THE EXPERIENCES OF A PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY: TEACHERS DEVELOPING A NEW IMAGE OF THEMSELVES AND THEIR WORKPLACE

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Summary

This paper presents a study of a secondary school in Queensland, Australia involved in an innovative change process called IDEAS (Innovative Design for Enhancing Achievement in Schools). This process of change centres on the action of teachers in classrooms rather than change in organisational structures. Our main findings illustrate how a group of teachers created a professional community though their participation in the process. We found that shared understanding developed through professional learning can impact on action in the classroom. However, the sustainability of this action within the organisation will depend on the established professional community's ability to create a broader 'school-wide' understanding of these new relationships. It will also require developing a new image of teacher, student and their workplace. Through their development of this image, the teachers are in the process of creating a school for students of the 21st century, in line with their vision.

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Introduction

The school revitalisation process, which is documented in this paper, centres on the action of teachers in classrooms and building a professional learning community (Kruse *et al*., 1995; Louis and Marks, 1996). Within this professional community, teacher leadership and strategic leadership have complemented each other developing new roles and relationships within the school. This paper relates the history of the process from the perspective of teachers and administrators within the school community. The story illustrates the complexity of such a process, the considerable investment of time and the evolving nature of the impact of the change on people and organisational relationships over time.

Background to the school revitalisation process

White Rock State High School (SHS) has used *Innovative Designs for Enhancing the Achievements of Schools* (IDEAS) (Crowther, 1999) as a process for school revitalisation. The two major components of IDEAS are the Research-based Framework (Appendix 1) and a five-phase school-based implementation strategy known as the IDEAS process (Appendix 2). The Framework is grounded in the work of Newmann and Wehlage (1995) and developed by Crowther and the IDEAS Project Team (Crowther, 1999). Crowther and the IDEAS Team used a number of authoritative sources as reference points in developing the IDEAS approach to innovative school

design. These include appreciative inquiry, action learning, problem-based learning, metastrategy and backward mapping (Crowther, 1999, p.24).

Of critical importance in the Research-based Framework for Enhancing School Outcomes is the principle of 'alignment'. This principle asserts that schools that have generated both depth and integration across the elements have been found to produce an enhanced sense of identity and greater capacity to pursue high expectations for student achievement (King and Newmann 1999; Crowther *et al.* 2000).

IDEAS is based on four principles that distinguish it from most other school revitalisation approaches:

1) It assumes equivalence of teacher leadership and administrator leadership in school development processes. Strategic leadership is viewed as the role of the principal while pedagogical leadership is seen as a professional responsibility of teachers (Smylie & Hart, 1999; Crowther *et al*., 2000). This relationship has been described by Crowther *et al*. (2000) as "parallel leadership".

2) School revitalisation is viewed as a multi-dimensional process, encompassing the development of a shared vision, the creation of a shared approach to pedagogy, and school-wide operational planning. It is through the creation of a contextualised and explicitly agreed approach to pedagogy, aligned with the school vision, that significant improvement in student learning outcomes is made possible (Louis & Marks, 1996; Peterson *et al*., 1996; Crowther *et al*., 2000).

3) The management structures include an IDEAS school management team, a facilitator from within the school and access to external (University) consultants.

4) Schools manage their own timeline and resources, with maximum flexibility assured.

This process is about building organisational capacity (Scribner *et al*., 1999; Crowther *et al*., 2000; King and Newmann, 1999). As Crowther notes:

> The latest Wisconsin research makes clear that when the professional community of the school engages collaboratively in school improvement, a value-addedness can be created that transposes into enhanced school identity and ultimately into enhanced student achievement (Interview - December 1999).

Underpinning the IDEAS Research-based Framework are the concepts of professional community and shared leadership (King & Others, 1996; Kruse *et al*., 1995; Louis & Marks, 1996; Hord, 1997; Marks & Louis, 1999; Crowther *et al*., 2000). It is a framework that requires the organisation to reimage itself (Morgan, 1997). The new image of teacher that emerges relates to developing a professional community of collaborative individuals (Limerick *et al*., 1998) that is underpinned by the concepts of collaboration, deprivatisation of practice, reflective dialogue, and taking a pedagogical leadership role.   Other reimaging occurs through developing relationships as administrative leaders work in parallel with the teacher leaders, changing the role of the principal to a strategic leader.

