

Hong Kong School Principals' Conference 2008

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Keynote Speech

NEW ALIGNMENTS TO SECURE THE TRANSFORMATION OF SCHOOLS

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The purpose of this presentation is to show how every school can be a world-class school and can sustain its success in the years to come. It draws on the findings of a recently-completed study in six countries (Australia, China, England, Finland, United States and Wales) to show how schools that have been transformed, or have sustained a high level of performance over many years, have built strength in four key areas: intellectual capital (the knowledge and skill of teachers), social capital (the strength of formal and informal partnerships that support or are supported by the school), spiritual capital (shared commitments to commonly-held values and beliefs about life and learning) and financial capital (money to sustain the effort). The findings are reported in a forthcoming book (Caldwell and Harris, 2008) and this presentation highlights some of the major themes. The key to success is to strengthen and align these four forms of capital and that is achieved through outstanding leadership and governance. Indicators of success as well as examples of outstanding practice are provided. New synergies must be created and four sets are proposed.

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Introduction

The possibility of every school being a world-class school is within reach. This is certainly the case for Hong Kong-China given the outstanding performance of 15 year-old students in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2006. Out of 57 participating countries Hong Kong ranked 2nd in science, 3rd in mathematics and 3rd in reading. Not only is overall achievement high, there is also a relatively narrow gap between high and low performing students. Socio-economic status (SES) has a relatively weak association with student performance. Hong Kong is one of a select few places that are described as 'high quality' and 'high equity'. Australia also falls in this category, but Australia, like Hong Kong, still has some issues to address. For Hong Kong, there are noteworthy gender differences and immigrant students perform at significantly lower levels than those born locally. Other issues concern the impact of high academic segregation between schools, educational expenditure and language policy (information about Hong Kong in PISA drawn from Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2007).

These outcomes have been achieved in a wider global educational environment in which nations formerly at the top, such as Germany and the United States, have fallen down the ranks, and others like Finland, Ireland and Korea have soared. China and India are outstripping the European Union and the United States in creating the human capital that will ensure success in the future, not only within their own national settings but across the globe because the search for talent is going global (these international trends drawn from Schleicher, 2008). These are exciting and challenging times and it will be important to move forward in a coherent manner. There needs to be synergy among the strategies if success in the future is to be secured.

Four sets of synergies are proposed (1) accountability, autonomy and choice; (2) intellectual, social, spiritual and financial capital; (3) education, economy and society; and (4) passion, strategy and trust. The vision of every school a world-class school calls for a transformation, defined as significant, systematic and sustained change that secures success for all students in all settings.

Synergy Set 1: Accountability, autonomy and choice

There are some particular findings from PISA 2003 that are of special interest as far as Hong Kong is concerned. Hong Kong schools have greater autonomy than in the past but they are also more accountable. These developments have been contentious and have impacted on the work of school principals. Hong Kong is also characterised

by the diversity of ownership of schools. Compared to most countries, only a small fraction of schools are government schools; the majority are owned and operated by a range of organisations and institutions but are subsidised from the public purse.

The concept of autonomy

Taken literally, school autonomy implies a degree of freedom that does not exist in any system of public education and it is becoming increasingly rare to find it in private schools that receive funds from the public purse. Such schools are constrained to the extent that their autonomy is framed by the requirement of accountability for the use of those funds which, in most countries, are conditional on the delivery of a curriculum that must be followed by all schools. Despite the foregoing, the concept of autonomy is widely used, although it is qualified in certain ways in both policy and practice. Depending on the setting, the terms 'local management', school-based management' or 'school self-management' are often used.

Much of our work has been concerned with the self-managing school, defined as 'a school in a system of education to which there has been decentralised a significant amount of authority and responsibility to make decisions related to the allocation of resources within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, standards and accountabilities (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988, 1992, 1998). Resources are defined broadly to include finance, curriculum, staffing, facilities and maintenance.

