

Chapter 7

Building leadership capacity for system improvement in Victoria, Australia

by

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This chapter provides information and analysis on the strategic approach to school leadership development in the Federal State of Victoria in Australia. The Victorian approach was selected by the OECD Improving School Leadership activity as an innovative example of school leadership development because of the state's remarkable drive to improve school effectiveness, in which leadership development plays a central part. The Victorian school improvement and leadership development strategies are thoroughly informed by national and international research. Implementation of the leadership development strategy reflects a close relationship between the Victorian education administration and school principals, in which the ministerial department provides consistent system leadership.

This chapter is based on a study visit to Victoria, Australia, organised by the Office for Government School Education (OGSE) of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), at the request of the OECD in August 2007. It aims to illustrate state-wide developments in educational leadership, showing the interface between the central leadership and the framework of leadership development with which schools are becoming engaged.

The chapter begins with an overview of the systemic, state-wide approach to building leadership capacity and a shared school improvement culture within a highly devolved system. It shows how the model has been developed in the Victorian and Australian context, reviews the main features of the approach, and provides examples of leadership development in action. It concludes by analysing practice in terms of constructs and impact, highlighting features that may be of interest to other systems, and identifies matters that will be keys to the sustainability and impact of the strategy.

7.1 The OECD case study visit to Victoria, Australia

The OECD chose the Victorian model as an example of a state-wide approach to leadership preparation and development. From reading the literature and discussions with Australian representatives, it seemed that this approach matched the criteria defined for the selection of case studies and would represent a good model of education leadership capacity building at the levels of both the state and individual schools. Victorian government schools have a high degree of autonomy but vary widely in their effectiveness. The Victorian government has recognised the need to invest in leadership development at all levels in order to raise levels of educational achievement. This process has involved winning back the allegiance of schools to centrally driven policies and creating a system-wide vision of effective schools and culture of leadership development. The Victorian strategy for school improvement is being implemented in a range of parallel developments, central to which is a coherent approach to building an improvement culture and leadership capacity. Effective leadership, not only at school level but throughout the system, is seen as crucial to improving the effectiveness of schools and raising the achievements of students.

The study visit included meetings with a range of stakeholders in Melbourne and two site visits (Annex 7.A1). The study team met representatives from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and staff of the department's Office of Government School Education (OGSE) and its regional offices; officials from the Australian Government's Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST); a representative of the Australian Council on Educational Research (ACER); school principals, teachers and students; academics; leadership development providers; professional associations and other organisations. The site visits covered a primary and a secondary school. This study was also informed by a range of high quality documents published by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and draws from the draft country background report prepared for the OECD activity on improving school leadership (Anderson *et al.*, 2007). We take the opportunity to thank our Victorian hosts, particularly the deputy secretary for the OGSE and his staff, and all those we met, for their extensive preparation for the visit, their openness in discussions and their warm hospitality.

The study team comprised: Dr. Peter Matthews (rapporteur), Visiting Professor at the Institute of Education, University of London and educational consultant; Hunter Moorman, OECD consultant and expert in leadership, education reform, and organisation development; and Deborah Nusche from the OECD secretariat.

7.2 The Victorian context

Social and economic context

Victoria is one of the six states and two territories that comprise the Commonwealth of Australia. It is the smallest but most densely populated mainland state, containing only 3% of the Australian landmass but being home to over 5 million people (almost one quarter of the country's population). Victoria is highly urbanised, with nearly 90% of residents living in cities and towns. Its population is very diverse in terms of cultural and language backgrounds, and is becoming more so. Almost a quarter of the population

speak a language other than English at home and 44% are either born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas. Schools and school leaders are expected to meet the needs of these increasingly diverse student populations.

Victoria's economy has done very well recently. In line with the national average, it has grown at an average annual rate of 3.6% over the past 10 years (1995/96 - 2005/06). Living standards in Australia have steadily improved since the beginning of the 1990s and now surpass all G7 countries except the United States. The Victorian society is experiencing a shift from an economy reliant on traditional manufacturing towards an increasingly knowledge and service based economy. The government emphasises the importance of gaining and retaining a competitive advantage through increasing the knowledge and skills of all Victorians. The education system is expected to provide students with the knowledge, skills and technological capacities required to participate effectively in a rapidly changing society and more broadly in the global economy.

Educational performance

The performance of Victorian students is continuously assessed through both national exams (in years 3, 5, 7, and 9) and international assessments such as PISA. According to Thomson *et al.* (2004), the 2000 and 2003 PISA studies showed good to excellent results for all Australian states and territories, in all subject areas. While there were performance differences between the states and territories in all domains, not many of the apparent score differences were statistically significant. Overall, Victorian students performed in line with the national average.

In terms of equity, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-achieving students in Australia is smaller than the OECD average, and the “tail” of underachieving students was less than the average for the OECD. However, as in most countries, contextual factors such as location of school, language spoken at home and socioeconomic status had a significant effect on student performance in Australia:

- Students in metropolitan areas performed at significantly higher levels than students in provincial cities, who in turn performed at significantly higher levels than students in rural areas.
- Students who mainly spoke English at home performed significantly better than those whose main home language was other than English.
- While the relationship between socioeconomic background and performance was less strong in Australia than for the OECD average, there still exists a distinct advantage for those students with higher socioeconomic backgrounds, many of whom attend independent or Catholic secondary schools.
- While some indigenous students performed well, this was a very small proportion of the overall sample and many more were performing at the lower end of the proficiency levels.

While the PISA results paint a good picture of Australian performance, several countries outperformed Australia in both average achievement and equity. A report by the Australian states and territories (Council for the Australian Federation, 2007) states that the challenge for Australia is to match the performance of countries like Finland, Canada, Japan and Korea whose results are both high quality and high equity. In order to sustain and further improve the performance of Australian students, Australian schools are

expected to continuously improve their practice and at the same time address the performance gaps and inequities outlined above.

Relationship between state and country

Australia does not have a unitary school system. Under the federal political structure, education is the responsibility of the individual states and territories, although the Commonwealth government significantly contributes to school funding and policy development. While schooling across the country has many commonalities, a number of differences affect school operations. In recent years there have been significant steps towards achieving greater national consistency across the eight states and territories. Nevertheless, caution is needed in generalising across the diversity of Australian schooling.

The ministers of the states, territories and commonwealth meet regularly in the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), which provides a formal mechanism for agreeing broad directions and strategies for schools across the country. The major elements of federal policies for schools may be summarised as follows:

- a set of agreed, common, national goals which are kept under review and are reference points for strategies; benchmarks; and standards for particular subject areas and other aspects of schooling;
- continuing efforts to establish national measurement and reporting of student outcomes (including through national sample assessments in some key areas);
- national taskforces, working parties, committees, studies and reports addressing particular topics and reporting on progress in implementing the goals and attendant strategies.

The MCEETYA has launched the national co-operative project through its Improving Teacher and School Leadership Capacity Working Group, with one of its aims being to consider the development of an agreed, common framework for teacher quality and standards. This builds on moves already underway in the profession and at government level. It presages a considerable strengthening in the future of teacher professionalism at all stages, from recruitment through pre-service education to lifelong professional learning.

Schools in Victoria

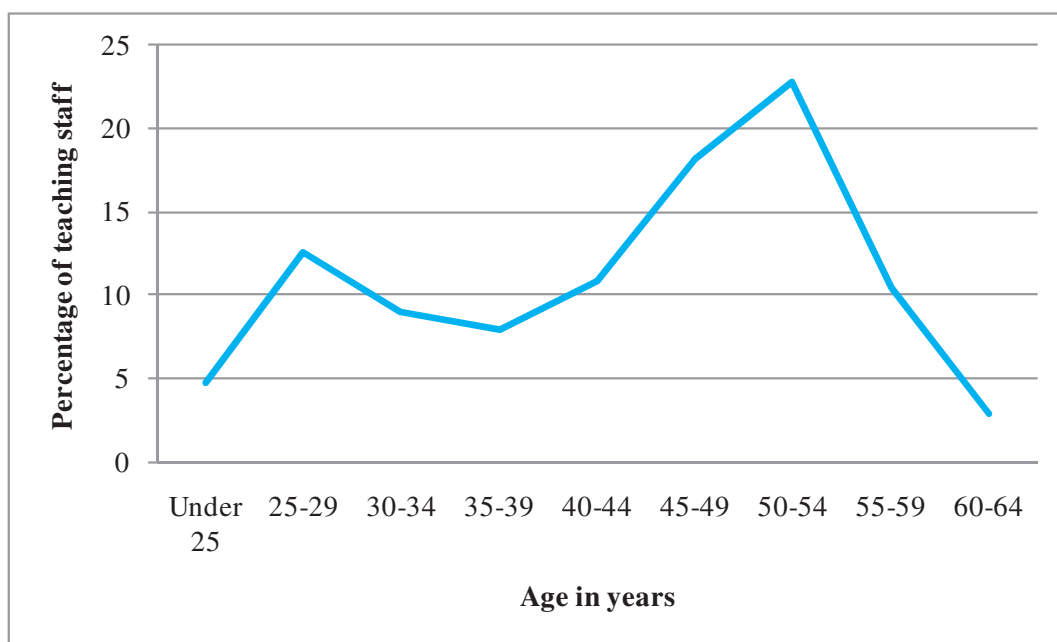
In February 2007, there were 1 594 government and 701 non-government schools, providing for approximately 539 000 and 298 000 students respectively. Pre-schooling is voluntary, and availability and participation are highly variable. About two-thirds (67%) of students attend government schools; the remainder are in Catholic or independent schools, which at the secondary stage gain over 6 000 pupils who have attended government primary schools. Over 38 600 teachers work in the government sector. In-school expenditure per student was lower in Victoria than in other states and territories. Student-teacher ratios in 2006 were close to the national average in primary schools but slightly below in secondary schools. Enrolment numbers vary greatly between schools. At present, there are approximately 270 small schools (defined as those with 70 or fewer students) with an average enrolment of 37 students.