Walker (1975) reports on a professional community with shared values and a common vision for enhancing student outcomes. The professional community had been build though a process of deliberation. This process enabled people to share assumptions, values, beliefs and mental images - developing a common understanding thorough

exposing educational platforms and developing a shared system of working principles and beliefs. IDEAS uses a similar process where common purpose is formulated and the individual is both recognised and valued. IDEAS values diversity and different expertise within the parameters of shared goals.

Cooper (1998), reporting on the reasons for successful implementation of a project, noted that the most effective implementation occurred when both teachers and administrators took responsibility for the program and it was seen as "…a collective opportunity to improve the educational experience of children". Cooper added, "Educators must be empowered prior to adoption of the program, as well as during the change process. Establishing a stable, committed cadre of teachers is the first step to successful program implementation" (1998, p.13). He also found that a school site facilitator, with strong interpersonal, organisational and communication skills, was the linchpin that holds the implementation together.

The IDEAS implementation process used at White Rock SHS is an organisational learning process where an IDEAS school management team with the assistance of an internal and an external facilitator moves the organisation through a non-linear process of diagnostic inventory scanning (discovery), envisioning, actioning and sustaining (IDEAS process). This study builds on a previous study (Andrews & Lewis, 2000) and focuses on the experiences of a professional learning community through the IDEAS process. It captures the experience of teacher leaders within the professional community and the resultant perceptions of change on individual and group learning as they create their school for the 21st Century.

Methodology

The intention of the research was to illuminate the experiences of a group of teachers as they engaged in a process of learning and development during a whole school change process (IDEAS). The school chosen is representative of the Queensland schools involved with the IDEAS project (1998 – 2000). This school has been involved in IDEAS since the project's inception and has demonstrated evidence of meeting the Louis & Marks (1996) criteria for a professional community, namely, clear shared goals for student learning; collaboration and collective responsibility among staff members; deprivatisation of practice, and reflective professional inquiry by staff members (Kruse *et al*., 1995).

The researchers formally entered the process during the Designing stage in November 1999 (refer Table 1), having previously accompanied the external facilitator to the school and observed an IDEAS group meeting in June 1999. No data were collected on that occasion, though the visit did provide some useful background information.

The researchers captured data during two visits, the initial visit aimed at capturing from multiple perspectives the experiences of the professional community members involved with IDEAS. These voices related these experiences through a process of retrospective interviews and from focus group discussion. Interviews were semi-structured exploring the informants' perceptions of and experiences with IDEAS. All the interviews and

focus group discussions were audio taped and the tapes transcribed. Data analysis was facilitated through the use of the qualitative data analysis software QSR NUD*IST NVivo. Through a simple coding procedure, the accessibility of the data was significantly increased and the multiple-perspectives easier to capture. This enabled a story to be told from different perspectives both as an individual and group experience.

These data have been supplemented with material drawn from the school's extensive documentation and the external facilitator's recounting of the process during an interview. This documentation and the interview have been used to enable the validation of events or incidents where there were common agreements by the informants that these provided defining moments that enabled the project to continue and develop.

Table 1 IDEAS Process and Data Collection.

IDEAS Process	1998-1999	Data Collection 1999 - 2000
Discovering	1998 –1999 IDEAS management team formed, facilitator appointed and Diagnostic Inventory (DI) carried out. DI indicated major problems.	
Envisioning	September 1998 - Semester 1 1999 Vision formulated and Schoolwide Pedagogy (SWP) established	
Actioning	Semester 2 1999 – 2000 Trialing SWP and mentoring as SWP is implemented.	November 1999 Retrospective Data collection interviewing IDEAS management team and a sample of "other teachers" with varying degrees of involvement with IDEAS. Documentation collected and External Facilitator Interviewed. April – June 2000 IDEAS management team teachers individually interviewed, taped management team meetings and group interviews.
Sustaining	At the time of the data collection	

	this stage had not been reached	

The second visit was six months later. This time the researchers' purpose was to reinterview all previous respondents in an attempt to measure the retention of the initial impact of their learning and the organisational wide impact of their actions.

Sample

Respondents were divided into three groups:

a. IDEAS Group and the external facilitator

b. the administration

c. a sample of those teachers not directly involved with the process (outside the IDEAS Group). These people were volunteers from those teachers identified as being outside the direct involvement with IDEAS.

Individual and group interview, observation, researchers' field notes and documentation have been used to illuminate the initial impact of the work of the IDEAS Group on the broader teacher community. These multiple sources have exposed the extent of the spread of their learning and understandings throughout the school. The interviews also have captured perspectives on the positioning of the IDEAS Group within the wider professional community and the relationship of this group to the administration.

