



The International Successful School Principalship Project

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Intention

- Provide some signposts to access the ISSPP.
- Highlight some important ideas.
- Describe a model that encapsulates the knowledge gained in the ISSPP – so far.
- Leave you with a resource to engage with the ISSPP.



The International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) is the most comprehensive and coherent international comparative study of the principalship ever undertaken.

Professor Brian Caldwell

Caldwell, B.J. (2014) Forward, in C. Day & D. Gurr (Eds) (2014) *Leading Schools Successfully: Stories from the field* (London: Routledge), pp. xxi-xxii.

21 countries, 26 research groups



www.uv.uio.no/ils/english/research/projects/isspp



Common protocols

Selection

Evidence of student achievement beyond expectations on state or national tests, where this evidence exists.

Principals' exemplary reputations in the community and/or school system. This could be gained through consultation with system personnel or other principals, school inspection reports, and so forth.

Other indicators of success that are more context-specific, such as the overall reputation of the school, awards for exemplary programs, etc.

Multiple Perspective Case studies

Individual interviews with the principal, senior staff and school board members.

Group interviews with teachers, parents and students

Analysis of appropriate documents.

Observation of the work of principals and the functioning of their schools.

Principal and teacher surveys.

ISSPP Publications

Books

- Day, C. & Leithwood, K. (Eds) (2007) *Successful School Leadership in Times of Change* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer-Kluwer).
- Ylimaki, R. & Jacobson, S. (Eds) (2011) *US and cross-national policies, practices and preparation: Implications for successful instructional leadership, organizational learning, and culturally responsive practices* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer-Kluwer).
- Moos, L., Johansson, O., & Day, C. (Eds) (2011) *How School Principals Sustain Success Over Time: International Perspectives* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer-Kluwer).
- Day, C. & Gurr, D. (Eds) (2014) *Leading Schools Successfully: Stories from the field* (London: Routledge)

Special Journal Issues

- *Journal of Educational Administration*, 43(6), 2005
- *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 35(3), 2007.
- *Journal of Educational Administration*, 47(6), 2009
- *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, 24(1), 2009
- *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 10(4) 2011
- *International Journal of Educational Management*, 26(5), 2012
- *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 15 (3), 2012



Other Books

- Møller, J. og Fuglestad, O.L (2006) (red.): *Ledelse i anerkjente skoler*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Moos, L, Krejsler, J. & Kofod, K. (2007) *Mening i ledelse: succesfuld skoleledelse mellem visioner og selvledelse* (Frederikshavn: Dafolo Forlag).
- Notman, R. (Ed) (2011) *Successful educational leadership in New Zealand: Case studies of schools and an early childhood centre* (Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Council for Educational Research Press).

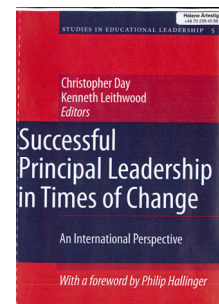
Leithwood, K. & Day, C. (Eds) (2007) *Successful School Leadership in Times of Change* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer).

The first book comprised country reports from the initial group of seven countries.

The view that successful school leadership comprises at least four core dimensions of setting direction, developing people, developing the school and managing the instructional program was supported.

There was also evidence for additional practices such as:

- strategic problem solving
- articulating a set of core values
- building trust and being visible in the school
- building a safe and secure environment
- introducing productive forms of instruction to staff
- coalition building



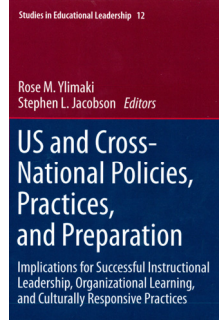


Ylimaki, R. & Jacobson, S. (Eds) (2011) *US and cross-national policies, practices and preparation: Implications for successful instructional leadership, organizational learning, and culturally responsive practices* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer-Kluwer).

The second and third project books saw a move to cross-national analysis, with book two exploring instructional leadership, organizational learning and culturally responsive practices.

Successful school leadership:

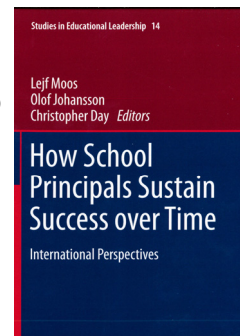
- is context dependent in that global, national and local contexts need to be considered to fully understand the behaviour of principals
- is best thought of as layered and multidimensional, with, for example, instructional leadership influence distributed within a school, and having multiple foci such as academic improvement, satisfying accountability policies, and promoting democratic education
- is socially constructed from the interaction of the life experiences and knowledge of principals with their work
- promotes sustainability of success through the interaction of values, influence skills, and the emotional and intellectual qualities of leaders



Moos, L., Johansson, O., & Day, C. (Eds) (2011) *How School Principals Sustain Success Over Time: International Perspectives* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer-Kluwer).

