



Education  
Services  
Australia

## Summer 2006 Innovation in education

### PowerToTheProfession

**What must happen for a good educational idea to become embedded as a high quality educational practice within a school? Frank Crowther and Dorothy Andrews explore one approach that is gaining a lot of deserved attention.**

This compelling question has befuddled authoritative theorists and dedicated practitioners alike for generations. Indeed, just a decade ago, renowned American researchers Hallinger and Heck surveyed the literature on successful school innovation from the perspective of educational leadership theory and concluded that the answer could be best explained through a 'black box' metaphor—it is located somewhere in the confines of a box of solutions to the great mysteries of the world, but it is far too dark inside that box for observers to discern clear images. The answer, Hallinger and Heck concluded, remains a mystery.

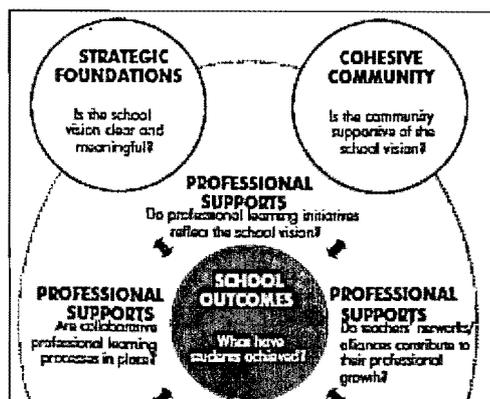
The decade since Hallinger and Heck made their pronouncement has been a particularly creative period in educational thinking and research in the Western world. 'The Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievements in Schools (IDEAS) Project' is but one of a number of exciting approaches to educational innovation that are currently captivating global attention. IDEAS resulted from the creation in 1997 of an alliance of the University of Southern Queensland's Leadership Research Institute and the Queensland Department of Education. It was inspired primarily by the findings of University of Wisconsin researchers Newmann and Wehlage and Associates, particularly the power of their concepts of 'authentic pedagogy' and 'collective professional responsibility' to offset the effects of socio-economic disadvantage.

IDEAS incorporates four constructs that extend the Wisconsin research, and international educational theory, into school-based innovation processes. Let us outline each of these four constructs briefly.

#### 1. The concept of organisational 'alignment'

In 1946 Peter Drucker introduced the concept of 'harmony' to describe an effective organisation. Such an organisation, he reflected, is like a tune: 'it is not constituted by individual sounds but by the relations between them'.

The 'Research-based Framework for Enhancing School Outcomes' (RBF) that is depicted in Figure 1 provides teachers and administrators with a way of thinking about their school as an organisation that is 'in tune' or 'in alignment' (or 'not in alignment', as the case may be).



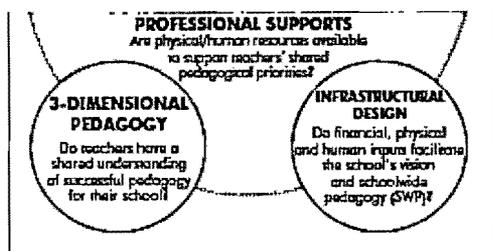


Figure 1: Research-based Framework (abbreviated)

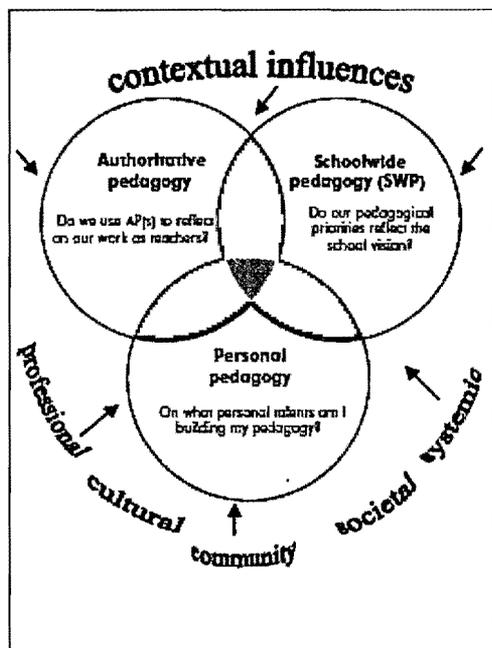


Figure 2: 3-dimensional pedagogy—an image of teachers' work in the 21st century

Specifically, when the five contributory elements of the RBF are all clearly in evidence in a school's operations, and philosophically 'in alignment', resultant school outcomes have been found to be high.

The conceptual picture of an idealised school that is contained in the RBF provides the basis for new tools for teachers and principals as they seek to diagnose their school's strengths, limitations and overall levels of alignment, and to establish long-term goals and strategies for serious innovation.

## 2. The construct of three-dimensional pedagogy

The component of the RBF (Figure 1) that is usually asserted by IDEAS Project participants to be the most challenging, most innovative and most professionally significant is that of 3-dimensional pedagogy (3-DP).

This concept recognises different perspectives on pedagogy which, when taken together, provide what we regard as a plausible image of the 21st century teacher's core work.

The concept of 3-DP locates the work of teachers, individually and collectively, at the centre of a school's operations and emphasises the importance of sustained pedagogical quality over any other aspect of school practice, including curriculums, parent roles, principal's leadership or systemic efficiencies. In this sense it represents a radical departure from most approaches to innovation. In our view it also represents a serious response from within the educational community to Peter Drucker's challenging projection that teachers, as knowledge workers, will become a 'leading class' in postindustrial society.