Research on autonomy

Providing schools with more authority and responsibility to make decisions has been an international trend in recent years, as mapped by the OECD (2004). There has been a parallel trend to greater centralisation of decisions for some functions so that the general pattern is best described as higher levels of autonomy for decisions related to the manner in which centrally-determined curriculum, standards and accountabilities are delivered at the local level.

Early research on the impact of autonomy or its variants of local management, school-based management or self-management were inconclusive, although limited evidence of the links between autonomy and learning outcomes had emerged in the 1990s. The most striking findings have come from recent analysis of school and school system characteristics reported in PISA.

Particular attention was given in PISA 2006 to knowledge and skills in science of

15-year olds. More than 400,000 students participated from 57 countries covering 90 percent of the world's economy. School principals reported on the extent of autonomy on a range of matters. The following findings are noteworthy:

After accounting for demographic and socio-economic background factors, school level autonomy indices in staffing, educational content, and budgeting do not show a statistically significant association with school performance. However, a system-level composition effect appears with regard to school autonomy in educational content as well as budgeting. Students in educational systems giving more autonomy to schools to choose textbooks, to determine course content, and to decide which courses to offer, tend to perform better regardless of whether the schools which individual students attend have higher degrees of autonomy or not (an increase of one unit on the index corresponds to an increase of 20.3 score points in science). Similarly, students in educational systems that give more autonomy to schools to formulate the school budget and to decide on budget allocations within the school tend to perform better regardless of whether the schools that individual students attend have higher degrees of autonomy or not (an increase of one unit on the index corresponds to an increase of 22.5 score points in science). School autonomy variables do not appear to have an impact on the relationship between socio-economic background and science performance, that is, greater school autonomy is not associated with a more inequitable distribution of learning opportunities. (OECD, 2007, pp. 252-3)

These findings can be interpreted in the context of the range of scores for science. Finland was the top ranked nation (score of 563) while Kyrgyzstan was the bottom ranked (score of 322). The OECD average score is defined as a range from 495 to 504.

The report of PISA 2006 goes further to construct a model to explain the joint impact of school and system resources, practices, and policies on student performance. Of the 15 factors in the model, the system average on the school autonomy index in budgeting is by far the most powerful, associated with a net increase in score of 25.7.

Adding accountability and choice to the picture

Even more striking are two studies of PISA 2003 results conducted for OECD by the Ifo Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich, Department of

Human Capital and Innovation. These were concerned with accountability, autonomy and choice, with one focusing on level of student achievement and the other on equity of student achievement. On level of student achievement, the following findings are striking:

On average, students perform better if schools have autonomy to decide on staffing and to hire their own teachers, while student achievement is lower when schools have autonomy in areas with large scope for opportunistic behaviour, such as formulating their own budget. But school autonomy in formulating the budget, in establishing teacher salaries, and in determining course content are all significantly more beneficial in systems where external exit exams introduce accountability.

Students perform substantially better in systems where private school operation creates choice and competition. At the same time, student achievement increases along with government funding of schools. A level playing field in terms of government funding for public and private schools proves significantly performance enhancing. The evidence is less clear on whether choice among public schools has any significant effect on student achievement across countries, although in urban areas where there are more schools to choose from, student achievement is higher for students who are not restricted to attend the local school and who report that they attend their school because it is better than alternatives. (Wößmann, Lüdemann, Schütz and West, 2007, pp. 59-60))

The conclusions on equity of student achievement were equally noteworthy:

. . . rather than harming disadvantaged students, accountability, autonomy, and choice are tides that lift all the boats. . . there is not a single case where a policy designed to introduce accountability, autonomy, or choice into schooling benefits high-SES students to the detriment of low-SES students, i.e. where the former gain but the latter suffer. This suggests that fears of equity-efficiency tradeoffs and cream-skimming in implementing market-oriented educational reforms are not merely exaggerated, but are largely mistaken. (Schütz, Wößmann and West, 2007, pp. 34-5)

The source material is cited at some length because it affirms the context and some of the key policy settings in Hong Kong, that is, schools have a relatively high level of autonomy, but are accountable to a system-wide authority in significant ways.

