

BOOK CHAPTER

When research, policy and practice disconnect:

An educational leadership policy example

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Introduction

The increasing rate of educational reform over the last thirty years has made defining the aims and purposes of education, and therefore the best way to conceptualise educational leadership, management and administration of schools, more challenging (Cranston & Ehrich, 2006). As well, the context for education has become a large scale global setting, placing complex and competitive performance pressures on governments, systems, schools and principals (Bredeson, 2013) within this context. Globalised measurements have created comparisons about educational effectiveness in a new, much broader scale than previously existed. This environment has led to a shift in the focus of educational policy as governments put in place strategies to improve student achievement based on these competitive comparisons in an international arena. Across countries politicians are under pressure to come up with answers to the universal aspirations to improve quality in education (Harris & Muijs, 2007) and many nations' governments are developing policy requiring schools to bring about significant, systematic, and sustained reform in order to improve student outcomes. The growth in international comparisons of educational results has seen this shift in policy-making reflect schooling as part of a market commodity, with the development of government policy based on the assumption that competition and information are the primary drivers of educational and economic improvement (Sahlberg, 2012) rather than research and evaluation.

The introduction of international comparative testing of students is symptomatic of this globally competitive trend and has become a major force in influencing the development

of education policy across the globe. One of the most significant examples of this is *The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013), which began international testing in 2000. The testing occurs through a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of education systems worldwide and does so based on student achievement, established through testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students (OECD, 2013, para. 1). This testing scheme is now used in over 70 different countries, where it creates a recognised impetus driving educational policy. Australia is one of the countries involved in PISA testing and the competitive nature of looking for strategies to improve student achievement is clearly reflected in the current development and articulation of education policy at both national and state government levels. Publishing the results of national literacy and numeracy testing, enabling the assessment of a school's 'effectiveness' based on their students' collective test results, is just one example of how policy has come to reflect this shifted perspective both nationally and at the state level.

Within this context, a focus on educational leadership has become a significant aspect of policy driven by education globalisation. This chapter aims to present a snapshot of how this has manifested in one Australian state's policy development, as quick changes in policy language and discourse rather than through considered and evaluative processes based on research. The review covers Queensland government education policy documents published between 2006 and 2013 that specifically describe expectations of school leaders. The information presented forms a small part of a broader literature review currently contributing to an ongoing unpublished case study identifying Queensland secondary principal leadership practices. Therefore, while the review presented in this chapter is not a fully completed case study, it does map the changes in educational leadership policy discourse and policy language as well as providing an avenue to consider the impact of political expediencies on the use (or non-use) of research in developing policy.

The review begins by providing background about how the globally competitive arena has brought about renewed interest in the concept of Instructional Leadership (IL) as a way to develop improved student achievement through the actions of school leaders. Next, a table is used to map the policy iterations of expectations of IL across the selected continuum of Queensland policies. The table shows the changes and alignments of various policy texts which facilitates discussion about the reasons behind the shifts and transitions that characterise the language found in the policy discourse. Examples of the implementation associated with those policies is also considered, presenting evidence that the process used for implementation illustrate the lack of consistency between policy and practice, due to a disconnect between the intended policy, the research literature and educational leader's actions. The chapter ends by exploring and analysing the reasons behind this disconnect.

Background: The re-emergence of Instructional Leadership (IL)

Over the last fifteen years in Australia, both federal and state governments have responded to growing international educational competitiveness by rapidly translating expectations for sustained improvement into educational policy (Caldwell & Lewis, 2005). The primacy of the principal's role in implementing mandated improvement agendas is acknowledged and chronicled in educational leadership research such as the 2010 *McKinsey and Company report* (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010). In this report school principals, policymakers and system leaders were interviewed across eight countries, including Australia, aimed at identifying the emerging role of the principal within this global context. The outcome confirmed the expectation on all levels that the principal role was crucial in implementing systemic reform whose purpose was to facilitate international competitiveness in the education arena. However, across those levels it was also found that there was not a common basis or understanding backed up by research about what practices facilitated improvement. This lack of conceptual understanding for the development and implementation of educational leadership policy across the levels of

organisation has been found to undermine the reform processes (Hargreaves, 2003). As well, when the impetus of the reform is not supported by research-based strategies it can create a gap between policy intent and practice.

