morale and efficacy, and students reported feeling safe, connected to the school, motivated and felt that classroom behaviour had improved.

Teachers began to realise their enhanced level of professionalism which one teacher expressed as, "there has been a total rethink of the way we do everything – what we do, how and why we do it, what our outcomes are and how they will be assured – all equating to improving our students, staff and school". This level of commitment generated a sense of pedagogical empowerment; it was a "buy in for us – we began to realise that our personal pedagogy was recognised, valued and it encouraged us to reflect in a non-threatening way". Thus, this heightened focus on individual and collective professionalism engaged teachers in learning more about themselves and moved toward a structured "alignment between individual classroom practice and

whole school vision and purpose”, as illustrated in the schoolwide pedagogical framework (see Table 10.4).

**Table 10.4.** *Greenfield Primary School SWP – Teaching Perspective*

<b>C E L E B R A T E</b>	<b>INCLUDE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☀ What do we know about these children?</li> <li>☀ How does this embrace our diversity?</li> </ul>
	<b>COLLABORATE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☀ How are we collectively making use of our individual strengths, knowledge and ideas?</li> <li>☀ How does this experience enable us to learn from each other?</li> </ul>
	<b>CONNECT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☀ How does this connect to real life?</li> <li>☀ How does this connect to the future?</li> </ul>
	<b>BUILD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☀ How does this build on what the students already know?</li> <li>☀ What supports and strategies will be used to aid new learning?</li> <li>☀ How does this new learning encourage us to think in new ways?</li> </ul>
	<b>REFLECT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☀ What opportunities have been provided for reflection?</li> <li>☀ What have I learnt?</li> <li>☀ How can I apply this learning?</li> <li>☀ Where to from here?</li> </ul>

Source: Crowther & Associates, 2011, pp. 90-91.

The principal chose to lead this school with a sense of collective responsibility and used the IDEAS processes to build links with community, to support strategic planning, and to encourage both staff and students to adopt leadership challenges. Teachers acknowledged that parallel leadership had enriched their pedagogical practice with a renewed sense of professional confidence and well-being; they were better able to critically assess professional development opportunities knowing that they were contributing to a “better world” and “a culture of success” (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3). And similarly, supported by the convictions of teacher leadership “articulating a positive future for all students” (p. 3), students demonstrated greater engagement in their learning by *Learning together to build a bright future*, and improved respect for their school and community (see Table 10.5).

**Table 10.5. Improvements in Student Attitude (SAS) and Staff Opinion (SOS) Data at Greenfield Primary School, 2004-2008**

<b><u>Improvement in Student Attitudes, 2004-2008</u></b>					
<u>State (Primary means)</u>			<u>Greenfield Primary means</u>		
<u>2004</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Improvement</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Improvement</u>
79.52	82.21	1.93	78.36	87.87	9.51
<p>Interpretation: Greenfield Primary School's Student Attitudes Survey data, 2004-08, indicated about five times the State improvement in numerical terms, and statistical significance at the 0.01 level on the categories of student morale and behaviour, student distress, student-teacher relations, learning environments, school connectedness, student motivation, learning confidence, and learning connectedness to peers.</p>					
<b><u>Improvement in Staff Opinions of School, 2004-2008</u></b>					
<u>State (Primary) means</u>			<u>Greenfield Primary School means</u>		
<u>2004</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Improvement</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Improvement</u>
62.85	65.12	2.27	57.58	65.96	8.38
<p>Interpretation: Greenfield Primary School's Staff Opinion of School Survey improvement, 2004-08, indicated about four times the State improvement in numerical terms, and statistical significance at the 0.01 level.</p>					
<b><u>Details of increases in well-being and climate at Greenfield, 2004-08</u></b>					
<u>Area of major improvement, 2004-2008</u>			<u>% improvement</u>		
Classroom behaviour			14.6		
Student morale			13.2		
Teacher effectiveness			11.8		
Stimulating learning environment			11.4		
School connectedness			11.2		
Teacher empathy			10.4		
Student safety			10.0		
Student motivation			9.2		
<i>Full suspensions</i>					
2006			10		
2008			0		
<i>After-school suspensions</i>					
2006			87		
2008			12		
Source: 2008 Survey Data 2004-2008					
<b>Improvements in Literacy Data at Greenfield Primary School, 2004-2008</b>					

- Year 2 reading achievement reached the state mean in 2007 for the first time, and sustained this level in 2008
- Year 3 upward trend in all areas of literacy, 2004-08
- Year 5 upward trend in Reading, Spelling and Writing, with some 2007 and 2008 results well above State school means.