The Context: White Rock SHS

White Rock SHS is a secondary school of four hundred students and thirty-seven teachers located in a prosperous rural community in Southern Queensland. The staff is

relatively stable, experienced and some are well established within the community. The town is geographically isolated, has low unemployment and there is a tendency for some parents to send their children to boarding school for their secondary education. The school community considers itself innovative and can relate experiences with a number of past and present initiatives. For the purpose of this paper, the story begins in 1998, when White Rock SHS was working with yet another initiative, this time related to site-based management. It was this initiative that flowed into IDEAS.

Our account here may be seen as a chapter of *THE STORY SO FAR* providing glimpses of how events unfolded. It is the story of a remarkable achievement. It illustrates what can be achieved when a group of people work together to forge new professional understandings, to create their school for the 21st Century.

The First Stage of the Journey

The first stage of the process commenced with data collection through the use of a diagnostic inventories scan. The instrument was constructed from the components of the IDEAS Research-based Framework (RBF) and administered to teachers, parents and students. This survey explored teacher, parent and student perceptions of how successfully the school was operating in relation to both student achievement and a range of contributory elements (Appendix 1). The data were collected and analysed by the external facilitator. The news was not all good, as one teacher recalls:

> The actual receiving of the data was shocking…when we got the survey results
>
> back I was really shocked at how negative it was…

The data indicated:

- a lack of cohesiveness in the school as a whole and among the staff as a professional community. The teachers perceived themselves as not being valued by the community;

- problems with the processes of conflict resolution;

- that while teaching excellence might be attributed to individual teachers, there was a lack of agreement about what actually constituted excellent teaching at White Rock and there was no unifying vision.

The first action arising from the data was a staff workshop conducted by another external facilitator. The purpose of the workshop was to assist the staff to develop an agreed definition of teaching excellence. It was an exercise resisted and, to a certain degree, disrupted by some staff members, some of whom left the school at the end of the year (1998). However, there was one very positive outcome, namely, a group of people (unhappy with the behaviour of their colleagues and wanting to make a contribution to change) volunteered to work as an action group to continue the process of developing a vision statement and formulate an action plan for 1999. This was how the IDEAS Group (which also functioned as the IDEAS School Management Team) later to become the core of the professional learning community, came into being.

It should be noted that a school management team coordinates the IDEAS process. The IDEAS management team adopts a number of working principles, namely, no blame, mutual trust and support and collaboration. The process enables all staff to be involved at different levels and at crucial times. If, for whatever reason, some staff choose not to contribute when consulted or be involved when asked, they are not pressured into this

engagement. The cost, however, is that they cannot later subvert the actions of the working group.

The IDEAS Group: Composition

The IDEAS Group developed as a result of 'the incident' was not constructed along any principles of representation. The ten volunteers represented a whole range of experiences, backgrounds, and beliefs. There was a mixture of experience and inexperience, of youth and professional maturity, and of positions of responsibility within the school. This was to prove a significant factor in their development of professional community.

> Brilliant, it's been best mix. Had we handpicked, we probably wouldn't have a better mix ...the group that got together [were] people who voted with their feet and joined was excellent.

The younger teachers were valued by their more experienced colleagues for their up to date theoretical perspectives and for their "energy and enthusiasm and different view of the world" (HOD). The less experienced teachers valued the depth of professional knowledge of their senior colleagues, and their ability to articulate a vision for the school. The involvement of teachers with no positional power demonstrated that IDEAS was not a 'top-down' initiative. This helped to give the group credibility among the rest of the staff.

Having volunteered, the members of the group began a rich and rewarding professional journey. While everyone had initially had the option of volunteering, the fact that this window of opportunity had opened and then closed caused some disquiet. One teacher not involved referred to the group's 'secret meetings' and 'secret business' and another commented on the 'lack of consultation' in its formation.

The IDEAS Group: The Deliberation Begins

For the remainder of the school year, in consultation with the staff and supported by the external facilitator, the IDEAS Group continued to work on the development of a vision statement and plan of action for 1999. The year ended on a high note with the draft statement and plan of action being endorsed by the whole staff. As the internal facilitator recalled:

> We had this really productive whole staff meeting where people were talking enthusiastically and energetically about the school and I just kept thinking, we've captured something here, it's the hearts and minds stuff that I feel so strongly about.

By the middle of 1999, the IDEAS Group was working on a vision statement supported by a series of concepts and questions designed to guide practice (Appendix 3). The experiences related with its use capture the effect this process had on their learning.