Recently, policy aimed at improving student achievement in the international marketplace has embraced a global re-emergence in emphasising Instructional Leadership (IL) (Stewart, 2006). The origin of IL can be traced to the US in the 1970s amidst public demand for school systems to raise standards and improve students' academic performance (Zigarelli, 1996). This demand for improvement created a search for a school model that would improve student achievement, eventually evolving into the effective schooling movement (Harris, Jamieson & Russ, 1996). Out of this focus on making schools more effective also emerged a search for the definitive characteristics of the effective leader, eventually giving rise to the concept of the Instructional Leader (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982). Even though there was little research confirming a connection between IL and improvement, the concept became an integral part of the identified characteristics contributing to the 'school effect' (Harris, et al., 1996, p. 8) in making a difference to student achievement. By the early 1990s IL became a focus in educational leadership research, and while there was still little empirical data linking IL and student improvement (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008), it became a significant factor in educational policy in the US and the UK (Webb, 2005). By the 2000s, as broader, more encompassing trends in educational leadership emerged, IL was seen as only part of a leadership role (Hallinger, 2005).

Although the reasons for the more recent re-emergence of IL are debated in educational literature, it appears to be based once again on a belief that instructional leaders are able to impact student achievement (Anderson, Leithwood, Louis, and Wahlstrom, 2010). This belief is seen by some, particularly policy developers, as having the capacity to make systems more globally competitive (Angel, Reitzig & West, 2008) in the current educational international arena. The resurgence in a focus on IL began to appear in

government policy simultaneously in Australia and internationally (Horng & Loeb, 2010; Dinham, 2011) and is reflected in Australian educational reforms and policies beginning in the mid 2000s (Dinham, 2011; Drysdale & Gurr, 2012) at both a national and state level. This is despite the fact that ongoing research (Horng & Loeb, 2010) confirms that the lack of understanding about the nature and construct of IL makes it difficult to judge the extent to which links between IL and student achievement exist. In terms of IL in educational policy, while the research demonstrating the link between IL and improved student achievement is debated (Robinson et. al, 2008; Robinson, 2010; Townsend, Acker-Hocevar, Ballenger, Ballenger & William, 2013), the inference that instructional leaders can make a difference to student results has appealed to government policy makers (Cardno, 2010). At the Australian state level, in Queensland since 2006, these student achievement-based expectations of principal leadership have been described through a string of systemic policies and procedures beginning with the development of a leadership framework, the *Principal Capabilities and Leadership Framework* (DETA, 2007b; DETA, 2010).

A snapshot review of Queensland government policy focused on IL

Queensland government policies and reports taken from policy documents between 2006 and 2013 contributing to creating a focus on the leadership expectations for principals include:

- *Leadership Matters – leadership capabilities for Education Queensland principals* (Cranston & Ehrich, 2006);
- *Leadership Matters* (DETA, 2007a);
- *The Principal's Capability and Leadership Framework* (DETA, 2007b);
- *The Masters Report* (2009);
- *The Principal's Capability and Leadership Framework* (DETA, 2010);
- *United in our pursuit of excellence – Agenda for improvement 2011-2015* (DETA, 2011a);

- The *Principal Supervision and Capability Framework 2011 – 2012* (DETA, 2011b);
- The *School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2012 -2015* (DETA, 2012);
- The *Education Queensland system review: Final report* (Fullan & Levin, 2012);
- The *Commission of Audit (CoA)* (Queensland Government, 2013); and
- *Great Teachers Great Results* (DETE, 2013).

These documents are reviewed in **Table 1: Instructional Leadership expectations: Queensland Government Reports and Policy Documents**¹. The table lists each policy and then provides a description of the part of the document related to describing leadership expectations and, in particular, any description related to being or becoming Instructional Leaders. Other information in the table includes how the documents relate to each other and specific terms used when describing the concept of IL especially within the context of the global emphasis on comparing student achievement.