Sources: *AIM Data 2004-2008; The 2008 Assessment of Reading DEECD Report*

Source: Adapted from Crowther & Associates, 2011, pp. 183-184

Overall, the result was a positive school learning environment created by a new sense of support and collective responsibility with a changed leadership team structure committed to whole-school achievement.

### **Nagle College case study: Where we SHINE.**

*We wanted shared understanding about how things happen at Nagle ... a shared language around pedagogy, staff ownership of an ongoing process ... this approach to dialogue and substantive conversation has translated to all meetings ... it's been a paradigm shift for some experienced teachers ... SHINE links to our core values and allows us to talk about learning. (teacher leader)*

When teacher leaders speak of a metalanguage that leads their pedagogical conversation and shared meaning they are referring to their college vision, *Let the light shine true*, and their Nagle **TRUTH** Values Charter actioned through their **SHINE** learning framework.

Situated in a leafy inner-city suburb of Sydney, Nagle College carries a 100-year history founded by the Catholic Sisters of the Presentation Order and continues its mission of "... educat[ing] students in the Presentation ideals of being women who promote gospel values, human dignity, justice and reforms which challenge some of the negative values of society" (Nagle College website). To Nagle's school leaders, the college vision (see Figure 10.6) captures, both figuratively and metaphorically, the full meaning of the highly significant Presentation lantern. In accordance with the deeply significant lantern image, *Let the light shine true*, the college vision beams forth as five rays of light: *Trust, Respect, Understanding, Tenacity* and *Hope*. These are known at Nagle College as the Nagle **TRUTH** Values Charter, all of which emerged in the school's work with the IDEAS project.

**Figure 10.6.** The Nagle College vision and values.



## *Let the light shine true*



Source: Crowther et al., 2013, p. 47

Prior to adopting the IDEAS school improvement project in 2007, there was a nagging realisation that students were,

echoed in the words of one teacher, “coming to school to watch us teach”. Students were complying with being taught, religious traditions were being upheld, student results were satisfactory, but the principal realised that a level of complacency had crept in with long-term staff teaching as they had always taught and students perhaps not being as well prepared for contemporary learning. She realised there was a need to engage teachers in developing “deep” professional dialogue and that teacher leaders needed to take that charge with her full support and resourcing:

I gave considerable thought to my role in the process ... making sense of the fit between the school and the system priorities ... but really advocating the work of the team of teachers leading the process.


Guided by the engaging processes of the IDEAS project, the college community captured the spirit of the Presentation Order’s founder, Nano Nagle, who in the late 18th century on the streets of Cork, carried her lantern tending to the sick and gathering the most needy people to teach. The light became a symbol of hope and Nano Nagle was fondly nicknamed *The Lady of the Lamp*. It is the lantern that continues to inspire the life of Nagle College resulting in staff agreement on the need for an authentic approach to “letting the Nagle light in” to their classrooms and all other college activities. The lantern, and its contextual significance, is a reminder of their moral purpose displayed through their Nagle **TRUTH** Values Charter, and most prominently enacted through their Schoolwide Pedagogy (SWP). The Nagle SWP, appropriately embodied in the acronym **SHINE**, integrates the Presentation mission, vision and values with contemporary pedagogical thinking (Figure 10.7). Furthermore, the principal emphasised the integral link between the school’s vision and SWP by referring to their “pedagogical vision” in her website message:

... Whilst Nagle College is rich in the history and traditions of our founder ... our College continues to provide young women of faith an education that is contemporary and relevant. Each student is challenged to be their best and do their best by our school vision, ‘Let the Light Shine True’. Our pedagogical vision is based on our SHINE Learning Framework. For students to **SHINE** in the classroom, we believe learning must be SHARED, HOLISTIC, INNOVATIVE, NURTURING and ENGAGING.

Figure 10.7. The Nagle College SWP.

