Educational Reform and Change in the Asia Pacific Region

Tensions and Dilemmas in Leading Australia's Schools

Lawrie DRYSDALE, David GURR, & Helen GOODE

In this paper we address current and emerging tensions and dilemmas that are impacting on Australian principals and other schools leaders. These include: changing expectations of leaders; changing demands for l leadership preparation and development; a stronger national and local accountability environment; differences in the degree of school autonomy; fostering performance and development cultures within schools; engaging with contemporary learning and building design; developing team-based work environments; responding to the construction of a national curriculum; and dealing with emerging community and societal issues. We adopt the approach of Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford in their 1999 book, 'Leading Schools in Time of Change', and regard the difference between tensions and dilemmas to be the extent to which there is the possibility of choice and influence; dilemmas allow for choice and influence, with this less evident in tensions. Our list is by no means exhaustive, but in working with Australian school leaders, these are aspects of leading schools that continually seem to dominate conversations. Our coverage of each area will of necessity by incomplete, but overall the view is of a complicated, yet exciting time in which to lead schools.