To begin, the development of the technical paper, *Leadership Matters – leadership capabilities for Education Queensland principals* (Cranston & Ehrich, 2006) marked the start of a period in Queensland educational leadership policy focused on a specific framework. In the technical paper, the theory of educational leadership, as shown in the literature review, encompasses a very broad range of practices, including the concept of Instructional Leadership. As a precursor to policy development, this paper demonstrates the strength of using a considered approach based on research. Based on the capabilities notions of Duignan (2004) the suggested framework was to be built around five inter-related capabilities: Personal, Relational, Educational, Intellectual and Organisational (p.1). The recommendations of the technical paper led to an overview policy *Leadership Matters*

¹ It should be noted that at the time the documents were used for this study they were available from the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) website.

(DETA, 2007a) and the development of the first *Principal Capabilities and Leadership Framework* (DETA) in 2007b.

Table 1: Instructional Leadership expectations: Queensland Government Reports and Policy Documents

Row	Date	Document	Reference to Instructional Leadership	Document Reference: Relevant Leadership Characteristics	Alignment with listed documents
1.	2006	Leadership Matters – leadership capabilities for Education Queensland principals	Instructional leadership found in the literature review of other frameworks and book chapters.	Development of a diagrammatic representation of leadership with the components of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Leadership • Intellectual Leadership • Organisational Leadership • Personal Leadership • Relational Leadership 	The basis for developing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2007 Leadership Matters and • 2007 Principal Capabilities and Leadership Framework
2.	2007	Leadership Matters	No mention of instructional leadership	Leadership developed through five categories, each with capabilities and elements. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Leadership • Intellectual Leadership • Organisational Leadership • Personal Leadership • Relational Leadership 	No match for instructional leadership but the basis for developing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2010 <i>Principal Capabilities and Leadership Framework</i> - aligns in terms of categories of leadership. • 2011 <i>Principal Supervision and Capabilities Framework</i> - aligns in categories but not the detail within categories.
3.	2007	Principal Capabilities and Leadership Framework	No mention of instructional leadership	Five sub-categories, each with capabilities and elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Leadership • Intellectual Leadership • Organisational Leadership • Personal Leadership • Relational Leadership 	Aligns to Leadership Matters 2006 Technical Paper and Leadership Matters 2007 document. Is the basis for the 2010 version.
4.	2009	A Shared Challenge -Improving Literacy, Numeracy and Science Learning in Queensland Primary Schools (The Masters Report)	Instructional leadership as part of effective schools, where, as the driver of improvement in student achievement principals develop deep knowledge about IL.	Essential component in high-performing systems Uses the OECD focus for principals taking an 'active role in instructional leadership': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring and evaluating teacher performance, conducting and arranging • mentoring and coaching, • planning teacher professional development and • orchestrating teamwork and cooperative instruction <p>This leads to Recommendation 5 from the report: That the Queensland Government initiates an expert review of international best practice in school leadership development with a view to introducing a new structure and program of advanced professional learning for primary school leaders focused on effective strategies for driving improved school performances in literacy, numeracy and science.</p>	Leads to an official response (see the next row). Appears to instigate changes to the <i>Principal Capabilities and Leadership Framework</i> (2010) and support leading to the development of <i>United in our Pursuit of excellence</i> (2011a)
5.	2009	Queensland Government response to the Masters Report	No mention of instructional leadership	The Government affirms that educational leadership offered by principals and other school leaders is a critical factor in the performance of schools, the quality of teaching, and the educational experiences of students.	Relates specifically to Masters and indirectly to row 7, <i>United in our Pursuit of excellence</i> (2011a).
6.	2010	Principal Capabilities and Leadership	Inserted statement: Instructional leaders create and lead a high performance, sustainable learning culture.	Five sub-categories, each with capabilities and elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Leadership • Intellectual Leadership • Organisational Leadership 	Is the same as the 2007 version except for the inserted statement..