**Shine Learning Framework**

Nagle is a learning community where all can *shine*.  
At Nagle learning is:



**Shared**  
How does this experience enable us to learn from each other?

- through finding connections in what we learn and know
- by being collaborative, flexible and empathetic
- by making informed responses to the contributions of others

**Holistic**  
Where does this learning come alive in our experiences?

- by pursuing a variety of approaches to learning and living
- through fostering connections with local and global communities
- by having active minds and engaging the full range of intelligences and opportunities

**Innovative**  
What new ways of learning have we explored through this experience?

- being independent and thinking critically
- being reflective and responding creatively
- being challenged by new ideas to broaden our learning

**Nurtured**  
What can we learn about ourselves from this experience?

- that effort as well as achievement is important
- that with support in managing learning expectations, we can achieve our personal best
- that we are recognised as individuals and supported in our learning

**Engaging**  
What is it about our learning experience at Nagle that is engaging?

- learning is active, informed and enriching
- learning takes place within flexible learning spaces
- taking ownership and responsibility for our learning
- knowing our preferred learning style and exploring others

Source: Crowther et al., 2013, p. 48

Teachers were encouraged to make regular and direct reference to the college's SHINE Learning Framework with the result that teacher leaders spoke of a Nagle metalanguage being used most particularly in classroom questioning techniques shared by teachers and students. This approach contributed to clear and purposeful professional dialogue amongst teachers across all subjects leading students to become more self-directed in their learning. As shared by the IDEAS facilitator, "SHINE gives us a language for reflection ... SHINE resonates with teachers. The Framework gives us an open-ended way to evaluate what we already do". Specifically, there was reference to the interconnectedness of teachers' planning under the SHINE umbrella, and the staff support of students in critiquing their own learning. There were particular instances of how teachers had come to work together, across curriculum areas, to plan integrated projects in order to enable students to experience the

connectedness of Nagle pedagogical principles from one curriculum area to another. Teacher leaders of the academic teams reported that a connectedness in student learning had provided the foundation for self-directedness, as students were being encouraged to critique their understandings of topics through cross-reference to other subjects and prior learning experiences. Ultimately, students were now learning more independently and were now more engaged in their learning as a direct outcome of the comprehensive implementation of the SHINE schoolwide pedagogical framework. And finally, teachers and students together were engaging jointly in data-driven assessment for the purposes of ongoing planning, review and evaluation. For example, it was noted that teachers were beginning to make reference to “enhanced NAPLAN results as an outcome of implementation of their SWP” (Crowther et al., 2013, p. 50) (see Table 10.6).

Table 10.6. Nagle College's NAPLAN Growth, Compared with System and State Growth, 2008–2010

		School percentage growth	System percentage growth	School–System percentage difference	State percentage growth	School–State percentage difference
Nagle College	Yr 9 Reading	40.9	38.4	<b>2.5</b>	35.1	<b>5.8</b>
	Yr 9 Numeracy	51.0 (*)	46.2	<b>4.8</b>	39.1	<b>11.9</b>

\* Significant at 0.05 level of difference

Source: Crowther et al., 2013, p. 50

There was evidence of the distinctive “parallel” roles of principal and teacher leaders in the development and implementation of the Nagle SWP. The principal’s “metastrategic” leadership committed her to a profound spiritual values-base across the college focused on students’ futures, nurturing of teacher leaders, and organisational alignment (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 71). She had realised the need to revitalise the college with specific focus on the transformation of a culture of teaching and learning, whilst meta-strategically moving staff to be more collectively responsible for overall organisation (Crowther & Associates, 2011, p. 164). What evolved was a level of teacher leadership engaged in ways not previously realised (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3) – all on the same page of understanding through the narrative of the Vision, Values and SWP and thus aligned to their moral purpose as a school of both significant history and aspiration.

### **Discussion: So what matters? ... Lessons learned from the case studies**

The case studies presented have highlighted the enabling forms of leadership of a successful school improvement process that has as its focus, sustaining success. Also evident in each of the case studies is the importance of a process for capacity building of which much has been reported in the literature (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Crowther & Associates, 2011; D. Hargreaves, 2012). And, leadership of a capacity-building process has often been defined as having a vision, a focus, or a purpose – in the instance of this chapter it is a shared moral purpose. For the purposes of this discussion we have found Dimmock’s (2012) definition of leadership useful: “a social influence guided by a moral purpose with the aim of building capacity by optimizing available resources towards the achievements of shared goals” (p. 7). The meta-strategic thinking of each of the principals of the case studies clearly illustrates this focus: the Nagle College principal seriously considered her role in advocating the work of teacher leaders in the process; the principal of Greenfield Primary School ensured that she “picked the right people” in accord with the needs of the challenging school community; and at Eacham High School, the newly appointed principal was highly aware of the need to build on the expertise of long-standing staff.