Individual learning

The IDEAS Group members indicated that they had learned a good deal as individuals though participation in the process of developing the school vision, concepts and

questions – one going so far as to describe it as 'an awakening'. However, the individual learning identified varied. These included learning that impacted on and challenged classroom practice; a refocusing of attention on the value of participating in professional dialogue and reflecting on practice; new learning which made "a wonderful base" for professional growth; and developing tolerance and understanding of how other teachers think and how they approach teaching.

For some, the learning experience involved a professional growth process that impacted on the growth of others. This in particular was the experience of the internal facilitator (and deputy principal). She acknowledged she had learned to go to meetings with no pre-determined ideas rather than with "the big picture" and "the road to get there" in mind. It is perhaps not coincidental that other leaders emerged. Group members reported that one young teacher whose leadership potential had not previously been recognised, "…came forward as a real leader right from the start" while the "enormous potential" and readiness for increased responsibility of another inexperienced teacher was recognised.

Sharing and Deliberation

The sharing and deliberation that went on within the IDEAS Group was not an easy process, and could be quite stressful. While the group had come together because of shared concerns, individual members had different ideas about what should drive their planning, teaching and learning. Reconciling different views could be like:

working in a mine-field where you want everyone in the team to feel that they

have participated in the process and you want to come up with something,

which is valid, and something to be proud of.

The process was messy, and often the way forward was not clear. The group had to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty and there were times when they did not know where they were going. Progress came through professional dialogue, which was energising for the group. Being able to "talk about what [we] were doing in the classroom with absolute enthusiasm" helped to build the type of cohesiveness where all views were valued. The group operated in an environment where differences were explored and all contributions valued:

we were very open to the fact that everybody had the right to say whatever they

wanted to…it was good to see everybody's different point of view and… see

where those differences were and why they were different.

Group Learning and the Development of Professional Community

As a result of working through the IDEAS process, the IDEAS Group learned together and in doing so, developed into a professional learning community. Members of the IDEAS Group talked about the collective learning which grew out of the common factors, that is, the shared purpose, shared experience and professional dialogue. This involved connecting as a group, being tolerant and respectful of each other. There was a recognition that a diverse group of individuals had created something of significance,

something that they owned and cherished. They had created a vision, a dream that they were committed to living.

The following are some examples of the group learning experiences of participants:

- "we have learned the importance of really considering our school and what we want for our school";

- we have learned a lot about the process of change and "the power of actually focusing on what we do in classrooms" [and] "shared an understanding of what the IDEAS group is and what the concepts and questions are about".

- we have learned that it is possible to engage in professional dialogue and critical thinking across Departments and that a lot can be learned, "…about different forms of pedagogy, about different forms of assessment, about different ways to motivate students, that sort of thing" when Departments talk to each other.

- we learned increasing respect for difference in practice – in things that are important to different teachers and different Departments [and] about what they are thinking and why and the implications of that.

There is little doubt that the IDEAS Group at White Rock SHS had developed into a professional learning community as defined by Kruse *et al*. (1995). This is clearly illustrated in the following extract from an interview with the internal facilitator:

> …all the stuff that I've read about for years I'm actually seeing enacted and the thing about professional learning communities - the dialogue, the shared dialogue, that was happening in that group. [It] was really quite significant [with]…people genuinely having to think and reflect and draw on the inner professionalism that they hadn't had to think about for a long time…we were

happy to listen to each other's ideology and belief systems and it even got to the point where we could argue and challenge what each other thought and felt and how that impacted on the school. [We]…had a really clear idea of what we stood for and what our common and shared beliefs and purposes were.

The White Rock Way: The Initial Impact of IDEAS on the members of the IDEAS Group.

The IDEAS Group shared ownership of the concepts and questions (Appendix 3) they had created believing them to be an appropriate guide to practice at White Rock. The concepts and questions represented agreement forged out of difference and their very nature allowed them to be interpreted and used in a wide range of different ways. The internal facilitator noted:

because of that shared ownership and understanding … those concepts can underpin practice and whether it's about…evaluating a leadership camp or whether it's about planning a unit or assessing a unit, the shared belief in those concepts can be powerful in what you're doing.

Each of the IDEAS Group members chose what they were going to do to trial what they had created. Some used the concepts and questions to plan units, some to inform their classroom practice in an explicit way, and some to evaluate units of work or specific projects. The effects were very encouraging. The success felt by the group members is illustrated in the following extracts:

It has certainly changed my practice…using the concepts and questions to take a structured approach to changing my teaching - in order to be able teach in ways that allow disconnected kids to reconnect with school.

