



*Instructional Leadership, A
View from Inside the School*

Questions emerging from
frontline stories



The role of the “academic practitioner”

Ed Wickins

English Headteacher
KGV, Hong Kong Principal 2004 –
EdD Candidate 2009 –

Partnership potential between Theory and Practice.

“Academic Practitioners”

“Research Engaged Schools”

Story A: Instructional Leadership: Last Wednesday

200 applications for the 3 Vice Principal vacancies, long list interview 15 in February and bring out 6 for the shortlist interviews last week. Meet them for drinks on Sunday night; welcome on Monday at 7.45 am and engage them with all school stakeholders (students, SLT, staff, parents, School Council, community, Alumni) until 7.30pm; on Tuesday observe lessons and feedback and then grill them for 45 minutes in formal interview with 5 others on the panel. Make a decision as a panel.



Last Wednesday contd...

Appoint three internal candidates. Come to work "tired".

Result 1 (observable): Extended Leadership Team express their concerns (5 of them had applied and not been appointed) and are worried about "lack of experience"

Result 2 (Shadowland): A good colleague drinks a glass too many and tells her friends (including 5 parents) that the Principal is in real trouble with ESF, only appointed one VP because he went to the same College, and a Learning Director will resign in protest (all untrue ... I think !!!)

An Instructional Leadership framework I use

Structure "Instructional Organisation" Eg Timetables, Management Structures	Culture "School Climate" Eg Conversations, Behaviour
Formal	Informal
Imposed	Developed
Top down	Bottom up
Static (inflexible)	Dynamic (flexible)
Safe (reliable)	Exciting (scary)
Model	Contextual
Systems	Relationships



Influential processes. How you
behave, what you do !



Highly visible with clear “instructional”
goals that are always in sight





Cultural
investment in
context
specific
developments



Story B: Distributed Leadership in action

The culture is improving and understanding of leadership is developing nicely. We need to review the school day and make some much needed changes. I know ... I will write a very clear brief and empower a group of middle leaders to recommend changes and develop a plan of action. They are good people and welcome the challenge.



Distributed Leadership contd...

They work hard and I devote myself to other things (instructional leadership if I remember correctly !). They report back to SLT and have obviously “adapted” the brief and contradicted some of my key suggestions.



Provocation

1. Distributed leadership: A rallying point for “post heroic” leadership alternatives (Gronn 2009) or a recipe for fudge and confusion ?
2. The academic practitioner tells the stories; what generic theoretical frameworks can be used to help school leaders ?
3. Is there any evidence that an exciting culture produces better learning outcomes than a safely organised school?

“... and after all, it’s about relationships in the end”