## 3. The construct of parallel leadership

'Parallelism' in the IDEAS Project has three distinct characteristics: mutualism, sense of shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression.

The first characteristic, mutualism, manifests in the form of mutual trust and respect between administrator-leaders and teacher leaders. The second characteristic, a sense of shared purpose, manifests in the joint development by principals

teacher-leaders. The second characteristic, a sense of shared purpose, manifests in the joint development by principals and teacher-leaders of a school's vision, values and pedagogical framework. The third characteristic relates to the allowance of a significant degree of individual expression (and action) by respective leaders.

Parallel leadership makes it more possible for schools to sustain innovative processes than has been possible through traditional leadership paradigms that depend inordinately on individual leaders, particularly principals.

### The five phases of the ideas process

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—namely an administrator strategic plan, a teacher pedagogical plan and a School Council policy 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?

Chart 1: The IDEAS process

### 4. The IDEAS process of schoolwide professional learning

The IDEAS process is an organisational learning process that is made up of five distinct phases that are linked in a conceptual sequence, as illustrated in Chart 1.

In all five phases of the IDEAS Project the centrality of teachers to processes of successful school reform is asserted. The process usually requires identifying one or more school-based facilitators and establishing an IDEAS school management team to manage the process with the assistance of an external (university) support team.

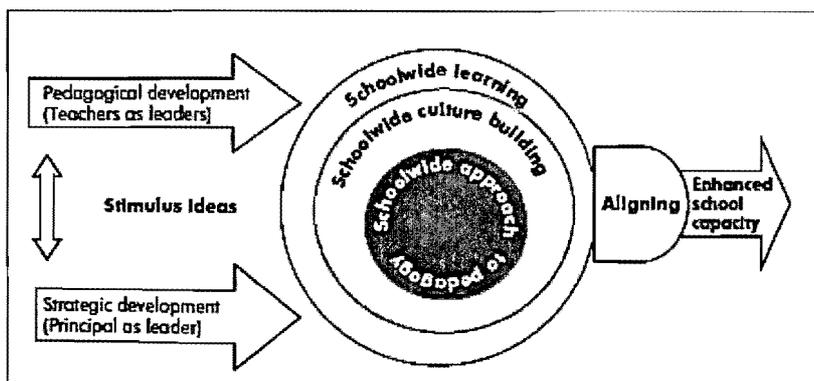
Language is very important in the IDEAS Project, with metaphor, symbolism and analogy emphasised in the school's conceptualisations of a vision. See example of school generated metaphor on page 10.

The final IDEAS phase is 'sustaining'. It involves continuous refinement by teachers of the concept of 3-DP, systematic evaluation of the school's level of organisational alignment and the building of enhanced school identity.

### The IDEAS Project and successful innovation—an explanation

The reader may well ask how the IDEAS Project addresses the issue raised by Hallinger and Heck a decade ago.

The answer, we believe, resides in the explanatory model for successful school innovation that is contained in Figure 3. This model is drawn from a detailed analysis of case studies of successful Australian schools by Crowther et al. in 2002. It has been validated in a wide range of educational settings and its application in IDEAS Project schools has been evaluated under the auspices of the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training. A formal report on that evaluation by Chesterton and Duignan emphasised the overall success of the IDEAS Project in terms of very powerful impacts on teacher professionalism, school community relations and student wellbeing.



---

**Figure 3 Processes that enable school improvement**

The four IDEAS Project constructs that we have outlined in this article place a value on teachers' professionalism that has been missing from most approaches to innovation. As you reflect on them, and the generic explanatory framework that is contained in Figure 3, we hope that you will be inspired by the power of our profession to shape its own world. Successful innovation, we maintain, is no longer a black box mystery.

To find out more about the IDEAS project visit <http://ideas.usq.edu.au>

**References**

- Andrews, D & Crowther, F (2003). '3-Dimensional Pedagogy—The image of 21st century teacher professionalism', in F. Crowther (Ed.), *Australian College Year Book 2003: Teachers as leaders in a knowledge society*, Australian College of Educators, Deakin West, ACT, pp. 95–111.
- Chesterton, P & Duignan, P (2004). *Evaluation of the National Trial of the IDEAS Project*, Report to Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training.
- Crowther, F, Kaagan, S, Ferguson, M & Hann, L (2002). *Developing Teacher Leaders: How teacher leadership enhances school success*, Corwin Press, California.
- Drucker, P (1994). 'The Age of Social Transformation', *The Atlantic Monthly* (November), pp. 1–19.
- Hallinger, P & Heck, R (1996). 'Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980–1995', *Education Administration Quarterly*, 32(1), pp. 5–45.
- Newmann, F & Wehlage, G (1995). *Successful School Restructuring: A report to the public and educators*, Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Frank Crowther is strategic director, IDEAS Project, and recently retired dean of Education and pro vice-chancellor, University of Southern Queensland.



Dorothy Andrews is director of the Leadership Research Institute and director of the IDEAS Project at the University of Southern Queensland.

The author owns the copyright in this article. For information related to the reuse of this work in any form please contact the publisher [denise.quinn@curriculum.edu.au](mailto:denise.quinn@curriculum.edu.au)

[top](#)