It's definitely changed my teaching – it's an awakening of stuff we should be doing but don't have time to...I've changed what I believe is important in terms of what kids can do and can't do…my focus has changed more to where I think the kids should be going…

I find that my teaching has improved, I find that I understand more about what I'm doing, why I'm doing things and I find that's been an improvement.

The concepts like the enriching community and future direction really helped me direct and focus my attention…really opened up my mind... I don't know how to verbalise it, but teaching them [the students] the skills that they will take on to the next grade and then out into the community and to get a job and be worthwhile, participating members of the community.

The Initial Impact of IDEAS on the rest of the school

From the perspective of the IDEAS Group, information was regularly disseminated to the whole staff. Also the whole staff was consulted at important junctures in the process. The IDEAS Group members believed that their work was beginning to have some impact across the school. Interviews with teachers outside the IDEAS Group revealed a range of perspectives as captured in the following groups:

*Group 1: Busy with other things***:**

I have been heavily involved in curriculum development in my area and have not had an interest or time to be involved. However, even though I am busy, I still have the right to be informed and am interested to know what is going on.

*Group 2: Don't know much about all this***:** commentary indicated that information was given out at staff meetings and workshops but this was disjointed.

> You would hear something and then not hear about it again for quite a while. While it was mentioned quite a bit…unless you're directly involved in it, it doesn't affect you too much.

Group 3: I am doing a great job: these teachers believe that they are:

> already doing a great job and we should get on with teaching kids in classrooms. They would like to see less 'innovation' and more energy consolidating what we have already got and may confirm that it is "what I have been doing for years". Teachers in this group are supportive of change but consider they are already doing what "is being suggested" and are "incredibly busy so I have not got time anyway to write programs that way".

Group 4: Feeling excluded from the inner club: This perspective suggests confusion about how you actually got to be part of the inner group and, particularly in the initial stages, feelings of exclusion:

> …until a pupil free day in June it seemed like secret business –

Group 5: Those who appreciate the work and want to know more: they are interested in what has been produced as a way of viewing their own practice from a different perspective.

> [I've noticed a] gradual change in the culture of the school, more willingness to talk about change because people are out there trying different things – more of a culture of …looking at doing something more to improve student outcomes

The Ripple Effect: Spreading the Learning Across the Staff

Following their own successful trialing of the questions and concepts, the IDEAS Group faced the challenge of spreading their learnings through the staff, without diluting the meaning of what they had achieved. Also this group felt a deep sense of commitment to what they had created, again, something not easily passed on to the others who have not been through the same process of creative deliberation. However, they recognised that there was a need to test whether their findings from the first trial held true with the broader teacher community. They needed to *spread the word*.

This process began after the IDEAS Group had trialed the concepts and questions and shared their experiences with each other. They then reported back to the whole staff, explaining what they had done and how they believed it had made a difference to their teaching and learning. At this point they invited others on staff to participate in an extended trial through a process described by the IDEAS Group as a 'mentor/mentee' relationship. This involved a member of the IDEAS Group working with one or two volunteers to trial the concepts and questions. A number of teachers volunteered to take part and indicated which of the IDEAS Group members they would like to work with. Some discussion did occur between then and the end of the school year, but looking back early in 2000, the IDEAS Group agreed that little of substance had been achieved.

This was an important issue because it is the aim of the group that, in time, a majority of people on staff will actually use the concepts and questions to guide their practice.

> …This is really how we are presenting it '*at this school, this is what guides our practice'* and I would envisage…it will become part of what we do at this school and why we do it.

It was decided to continue the extended trial model in 2000 and hence the mentor/mentee' relationships were re-established. After a relatively slow start, the process picked up pace during Term 2 and the experiences of the expanded group were reported to the whole staff in May. This reporting back session indicated that the mentoring had been successful in a number of ways. Twelve different teachers spoke about how they had successfully applied the concepts and questions and it was significant that no two uses were the same. The flexibility of the framework created by the IDEAS Group was clearly illustrated as teachers variously described how they had used it to plan, assess, evaluate, guide practice, change teacher/student interaction, and generate deep discussion (in very different contexts). It was also clear that the intended 'ripple effect' was actually occurring with more teachers beginning to adopt the framework that had been developed by the IDEAS Group.