School governance and leadership

Although school governance and policy have traditionally been highly centralised, decentralisation has progressed further in Victoria than elsewhere in Australia owing to the very large measure of devolved decision making to the principals and school councils of government schools, which gives them considerable operational autonomy. The principals of government schools are required to work with their staff and community to develop strategic plans with clearly articulated outcome targets and improvement strategies. While principals are vested with overall operational authority, school leadership tends increasingly to be shared or distributed, school principals are expected to facilitate and work effectively with others with significant leadership roles. School networks are also becoming increasingly important and are broadening the scope of school leaders' work.

Leadership in Victorian government schools is recognised structurally by posts of assistant principals and principals, who together form the so-called “principal class”. Distributed leadership is strongly encouraged, however, and the spreading leadership culture recognises that leadership qualities and opportunities apply across the education workforce. The demography of teachers shows an aging group (Figure 7.1) in which the subset of principals is likely to be older, complicated by the opportunity of retirement at age 55. This has implications for preparing more future leaders, and for the appointment, induction and mentoring of new principals, all of which are embedded elements of government policy.

Figure 7.1 Age profile of Victorian teachers and leaders (2006)



Source: Data provided by the Government of Victoria.

7.3 School improvement policy: *Blueprint for Government Schools*

The Victorian leadership development strategy (*Learning To Lead Effective Schools, 2006*) has been aligned with a reform agenda (*Blueprint for Government Schools, 2003*) comprising a consistent sequence of reform initiatives aimed at improving practice, enhancing performance and reducing achievement gaps in the government school system. The leadership development strategy is an essential part of this comprehensive framework for system-wide improvement. Before we turn to the Victorian strategy for building leadership capacity, this section will describe the genesis and implementation of the system-wide school improvement agenda.

In 2003, the Labour Government of Victoria identified a need to take action to improve educational outcomes for all students. Research evidence showed that three key features of the government school system needed to be addressed:

- a high concentration of poor outcomes in some schools and some regions;
- frequent high variations in outcomes between classes within a given school, which point to the centrality of the teaching-learning relationship;
- variations in outcomes between schools with similar student populations.

On the basis of extensive research into patterns of student outcomes, the factors that influence them and the performance of schools in delivering them, the government has provided its *Blueprint* for continuing improvement in progress in the quality of the government school system. There was wide consultation in the development of *Blueprint*, which was published in March 2003.

The government set out three priorities for reform, based on a broad consensus of what should be done to lift student outcomes. The priorities are:

- recognising and responding to diverse student needs;
- building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching-learning relationship;
- continuously improving schools.

Although there have been a number of ministerial and departmental changes since *Blueprint* became government policy, the current minister recognises that exceptional leadership is necessary in such a highly devolved system. It appointed an experienced principal and outstanding leader to head the Office for Government School Education as deputy secretary. Our evidence supports the Minister's view that there has been common ownership of the *Blueprint* agenda.

Agenda for action: the seven “Flagship strategies”

The *Blueprint for Government Schools* identifies seven flagship strategies for addressing the three priorities. Each strategy includes an ambitious series of actions, shown in Box 7.1. The *Blueprint* provided a powerful and comprehensive agenda for educational reform, backed by political will and resources. It also introduced the operational challenge of implementing the raft of measures in a coherent and effective way so that they had the desired impact across the state.

The *Blueprint* could have evolved either as a collection of disparate initiatives or as a cohesive strategy. The threats to the cohesive approach were considerable. Relationships between the schools and department had been fragile before the reform. Many schools had regarded their high degree of autonomy as the signal for detachment from the department and its policies. Others had not used their devolved power to best effect: outcomes were too low, and public perceptions led to a drift away from government schools and into the Catholic or independent sectors, especially at secondary stage. Faced with falling enrolments, inter-school competition for pupils became more intense and the department and regional offices were not seen to provide effective solutions. Morale in parts of the system was low. The successful implementation of the *Blueprint* as a coherent system of reform initiatives is due in large part to the thoughtful strategy of school improvement the department adopted.

The department recognised the need for a culture shift. They considered that the best way of achieving this and delivering the range of reforms was to invest in school leadership, particularly by developing and, in effect, reprofessionalising the principals and assistant principals. This was an ambitious and risky project, but having conceived it, the leaders of the department set out to be leaders of the system by modelling their expectations for school leadership. Their recognition of the influence of leadership, second only to the quality of teaching and learning, was deliberately informed and supported by research (e.g. Leithwood *et al.*, 2004).

Box 7.1 Outline of the <i>Blueprint</i> for Government Schools commitments	
Recognising and responding to diverse student needs	
Flagship Strategy 1. Student learning	1a. Identify a framework of “essential learnings” for all students 1b. Develop the principals of learning and teaching from prep to year 12 1c. Improve reporting on student achievement 1d. Develop a broad assessment processes against which defined standards of learning at key points of schooling can be measured 1e. Develop a knowledge bank that documents exemplary practices in schools
Flagship Strategy 2. Developing a new resource allocation model	2a. Replace the school global budget with a new resource allocation model
Building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching-learning relationship	
Flagship Strategy 3. Building leadership capacity	3a. Improved principal selection process 3b. Mentoring programme for First time principals and a coaching support programme for experienced principals 3c. A balanced scorecard approach to principal performance management 3d. An accelerated development programme for high potential leaders 3e. A development programme for high performing principals 3f. Local administrative bureaux for networks of small schools

Box 7.1 Outline of the <i>Blueprint for Government Schools</i> commitments (cont'd)	
Flagship Strategy 4. Creating and supporting a performance and development culture	4a. Accreditation scheme for performance and development culture schools
Flagship Strategy 5. Teacher professional development	5a. 60 teachers to undertake 4–6 week teacher professional leave 5b. Induction programme for beginning teachers, complemented by 5c. Mentoring programmes for beginning teachers
Continuously improving schools	
Flagship Strategy 6. School improvement	6a. A differential model of school review 6b. Schools with student performance outcomes above expected levels to: indicate plans to expand horizons; propose alternative models of review; act as mentor schools and share good practice 6c. Support for schools where student performance is satisfactory but where indicators suggest there is scope for improvement 6d. Improvement strategy for schools where student performance outcomes are below the expected levels 6e. A range of interventions and support strategies 6f. Schools to prepare single planning and accountability document 6g. Schools to be provided with parent, teacher and student opinion data 6h. Performance and development culture
Flagship Strategy 7. Leading schools fund	Provision of a leading schools fund

Source: DEECD (2003), *Blueprint for Government Schools: Future Directions for Education in the Victorian School System*, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: State of Victoria.

The Departmental Office for Government School Education (the OGSE – formerly OSE) bases its approach to school improvement on the three core beliefs: all children can learn; work hard and get smart; and failure is not an option (Fraser and Petch, 2007). These are applied through a focus on creating the right conditions for improvement; developing the capacity of leaders to promote high quality instruction; increasing teacher effectiveness; building high-quality relationships with the educational workforce; and understanding the relationship between educational theory, research and practice.

The OGSE's approach to implementing the improvement strategy has been to “draw on the best evidence from international research, ‘socialise’ this evidence and then use the data available in the system to assist all schools to determine the most appropriate improvement strategy for their stage of performance and development. This includes “strategic interventions in schools that do not have internal capacity to respond effectively to the challenges they face” (Fraser and Petch, 2007).

A research-based approach to system-wide improvement

The OGSE recognised that a precondition for implementing the school improvement strategy was for teachers, principals, and staff of the education office to “understand and engage in the core work of school improvement” (Fraser and Petch, 2007). The DEECD has developed a common understanding of the principles and models for implementing key parts of the reform, with a shared language with which to discuss it. The common framework and vocabulary ensure that all stakeholders may engage in meaningful communication. High quality relationships are being built with the school leadership workforce and great emphasis is put on exposing them to educational theory and research. The process is supported by substantial capital and recurrent funding and validated through an intelligent accountability framework which is increasingly embedded in a system-wide performance and development culture.