There is a wider range of providers of school education in Hong Kong than in most other jurisdictions around the world. These characteristics are affirmed. A key question to pose at this point is whether there are other policy settings or strategies to help ensure that every school is a world-class school, and it is in this regard that we turn to our own work in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools.

Synergy Set 2: Intellectual, social, spiritual and financial capital

The purpose of the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools was to explore how schools that had been transformed or had sustained high performance had built strength in each of four kinds of capital and aligned them through effective governance to secure success for their students. It called for a deeper exploration of the model in Figure 1. Particular attention was given to secondary schools in systems where there was a relatively high level of school autonomy.

Intellectual capital refers to the level of knowledge and skill of those who work in or for the school. Social capital refers to the strength of formal and informal partnerships and networks involving the school and all individuals, agencies, organisations and institutions that have the potential to support and be supported by the school. Spiritual capital refers to the strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence among values, beliefs and attitudes about life and learning (for some schools, spiritual capital has a foundation in religion; in other schools, spiritual capital may refer to ethics and values shared by members of the school and its community). Financial capital refers to the money available to support the school. Governance is the process through which the school builds its intellectual, social, financial and spiritual capital and aligns them to achieve its goals.

The model in Figure 1 was the outcome of work over three years from 2004 to 2006 described in the recently-published *Raising the Stakes: From Improvement to Transformation in the Reform of Schools* (Caldwell and Spinks, 2008). An innovative approach was utilised in the development and enrichment of the model including case studies (49), master classes (4) and workshops (60) involving school and school system leaders in 11 countries where there was an agenda for or interest in transformation and where schools had a relatively high level of autonomy. Forty of the 49 case studies were contributed by school leaders in 13 of the 60 workshops. Several workshops were incorporated in conferences and postgraduate programs in leadership and management.

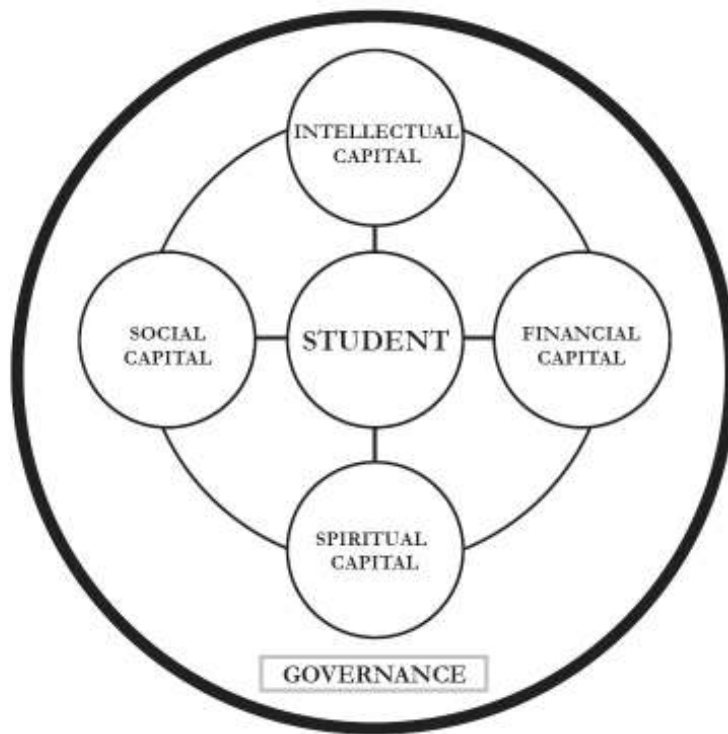


Figure 1 Synergy in four forms of capital

A feature of most of the workshops was the invitation to school and school system leaders to respond to key questions on design, implementation, issues and outcomes of efforts to achieve the transformation of schools. An interactive computer-based technology enabled large numbers of individual and group responses to be gathered for subsequent analysis. The interactive technology was utilised in 50 out of a total of 60 workshops, with approximately 2500 participants generating more than 10,000 responses for subsequent analysis.