Many more teachers are still to be engaged but the aim that "…we're all pointing in the same direction and that we can all articulate the same set of beliefs about the school and what it represents and what we think is important to us here" appears to be gaining ground.

The Contribution of the Facilitators

While all members of the IDEAS Group made significant contributions to the development of the professional community, the special roles played by the internal and

external facilitators warrant further comment. The internal facilitator could potentially have been any member of the IDEAS Group, however, in this particular case the role was taken on by a member of the administration. One clear advantage of this was that she was able to provide release time for group members, allowing them to meet during school time. She provided the impetus for and structure to the group's meetings as well as playing an important role in communicating with the rest of the staff. She would also liaise with the external facilitator passing on the thoughts of the group, and relaying his suggestions and questions back. She variously refers to herself in this role as 'linchpin', 'referee' and 'sheepdog' and reflects:

> It was really important for me not to take over but to be the organiser, to facilitate them getting together, to ensure they got together, to ensure that the meetings had some direction… and then report back and it just kept the flow of information going…This meant I had to liaise and facilitate rather than tell.

Every member of the IDEAS Group recognised the importance of the contribution made by the external facilitator. They recognised: his ability to "build a non-threatening environment" where people felt able to express their thoughts; his skill in "keeping the group together" despite the range of personalities and "making people's contributions feel valued and worth while"; his high level of credibility with the staff which enabled them to cope with the 'fuzziness' of parts of the process; and his role as a critical friend offering a different (and inherently neutral) perspective. While the group felt that they owned the process and the statements they had developed, they acknowledged that the road would have been a lot more difficult had they not had the support of the external

facilitator.   The external facilitator from the University had forged a learning partnership with the school community.

The Role of the Administration

The principal, after initiating the project, stepped back from the process. However, the involvement and commitment of members of the administration team in the IDEAS Group enabled strategic decisions concerning resources to support the process. Significantly, staff at various times took on a pedagogical leadership role, their initiative and involvement enhancing and giving credibility to the process.   This positioning has been crucial to the acceptance of the process school-wide, as noted by a member of the IDEAS Group:

> The rest of the staff saw it not just as a HOD/administration group, they saw it as group where there were other staff members there who didn't have positions of power. So I think that helped other members of the staff accept what we were doing not just as coming from the top down [and having] administration in the group helped in terms of having time out, which is a big thing.

Therefore the process enabled the emergence of teachers who have taken up new leadership roles within the organisation.   In fact the internal facilitator, a deputy principal, noted about her own involvement:

> I've been very aware of the fact that as a school we haven't had a strategic vision and a strategic alliance to the actions we do. We have all these pockets of dynamism that create all this wonderful stuff but there's no strategic focus

> … so I saw IDEAS as being a real answer [that would enable us to focus our efforts].

and she also saw her role in building leadership density within the organisation:

> My strategic role in the school is more about nurturing leaders. ... about providing people with opportunity for promotion. [and] working with HODs…giving them tasks to do.

The Principal had been content with "overseeing the project at a distance". He was proud of his staff and the innovation that emanated from the group. He indicated that he maintained a keen interest in what was happening in the teaching and learning initiatives and that a public relations profile had become an increasingly important component of his role. However, data also indicate that as the process continued and teacher leadership developed through the actions of the IDEAS Group, the relationship between this group and the principal had not developed to the extent that a strong alliance has been formed. While responsibility towards pedagogical leadership had moved to the teacher community, however, the strategic leadership (Crowther, 2000) is still in a re-imaging phase. The ability of the members of the Administration team to address the relationship between the IDEAS Group and other groups in the school and their strategic role in management will be crucial in the sustainability of the process over time.

Project outcomes

Expected school outcomes listed in the Research-based Framework (Appendix 1) anticipate enhancement of student achievement, the development of a professional learning community, the development of strong school community support and the enhancement of the image of the school within the community.

The original impetus for the work of the IDEAS Group came from the results of the diagnostic inventory. Following their engagement in the IDEAS process, the IDEAS Group have made significant progress on addressing these issues and have begun to build these common understandings into action in classrooms. Generally these outcomes are found in changes within the school organisation; teachers' thinking about students' learning; and the school in its broader community.

Changes within the School Organisation:

1. The IDEAS Group that managed the school revitilisation process developed into a professional learning community. The impact of their collective learning has changed the way they teach and their understandings of successful practice. Teachers in the group have taken leadership roles in developing and making explicit a shared view of school-wide pedagogy. The IDEAS Group's internal facilitator also demonstrated strategic leadership.