The DEECD has drawn from international research to identify the most important characteristics of effective schools, effective leaders and effective professional learning. Three evidence based models were used as a basis for building shared understanding of how the education workforce relates and impacts on student outcomes: the effective schools model, and, further elaborating key provisions of this model, the effective leaders model and the professional learning model. At the outset, the OGSE adopted a model of school effectiveness (Figure 7.2) based on the review of school effectiveness research conducted by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995). Priorities within the eight characteristics indicated by the model were professional leadership, a focus on teaching and learning, and purposeful teaching.

Figure 7.2 The effective schools model (schematic)



The effective schools model provides an organising framework for the range of strategies and initiatives which stem from the *Blueprint*.

Professional leadership is reflected in an emphasis on building leadership capacity. Adoption of the effective leaders model, based on Segiovanni's domains (1984), has provided a shared model for leadership development and the foundation for principal preparation, selection, performance and development. The effective leaders model is further elaborated in a system-wide model for leadership learning, the developmental learning framework (Office of Government School Education, 2007).

The *focus on teaching and learning* and *purposeful teaching* are reflected in a model for effective professional learning (Office of Government School Education, 2005). This puts student learning at the centre of a range of development programmes, such as leading for student learning and leading professional learning, which enable teachers to engage with school improvement, together with the development and practice of skills such as coaching and mentoring, which contribute to greater teacher effectiveness.

Shared vision and goals are clearly promoted system-wide through the *Blueprint* and the documents issued subsequently by OGSE, the regular and sophisticated communications with principals and others, the grouping of all schools into networks, and the alignment of all the development programmes and opportunities.

High expectations of the profession are applied through the leadership development framework, which raises the sights for leadership performance and also through the performance and development culture which forms the basis for accountability along with differential school reviews.

The department has promoted a wealth of *learning communities* intended to strengthen the professional culture and values. All schools, for example, belong to local clusters and wider school networks, supplemented by collegiates of principals. The networks all have links with the department through the nine regional offices; the regional directors are strongly committed to the delivery of the *Blueprint* school improvement policies.

Lastly, the provision of a *stimulating and secure environment* is reflected both in a major government commitment to rebuild or refurbish all schools by 2017 (50% of schools by 2011) and the provision of a "leading schools fund", which provides a programme of school development and enhancement including a large capital sum for investing in new facilities.

7.4 Strategy for building leadership capacity

The state-wide approach to building leadership capacity in Victorian schools (Flagship Strategy 3) has many parallel programmes. Coherence is achieved in a number of ways. First, the glue that provides cohesion is the inspired effort to create a leadership culture across the system, based on professional discourse using a common language. Second, the conversation about school improvement and leadership development is promoted across the system through all sections of the education infrastructure. This infrastructure, supports and transmits system-wide leadership. Third, a clear vision of the characteristics of effective leadership and developmental learning is understood throughout the system.

This vision has been expounded, not through a set of leadership standards or benchmarks, but through the more sophisticated “developmental learning framework for leadership” mentioned above, in which the different components of leadership are described as progressive levels of competence or performance. We discuss these cohesive strands in turn before illustrating the leadership development provision in Sections 7.5 and 7.6.

Creating a culture of reflective leadership and developmental learning

Ingenuous strategies are used to raise the level of discourse and understanding about school leadership among the principal class in Victoria. These stem from the leadership of the Office of Government Schools Education, where the deputy secretary steers learning through the system. One initiative which provides an indicator of the changing relationship between the centre and schools is Big Day Out, an annual convention for all the principals in the state. Characteristically the minister and senior department staff take a lead in presenting policy issues and the expected role of principals. The event always includes an inspirational visiting speaker of international repute who provides the agenda for round-table workshop activities. Recent scholars at state-wide forums have included Richard Elmore and David Perkins (Harvard), Michael Fullan (Ontario) and Ken Leithwood (Toronto).

Other strategies for communicating in a common language and building a leadership culture having a shared vision and goals include:

- A fortnightly newsletter for all principals from the deputy secretary, detailing his work and developments in the system, and drawing attention of principals to some educational publications which are worth reading.
- Regional workshops for principals led by the deputy secretary and a colleague.
- Regular meetings of principals who are organised in 64 networks across the nine administrative regions, with the department meeting network chairs periodically.
- Short secondments of principals to the department.
- Standing consultation meetings with two principals from each region; the Principals Common.
- State-wide structured reading activities, encouraged by the occasional free issue of a key book to each of the 1 600 principals in Victoria. The first example was *Leadership on the Line* (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002). Individual chapters of the book were discussed in successive newsletters, and principals were invited to share their critiques in the newsletter (see illustrative comment in Box 7.2).

Box 7.2 Comment by school leaders on Chapter 2 of *Leadership on the Line* by Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky (issued to all principals by the OGSE) – circulated in the fortnightly newsletter

A comment by Victorian school leaders: “Heifetz and Linsky’s contention that ‘to lead is to live dangerously’ is explored in a most pragmatic and realistic fashion in chapter 2 – ‘The faces of danger’. The four faces of leader-danger they expound upon are the risks of being marginalised, diverted, attacked or seduced by those who seek to retain the status quo in an organisation. All can result in leadership being shut down, and all are characterised by the element of surprise. The discussion of these and the examples given will, I am sure, strike a chord with many of us. Change is such a challenge for many people within a school, and many try to resist, using whatever tactics they can muster. It is difficult always to know the provocation source of the next attack and even more, at times, to realise that it is coming from those who generally seem to be supporters.... The distinction between the adaptive and the technical aspects of any issue can assist us in managing those whose primary concern is the preservation of self and position. Heifetz and Linsky show us how to identify the ways in which leadership may be undermined. A useful tool we think.”

Source: OGSE (2007a).

Key books such as *Leadership on the Line* (Heifetz and Linsky 2002) are given free to each of the 1 600 principals in Victoria, and discussed in a series of newsletters.

Multi-layered system-wide leadership

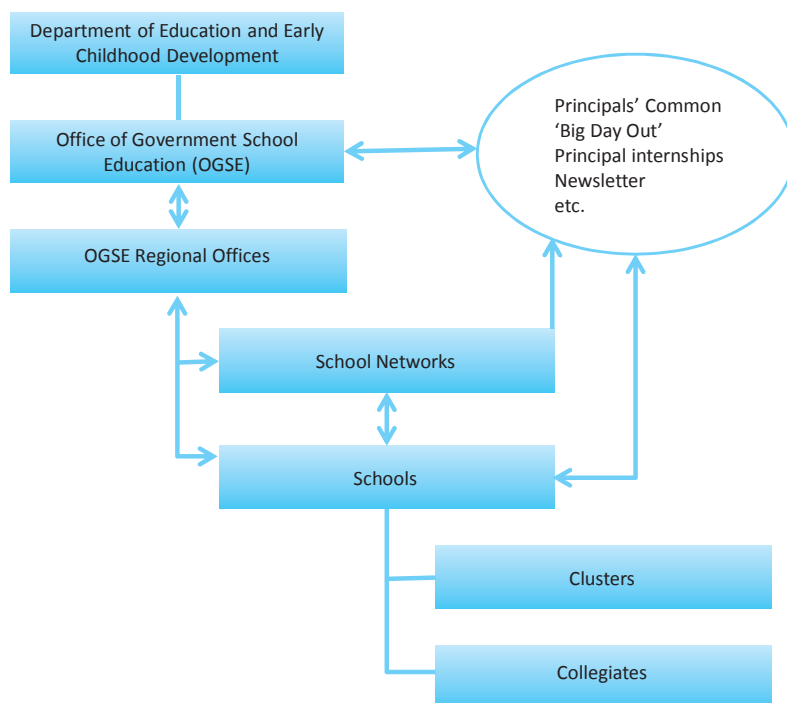
The coherence and impact of the different school improvement programmes are due largely to the conversation which has been sustained across schools, regional offices and the central office to develop a collective understanding of the challenges confronting the government school system. System-wide leadership of the implementation of reforms in government schools, which stems from the deputy secretary and his OGSE senior team, is focused, analytical, challenging and visible. The vision and objectives are clear; development strategies are evidence based and designed to meet priorities for improvement; communication is continuous and consultation embedded. High expectations, individual and collective responsibility, and the principles of professional learning apply across the system to those working in education administration as well as in schools. The result is that the whole system is being encouraged to sing from the same song sheet.

The key agents of change are the deputy secretary and his colleagues in the Office for Government School Education, the nine regional directors and their colleagues, and the 1 800 or so members of the principal class, whose schools are grouped in 64 networks, each chaired by a principal. Local groups of schools also belong to other partnerships such as clusters, and the collegiates which work on shared interests. The layers of organisation are shown in Figure 7.3 together with links and a feedback loop through, for example, the Principals Common which meets the deputy secretary and in which every network is represented.