Book three focussed on the the sustainability of successful leadership and found several factors which seem to be important for sustained success:

- self-renewing communication (negotiation and deliberation) and distribution of leadership
- personal qualities and beliefs such as resilience, commitment to making a difference, and engaging the school and wider community
- balancing discourses (e.g. social justice and high achievement)
- utilising both transformational and instructional leadership practices
- professional learning (whether it be through compulsory or voluntary programs)
- managing accountability expectations





Day, C. & Gurr, D. (Eds) (2014) *Leading Schools Successfully: Stories from the field* (London: Routledge).

The fourth project book contains 15 stories of principal leadership success from 13 countries, with the final chapter providing a synthesis of these stories. The themes:

- High Expectations
- Post-heroic leadership
- Collaboration/collective effort/shared vision/alignment
- Symbolic role
- Integrity, trust and transparency
- People centred
- The Power of 'And' : Transformational AND instructional leadership
- Improving schools in challenging circumstances
- Developing as a leader
- Personal qualities, beliefs and values - Personal acumen; Qualities and Dispositions; Beliefs and values



Some of the big ideas

Gurr, D. (2015) A Model of Successful School Leadership from the International Successful School Principalship Project, *Societies*, 5(1), pp. 136-150.

doi:10.3390/soc5010136

From a special issue on 'How school leadership influences student learning', edited by Leithwood and Sun. Open access journal available at:

www.mdpi.com/journal/societies



High and reasonable expectations for all.

These high expectations are manifest at both personal and collective levels; they are high yet reasonable, and constantly demonstrated and reinforced in the practice of the principals. The expectations are also individualised and very much about helping individuals to achieve their best, rather than focussed on meeting external accountability demands.

Pragmatic/active leadership approach

No single model of leadership satisfactorily captures what successful principals do.

Not transformational or instructional leadership, but transformational and instructional leadership

In essence, these principals develop approaches to leadership which enable them to lead a school community successfully; they are less concerned with the academic debates that rage about the impact of various leadership styles.

Leadership distribution

For these successful school leaders, distributed leadership is almost assumed as they will openly say that the success of their school is due to the leadership of many, and they genuinely value the contribution of teachers, parent and students.

Core leadership practices

Setting direction, developing people, leading change and improving teaching and learning.

Plus

- Use of strategic problem solving.
- Articulating a set of core ethical values.
- Building trust and being visible in the school.
- Building a safe and secure environment.
- Coalition building.
- Promotion of equity, care and achievement.

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Heroic leadership

In many cases there is evidence of heroic leadership, in, for example, the way principals challenge the status quo, fight for the best opportunities for their students, and have a positive and empowering view of what is possible for a school community, whatever the circumstances. But it is heroic leadership that is inclusive, and which we describe as **post-heroic**.

Capacity development

Successful school leaders are people centred. They obviously get enormous satisfaction from seeing students develop, but they are also concerned to develop the adults in a school community, and core to this is their interest and ability in building the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff to be better at what they do.

Trust and respect

A standout characteristic of the principals is the degree to which they are respected and trusted by their school communities.

Acting with integrity and being transparent about their values, beliefs and actions, modelling good practice, being careful to ensure fairness in how they deal with people, involving many in decision making.

Continuous learning

Whilst some had early leadership opportunities, their success as a principal was generally crafted through a blend of on-the-job learning, formal and informal professional learning, mentoring or sponsorship by significant others, and some serendipity in the pathways to leadership. All the principals were restless folk, seeking new ideas, new ways to do things, new opportunities for their schools, and so they were always developing as professionals.



Personal resources

There are many personal qualities, beliefs and values that help principals be successful leaders.

Acumen, optimism, persistence, trust, tolerance, empathy, alertness, curiosity, resilience, benevolence, honesty, openness, respectful, and humbleness.

Above all they are driven by the desire to provide the best educational environment they can for all students.

Context sensitivity

Successful school leadership is context sensitive, but it is not context driven. Using a range of common leadership practices that seem to promote success in most contexts, successful school leaders fine tune their responses to the context and culture in which they lead to optimise school success.