2. The IDEAS Group has packaged their definition of authentic pedagogy as concepts and questions (Appendix 3). Once they established its authenticity within the group they decided to spread this way of working out into the rest of the school through a mentoring program. However, our research indicates that while the original

members have developed a shared understanding, this understanding can only come from extended deliberation. While understandings have clearly been conveyed to those being mentored, some of the original depth of meaning has been lost.

3. Whilst there have been spasmodic attempts by the group and the internal facilitator to "educate and inform" the staff about their experiences, there is evidence that the type and the timing of these information episodes have not been effective. There is a need for the group to clearly reach out to others to keep them informed. Recent feedback sessions involving the mentor/mentee have been very successful in "spreading the word".

4. As teacher leadership emerges over time, the roles of the facilitator and the Administration team will require re-imaging. Initially, the process required the Administration to strategically respond to the development and actions of the IDEAS Group. It would seem that the process will require the Administration to negotiate new roles and relationships, that is, to re-image itself.

Teachers' Thinking about Students' Learning.

Interviews recorded the perception of teachers towards change in their approach to meeting student learning needs and at this stage evidence is limited to their perceptions of this impact on their classroom work.

> … we have started to look at what is important to us and to our community and our kids and what it is going to look like in the future so we can give them the skills to get there or to adapt to the change that is happening.

…I am putting into practice things that I have thought for a long time that I have got to start letting students have more choice and more freedom in their actual curriculum to negotiate a lot more with how they do things, instead of just saying here it is, we are going to do it this way, my way, we need to have a lot more interaction with the students … treat them like young adults.

… when I plan now I think of the 8 concepts and ask myself the questions … I mentally tick off all that and I think okay I'm not going to teach this unless I'm really sure it's what I want to teach or it's the right way … it makes me justify my position before I go into the room.

The feedback sessions provided evidence that there was a strong perception by the IDEAS Group that their Authentic Pedagogy (Appendix 3) focus has impacted strongly on their action in classrooms and as a result they believed it has made an impact on students learning experiences. Collecting evidence further than this perception is beyond the scope of this paper.

The School in its Broader Community:

All teachers interviewed agreed that there has been an improved relationship with the school's broader community. They talked about the importance in developing good community relations and of the initiatives and efforts they have made to improve these outcomes. Some acknowledged the difficulty in such a community of relating the achievements and positive impact of what the school has been doing. However all those

interviewed believed that the school had gained public acknowledgment that the school is an "innovative school" and hence has changed their perception of the school.

Teachers consider it a great place to work and they believe the action arising from the IDEAS process has had a positive influence on all the community. One teacher noted:

> I think that's had significant impact across the rest of the school because people around the school know that something good is happening, even if they weren't involved in it…and because of the shared leadership and the fact that we've been able to distribute who's presented at staff meetings and lots of different people have talked to the staff about all sorts of things, that's given a sense of authenticity if you like

Conclusions

This study adds to the literature on whole school change, in particular, change that builds enhanced school outcomes by centring on the work of teachers operating as a professional learning community as described by Kruse, *et al.* (1995). The school in this study is one of a number of state schools involved in the IDEAS process in Queensland, Australia.

The main findings from this study illustrate how an innovative process centred on classroom outcomes has created a professional learning community. The researchers have found that shared understandings through professional learning can impact on action in the classroom. However the sustainability of this community and action within the organisation will depend on the established professional community's ability to create a broader understanding of these new relationships and new understandings

about the image of teacher, student and their workplace. The development of this image is part of the process of living the vision and creating a school for students of the 21st century.

Appendix 1: Research-based Framework (Crowther,1999, p.7)

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS

- *Are successes capitalised upon to build a positive school image?*
- *Do internal and external networks facilitate innovative practice?*
- *Do in-service programs complement the school vision?*

STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS

- Is the school's vision a source of pride and identity?
- Are resource decision processes transparent?
- Are funding and assets built upon to create unique school resources?
- Does the school have processes for sharing leadership responsibilities?
- Does the school value its social justice responsibilities and practise inclusivity?

COHESIVE COMMUNITY

- Does the school community support and promote the school's vision?
- Do teachers assume collective responsibility for individual students and student learning?
- Do staff engage in serious critique of the school vision and of school practices?
- Do teachers tailor their individual talents to the school vision?