The regional offices have an important role in the school accountability and improvement framework by monitoring and reporting on the achievement of each school’s progress towards its identified priorities. The offices also support the networks,

foster the cluster arrangements and have a key role in assessing applications for leadership development programmes.

Figure 7.3 Some layers and groupings in the government school system



Regional structures and networks enable system leaders such as high performing principals to support their peer schools. In 2006 the department identified the need to harness the capacity of the networks to assume greater responsibility and accountability for the performance of their schools and to focus more on work in the classroom. Network meetings are increasingly concerned with the professional challenges involved in delivering school improvement imperatives stemming from the *Blueprint* and the three educational models discussed earlier. Much of the coaching and mentoring resource which is such a strong feature of leadership development programmes is applied within networks. Some principals have also spoken of the stronger collegiality with other principals: focusing on leadership issues of common interest is of particular value.

Conceptualising leadership

In all these groupings, common language about leadership and school improvement is becoming increasingly prevalent. In an initiative which typifies the research based approach to professional development, the Office of Government School Education constructed and delivered to every principal a *Developmental learning framework for school leaders* (OGSE, 2007b), which defines what effective leadership looks like in practice at different stages of development and growth. This taxonomy of leadership capabilities uses Sergiovanni's model of transformational leadership (Sergiovanni, 1984, 2005) as the basis of the framework (Box 7.3).

Box 7.3 Developmental learning framework for school leaders: Domains and capabilities	
Leadership domains	Leadership capabilities
<p><i>Technical</i></p> <p>An effective leader demonstrates the capacity to optimise the school’s financial, human and physical resources through sound management practices and organisational systems that contribute to the achievement of the school’s vision and goals</p>	<p>Thinks and plans strategically</p> <p>Aligns resources with desired outcomes</p> <p>Holds self and others to account</p>
<p><i>Human</i></p> <p>An effective leader demonstrates the ability to foster a safe, purposeful and inclusive learning environment, and a capacity to develop constructive and respectful relationships with staff, students, parents and other stakeholders</p>	<p>Advocates for all students</p> <p>Develops relationships</p> <p>Develops individual and collective capacity</p>
<p><i>Educational</i></p> <p>An effective leader demonstrates the capacity to lead, manage and monitor the school improvement process through a current and critical understanding of the learning process and its implications for enhancing high quality teaching and learning in every classroom in the school</p>	<p>Shapes pedagogy</p> <p>Focuses on achievement</p> <p>Promotes enquiry and reflection</p>
<p><i>Symbolic</i></p> <p>An effective leader demonstrates the capacity to model important values and behaviour to the school and community, including a commitment to creating and sustaining effective professional learning communities within the school, and across all levels of the system</p>	<p>Develops and manages self</p> <p>Aligns actions with shared values</p> <p>Creates and shares knowledge with them</p>
<p><i>Cultural</i></p> <p>An effective leader demonstrates an understanding of the characteristics of effective schools and a capacity to lead the school community in promoting a vision of the future, underpinned by common purposes and values that will secure the commitment and alignment of stakeholders to realise the potential of all students</p>	<p>Shapes future</p> <p>Develops a unique school culture</p> <p>Sustains partnerships and networks</p>

Source: OGSE (2007b), *The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders*, Office of Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, State of Victoria.

Box 7.4 Developmental leadership profiles in the <i>Educational Leadership</i> domain	
Educational leadership	Capabilities
An effective leader demonstrates the capacity to lead, manage and monitor the school improvement process through a current and critical understanding of the learning process and its implications for enhancing high quality teaching and learning in every classroom in the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shapes pedagogy Focuses on achievement Promotes enquiry and reflection
Level	Profile
Level 1	Leaders engage staff in professional discussions about effective learning and teaching. They implement processes that support the alignment of the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting and ensure the curriculum reflects system goals and requirements. The role feedback plays in supporting learning and teaching is articulated. They promote the use of multiple forms of data to determine starting points and goals of the learning. They create opportunities for people to use their expertise and assist them to enhance their practice by identifying strengths and areas for improvement. To promote intellectual exploration, they reference research material and source relevant data to determine priorities for school improvement.
Level 2	Leaders consider the nature of the student cohort when designing the school’s curriculum. They establish processes in order to support the use of a range of feedback sources to inform teaching and learning. They help others to develop their capacity by creating opportunities for staff to learn from each other. Leaders develop a shared understanding of the implications of data for planning improvements. They support staff to experiment with a range of strategies to improve their practice
Level 3	Leaders design learning, teaching and management interactions based on how people learn and support the application of learning theories in classroom practice. School practices are monitored to ensure alignment of the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting with goals for student learning. They design a curriculum that is responsive to system changes and to changes in the student cohort. Leaders manage staff performance and development to improve student outcomes and monitor the extent to which feedback informs professional learning. Opportunities for reflection are incorporated in a range of forums
Level 4	Leaders challenge others to continually improve their performance. Classroom practice is evaluated to determine professional learning needs. They ensure that teacher performance and development processes are linked to teacher practice, programme effectiveness and professional learning. Resources are allocated in order to support the school community to engage in an ongoing process of enquiry and reflection. Leaders design improvement strategies based on empirical evidence.
Level 5	Leaders ensure models of learning and teaching underpin all classroom practice. They ensure that the principles of developmental learning inform the alignment of the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting. To improve learning outcomes, they verify that students and staff self-evaluate against goals and targets. Leaders promote further improvement by systematically collecting evidence of how reflective practices contribute to improvement in teacher practice. They influence curriculum practices in other schools and design initiatives that build the capacity of people across the system.

Source: OGSE (2007b), *The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders*, Office of Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, State of Victoria.

The leadership framework is intended to underpin all discourse and development related to school leadership. Sergiovanni's domains ("five forces of leadership") are already referred to widely in discussions with and between leaders and about leadership. Its power lies in the refinement of each of Sergiovanni's domains into developmental profiles (see example in Box 7.3). These are being used as a basis for self-assessment and 360° assessments, enabling teachers and school leaders to set direction for their professional learning. The body of content within each of the leadership domains compares with other, more empirical leadership taxonomies, such as the National Standards for Headteachers (DfES 2004) in the UK. The framework is also being used by leadership development providers, the education department and its regional directors and their staff. The leadership framework has become fundamental to the selection of new principals. School councils are required to advertise principal positions using five mandatory criteria based on the Sergiovanni leadership domains. A sixth community criterion reflects local needs and priorities.

Victoria, with the help of the University of Melbourne, has expanded the leadership domains into hierarchical levels at which performance can be demonstrated (Box 7.4). This ensures that the classification can be used developmentally, and there is evidence that principals and providers are doing so. Parallels exist in the rather more restricted contexts of urban leadership in the UK (NCSL 2003), which uses four rather than five development levels, and a range of school evaluation and inspection criteria used in different national accountability systems. The Victorian leadership framework breaks new ground in being applicable to leadership throughout the school at all levels in the school, showing where a teacher or school leader is located on a continuum and what they need to know and be able to do in order to improve.

Building leadership at all levels

The department recognised that effective leadership at all levels in the system was a pre-condition for implementing the school improvement aspirations reflected in the *Blueprint*. The increased investment in leadership development was based on a "comprehensive and deliberate suite of strategies aimed at improving the quality and performance of our leaders". These strategies include leadership development opportunities for aspirant leaders and principals, including a Master in School Leadership qualification for teachers who demonstrate high leadership potential; mentoring for new principals and coaching for experienced principals; and a programme for high performing principals that develops those who can contribute to system development.

7.5 Features of the leadership development programmes

The opportunities for professional learning for current and aspirant leaders are set out in *Learning to Lead Effective Schools* (Office of School Education, 2006) which provides a diverse range of 19 programmes for aspirant leaders, assistant principals and principals (Box 7.5). Some 3 000 people had participated in the suite of programmes between 2004 and 2007. In 2007 alone, most programmes have had between 50 and 100 participants per programme, and Leaders in the Making had more than 200 participants.

All 19 leadership development programmes aim to build the capacity of teachers and leaders to meet the *Blueprint* expectations for continuous improvement in the quality of learning and teaching (Box 7.5). Each programme is rooted in research evidence and best

practice. The principles identified by the department in 2004 (OGSE, 2005) characterise effective professional learning as:

- focused on student outcomes (not just individual teacher needs);
- embedded in teacher practice and informed by the best available research on effective learning and teaching;
- collaborative, involving reflection and feedback ;
- evidence based and data driven to guide improvement and to measure impact;
- ongoing, supported and fully integrated into the culture and operations of the system – schools, networks, regions and the centre;
- an individual and collective responsibility at all levels of the system, and not optional.

As with other dimensions of the new professionalism expected of teachers and leaders in the Victorian system, individual development must contribute to the greater good – system-wide improvement. Professional development is seen as investment in capacity for which there needs to be some payback in terms of bringing knowledge into the system. The programmes use professional learning models, either singly or more often in combination. These include: action research, examination of students’ work, study groups, case discussions, peer observation, lesson study, study visits and academic study. All professional development providers are required to have regard for the *Blueprint* principles and professional learning models. Leadership programmes are underpinned by the department’s effective schools model (Figure 7.2). They include four key elements:

- the **knowledge and skills** that leaders need to develop the capability to influence how schools function and what students learn;
- the **experiences** to support the development of these skills;
- the **structures** that best support delivery of these experiences;
- the **resources** necessary for these programmes.