Furthermore Dempster (2009), scanning the literature on school improvement, indicates that there are three leadership fundamentals clearly evident, namely:

1. Clear moral purpose – that is, the improvement of students’ lives through learning.
2. Leadership is always located somewhere and is influenced by context as leaders need to be able to harness capacity and support in the school and the wider community to assist them in their moral quest.
3. Leaders cannot work alone in schools. They can only achieve the school’s moral purpose through human agency and as such move towards leadership as a collective activity (distributed leadership).

Again, the case studies bring to life Dempster’s summation around leadership for sustainable improvement and support. Although each school is contextually different, and has identified very different visions in response to their core values, there is clear evidence of each one of the proposed fundamentals in each case study.

### **Leading with moral purpose – contextual and shared**

*Individuals with high hope possess goals, find pathways to these goals, navigate around obstacles, and develop agency to reach these goals.* (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 115)

In educational organisations, the use of the term “moral purpose” can best be described as “improvement of student’s lives through learning” (Dempster, 2009, p. 8) and as Sergiovanni (2005) noted, that leadership should not just be aspirational or

virtuous: it must result in action. Moral action draws on four leadership virtues, one of which is hope, that is, leading change for the better. McDermott et al. (2002, pp. 274-75, cited in Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 115) posit that “being a hopeful leader requires deliberate action to what they hope for and turn it into reality ... [that is] a cognitive set of comprised goals, pathways and agency”.

In “*From School Improvement to Sustained Capacity*” Crowther and Lewis, in Crowther and Associates (2011, p. 31) make the point that real commitment is gained from moving from political (that is, going along with the change for what might be personally gained out of action) to intellectual (deep-rooted belief that they could create a sense of purpose (hope) and improved (pedagogical) practice) and emotional (capturing people’s imagination so that it becomes contagious). In fact, Wrigley (2003) describes school improvement as integral to a teacher’s professionalism. It is an expression of hope for better schools and better lives and “[I]mprovement is built on hope that reaches out ... reconnects to core values. Hope is a principle that unites the actions and aspirations of teachers, parents, children and headteachers” (pp. 7-8).

Based on the knowledge gained from working with each of the case study schools in this chapter, moral purpose is about hope; hope brings with it a desire to make a difference in students’ lives (Dempster, 2009; Johnston in Coggins, Zuckerman, & McKelvey, 2010). For example, “a brighter future where all students achieve no matter where they come from” was most certainly an expression of hope by the Greenfield Primary School community. To continue, this moral purpose is reflected in the writings of Sergiovanni (2005) where he sees a sense of hope, linked to both deep values and task orientation that enables leaders to change reality. Ross and Gray (2006) talk of teachers with high hopes and expectations producing higher student achievement, as was the case at Nagle College where an authentic approach to “letting the Nagle light in” to their classrooms, focused on learning through across-subject planning with higher-order questioning techniques by teachers and students; and Bartel and Saavedra (2000) infer that emotions (such as hope) in organisations are contagious and create group action. High hope workplaces have positive atmospheres and give employees the feeling that goals can be achieved (Adams et al., 2003).

Reflecting on the writings of Pink (2009), “human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another” (p. 71) and therefore motivation in the workplace is driven by “Drive: Mastery, Purpose and Autonomy” (p. 71). In particular, autonomy – “acting with choice – ... means we can be both autonomous and happily interdependent with others” (Pink, 2009, p. 88). A teaching profession with this vision of autonomy can set high standards for student outcomes and teacher practice and remain flexible about how teachers achieve this, as was the situation for example with the across-subject planning at Nagle College. It also means creating conditions for teachers to lead their peers in meaningful ways, of which there was clear indication in each of the case studies, for instance at Eacham High School: “because of the leadership of this process by a leader other than the

principal. Her passion and her commitment to the process”. Coggins and Diffenbaugh (2013) quote situations where teachers share leadership and ownership of the turnaround effort (low-performing schools) instead of having new policies and approaches imposed on them from above. Principals in these schools not only talk the talk about distributed leadership, but also walk the walk (p. 45). The three case studies are certainly an indication of what can be done in quite different contexts with different approaches to enacting shared leadership.

