OUTCOMES FROM BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY IN AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL:
A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the school-wide improvement initiative of building leadership capacity undertaken at an international school in Asia. It reports the perspectives of both administrators and teachers as they look back over their experience of the innovation and reflect its outcomes of the innovation. Given the theoretical perspective of social constructionism, no single, stable, fully knowable external reality is assumed. The study is based upon the qualitative data collected by means of questionnaire, interviews and focus groups at a school where the researcher was a principal.

The relationship between sustainable school improvement and building leadership capacity has been receiving significant attention over the last two decades and cannot be ignored by schools wishing to sustain long-term improvement. Improvement initiatives often fail if they are dependent upon a single person or a few people and it is not uncommon for initiatives to flounder with changes in key personnel. The implications of this may be particularly significant in the context of international schools where the rate of turnover in administrative personnel is high and where investigation into ways of building leadership capacity to sustain school improvement initiatives has not yet been undertaken. The researcher investigated what happened in a school as it intentionally focused on the development of teacher leaders as a distinct strategy for building leadership capacity in order to sustain school improvement.

When applying the findings from this specific case to the international school context in the final chapter, key issues related to innovation in international schools emerged. A two part framework was developed to respond to the key issues and to guide the introduction of innovation in international schools. Part One, ‘Getting Ready,’ considers factors that provide insights into the unique context into which an innovation is to be introduced. Part Two, ‘Getting Going’ considers factors that help ensure that an innovation continues to produce improvement.

In using the framework to reflect upon innovation in the international school context significant issues were identified and recommendations developed to respond to the issues. Issues and recommendations were made in the following areas: school improvement planning; the persistence of a traditional discourse of leadership; monitoring the impact of an initiative; using financial and human resources effectively and respectfully; recruitment, succession, and induction planning; prioritizing relationship building; and positive
relationships with peers serving as a key motivator for teachers to engage in innovation. The findings contribute to the current body of knowledge on innovation in the international school context and indicate the importance of careful consideration before initiating innovation and consistent attention once having done so. They also provide direction for further discussion, exploration and research.
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the content of this thesis has not been previously submitted for any degree and it is not currently being submitted for any other degree. I also certify that to the best of my knowledge any assistance received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged accordingly.

Bernadette P. Carmody

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