All programmes are structured so that participants can apply their learning in a practical context. “The programmes are designed to build on prior learning experiences and enable current and aspirant leaders to access learning opportunities at different stages of their careers.” (OGSE, 2006)

These programmes put a responsibility on the participant to be an effective, self-motivated learner. The emphasis of much of the leadership development is on self-determined, practice-orientated experience. Mentoring and coaching play prominent parts in both policy and practice, as well as in supporting candidates’ development, and other schools and their principals are important resources for professional learning.

In line with the new professionalism expected of teachers and leaders in the Victorian system, individual development must contribute to the greater good – system-wide improvement.

Box 7.5 Professional learning programmes for current and aspirant leaders

Name of programme	Open to:	Description	Aspirant leaders	Assistant principals	Principals
Master in School Leadership	All after 5 years teaching	Taught modules, in-school elements and mentoring or shadowing; 2 years	√	√	√
Building capacity for improvement	Teams of teachers	Briefing, residential and day workshops, coaching support and feedback; 1 year	√	√	√
Building the capacity of school leadership teams	School leadership teams	Three-day residential, action research in school, 3 coaching sessions, follow-up workshop; 1 year	√	√	√
Leading across effective small schools	Small school teams	Three 1-day forums, action learning project, web based support, mentor with small school experience; 1 year	√	√	√
Leading in effective schools (strategic planning)	High potential leaders	Briefing, preparatory activities and 360° feedback, two workshops, 4 coaching sessions and ongoing email contact; 1 year	√	√	
Preparing for leadership	Experienced teachers	Two-day conference, four day workshops, background reading pre- & post-programme 360°, school based project, shadowing; 1 year	√		
Leading for student learning	Expert teachers	Five days workshops, reading & data collection, 360°, peer learning groups; 1 year	√		
Leading professional learning	PD coordinators	One year part time programme	√	√	
Scholarships at postgraduate study	Postgrad teachers	Range of postgraduate courses	√	√	
Eleanor Davies school leadership programme	Female leading teachers / APs	Five months including mentoring, reading, seminars, school based project	√	√	
Leaders in the making	Assistant principals	One year with workshops and strategic planning project.	√	√	
Stepping up to the principalship	Assistant principals	One year, including data-collection, workshop, shadowing, reviews		√	
Educational leadership: shaping pedagogy	APs and principals	One year, including preparation, intensive workshop, review, feedback, action planning		√	√
Human leadership: developing people	APs and principals	One year, development and implementation of a professional learning plan		√	√
Technical leadership: thinking and planning strategically	APs and principals	One year, including strategic planning project		√	√
Mentoring for first time principals	First time principals	One year			√
Coaching to enhance the capabilities of experienced principals	Experienced principals	One year with assigned coach			√
Development programme for high performing principals	Principals	Over a two-year period including contribution to system development and individual professional development			√
Building the capacity of the principals of small schools	Principals of small schools	One year			√
Teachers professional leave	All teachers	30 days	√		

Source: OGSE (2006), *Learning to Lead Effective Schools: professional learning for current and aspirant leaders*, Office of Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, State of Victoria.

Practice-based and tailored programmes

The high performing principals' programme allows principals the time and encouragement to travel, study worldwide leading edge practice, and reflect on applications to their own work (Box 7.6). Participants we spoke with were stimulated, informed, enthused and professionally rejuvenated by their experiences. They returned to Victoria with greater expertise in the topic they had studied, eager to apply their learning through the leadership of their school. They now saw themselves as high performing learners. Other themes for study included addressing disadvantage, personalised learning, learning management and ICT, and instructional learning. Many agreed that the biggest change was that they are more reflective about their practice. The programme demonstrated that the system values and trusts principals and believes in their importance in bringing about changes in schools and for students. High performing principals are actively used in mentoring and coaching roles, but engagement with the programme has enhanced their value. The department is seeking ways of disseminating their experience more widely, for this programme has given school leaders knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to meet new roles and responsibilities in the school and larger system. Another effect of the programme is to give outstanding leaders a greater incentive to remain within a system that cannot afford to lose them.

Participants we met told us that they used their horizon-broadening experience to reflect on the Victorian system (Box 7.6). They considered that one of the biggest challenges facing the system stems from increasing inequities: between the wealthy and the poor, between different schools and between the government and other school sectors. They recognised a need for education that would build the capacity of the workforce, but perceived many inequitable barriers to achieving this. Many were motivated to make a greater contribution to schools beyond their own, disseminating their accumulated experience and newfound expertise to help other schools to succeed.

Box 7.6 High performing principals: Experiences and impact

One participant had taken the Data-wise course at Harvard, examined the London Leadership Strategy and visited the Institute of Education, and paid a visit to Finland, returning with clear strategies for achieving improved student learning. This participant now perceived that “most of the copious data available to schools in Victoria is too aggregated to be of use in helping to improve student learning”.

Another participant went to Harvard, Canada and the UK to study school networks. She described the experience as overwhelming and felt “reborn”. Her network is now involved in professional learning. The opportunity came at the right time, for she did not know what to do next in her coasting school. She focused on instructional learning, which has led to the development of individual learning plans for every student. She is now “in classrooms a lot more” and has coached leaders and formed small collegiate groups within her network.

In contrast to the high performing principals' programme, teachers' professional leave (TPL) enables teachers within or across schools to undertake projects known as “challenges”. The resource is between 20 and 50 days of paid leave, which can be used as a block of time or spread out. The programme has engaged 2 400 teachers (out of 40 000) to date (6%). In common with the high performing principals, participants in the TPL programme who met with the OECD team were enthusiastic about the opportunities it offered and the contribution that such development could make to schools and clusters (Box 7.7).

Box 7.7 Teachers' professional leave: Experiences and impact

In one example, a team of three primary school teachers (middle leaders) in a cluster of schools used the TPL programme to undertake development in peer coaching, focusing on coaching for the improvement of learning and teaching. The project fitted the schools' aspiration of sharing good practice. As one said: "my challenge is to challenge and energise the teachers I work with." The three participants were allowed 20 days each to develop coaching skills with the support of a practised coach, undertaking observation and coaching in each others' schools and feeding back to colleagues in their own school. They encountered barriers in disseminating their expertise, since even in effective and well led schools many teachers are reluctant to engage in peer evaluation of classroom work. Thus the translation of the new skills into improved classroom practice is not automatic or given, and demonstrates the necessity for additional support through the principal and other systemic interventions.

In both these examples, it was evident that strategies were needed for effective application and dissemination of the knowledge and skills developed by participants in order to maximise their value to the school system. Many of the structures are in place to achieve this – for example, regional leadership, networks and clusters of schools, and a thoughtful "principal class". One of the challenges for senior leaders may be their readiness (or reluctance) to model the roles and behaviours they wish to be reflected across the work of the school, leading by example in the classroom as well as the school.

The philosophy of learning in a practical context was reflected in the responses of educators who had participated in leadership development programmes. Many spoke warmly of the quality of mentoring or coaching they had experienced and the value of visiting other schools. Evidence was presented, for example, of the value of the Eleanor Davis school leadership programme (Box 7.5), which aimed to encourage more women into principalship through being mentored by a principal in another school, and the range of programmes aimed either at preparing leaders for the next step or building leadership capacity within schools and teams.

Academic and other provider-led programmes

The range of programmes commissioned by Victoria from higher education institutions and other suppliers of professional development, together with nationally funded programmes, fits well with the Victorian *Blueprint* priorities and leadership development strategy. Indeed, providers are required to reflect Victorian policies in their proposals. The Master in School Leadership (MSL) programme offered by both Melbourne and Monash Universities complements other postgraduate qualifications in education, and the graduates of these competing Masters programmes we interviewed were positive about the quality of their provision. Both universities have been closely involved in supporting the development of the research based strategies. Academic leadership programmes therefore reflect the recently published Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders (OGSE, 2007b).

Members of the first cohort of the MSL programme told us they valued the challenges presented by the programme and its implications for them in their schools. Foremost is the shift from management thinking to leadership. Changing teachers' attitudes to seeing themselves as leaders was seen as a difficult issue, tackled by capacity-building strategies such as developing data-led shared ownership and responsibility for children's progress.

Changing community perceptions about what schools do was even harder. There was a recognition of the need to communicate with and educate parents more effectively.

The structure of leadership programmes, like those in the UK, facilitates progressive development opportunities. For example, one principal – now in her second principalship – recounted how she had been a mentee on the Eleanor Davis programme and was subsequently a mentor, as a principal. She undertook a Masters degree in change management in 2000 and is working towards a Doctorate. She is a trained and experienced coach and the chair of a schools network, and has undertaken study visits to Indonesia, Japan, New Guinea and elsewhere. For the capable and ambitious leader, it appears, there is a world of development opportunity.