		Framework		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Leadership • Relational Leadership 	
7.	2011	United in our pursuit of excellence – Agenda for improvement 2011-2015	Strong leadership and Instructional leadership, with an unrelenting focus on improvement	All principals will be instructional leaders by focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – core learning priorities – quality curriculum – student achievement and improvement – pedagogical practice – teacher feedback – quality assessment 	Documents created to align with this include Principal Supervision and Capabilities Framework 2011 -2012 and the School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2012 -2015.
8.	2011 - 2012	Principal Supervision and Capabilities Framework	Instructional leaders create and lead a high performance, sustainable learning culture.	Five sub-categories, each with capabilities and elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Leadership • Intellectual Leadership • Organisational Leadership • Personal Leadership • Relational Leadership 	Initiated as a response to United in our pursuit of excellence 2011 - 2015 and the School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2012 -2015
9.	2011 - 2012	School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2012 - 2015	Instructional leadership, with an unrelenting focus on improvement	All principals will be instructional leaders by focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core learning priorities • quality curriculum • student achievement and improvement • pedagogical practice • teacher feedback • – quality assessment 	Initiated as a response to United in our pursuit of excellence 2011 - 2015 and the Principal Supervision and Capabilities Framework 2011 -2012
10.	2012	Education Queensland system review: Final report	Provides two aspects of a of a research evaluation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviews the leadership focus by DETA and presents recommendations (Fullan & Levin). 2. Incorporates the government response to recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review: The recommendations found that the instructional role of the principal is key and that currently the role is 'a vague notion that requires more definitional and developmental work' (p.6). • Government Response: Promises to create more consistent messages and to use instruction as the driver (p.9) 	Reviews The Principal Supervision and Capabilities Framework 2011 - 2012, The School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2012 - 2015 and United in our pursuit of excellence – Agenda for improvement 2011-2015.
11.	2013	Commission of Audit (CoA) report	No direct mention of IL - reference to greater priority needing to be given to effective leadership focused on improving student performance as seen in other systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Australia, the Productivity Commission's <i>Schools Workforce</i> research report identified innovation at the school level, supported by stronger school leadership • Conditions for success include appropriate leadership by principals, accountability for student outcomes, and support from central agencies on training, teacher standards and curriculum. • One of the most significant impacts of school leadership is its influence on teachers' professional development and performance appraisal 	Whole of government review which initiates a DETE response (in Row 12 of this table)
12.	2013	DETE Response to the CoA report: Great Teachers = Great Results	No mention of instructional leadership	Responds to the CoA in terms of leadership in four areas, none of which relate to instructional leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are limitations on recognising and rewarding high performing staff • Unlike leadership positions in many other industries, principals don't receive performance bonuses • There is no incentive for school leaders to focus on continuous improvement • There is little support for teachers and school leaders to undertake further study 	No linkages in discourse to any other documents other than to confirm expectations that principals still use the Principal Capability and Leadership Framework.

In keeping with the recommendations of the technical paper, the original framework did not contain specific reference to IL but built on the research base to incorporate aspects attributed to instructional leaders. This framework was used unchanged for 2007, 2008 and 2009 as the capacity building tool for Queensland state educational leaders, particularly principals, in schools. The wording used in these initial documents is shown in **Table 1** in rows one through three and provides an example of significant and thoughtful policy developed based on comprehensive research. In the remaining rows of **Table 1**, the subsequent strategic policies describing educational leadership up to 2013 are also traced, showing the leadership policy development pathway with an increasing use of language based on IL. Parallel to the development of the framework in 2007, the year also saw the introduction of national literacy and numeracy testing in Australia. This can be seen as a response to the globalised focus on improving student achievement (Lingard & Sellar, 2013; Lingard and Rizvi, 2010). For the first time all the Australian states were ranked by overall student achievement results on a common set of standardised tests. Newspaper articles chronicling the Queensland results show that the state was rated sixth out of seven states and territories for the first three years students sat the tests (2007, 2008 and 2009) (Chillcott, 2009). It is within this context that the Queensland government commissioned *A Shared Challenge Improving Literacy, Numeracy and Science Learning in Queensland Primary Schools* (Masters, 2009), more commonly known as the *Masters Report*. The report was commissioned in order to 'analyse the reasons behind Queensland's poor results in the new national literacy and numeracy testing, particularly in state primary schools' (p. v).