Each of the case study schools, at the point of last contact during the research projects, was demonstrating sustainable capacity building leadership through focus on their clearly articulated moral purpose. Therefore the “moral purpose” needs to be captured in a shared purpose (Dempster, 2009; Crowther & Associates, 2011; Bezzina, 2008; Starratt, 2007). As Dempster (2009) found, “leaders cannot work alone in schools. They can only achieve the school’s moral purpose through human agency ... movement towards leadership as a collective activity (distributed leadership)” (p. 8). Coggins et al. (2010) found that teachers in the US with 3-10 years of experience chose teaching for their love of working with students, their commitment to social justice and their belief that teaching can improve society on a broader scale, and concluded that, for this reason, teachers must be given opportunities to take on leadership beyond the classroom.

### **Distributed leadership**

[Sustainable Leadership (SL) and improvement] preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefits for others around us, now and in the future. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 224)

SL respects the future, present and past and builds on the past in its quest to create a better future ... treats people’s knowledge, experience and careers as valuable, renewable and re-combinable resources. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 226)

The call for a broader conception of school leadership has permeated the literature for some time. Smylie and Hart (1999) reflected this shift, “from a single person, role orientated view to a view of leadership as an organisational property shared amongst administrators, teachers and perhaps others” ( p. 428). Earlier, Ogawa and Bossert (1995) defined leadership as a quality of organisations, that is, “the medium and currency of leadership lie in the personal resources of people and leadership shapes the systems that produce patterns of interaction and the meanings that other participants attach to organisational events” (p. 225). They describe leadership as embedded, not in particular roles, but in the relationships that exist among the incumbents of roles: as in the words of a teacher leader at Eacham High School, “The

staff now has many more opportunities to be involved and to have real input into decision making”.

Many authors have explored “leadership through influence” as the concept of distributed leadership: Sergiovanni (2001) (leadership density); Spillane (2006) (leadership plus and practice); Gronn (2008) (co-joint agency); Lambert (2007) (sustainability); Timperley (2005) (activities and actions distributed across multiple people and situations); Fullan (2005) (leadership capacity); Printy and Marks (2006) (shared instructional Leadership); Hopkins and Jackson (2003) (dispersed leadership); Murphy, Elliott, Goldring and Porter (2007) (Leadership for Learning); MacBeath (2006); Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2008); Hargreaves and Fink (2008); Harris (2008) (patterns of leadership; agency); Heck and Hallinger (2009) (Leadership for Learning); Crowther et al. (2002); Andrews and Crowther (2002) (Parallel Leadership). A. Hargreaves and Shirley (2007) have asserted that distributed leadership is a Fourth Way [SL] construct because it is:

... grounded in and advances a compelling moral purpose ... builds capacity and develops leadership succession in a dynamic and integrated strategy of change. (p. 97)

And the concept of distributed leadership has been even further explored (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Harris, 2004, 2008; Frost & Harris, 2003; Murphy et al., 2007; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Louis, 2009; Lambert, 2007). However, in this chapter, we draw on research (Crowther et al., 2002, 2009, 2011, 2013) to present our view of leadership, that is, parallel leadership: a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action for purposes of schoolwide development and revitalisation. It embodies three distinct qualities – mutual trust, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression (Crowther et al., 2009).

Parallel leadership acknowledges the professionalism of teachers through its sense of moral purpose, as well as teacher-principal relatedness and its established links to enhanced school outcomes. As noted by the teachers of Greenfield Primary School, parallel leadership had moved their sense of professionalism from working as individuals without success to that of shared and enriched pedagogical practice with a renewed sense of professional confidence and well-being better able to critically assess professional development opportunities. Harris (in Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2010) has a similar view of school leadership:

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

Principals’ leadership functions in the parallel leadership construct are conceptualised

as “meta-strategic” and teachers’ functions emphasise pedagogical enhancement, particularly school-wide pedagogical development and expert practitionership (Crowther et al., 2002, 2009).