The model in Figure 1 was the starting point for the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools. There were two stages. The first called for a review of literature on the four kinds of capital and how they are aligned through effective governance. An outcome of this review was the identification of 10 sample indicators for each form of capital and for governance. The second called for case studies in five secondary schools in each of six countries: Australia, China, England, Finland, United States and Wales. The project was carried out by Melbourne-based Educational

Transformations with different components conducted by international partners and funding from the Australian Government and the Welsh Assembly Government.

Indicators

Sample indicators were devised for each kind of capital and of governance. They served as a guide to researchers in each of the six countries in the selection of schools and to help build a common understanding of what was meant by each concept (intellectual capital, social capital, spiritual capital, financial capital and governance). There was no expectation that information on each indicator would be systematically gathered at every site.

The 50 indicators – 10 for each kind of capital and for governance – are listed below. Those with an asterisk (*) were illustrated in each school in each of the six countries. Indicators marked with a hash symbol (#) were illustrated in the majority of schools. The others were illustrated in at least one school. These indicators suggest strategies to be employed in efforts to ensure that all schools are world-class schools.

Intellectual Capital

1. *The staff allocated to or selected by the school are at the forefront of knowledge and skill in required disciplines and pedagogies
2. *The school identifies and implements outstanding practice observed in or reported by other schools
3. *The school has built a substantial, systematic and sustained capacity for acquiring and sharing professional knowledge
4. Outstanding professional practice is recognised and rewarded
5. *The school supports a comprehensive and coherent plan for the professional development of all staff that reflects its needs and priorities
6. #When necessary, the school outsources to augment the professional talents of its staff
7. *The school participates in networks with other schools and individuals, organisations, institutions and agencies, in education and other fields, to share knowledge, solve problems or pool resources
8. *The school ensures that adequate funds are set aside in the budget to support the acquisition and dissemination of professional knowledge
9. #The school provides opportunities for staff to innovate in their professional practice

10. The school supports a 'no-blame' culture which accepts that innovations often fail

Social Capital

1. #There is a high level of alignment between the expectations of parents and other key stakeholders and the mission, vision, goals, policies, plans and programmes of the school
2. *There is extensive and active engagement of parents and others in the community in the educational programme of the school
3. Parents and others in the community serve on the governing body of the school or contribute in other ways to the decision-making process
4. #Parents and others in the community are advocates of the school and are prepared to take up its cause in challenging circumstances
5. *The school draws cash or in-kind support from individuals, organisations, agencies and institutions in the public and private sectors, in education and other fields, including business and industry, philanthropists and social entrepreneurs
6. *The school accepts that support from the community has a reciprocal obligation for the school to contribute to the building of community
7. *The school draws from and contributes to networks to share knowledge, address problems and pool resources
8. *Partnerships have been developed and sustained to the extent that each partner gains from the arrangement
9. #Resources, both financial and human, have been allocated by the school to building partnerships that provide mutual support
10. *The school is co-located with or located near other services in the community and these services are utilised in support of the school

Financial Capital

1. *Funds are raised from several sources including allocations by formula from the public purse, fees, contributions from the community, and other money raised from the public and private sectors
2. #Annual planning occurs in the context of a multi-year development plan for the school
3. #The financial plan has a multi-year outlook as well as an annual budget

4. *Allocation of funds reflects priorities among educational needs that take account of data on student achievement, evidence-based practice, and targets to be achieved
5. There is appropriate involvement of stakeholders in the planning process
6. *Appropriate accounting procedures are established to monitor and control expenditure
7. #Money can be transferred from one category of the budget to another as needs change or emerge
8. Actual expenditure matches intended expenditure allowing for flexibility to meet emerging needs
9. #Educational targets are consistently achieved through the planned allocation of funds
10. The funds from all sources are sufficient and sustainable to meet educational needs

