



## **Leading Schools of the Future: The Co-Existence of Solo-Transformational and Shared Instructional Leadership**

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Over the last decade, it has been increasingly recognised that school leadership is critical for improved student outcomes. The spotlight is on shared leadership with a focus on professional learning. In recent years, it has been acknowledged that whilst the principal plays a prominent role, the capabilities of a single individual are insufficient for the many leadership responsibilities, including the challenge of preparing a diverse student group for success in a knowledge-based world. Hence, leadership is now also thought of as being shared across many talented actors. As new knowledge emerges, new types of expertise are required; making professional learning critical for student success in addition to visionary leadership.

This paper explores the practice of school leadership in two schools in Australia. The first case study focuses on the leadership practice in two teams. Adopting a mixed methods research design, data was gathered for a PhD study in 2010 through observations, social network survey, and interviews. The framework for analysis included network theory and hybrid leadership model (Gronn, 2009). The study found a hybrid leadership pattern with various configurations, including informal leaders sometimes occupying more central positions in networks, suggesting that the lived experience of leadership in may be significantly different from that of the formally designed organisation.

The second case focuses on the leadership practice in the school where the authors are formally designated leaders. In 2008, the school was one of the lowest performing schools in Queensland. The school improvement agenda included re-visioning of the school, re-structuring leadership, and 'in-house' professional development. Today, the school is recognised as one of the top five schools in the State and has expanded the professional learning opportunities to include pedagogical coaching and professional learning teams. This case study too reveals that the approach to school leadership is situational. In the initial stages, the principal adopted a transformational approach, followed by shared instructional leadership. Emerging trends of recent leadership 'innovation' indicate an improvement in student outcomes where teachers received pedagogical coaching.

The findings of both case studies indicate the task of school leadership includes the co-existence of solo (individual-focused) and shared instructional leadership arrangements, and the presence of formal leaders and teacher leaders; a hybrid leadership model. The findings of these case studies provide valuable insights for school leadership practice as there are some current trends that will gain traction and become common over time (Gurr, 2015).