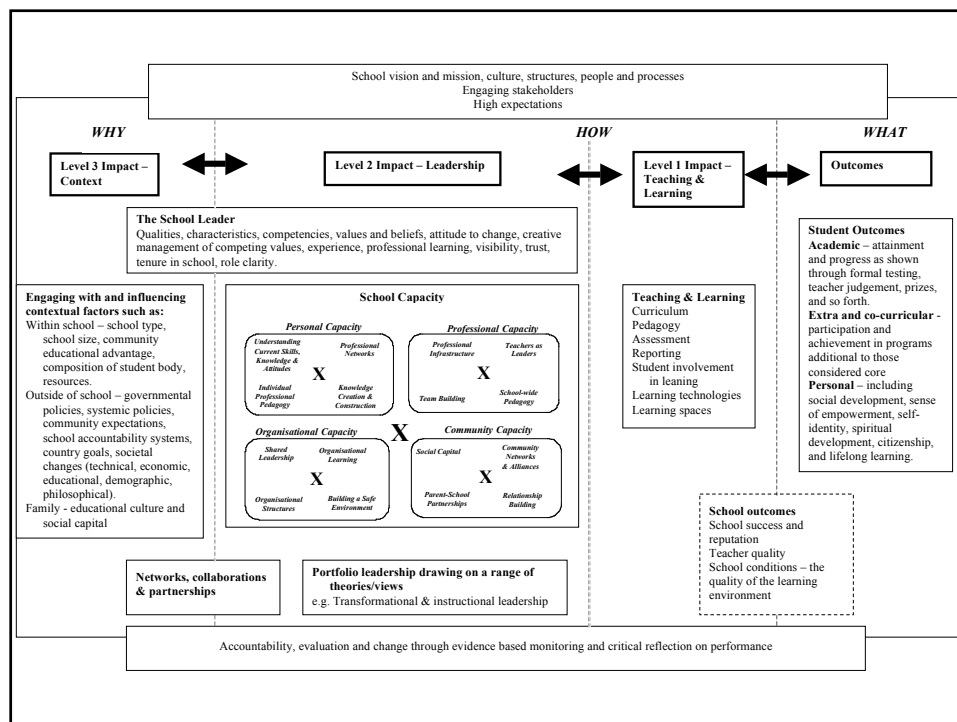
Sustaining success

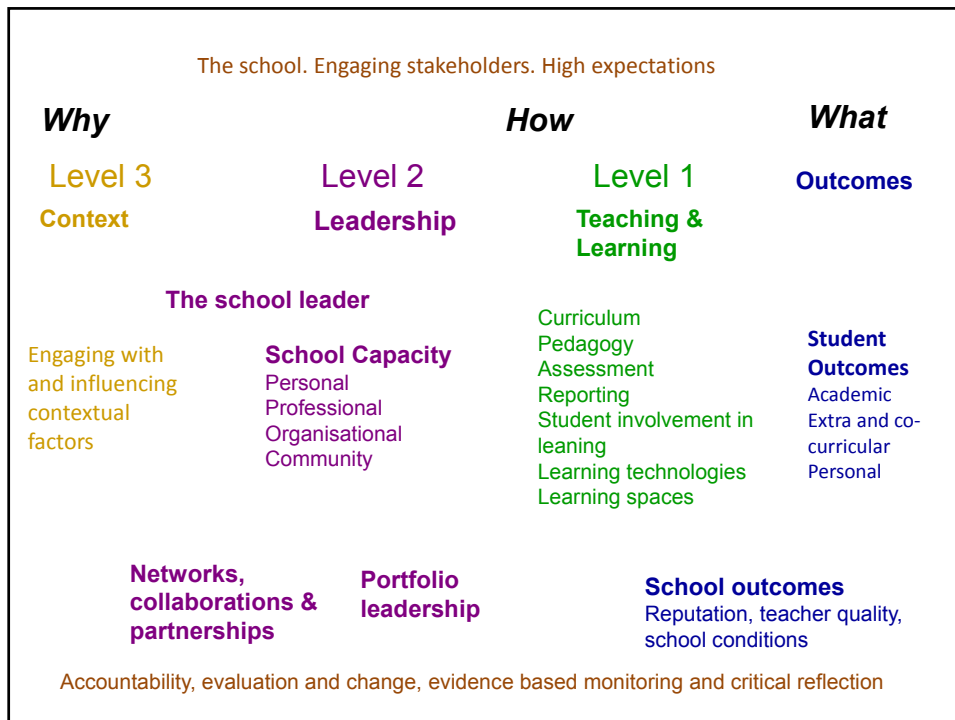
Factors which seemed to be important for principals to sustain their success include:

- actively engaging with others to arrive at a consensus about what a school should do
- personal qualities and beliefs such as resilience, commitment to making a difference, and engaging the school and wider community
- balancing competing discourses
- utilising both transformational and instructional leadership practices
- continuing their own professional learning
- managing accountability expectations
- attitude to change



A Model of Successful School Leadership





Ongoing considerations

How will the project gain access to under-represented regions – Asia?

How will you engage with this project?

Next project meeting: Seville, Spain, May 31-June 3.

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Thank you

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Recent ISSPP related publications:

- Day, C. & Gurr, D. (Eds) (2014) *Leading Schools Successfully: Stories from the field* (London: Routledge)
- Gurr, D. (2014) Successful school leadership across contexts and cultures, *Leading and Managing*, 20(2). 75-88.
- Gurr, D., Drysdale, L., Clarke, S., & Wildy, H. (2014) High Needs Schools in Australia, *Management in Education*, 28(3), pp. 86 - 90.
- Encarnacion, G. Jr., Drysdale, L., Gurr, D., Jacobson, S., & Merchant, B. (2014) Leadership for School Success: Lessons from effective principals. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 28(7), pp. 798 - 811
- Drysdale, L., Bennett J., Murakami, E., Johansson, O., & Gurr, D. (2014) Heroic Leadership in Australia, Sweden, and the United States, *International Journal of Educational Management*, 28(7), pp. 785 – 797
- Gurr, D. (2014). Finding your leadership, *Perspectives in Education*, 2.