Spiritual Capital

1. #There is a high level of alignment between the values, beliefs and attitudes about life and learning held by the school and members of its community
2. *The values and beliefs of the school, including where relevant those that derive from a religious foundation, are embedded in its mission, vision, goals, policies, plans and curriculum
3. #The values and beliefs of the community are taken into account by the school in the formulation of its mission, vision, goals, policies, plans and curriculum.
4. *The school explicitly articulates its values and beliefs in publications and presentations
5. *Publications and presentations in the wider community reflect an understanding of the values and beliefs of the school
6. #There are high levels of trust between the school and members of its community
7. #Parents and other stakeholders are active in promoting the values and beliefs of the school.
8. *The values and beliefs of the school are evident in the actions of students and staff.
9. Staff and students who are exemplars of the values and beliefs of the school are recognised and rewarded
10. The values and beliefs of the school have sustained it or are likely to sustain it in times of crisis

Governance

1. *Authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities of the governing body and professional staff are clearly specified
2. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that obligations in respect to legal liability and risk management are addressed
3. *There is a clearly stated connection between the policies of the school and intended outcomes for students
4. #Policies have been prepared after consultation with key stakeholders within the school and the wider community
5. #Policies have been formally approved by the governing body
6. Policies are consistent in their application across the school so that students with the same needs are supported in the same manner
7. *Data are used in making decisions in the formulation of policies and making judgements about their effectiveness
8. *Data are gathered across the range of intended outcomes
9. #Information about policies and their implementation is readily available to all stakeholders
10. #There is a strong sense of commitment to policies and their implementation on the part of all stakeholders

Two instruments have been developed. In the first, for each indicator, respondents are invited to provide ratings of (1) importance in the context of your school, (2) how well your school is performing, and (3) the priority you attach to further development. The respondent might consider the school as a whole or a particular unit within the school. These instruments have also been used by networks of schools to examine and evaluate the priorities and performance of the network in each of these areas.

The instrument may be used in a range of situations. Its principal use is to frame an audit of a school's capacity to achieve change on the scale of transformation or to sustain high levels of performance. We incorporated the use of this instrument in 22 workshops in the second half of 2007 where participants included school and school system leaders who rated their own schools or school systems. Where there was a group of leaders from the same school, they completed their ratings individually and then compared responses, or worked through the list as a group. The instrument may be completed in the school setting by a leadership team or a group of staff working in the same area.

The instrument travels well across international borders. We used it with leaders from

several countries, including Australia, England, Malaysia, Netherlands, Philippines, Singapore and Wales. Participants have not balked at the inclusion of any indicator and have been able to work through the entire set in the context of their own schools or school systems. At first sight they are appropriate for use in Hong Kong.

The second instrument is concerned with governance and is designed to assist the school in the specification of roles and responsibilities for the governing body of the school and the principal, who normally serves as its chief executive officer. We list each set of indicators for each form of capital – intellectual, social, spiritual and financial – and invite respondents to suggest a distribution of roles and responsibilities, choosing from seven modes in each instance.

Illustrative noteworthy findings

Intellectual Capital

Intellectual capital, which refers to the level of knowledge and skill of those who work in or for the school, is regarded in each of the six countries as one of the most important resources for schools. The case studies revealed a range of practices to build intellectual capital.

- The education system in Finland has been highly successful in its aim of providing equitable access to high quality education for all students in Finland. The results of PISA (2000, 2003 and 2006) have shown that not only does Finland perform at a high level in international assessment, it also has one of the smallest gaps between the achievements of high and low performing students in the OECD and partner nations.
- The schools are focused on the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers. All had a capacity to select their own staff. The principals of schools in Finland are able to interview staff and recommend their selected candidate to the local education board, which is responsible for the employment of teachers. Schools in Australia and England are able to recruit, select and manage their own staff.
- The level of qualifications for teachers and school leaders varied between the countries. In Australia, England and the United States, teachers are required to complete at least an undergraduate education qualification. Teachers in Finland are required to hold a master's level degree. School leaders from each country are expected to have some practical knowledge and training in educational administration.