### **Capacity building for sustainable improvement**

There is no chance that large scale reform will happen, let alone stick, unless capacity building is a central component of the strategy. (Fullan, 2005, pp. 10-11)

Without a clear focus on “capacity”, a school will be unable to sustain continuous improvement efforts or to manage change effectively. That we know. (Hopkins & Jackson, 2003, p. 87)

Crowther and Associates (2011) define capacity building as “the intentional process of mobilising a school’s resources in order to enhance priority outcomes – and sustain those improved outcomes” (p. 20). The process consists of six sequential process dynamics, that is, Committing to school revitalisation; Organisational diagnosis and coherence; Seeking new heights; Micro-Pedagogical deepening; Invoking reaction and Consolidating success (Crowther & Associates, 2011, pp. 16-18).

Each of the case studies presented in this chapter provides illumination of the relationship between principals and teacher leaders motivated to improve through a shared moral purpose. This relationship emphasises the relative importance of the influence and action by principal and teacher leaders through a school improvement process that focuses on capacity building. The commitment established in Dynamic 1 (Committing to school revitalisation) and captured in Dynamic 3 (Seeking new heights) enables leadership to “... be situated within, informed by and aligned to, the belief and value system that is foundational to the organisation within which it serves” (Sultmann & McLaughlin, 2000, p. vii).

As indicated earlier, Crowther and Lewis (in Crowther & Associates, 2011, pp. 28-29) claim that commitment to action operates at three levels, “... whole political commitment is about obtaining people’s attention, and intellectual commitment is about convincing people of the worth of particular ideas, emotional commitment is about values and moving people and systems to concrete action” (p. 29). Sergiovanni (2005) has indicated that it is the capacity of linking the sense of hope to action that enables leaders to change reality. Developing a framework to enable that to happen occurs during the process of envisioning – that is, establishing a clear sense of purpose (Vision) to an explicit statement of enactment of that vision through



development of a school-wide pedagogical (SWP) framework. This process honours and values the past and present and recombines these factors into the future (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006), so clearly illustrated in each of the case studies of this chapter.

During this process, teacher-led professional learning communities ensure that the unleashed passion and energy in teachers' work is related more to collective action than individual or small group effort. In all three case studies particular note was made of the importance of teachers taking the lead to develop shared understandings (SWP) in a professional learning community with deliberate attention to enhancing professional reading and dialogue. At the same time, principals during the pedagogical deepening stage take a very active role ensuring that they enable the operationalisation of the deepening of SWP – enabling the process through facilitative and supportive ways. In particular, principals need to utilise meta-strategic thinking for future planning, organisation-wide professional learning and systems of action that ensure successes are consolidated and sustained.

All three case study schools of this chapter have illuminated these capacity-building processes over a period of 3 to 5 years and demonstrated that a focus on what is important in terms of school improvement motivates and drives teacher professional learning. “Teachers are the key” – in particular, that teacher leaders working within their professional communities and supported meta-strategically by their principals have achieved considerable and sustained success in many measures of school outcomes. They have not focused on narrow student achievement; rather on enhancing the quality of teaching across the school, creating an authentic professional learning community within the unique context of their school.

## **Conclusion**

School improvement efforts are complex, resourcing is intensive and emotionally draining. It is for this reason that efforts should be given the best chance of success. The evidence is there, not just from our research but from many, that sustainable school improvement must be driven by a principal-teacher leadership relationship that is built on a shared moral purpose. The latter needs to reflect the words of Hargreaves and Fink (2006) “[Sustainable Leadership and improvement] preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefits for others around us, now and in the future” (p. 224) [and] “... respects the future, present and past and builds on the past in its quest to create a better future ... treats people’s knowledge, experience and careers as valuable, renewable and re-combinable resources” (p. 226).

So, if there is to be genuine valuing of teachers' knowledge, experience and careers then teacher leadership must surely be brought to the fore of all leadership capacity building in schools. Liebermann and Pointer Mace (2009) posit that "starting with teachers' practice invites teachers into the conversation and opens them up to critique, to learning and to expanding their repertoire" (p. 86), a point that resonates with our capacity-building model when teachers emerge from within communities of professional educators willing to self-critique, advocate for ongoing and sustainable improvement, and network amongst their colleagues and beyond their immediate environ (Crowther, Conway, & Petersen, 2011 in Crowther & Associates, 2011, pp. 124-127).

Exciting as this prospect is, there is much to be done in making public the power of teacher leadership – not just for the sake of "lead teacher" status and accreditation, but for a lasting effect in communities of professional educators with their "eye on the ball" – the moral purpose of building capacity for sustainability in their immediate school contexts.

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