Programmes funded by central government

In addition to the *Blueprint* programmes, there are other leadership programmes at a national level. Since 2006, Teaching Australia (the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, an independent national body for the teaching profession) has developed and delivered, in collaboration with the University of Melbourne and the Hay Group, a national professional leadership development programme, Leading Australia's Schools. This programme trains two cohorts per year of 40 principals from all Australian states and sectors. During the three months they spend in the programme, participants identify a major challenge, refine it, set goals for themselves and assess themselves against those goals, with peer group support, coaching and tutorial inputs and guidance. Challenges have ranged from overcoming the barriers to the amalgamation of two secondary schools to bringing change into an established primary school culture; motivating staff to continually reflect on their teaching and learning programmes; and introducing a performance and development culture. Participants' case studies showed that they benefited a great deal from the programme, gaining new skills and affirming their own moral purpose as prospective system leaders.

7.6 Programme effectiveness and continuous programme improvement

All those we met appreciated that the department had taken seriously the need to develop leadership, had made real investment in the programmes and had become much closer to schools. Principals endorsed the value of the shared readings promulgated in newsletters from the deputy secretary, and it appeared to principals that the OGSE was practising what it preached.

Independently evaluation of the leadership programmes has been very positive. For example a 2006 report (Roy Morgan Research, 2007) considered the Masters, mentoring, coaching and high performing principals programmes. Using multiple research methods, the evaluation concluded that the aim of the *Blueprint* Flagship Strategy 3, “building leadership capacity” was being achieved. Pre- and post-tests showed a positive change in the mean rating for each capability with every domain of leadership. Programmes targeted at less experienced and aspiring principals achieved greatest improvement, as expected. Participants in the development programme for high performing principals gave it exceptionally high ratings. Participants felt this was extremely worthwhile and commented that it gave them a renewed passion for their role. After three years, 10% of Victorian school principals have undertaken this programme, emerging as refreshed and invigorated potential system leaders.

In the leadership development programmes, there is evidence that positive gains continue after participants have completed the programme: an increasing proportion of graduates gain promotion after completing the Masters programme. The report also states: “What is also evident is that many participants are reporting personal outcomes which are outside building leadership skills, for example clarity and sense of purpose, feeling energised and motivated, and coping better and having more resilience, which are particularly beneficial and in addition to the specific leadership skills which were expected” (Roy Morgan Research, p. 56). Suggestions for incorporation into the programmes include more opportunities for shadowing and networking.

There are some frustrations, which we also heard from high performing principals, to the effect that insufficient use is made of their new knowledge and expertise in the role of system leaders. It may be the case that system leadership capacity is being generated at a faster rate than it is being absorbed.

Participants in these programmes identified the hierarchical nature of existing leadership and promotion frameworks as being a major barrier to change. The current approach to the recognition of performance, for example, “was regarded by some as rewarding length of service rather than encouraging leadership”. There was a feeling that large scale changes are required to properly support aspiring and current school leaders. The report concludes that “changes in leadership behaviour are preceding the cultural changes required to actively encourage transformational leadership”. This finding supports the emphasis placed on leading the whole system and on changing the culture so as to reprofessionalise leadership.

Little is said in the evaluation about instructional leadership – the focus on learning and teaching. This connection is essential if the investment in leadership development is to have an impact on what happens in the classroom. So far, there is little evidence of impact on students’ learning and achievement.

The development opportunities provided to Victorian teachers and school leaders through the Australian Government Teacher Development Programme (AGQTP) – which directly contribute to the *Blueprint’s* flagship strategies – are also subject to commissioned external evaluation. The 2006 report⁵ gauges evidence of impact from the perceptions of participants and third parties, such as observers or coaches. In most cases, around 60% of participants reported the activities as having a great or large impact, with up to 90% saying the impact was great, large or fair. These perceptions were validated by observers who assessed the impact of programmes on the skills of participants and generally rated the benefits higher than participants. Five to ten percent of the participants found little or no value in the experience.

One of the *Blueprint* activities which the AGQTP has evaluated is the Building the Capacity of Small Schools programme, which provides individual onsite coaching and support for principals of small schools. From May to November 2006, this programme involved 39 leaders of small schools, selected through a regionally based process, and used 16 trained coaches. Participants worked to develop a strategic improvement plan that they would implement during the year with the support of their coach and study groups. Despite having full teaching loads, the participants reported a significant increase in their

5. The 2006 report of the AGQTP Longitudinal Evaluation (I & J Management Services, 2007) monitors and reviews AGQTP activities including the leadership development programmes “Building the Capacity of School Leadership Teams”, “Leading for Student Learning” and “Building the Capacity of Principals of Small Schools”.

capacity to develop and support a whole school culture orientated to school improvement. By early December 2006, participants were on average 74% along the way to implementing their plan and expectations were that most school improvement plans would be completed by early 2007.

The evaluation report (I & J Management Services, 2007) again shows that coaches assess the impact higher than the participants themselves, “seeing something in the participants that the participants are not seeing in themselves”. Qualitative feedback on the impact of a coach and a network of peers was very strong

A coach stated: “(Participants have valued)... that they are not alone. They have a non-judgemental person to bounce ideas off, and can try new things with someone to support them to move their thinking from the day to day to the bigger picture.”

A principal stated: “I valued the collegiate discussions and sharing of good practice strategies that other schools use and that can be adapted to my school’s needs.”

Quality assurance of Victorian leadership development programmes rests not only with the commissioned evaluations but in the attachment of departmental staff to every programme. Close monitoring contributes to continuous improvement, as does the selection of providers through competitive tendering. To be successful, providers must be thoroughly familiar with the department’s strategies and policies.

Quality assurance of Victorian leadership development programmes rests not only with the commissioned evaluations but in the attachment of departmental staff to every programme.

7.7 Policy conditions, implementation and impact

A number of policy conditions seem to have facilitated the implementation of the Victorian school leadership strategy. These are summarised below.

Continuing political support

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s initiatives have played a crucial part in the drive to build leadership capacity across the government school system. The *Blueprint for Government Schools* provides the aspiration for high-quality school education for all government school students. The flagship strategies have been designed to enable the system to respond to that aspiration. It is important that successive ministers have continued to support the *Blueprint*, protecting the system from distracting changes of course and contributing to its sustainability.

Strategic alignment

A significant feature of the Victorian approach to school and system improvement is the high degree of alignment of all its strategies. The language and culture of school improvement and professional development extend across the department and the principal class of the state and are penetrating to other levels of leadership in many schools. The strategy and its research foundations also extend to the partners of the school system, particularly the providers of leadership development programmes, and to the Catholic and independent schools which provide for a third of Victorian students.

This alignment is shown in the way leadership development programmes are embedded in the wider development context. Each of the formal programmes contains field based experience, and aspiring and incumbent leaders also apply and develop leadership competences in the context of their daily school practice, in which they seek to exercise the skills identified in the state's leadership model. In addition, there is extensive provision for the coaching and mentoring of leaders and aspirant leaders. This on-the-job learning and practice are aligned with the department's leadership strategy, which also includes an improved principal selection process, based around the Sergiovanni leadership model. Candidates move through the selection process aware of the model and its implications for effective leadership.

Performance evaluation is also aligned with the development programmes. Following a balanced scorecard approach to performance management, targeted coaching, mentoring, and performance feedback from a range of sources evaluate critical elements of effective leadership. Among the performance objectives for all principals is achieving accreditation through the Performance and Development Culture Process designed to encourage and support leaders in introducing high quality performance management and continuous improvement into their schools. A differentiated model of school performance measurement, reporting, review, and accountability concentrates principals' efforts on performance outcomes and continuous improvement. Such processes integrate and reinforce professional practice and professional development.

An intelligent accountability framework

Victoria has one of the most devolved school management approaches among OECD countries. Schools are self-governing bodies controlling 90% of their budget. This creates the need for an intelligent accountability framework that allows the education system to respond appropriately to the evidence that student outcomes and trend data provides.

A strength of the *Blueprint* is its context of a transparent and rigorous accountability framework. Plans for school improvement comprise a four-year school strategic plan and an annual implementation plan. The framework evaluates progress towards meeting improvement goals and targets using school self evaluation and external reviews; reports to the school community on progress in core performance indicators; and assures compliance with legislation. Independent as well as internal evaluation shows strong support for and effective use of the School Accountability and Improvement Framework.

The differing requirements of schools are accommodated by a flexible accountability arrangement. Rather than using accountability as a mechanism to distribute sanctions and rewards, the Victorian government uses performance data as a basis for decisions on intervention and support strategies for schools and school leaders. These strategies include:

- coaching;
- mentoring;
- expert administrators;
- expert consultants;
- partnership arrangements with tertiary providers to work on improvement projects;
- co-operative arrangements between schools;

- secondment of high performing principals to low-performing schools.