ENHANCED OUTCOMES

- ♦ **What are students achieving?**
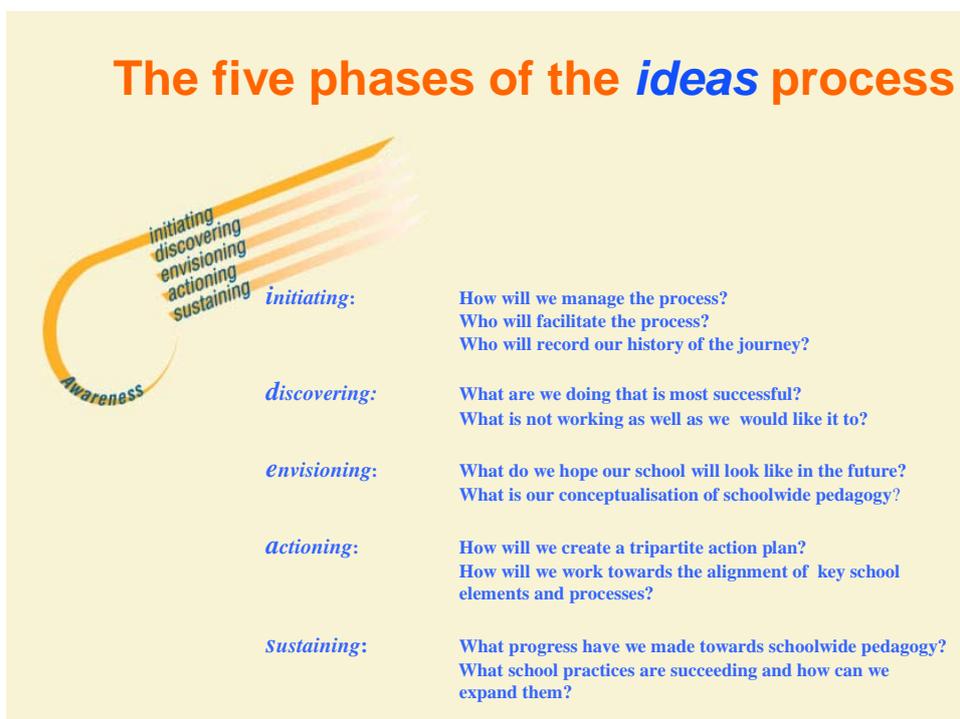- ♦ **What is the level of staff satisfaction and professional image?**
- **What is the level of community pride and support?**
- **What is the school's influence on Quality of Life in the wider community?**

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS

'AUTHENTIC PEDAGOGY'

- Do teachers have a shared understanding of excellence in teaching and learning?
- Do teachers base their work on clearly articulated educational theories?
- Does teaching practice explicitly reflect the school vision?
- Are assessment and reporting practices approved by the community?
- Is student achievement measured against agreed benchmarks?

INFRASTRUCTURAL DESIGN

- Is the school's use of space, time and technologies:
  - ◊ responsive to the developmental needs of students?
  - ◊ conducive to excellence in pedagogy?
  - ◊ supportive of the school vision?

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS

This framework has been developed through a partnership between the University of Southern Queensland's School Leadership Institute and Education Queensland.
The University of Wisconsin's longitudinal studies of successfully restructured American Schools (eg. Newmann and Wehlage, 1995) have been particularly helpful.

Appendix 2: The IDEAS Process (Crowther, 1999, Crowther et al., 2001)

The five phases of the *ideas* process

initiating
discovering
envisioning
actioning
sustaining

Awareness

initiating: How will we manage the process?
Who will facilitate the process?
Who will record our history of the journey?

discovering: What are we doing that is most successful?
What is not working as well as we would like it to?

envisioning: What do we hope our school will look like in the future?
What is our conceptualisation of schoolwide pedagogy?

actioning: How will we create a tripartite action plan?
How will we work towards the alignment of key school elements and processes?

Sustaining: What progress have we made towards schoolwide pedagogy?
What school practices are succeeding and how can we expand them?

Appendix 3: White Rock SHS Vision Statement.

A school community for the 21st Century: *Together we Achieve*:
- life-long learners
- an enriched community
- flexible pathways to the future

This vision statement was supported by the following series of concepts and questions designed to guide practice:

SELF-AWARENESS:	What does this experience tell me about myself?
CRITICAL REFLECTION:	Why am I doing this?
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:	How has this contributed to my development?
COMMUNICATION:	How could I demonstrate what I know?
COOPERATION:	How does this experience enable us to learn from each other?
APPLICATION:	How can this be applied now or later?
ENRICHING COMMUNITY:	How does this enrich our school community?
FUTURE DIRECTION:	What will this be like in the future?

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