- Schools from each country described mentoring programs for newly qualified teachers. The Australian schools indicated that their long-serving staff are highly valued for their knowledge and experience. In many of the English schools, the mentoring of new teachers was one part of the staff professional development program. These schools reported that less experienced teachers are able to develop personalised development programs with their mentors.

Social Capital

Schools in each country indicated the importance of involvement in networks, which may include relationships with other schools or education providers, members of the local community, businesses and other organisations.

- The support and involvement of parents in school life is highly valued. Parents participate in a number of ways including school activities, parent-teacher meetings, in the school decision-making processes, volunteering and through the school's provision of information sessions for parents.
- Schools in each country have fostered strong links with other schools. These may include schools in different countries, which may be linked through international 'sister school' programs, as well as local networks.
- Links with other schools may include sharing teachers and resources. The sharing of teaching staff is common in Finnish schools, particularly in specialist subject areas such as music and foreign language teaching.
- Schools have also formed formal and informal links with other organisations such as local businesses, charitable organisations, church groups and social services.

The concept of synergy is particularly evident in social capital. This is a special feature of schools in Hong Kong given the relatively large number of organisations and institutions that sponsor schools.

Financial Capital

Although schools regard financial capital as an important resource, they did not believe that it was the most important resource for the improvement of student outcomes.

- While each of the schools received government funding, they are also actively involved in seeking additional financial support. Additional funds were raised through school fees and local fundraising activities. Schools in Australia,

England, the United States and Wales reported that school leaders devote time to preparing applications for additional government grants. Schools in England are exemplars of entrepreneurial leadership and report high levels of success in seeking external funding including cash or in-kind support from corporate bodies.

- All schools have some freedom in the allocation of school finances across budget categories. The schools regard this ability to move funds to be important in order to meet the educational needs of their students within a specific local context.
- The freedom to manage school budgets works within strict accountability processes.

These practices illustrate the findings of recent OECD studies on accountability and autonomy reported in the previous section (Synergy Set 1: Accountability, autonomy and choice).

Spiritual Capital

Spiritual Capital refers to the strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence among values, beliefs and attitudes about life and learning. For some schools, spiritual capital has a foundation in religion. In other schools, spiritual capital is based in the ethics and values shared by members of the school and its community.

- All schools had clearly defined values, which are frequently promoted in the school and local community. Many reported using their websites for this purpose.
- Each school aimed to align its values and beliefs about life and learning with the values held by the local community. These may be based on cultural values, such as the emphasis on education and equity in Finland. Alignment may be more difficult to achieve in communities with high levels of cultural diversity. Schools in Australia, England and the United States that serve diverse communities have been generally successful in managing this alignment through high levels of consultation with the community and the promotion and understanding of different cultural traditions.
- Schools reported a continuing movement towards holistic educational approaches and a focus on student welfare. Schools in Finland have created strong networks with other social service agencies, including hospitals, psychologists and police, to assist students with social and emotional difficulties.

Governance

All schools had established governance structures which are used to strengthen and align the four forms of capital. It is interesting to note that schools had developed their own structures, which ranged from traditional top-down structures to more distributed, democratic and inclusive approaches. Broad features of governance that are shared by all schools include:

- Schools have developed structures to suit the needs of their local community. These structures were considered to be a significant factor in their success. Schools have some form of distributed leadership.
- Although schools have developed different governance structures, all members of the governing body are aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- Schools are led by inspiring leaders who articulate a strong vision. Principals are described as leaders of teaching and learning within their school and are deeply involved in school improvement.
- School leaders have a high degree of freedom in the day-to-day management of their school. In addition to managing the budget and selecting staff schools formulate innovative and entrepreneurial plans.
- Schools are active in gathering data to monitor, evaluate and improve their practice.