Timing and resourcing

Recognising that culture change in education will take time, no timelines were fixed for attainment of the reform objectives. There is an implicit appreciation of the need for ongoing constant funding and support efforts over a time frame that is longer than short term political interests.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) has provided the capital and recurrent funding to support the overall reform programme. The department has focused in particular on schools most in need and those with a strong argument for further investment. The support and resources available for radical change projects, urgent regeneration and improvement plans create a context conducive to innovation.

There is an implicit appreciation of the need for ongoing constant funding and support efforts over a time frame that is longer than short term political interests.

The DEECD has defined ambitious expectations about school improvement and it is ready to invest heavily in human capital development in order to achieve them. In 2006-07, the budget for *Blueprint* projects was over AUD 17 million. *Blueprint* allocations represent 0.44% of the total School Resource Package for government schools. By way of illustration, funding for teacher professional leave was over AUD 4.4m, compared with funding for high performing principals of AUD 0.75m. Individual participants rely on a variety of resources, from central coverage of the full cost to part school or self funded costs. The exact balance varies between programmes.

Evidence of impact

Evidence published in Fraser and Petch (2007) shows differential improvement of schools in the last three years, in a number of performance indicators, against a background of improvement in small incremental steps over the last eight years. The more marked three year improvement trends include measures of school climate, using teachers' perceptions of school morale and students' perceptions of their own motivation to learn; learning environment; student decision making; professional interaction; learning environment and a range of other measures. There is evidence that the quality of instruction in years 5–7 has improved, though this tapers off in later years. There are longer term small but positive trends in educational outcomes such as literacy, although little evidence to show a clear association with recent policy initiatives. The DEECD is monitoring performance trends systematically, and has the tools to track the impact of *Blueprint for Government Schools* on the quality of teaching and leadership, and outcomes for learners.

7.8 Food for thought

A world class approach?

Since the Victorian government published the *Blueprint* in 2003, the quality of the systemic approach to school improvement in Victoria has been excellent. Clarity of focus has led to a clear and persuasive research based school improvement, professional learning and leadership development culture, articulated through a common language. The programmes are well designed and comprehensive. Momentum has been sustained through highly effective communications and diligent consultation with all the major stakeholders. Most compelling is the way in which evidence based theory is aligned with school based provision of leadership development opportunities, reflecting a high degree of coherence in the Victorian school improvement strategy. The “theory of action” which underpins these developments is clear and rational, and can be commended to other education administrations.

Most compelling is the way in which evidence based theory is aligned with school based provision of leadership development opportunities.

The improvement strategy has also found ways of reconciling accountability and development. At the individual level, the performance and development culture framework (DEECD, 2007) provides for the accreditation of schools based on self assessment. This should reduce the need for the diagnostic reviews which are currently part of the external accountability arrangements.

Within this school improvement strategy, the Victorian leadership programme is an outstanding example of effective large scale reform. Its rigorous, systematic process is projected over several years in a carefully calibrated sequence with ample political support. The programme offers no promise of a quick fix, but deep belief in the chosen course and its ultimate success. The programme builds the capacity for the “steady work” of school reform (Elmore and McLaughlin, 1988). It fosters common understanding among policymakers and practitioners, builds practitioner capacity for reform and focuses that capacity on the development of feasible solutions rather than predetermined policy fixes. It provides for variable forms of practice suiting diverse conditions.

Much is demanded from the improving system, but the government makes an investment in building human and system capacity proportional to its expectations, thus satisfying Elmore’s law of reciprocity (Chapter 3). In fact, the driving strategy is not accountability, or implementation of models, two otherwise popular approaches to reform, but investment in human capital. This is investment not in the acquisition of fixed knowledge and ability, but in the ability to learn, to lead others to learn, and to nourish systems of continuous improvement. Thus change is cast not as a process of technical engineering, though some of that is needed, but rather as adaptive work (Heifetz, 1994), a process of learning that leads to development of new ways of acting and solutions to commonly perceived but ambiguous, complex problems. Finally, the government is providing targeted resources and leverage at the critical trouble spots where it is most needed, ensuring that leaders have the wherewithal to support the changes that emerge through their adaptive work.

The driving strategy is not accountability, or implementation of models, two otherwise popular approaches to reform, but investment in human capital ... the ability to learn, to lead others to learn, and to nourish systems of continuous improvement.

In international terms, the Victorian model of leadership development is at the cutting edge. The department has created professional learning opportunities for leaders at all levels in the system to seize, and the increasing numbers that have done so inject further knowledge and vitality into the system. This results in building human as well as knowledge capital on a large scale. The span of operation is large, probably approaching the limit for a strategy which is driven with a particular leadership structure and style, and supported by thorough consultative procedures, frequent communications and comprehensive networking. The Victorian model is exceptionally well documented; the high quality publications from the Office for Government School Education provide a clear rationale for the thoughtful approaches adopted.

Further strengths of the Victorian leadership development strategy

A coherent reform process: The department has adopted and propagated three educational models, reflecting current research evidence on effective schools, effective leaders, and effective professional learning. The models are interlinked and provide reference points for new policy initiatives, ensuring that the entire process is logically aligned. The DEECD continues to deepen the reform process; the recent introduction of a framework for purposeful teaching is linked to the existing models and the overall reform process.

Intellectual engagement of the education workforce: Despite the complexity of the Victorian reform agenda, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has focused on developing a few clear and simple messages to engage all members of the educational community. The DEECD has constructed a common framework and language to ensure that all stakeholders can engage in meaningful communication. High quality relationships are being built with the school leadership workforce and emphasis is put on exposing them to educational theory and research. The department draws on evidence from international research and shares this evidence as well as the data available in the school system to help schools in developing appropriate improvement plans.

Clear expectations for school leadership: The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has chosen, refined and disseminated a specific model of effective leadership – Sergiovanni’s model of transformational leadership – which provides an explicit statement of what is expected of school leaders. This model articulates the kind of knowledge, skills and behaviours leaders should continuously demonstrate in order to lead schools effectively. The model has been embedded in all leadership policies and initiatives; in particular, it underpins a developmental learning framework that guides school leaders’ professional development, their recruitment, training and appraisal.

A focus on performance development: The performance review of school leaders is geared to support their professional development and improve practice, rather than as a mechanism for top-down control. School leaders use the developmental learning framework as a tool to define their learning needs as part of their annual performance and development cycle. Based on the framework, they identify leadership skills they need to successfully implement the school improvement plan. They provide details of the

leadership capabilities they intend to develop, indicate professional learning actions to build their capacity, and choose evidence they will use to monitor their growth and development. In many cases, the performance and development plans are developed and monitored collaboratively with the leadership team or across the school.

Continuous learning linked to school based plans and challenges: All leadership preparation and development programmes have a school based component that matches the participants' performance plans as well as their school's strategic plan. Nineteen different programmes are available to school leaders in Victoria; their variety aims to address the specific needs of leaders at different stages of their career with different aspirations, experiences, needs and proficiency levels. Leadership development is recognised as a strategic issue; the capacities of current and future leaders have to be identified and continuously developed.

An emphasis on peer learning: The Victorian leadership strategy is built on the recognition that in order to develop professionally, school leaders need to be aware of themselves as learners. It highlights the importance of coaching, mentoring and peer observation processes. It encourages networking, collegial exchanges, and the involvement of "critical friends" within the educational community. School leaders are encouraged to seek multiple sources of feedback to develop a better understanding of and reflection on their own practice. They are expected to model such behaviours to their teachers in order to develop their schools as learning organisations. Professional learning is based on the principles of the professional learning model in evidence across the range of programmes.

Challenges

We identified some elements in the system that will require particular attention for large scale and sustainable school improvement to occur in Victoria.

Reducing the achievement gap: The key objective of the *Blueprint* reform is to improve learning outcomes regardless of students' socioeconomic background or geographic location. However, the available data on student performance is not as yet strategically used for that purpose. Performance data are not disaggregated by socioeconomic background to target disadvantaged students more specifically. None of the leadership development initiatives is specifically geared to building capacity to address equity challenges.

Involving parents and community more: The leadership development strategy aims to include leaders at different levels of the system, including the school, regional and central levels. Given the comprehensiveness of the approach, it is surprising that the school council, which has a formal role in school leadership, has so far been left out of the process. Addressing the leadership capabilities of the school council could also be a way of reaching out to the parents and community and addressing socioeconomic inequities more. In the UK, for example, government has initiated training focused on the leadership of school governing boards (DfES, 2005).

Integrating small, rural and isolated schools: The outreach to schools is still uneven and there are some schools where no member of the staff has undertaken training. Small, isolated, and rural schools have often not been sufficiently connected to the process. In small schools, teaching obligations make it difficult for principals to attend training programmes, network meetings or conferences.