This evaluative commissioned research demonstrated what Calzoni, (p.? in this book) discusses as the advantages of using researchers to help establish policy, where, in some cases, researchers as evaluators they are able to challenge the status quo. While the *Masters Report* (2009) was specifically commissioned to investigate and make recommendations for numeracy, literacy and Science education in Queensland primary schools, the report expanded on its terms of reference by also referring to the need for changes in school leadership. Although it was meant to be evaluative rather than

developmental, it was in this report that IL first appears in the language used to describe the role of school leaders and also suggested a way to impact student achievement. The report stated that ‘most high-performing systems recognise the importance of encouraging principals to take on instructional leadership roles’ (p.9) as is shown in row 4 of **Table 1**. This was based on the findings of a 2008 OECD study (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008) of school leadership in 22 education systems, which found that ‘instructional leadership is a key to improved learning outcomes’ (p. 103).

While the *Masters Report* recommended changes in leadership based on relevant research, the recommended approach the report describes to achieve this was not acknowledged in the government response. The Queensland government response did not overtly recognise the inclusion of IL as a future focus for school leaders. A description of their response to the information on IL is shown in row 5 of **Table 1**. Unlike the development of the leadership framework after the 2006 technical paper, changes were made without further consultation with researchers. Instead, a shift in leadership discourse is introduced through a minimal change in language that is added to the existing principal leadership framework. This can be seen in the 2010 version of the *Principal's Capabilities and Leadership Framework*. In this new version of the framework, one change is made as an addition to what was already included. A single statement is inserted above the existing framework and the five areas for principal development (shown in row 6 of **Table 1**). No changes are made to the actual framework structure or descriptors of the leadership actions, nor is any explanation given for what the changes might mean for leadership practices. The sentence stated that ‘Instructional leaders create and lead a high performance, sustainable learning culture’ (DETA, 2010, p. 3). By simply adding one sentence, the approach did not incorporate the suggested structures in the *Masters Report* or those related to IL practices found in broader educational research. This would suggest that although the new sentence appears to be a response to the *Masters Report* it represents a disconnect between the

research underpinning the suggestion for change and the development of consistency in the policy language.

Although the government response did not acknowledge the changes suggested by Masters, there are changes in language used in a number of the strategic policies that were developed directly after the report's release that do appear to link to the report. Phrases such as 'strong leadership' and 'instructional leadership', both used in the *Masters Report*, begin to appear in policy documents. For example, strong leadership is the focus of educational leadership in the *United in our pursuit of excellence – Agenda for improvement 2011-2015 document* (DETA, 2011a, p.1). However, how these changes link to still existing policies about leadership is unclear. For example, the strong leadership mentioned in the Agenda document is not linked through any dialogue that aligns it to the five areas for principal leadership which still remain in the 2010 version of the leadership framework or the new inserted IL sentence. Instead, another new set of six new components as a focus for leaders appear. These are: core learning priorities, quality curriculum, student achievement and improvement, pedagogical practice, teacher feedback and quality assessment (DETA, 2011a, p. 2). The sources used to develop this new language are not cited, do not align to the leadership framework or the new inserted sentence, nor the *Masters Report*.

As further policy focused on leadership are developed from this time, mentioning the concept of IL begins to appear in more documents. For example, the discourse about leadership in the *School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2012 -2015* (DETA, 2012), (found in row 9 of **Table 1**) describes four key strategies that were identified as crucial for effective schooling. The third of these key strategies is described as, 'Instructional Leadership, with an unrelenting focus on improvement' (p. 1). While this statement provided a clear message to Queensland principals that they had responsibility for being instructional leaders in a climate of competitive student achievement results, it does not mention or

incorporate the new strong leadership description within the *Agenda for improvement* nor does it visibly link to the existing leadership framework.