Implications

The over-arching implication of the findings is that a comprehensive and coherent approach to the transformation of schools should address each form of capital and that a high level of performance on each indicator should be achieved.

Why not the best?

Enough is now known about what makes a successful school that no nation or system of education should settle for less than the best. This conclusion can be drawn when the findings of the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools are combined with those in contemporary research and two recent landmark reports – McKinsey & Company on *How the World's Best-Performing School Systems come out on Top* (Barber and Mourshed, 2007) and the report of PISA 2006 (OECD, 2007). A key finding in the McKinsey & Company study was that 'The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers' (Barber and Mourshed, 2007, p. 16). Schools will of course continue to evolve and an ongoing research and

development effort is required.

Strategic coherence

A review of developments in recent years reveals that particular strategies have taken their turn in moving to centre stage and then retreating as others are spotlighted. One might be a curriculum for the 21st century which enables every student to find a pathway to success at the same time that the needs of society are addressed. Another might be pedagogy, taking up the extraordinary advances in scholarship about how the brain functions and young people learn. It might be a matter of money, because quality and equity cannot be addressed without appropriate allocation of funds to schools and within schools. It might be to attract, reward and sustain the best teachers and other professionals. It might be to replace the run-down and obsolete stock of school buildings that are no longer fit for learning and teaching if there is to be success for all. It might be to build the support of the community for public education. It is all of these strategies and more, and the key to success is to bring them together and make them effective. Leadership is required at all levels – for a system of schools as well as within schools. New concepts of leadership are emerging – system leadership, but not in its traditional form, and distributed leadership, but not constrained to a simple sharing of tasks to make lighter the work of the principal. Outstanding governance is also required, but there must be a breakthrough in how we understand the concept. It is time to draw together what we have learnt from schools that have been transformed. The outcomes of this project, as reflected in the 50 indicators and the illustrative noteworthy findings, show how this can be done.

International transferability

There were few findings that cannot be transferred from one country to another providing there is appropriate adaptation to context and sufficient time is allowed for design and implementation. Each of the illustrative noteworthy findings falls into this category. It is disappointing that some observers reject the notion that we can learn from others such as Finland which performed ahead of Hong Kong (and also Australia) in PISA 2006. There are of course cultural and socio-economic differences, but there is no reason why we cannot adapt strategies to different settings. An example where local adaptation is possible is the practice in Finland wherein every student who falls behind is given 1:1 or small group support. Thirty percent of all students at primary and secondary levels receive such support each year. In Finland this is 'special education'. Special education teachers have an additional year of training and receive higher salaries.

System leadership

Outstanding practice does not happen by itself. What occurs in schools is framed by governance at other levels. In Finland, for example, the intellectual capital of schools, invariably highlighted as a factor in explaining its success, has been made possible by national policies that now require every teacher to have a master's degree.

System leadership is manifested in other ways. In addition to frameworks for governance set at higher levels, there must also be frameworks of support that help schools build a capacity for outstanding leadership. Returning again to Finland, principals require certification from the National Board of Education and requirements reflect their expanding roles in the selection of staff. In England, the National College for School Leadership, arguably a leader in its field across the world, was established for the same purpose. The expectation that secondary schools in England will have partnerships with business means new knowledge and skill for school leaders, especially in strengthening the social and financial capital of their schools. The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust provides support for schools to do this.

System leadership has taken on a new connotation so that principals become leaders in the system. Hopkins describes system leadership in these terms:

‘System leaders’ are those headteachers [principals] who are willing to shoulder system leadership roles: who care about and work for the success of other schools as well as their own. System leaders measure their success in terms of improving student learning and increasing achievement, and strive to both raise the bar and narrow the gap(s). They look both into classrooms and across the broader system, they realise in a deep way that the classroom, school and system levels all impact on each other. Crucially they understand that in order to change the larger system you have to engage with it in a meaningful way. (Hopkins, 2006) (See also Hopkins, 2007)

Synergy Set 3: Education, economy and society

Most nations around the world are facing the challenge of ensuring that graduates have the mix of knowledge and skills that ensure success in a 21st century global economy. Figure 2 illustrates synergy in education, economy and society.