Bringing transformation into the classroom: The Victorian approach recognises school leaders as leaders of transformational change in their schools. However, as in any education system, experienced teachers in Victoria may be reluctant to revise teaching practice which seems to have worked over the past and to accept new ideas that may not seem relevant to their local experience. School leaders will have to play a crucial role as mentors, role models and facilitators engaging teachers to reflect on and improve their practice using current research and evidence of effective teaching and learning. The success of the leadership reform will ultimately depend on school leaders' capacity to engage teachers with the reform process.

Avoiding over-complication: The publication of *School Improvement: A Theory of Action* (Fraser and Petch, 2007) provides a timely review of the many different strands of the school performance improvement strategy, spinning them into a cohesive thread. Seen in isolation, the different initiatives that contribute to the reforms are complicated components of a sophisticated machine. Taken together, they reinforce each other and provide coherence and direction in the drive for improved school performance. All the essential ingredients appear to be in place. It will be a challenge to embed, sustain and further develop them, and to ensure that current and new school leaders understand the principles on which effective school improvement rests.

Sustainability

The system-wide improvement and leadership development has undoubted momentum and will have an increasing impact as the system leaders among the principals engage more in work with other schools. The question of whether the strategy has passed a point of no return is not simply rhetorical; it would have real meaning if one of the key drivers of the strategy, a system-wide leader, was no longer on the scene. Other risks would include diminished government commitment to or funding for leadership development; failure to focus effectively on the development and quality assurance of learning and teaching; and any hesitation in generating and employing pupil-level performance data to inform their learning and enhance their rate of progress. Views expressed to us vary: the most capable principals are optimistic and enthusiastic; the OGSE is cautious; academics are reserved. The leadership framework has not yet penetrated much below the principal class. While the professional culture of this group has been invigorated, stimulated and in individual cases transformed, there is evidence that teaching is considered by many educators to be an activity conducted by an adult with acquiescent students in private. We were impressed with those teachers who have seen the power of peer coaching and are eager to open windows into lessons. This will be an ongoing challenge which may be accelerated if the members of the principal class emulate the leaders of the system and open their practice as educators to others in their school. Role modelling is central to what Sergiovanni terms “symbolic leadership”.

We feel that the system is close to critical mass or tipping point, which the minister described as “the point where the majority is going down a different path and the minority becomes uncomfortable in not moving” (Bronwyn Pike, Victorian Minister for Education).

Victoria provides a working model of system-wide school leadership development from which other systems can learn.

In conclusion, we largely share the view expressed by Richard Elmore, who knows the Victorian system well:

“The good news is that Victoria, because of the thoughtful design of its improvement strategy, is on the leading edge of policy and practice in the world. There are few improvement strategies close to or as well developed, and probably none that are focused with such depth and complexity on the basic human capital problems associated with school improvement at scale. Unfortunately, this is also the bad news. What it means is that there are relatively few places Victoria can look to find the answers to the kinds of problems that will surface through the middle and later stages of the strategy. The special affliction of the precursor is to have to make the mistakes that others will learn from”. (Elmore, 2007)

As we have suggested, challenges remain in terms of embedding, sustaining and further developing the Victorian school improvement strategy, but mistakes were in conspicuously short supply. Victoria provides a working model of system-wide school leadership development from which other systems can learn.

Annex 7.A1

Case study visit programme, 20-23 August 2007

Day 1: Monday 20 August 2007

Time	Event	Participants	Location	
09.00 - 10.00	The Victorian Context The Education Reform Agenda	Darrell Fraser Judy Petch Dale Cooper	OGSE	
10.00 - 11.00	Learning to Lead in Victoria The Leadership Agenda	Darrell Fraser Judy Petch	OGSE	
11.30 - 12.30	Evaluations of Leadership programmes currently being run in Victoria	Judy Petch Dina Guest Raylene Dodds Dale Cooper	OGSE	
13.15 - 14.15	Meeting with Leadership & Teacher Development Team to include a briefing on the Developmental Framework for School Leaders	Judy Petch Raylene Dodds Chris Thomson Jane Hendry Chris McKenzie Dale Cooper	OGSE	
15.00 - 16.30	Meeting with the Representatives of the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). The purpose of this meeting is to provide the national context. This will include a briefing on the current work of Teaching Australia.	DEST reps (Ewen McDonald, Shelagh Whittleston) Teaching Australia reps (Helen O'Sullivan, Nicolas Jackson, Kathy Lacey) Darrell Fraser Judy Petch Dale Cooper	OGSE	
16.30 - 17.10	Meeting with the Victorian Minister for Education, Bronwyn Pike	Minister Pike Professor Peter Dawkins	Minister's room	
17.10 - 17.30	Meeting with the Secretary, Department of Education Victoria, Professor Peter Dawkins	Peter Dawkins		
19.00 – 21.50		Darrell Fraser Judy Petch Dale Cooper Dina Guest John Allman Dianne Peck Katherine Henderson Dahle Suggett Jeff Rosewarne Tony Bugden Glenda Strong Vicki Forbes Gabrielle Leigh Chris Chant Michael Bell Julie Podbury Gordon Pratt Professor Field Rickard Professor Patrick Griffin Professor Jack Keating Tony Mackay Professor Peter Dawkins Louise McDonald Sue Buckley	Deputy Secretary Government School Education General Manager Govt School Education Senior Policy Officer Govt School Education General Manager Govt School Education General Manager Govt School Education General Manager Govt School Education Deputy Secretary Policy and Evaluation Deputy Secretary Policy and Innovation Deputy Secretary Resources and Infrastructure General Manager Human Resources DEECD Regional Director Barwon Region Principal Brentwood Secondary College Principal Carolyn Springs Secondary College Principal Mentone Primary School Principal Euroa Secondary College Principal Brighton Secondary College Principal Brighton Primary School Dean of Education University of Melbourne Deputy Dean of Education University of Melbourne Faculty of Education University of Melbourne Director, Centre for Strategic Education Secretary DEECD Amrita Chandra, Larry Kammener, Drew Arthurson Tony Bell, Chris Bennett	Level 46 Collins Tower

Day 2: Tuesday 21 August 2007

Time	Event	Participants
08.30 – 10.45	Murrumbeena Primary School Discussion with Principal about the Victorian Leadership development strategy High Performing Principals Coaching & Mentoring Programme Teacher Professional Leave Principals Common The Ultranet Tour of school	Heather Hill Principal and colleagues
11.15 – 14.00	Balwyn High School Discussion with Principal about the Victorian Leadership Development Strategy High Performing Principals Coaching & Mentoring Programme Teacher Professional Leave Development Learning Framework for School Leaders The Ultranet Include a discussion with a group of students in the Xplore centre. Tour of school	Bruce Armstrong , Principal Senior Leadership Team, Staff and students
14.30 – 16.00	Meeting with the nine Regional Directors Presentation on the role of Regions and Regional Directors. Discussion with Regional Directors about Impact of Leadership Strategy and their work Two Case Studies Bendigo Regeneration Project Targeted School Improvement initiative, two examples to illustrate approach to school improvement and the role of the school leadership team.	Nine Regional Directors

Day 3: Wednesday 22 August 2007

Time	Event	Participants
09.00 – 10.30	Discussion with 8 Principals who have participated in the High Performing Principals initiative.	Eight High Performing Principals
11.00 - 12.15	Meeting with eight participants in the Masters of School Leadership Programme	Eight Masters of School Leadership participants
12.15 – 13.15	Meeting with 8 participants from the other leadership development programmes	Eight programme participants
14.00 – 15.00	Meeting with the Presidents of the three associations that represent Victorian principals to examine the complimentary set of leadership development programmes their organisations deliver. Brian Burgess President - Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Fred Ackerman President Victorian Principals Association Jeff Walters & Bob Parr Organisers Principal Class Association Australian Education Union.	
15.00 – 16.00	Meeting with Tony Bugden, General Manager of Human Resources Workforce Corporate Leadership Strategy Enterprise Bargaining Agreement	Tony Bugden and colleagues
16.00 – 17.00	Meeting with Programme Providers from Victorian Universities and private providers: Prof Len Cairns Monash University Prof Field Rickards Melbourne University Prof Sally Walker Deakin University Prof Jack Keating Melbourne University Steve Atkinson Sharon Butler Ross Dean Karen Starr	

Day 4: Thursday 23 August 2007

Time	Event	Participants
09.00	Meeting with the other deputy secretaries in the department of education to discuss policy agenda and how resources are used to deliver the government agenda.	Dahle Suggett Katherine Henderson Jeff Rosewarne
10.00	Meeting with Professor Peter Dawkins to examine the work of the Victorian Department of Education in the national context.	Peter Dawkins Tony Mackay
11.00	OECD team meeting	
14.30	Plenary session for OECD team to feed back, raise questions and to test their first impressions.	Darrell Fraser Judy Petch John Allman Dina Guest Dianne Peck

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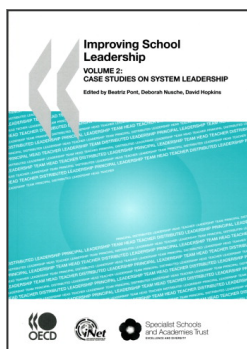
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