The language in the policy discourse, even if inconsistent in terms of existing documents, created a message for principals that they needed to be developing their IL practices. How this was to be done was unclear. For example, in the *School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2012 -2015* (2012) is aimed at working in tandem with the *Principal's Capabilities and Leadership Framework* (DETE, 2010), none of the documents included the same descriptor of IL or described how principals were to enact this new focus. The five areas of actions from the original leadership framework remained, but how these related to the new IL focus was not explained. Despite a significant body of educational leadership research being accessible, no connection with research was used to further develop the framework to clearly embrace and reflect the new IL perspective. It effectively meant that principals were to have new outcomes by continuing to implement the same practices that continued to form the leadership framework. This confirms the perspective concerning policy development that when the links between research, policy and implementation are unclear the result is 'neither linear, nor guaranteed' (Ahmed, 2005, p.765).

In the Queensland context, this myriad of policies, with differing terms, created a broad and complex set of information that was unclear in terms of the actions to be taken by leaders. To make the situation even more complex, the process created to support the IL implementation by school leaders, was developed not through consistent use of research but through sometimes conflicting strategies used by members of the systemic leadership hierarchy.

Disconnect through the implementation of policy

The policy language ambiguity created around the concept and practices of IL expected to be implemented was reflected and increased through the range of approaches inculcated in state education regions after the release of the *School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework* (2012). The lack of clarity regarding IL practices in the succession of Queensland policies was then amplified by the processes developed regionally to support principals in the implementation process. It was decided that regional leaders would support principals to implement their IL focus. This was to be done through the development of regional and/or school based implementation of pedagogical frameworks; that is, a framework for leaders to use as the tool that would support principals to build instructional capacity at their schools. However, the diversity of the initiatives and processes enacted across state regions created situations showing vastly different understandings about IL. For example, in one region principals were inducted into Marzano's *Art and Science of Teaching* (2007). This process focused on leaders observing teachers in classrooms and working to create a site-specific definition for learning. In contrast, another region offered opportunities to access a variety of different programs including one developed through the work of Fullan (2010) regarding the characteristics of effective principals in high achieving schools, based on a study from across Canada and the US. Rather than a bottom-up instructional model building from students and teachers as in Marzano's (2007) process, this model used evidential data to frame a top-down process collaboratively led by principals. A range of other models were used across the state regions.

The confusing policy discourse on IL meant linking any of these pedagogic models to the policy leadership expectations was a confusing key issue for principals and for the development of a consistent way to instigate a state-wide approach to improving student achievement. With no common research-based understanding for the definition of IL being used or for building IL capacity to implement change, principals were left to decipher the situation themselves. This meant that across the state there was no clear interpretation for what IL meant or looked like. Evidence from the leadership literature (Hallinger, 2005)

reveals that mixed messages for IL can be problematic in creating expectations for principals. Accessing and developing a common approach guided by significant research, as was done in the initial 2006 development of the leadership framework, could have supported a more cohesive outcome.

In a 2012 required evaluative review of the Queensland government's educational system focus, including educational leadership, the mixed messages created through this policy discourse and the implementation disconnection was recognised. The *Education Queensland system review: Final report* (Fullan & Levin, 2012), as shown in *Table 1*, indicated that there needed to be a reassessment of the processes and policies aimed at school leaders in order to build:

1. Common focus on goals and strategies;
2. Consistency of delivery across the seven regions; and
3. Instruction as the driver (p. 5).

As well, this evaluation recommended that there was a need to be globally competitive and to do so, there needed to be a 'common and consistent stance evident in relation to the reform strategy' (p. 5). The review also noted that the instructional role of the principal is key and while this role was acknowledged, it is 'currently a vague notion that requires more definitional and developmental work' (p.6). It is also noted that this has been a problematic aspect to instructional leadership shown in the research and implies that this should have been known. The government response, while stating that the recommendations are accepted and acknowledges the international research, does not put forward a convincing set of processes aimed at creating consistency. Instead, the existing range of models were to be added to with a 'suite of multi-layered strategies' (p. 10). Most of these strategies were never realised as in 2012, as a change in government in Queensland precipitated another shift in policy, policy language and discourse regarding