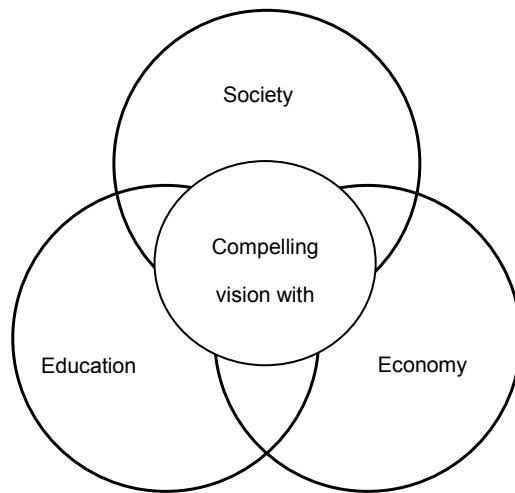


Figure 2: Synergy in education, economy and society

Some in education may feel uncomfortable with the explicit link between education and economy. Can a 'compelling vision with high moral purpose' include such a link? UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown demonstrated how this can be done in his vision of education:

I make no apology for saying that education is the best economic policy. And I make no apology for wanting every child to be able to read, write and add up. But education has always been about more than exams, more than the basics, vital as they are. To educate is to form character, to shape values, and to liberate the imagination. It is to pass human wisdom, knowledge and ingenuity from one generation to the next. It is a duty and a calling. As Plutarch said, the mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled. And that is why we have such high ambitions. Not just because education is a matter of national prosperity, although it is certainly that. It is because education is the greatest liberator mankind has ever known, the greatest force for social progress. And that is why it is my passion. (Brown, 2007)

Synergy Set 4: Passion, strategy and trust

Educational leaders at all levels will need to articulate such a vision and to do so with

passion. But passion by itself is insufficient, and herein lies the need for synergy in passion, strategy and trust illustrated in Figure 3.

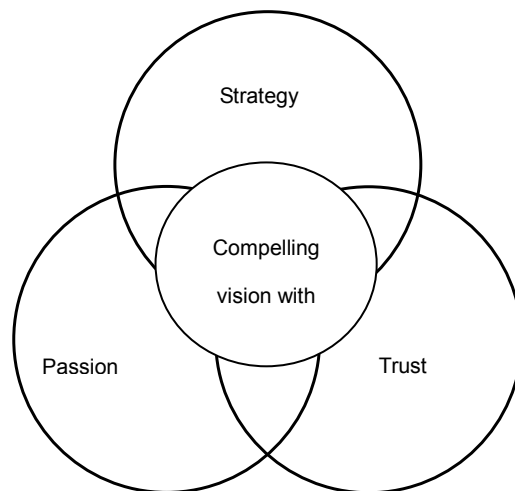


Figure 3: Synergy in passion, trust and strategy

Conclusion

School leaders regardless of the setting need to articulate a compelling vision with high moral purpose that is suited to the times. Such a vision makes clear the relationship between education, economy and society that is suited to the 21st century global knowledge era. Such a vision should be articulated with passion, but passion by itself may be counter-productive unless accompanied by appropriate strategies and a high level of trust among key stakeholders. The 50 indicators that were identified in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools suggest the strategies.

The integrating force in all of these matters is trust. This is an underlying theme of Stephen Covey writing in *The Speed of Trust* (Covey, 2006).

There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organisation, nation, economy, and civilisation throughout the world – one thing

which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love.

On the other hand, if developed and leveraged, that one thing has the potential to create unparalleled success and prosperity in every dimension of life. Yet it is the least understood, most neglected, and most underestimated possibility of our time.

That one thing is trust. (Covey, 2006, p. 1)

We should add the school or the system of education to Covey's list. New synergies energised by trust will ensure that every school in Hong Kong is a world-class school.

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