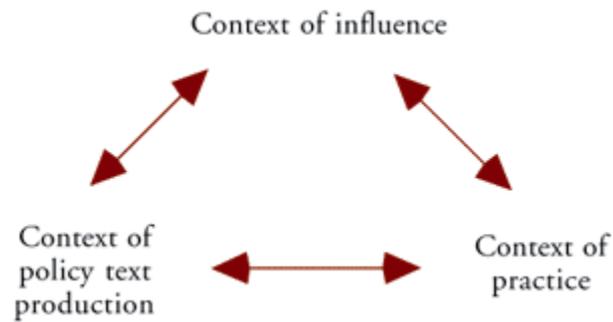
leadership. This was to be implemented through policies that did not replace or clarify existing ones, but were created as additional to existing policy documents.

Added to this in 2013, as seen in Table 1, were both a *Commission of Audit (CoA)* (2013) report, which included consideration of educational leadership, and a Queensland government (2013) response to the CoA recommendations. The recommendations from the CoA mirrored those of the Fulton and Levin earlier evaluation. Once again the government response, rather than simplifying and responding to the most recent research to create a common language and process around IL, added more policies to augment the existing suite of policies. This meant that the ongoing issue relating to clarity and consistency became even more complex. As stated on the DETE website (July, 2013, para. 4), 'while these new policies do not replace the previous strategic focus of either the *Principal's Capabilities and Leadership Framework* (2010) or the *United in our Pursuit of excellence* (2011a) policy, they are meant to develop a stronger accountability context'. How this was to occur was not explicit.

Policy disconnect

Research into the processes used for developing government policy shows that a number of problematic situations can be responsible for a lack of convergence between policy and current research (Levin, 2010). The problematic use of research to shape policy, as shown in the review of Queensland educational leadership policy, can be analysed through the use of what Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992) refer to as the policy cycle. **Figure 1:** *The Bowe, Ball and Gold Policy Cycle* (1992, p.20) depicts their conceptual organisation of this cycle. The cycle describes the interaction between the development of policy and implementation strategies through the three contexts, including the context of influence on policy development, the context in which the policy language, text and discourse is developed and the context in which the policy is practiced or implemented.

Figure1: The Bowe, Ball and Gold Policy Cycle (1992, p.20)



Within the cycle Bowe, et al. suggest that when influences are urgent it creates the development of more and more policy to ensure the ongoing discourse. This is where the importance of research, as an influencing factor, and the lack of understanding for how research can support policy decision-making can impact the connection between the three areas of influence. This can lead to a disconnect between any of the three areas. For example, external factors, such as the growing international competitive situations, have been found to make increasingly substantial impacts on research and policy processes, especially in education (Levin, 2010). This can be seen in the current global trend where education is seen as a competitive commodity based on student testing results.

Another example is when the language of policy is compared to the hoped for enacted practices and implementation strategies. Analysis shows (Adie, 2008) that development of policy specific rhetoric, such as on the topic of educational leadership, can become a continuous discourse that responds to changing circumstances locally and globally. It also shows that continuing to develop the expected discourse as a response to these influential circumstances requires constant iteration and reiteration through a range of related policies. Without consolidation in policy, including identifying relevant research to support decisions, this constant and rapid change within the policy cycle, is where the disconnect between research, policy and practice can occur.

In the case of the policy development reviewed, two issues clearly emerge:

1. The pressure for government policy to reflect the increasing importance, particularly in education, for being internationally competitive leading to inconsistent use of research to support change; and
2. Problematic tensions created through inconsistencies in policy language contributing to development of inconsistent implementation strategies and practices.

The pressure to change: Increasingly, as found by Court and Young (2003), through the rush to develop policy addressing the globally competitive market, disconnection emerges between what is expected through policy and what has been found and established through research. Responding to the political pressure for change can create situations where policy is decided on the run and rather than a considered development and approach, new policy is added to old, creating an ever growing snowball of expanded policy that can create confusion. Without adequate understanding for building explicit policies, aligned to research and using consistent language, policy makers may not know how to identify suitable concepts and strategies for implementation in their context (Court & Young, 2003, p. 440). A body of international literature (Smith 2005; Sahlberg 2007) illustrates how different governments around the world have translated the global imperatives of competition and market-driven reform into their education policies. This has resulted in extensive resources being used to develop and implement policy that aims to reflect and enact strategies responding to this international environment. Use of resources in this way would indicate that governments expect their policies will act as change agents. However, as Adie, 2008 found, 'producing policy documents does not necessarily result in changes to education practices in schools' (p. 252).

As seen in the Queensland context, adding to existing policies, without consolidation and the use of research to create a consistent message led to a broad policy smorgasbord and eventually, a fractured implementation process. Elmore (1980) suggested that policy makers needed guidance in interpreting the literature and in determining the logic that ties

policy and implementation strategies together. This lack of guidance can be seen in the new language and additional documents that were added to the suite of Queensland policies, such as the *Principal Supervision and Capability Development* (DETE, 2011b), where the existing leadership focus was added to and altered, in this case moving from a developmental focus to a performance one. This shift in focus, to not only create stronger statements about IL expectations but to also build in accountability measures, is one of the issues established by Bowe, et. al as creating a policy cycle disconnect in the context of practice through exterior influences.

This can also lead to what Jenlink and Jenlink identified in their chapter (p.?) as 'ethical drift' (Kleinman, 2006; Sternberg, 2012). This outlines a concept where organisations are seen to 'drift' away from ethical practices in creating policy. Stenberg (2012) saw ethical drift as the gradual ebbing of standards that occurs in organisational decision-making as the result of external pressures. This loss of standards can be seen as disconnection between the development of policy and the way in which the policies are enacted. One reason for this type of 'drifting' is when clear use of research does not support the design of consistent implementation processes and practices to back up policy decision making. This can be seen in the selected Queensland policy context.

Policy discourse: These changes, without utilising consistent research -based decision making processes, also highlight the problematic situations created through what is described in the policy cycle as the context of policy text. Reasons for this can relate to the capacity to understand the concepts by those responsible for translating policy into practice. In making this change to the *Principal's Capabilities and Leadership Framework* (2010), it would seem that this may be the case, as the shift in policy shown through the insertion of one sentence, does not represent a shift in a description of the actual practices. In the Queensland example, the combined set of reworded or additional policies provided a complex and confusing picture of the role of an instructional leader for school principals.

While each policy and report identified the leadership as important in developing an educationally competitive system, they differed in describing these expectations in both terminology and format. The variance in the language and conceptual presentation of information prevented an automatic 'match' from one document to the next or a connection to a clear, common description of specific expectations. This variety of policy iterations created a situation where while there were common expectations that Queensland principals would embrace and practice IL, exactly how principals were to implement the IL practices or build their 'instructional' capacity was not clear.

Conclusions

The comparison of the varying definitions of IL in the succession of Queensland policy documents, papers and regional initiatives supporting principal development, identifies that there was a lack of clarity in both the definition of IL and the processes used for implementation and the development of principal practice. Policy implementation as reflected across a sample of the state's regions demonstrates this same inconsistency. Based on the disparity in processes it is difficult to clearly see a significant, common core message or purpose that underpinned and drove the strategic direction for IL being developed across the Queensland system in time period reviewed.

Across the seven year period a disconnect in the policy cycle is visible between the pervasive research messages about IL and policy implementation. Ethical drift is also apparent in the profusion of strategic policy documents across this continuum. It is clear that the Queensland government educational policy development related to Instructional Leadership was impacted by the rise in the importance of the international and national high stakes literacy and numeracy testing and that, although there were attempts to support making changes through commissioning the *Masters Report* (2009) and the Fullan and Levin review (2012), the translation into policy and implementation were not developed through a consistent and considered response relying research-based decisions. In reflecting on how this example relates to the *Bowe, Ball and Gold Policy Cycle* (1992), the use of research and

researchers as an important influencing factor could have supported the development of a connected process.

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