

Reforming Education:
A Review of the Contributions of Benjamin Levin, Ph.D.

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Abstract

One of Canada's beacons in the theory and practice of educational reform is Dr. Benjamin Levin. Dr. Levin's steadfast commitment to improving education is rooted in a unique career that has alternated between academia as a scholar and an intimate knowledge of the workings of government as a senior provincial public servant. His publications are accessible to those within educational scholarship and within the political environments of public and educational administration. This paper explores and celebrates the continuing career and contributions of Dr. Levin.

Introduction

One of Canada's beacons in educational reform is Dr. Benjamin Levin, whose career reflects a prolonged commitment toward improving school systems. Dr. Levin's contributions are based on his pragmatic understanding of the workings of government and politics, and a sincere regard for the value of applied research in educational practice. Levin's career has been marked by an overlapping and an integration of his work as a scholar, and a public servant that culminates in his establishment of unique and broad contributions to Education.

Levin's overall career embodies the main themes of knowledge mobilization and the application of academic research toward effective education reform. Through numerous publications and presentations, Dr. Levin has made the complexities of improved learning accessible to the political environments of public and educational administration and encouraged decision-makers to apply the findings of empirically valid research. This paper explores Levin's biographical background, a selection of his publications, and his innovative research interests. The paper portrays the development of Dr. Levin's support for comprehensive, efficient, and linkage-based approaches to education reform that combine system-wide improvement for student outcomes with improved educator morale and public confidence.

Biographical Background: Building a Foundation

Dr. Benjamin Levin's biographical background illustrates the ways in which his many and varied life experiences have paved the way for a distinguished and original career of note within the broad field of Education. This section focuses on his academic and public service accomplishments, from Levin's early career up to more recent endeavours. Additionally, the paper provides examples of the early influences on Levin's outlook for his work, including mentors and family members. Ben Levin has been a politician, a bureaucrat, a researcher, an adviser, and a writer, which provides a distinctive pragmatism to his ongoing contributions. His influences, philosophical orientations, and his studies and employment opportunities are the foundation for Levin's prolific and important career.

Levin's interest in reform began early. While still in high school, he initiated and organized a city-wide high school student's union; an activity he has mentioned with fondness and pride in several biographical

sketches and interviews (Canadian Education Association, 2003; Clune, 2005; Ontario Institute for Studies in Education [OISE], 2007; B. Levin, personal communication, July 23, 2007). At the age of 19, he was elected as a public school trustee in Winnipeg's Seven Oaks School Division, which allowed him a window into the workings of local school boards and their potential to improve education (B. Levin, personal communication, July 23, 2007).

Dr. Levin is both an accomplished academic and a public servant. A brief summary of his credentials commences formally in 1974, when the University of Manitoba bestowed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree on Benjamin Levin. One year later, Levin earned an Education Master's (Ed. M.) degree from Harvard University before returning to Winnipeg, Canada. These degrees launched his distinguished career combining academic contribution and public service.

Levin then undertook his doctoral studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), where he worked simultaneously as Chief Executive Research Officer for Ontario's large Peel Board of Education. This was one of his early opportunities to apply his research to practice (Canadian Education Association, 2003). Levin completed his Ph.D. in Educational Administration in 1982, and in 1983 he moved back to the province of Manitoba and joined the provincial Department of Education as the Director of Planning and Research, where his application of research to practice was evident (Canadian Education Association, 2003). He became Assistant Deputy Minister in 1985 and then served as the Executive Director of the Manitoba Universities Grants Commission (Canadian Education Association, 2003). These experiences in the provincial public service contributed to his later scholarship contributions and interests, particularly in the areas of leadership, access to post-secondary education, and the mobilization of knowledge.

Levin joined the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba in 1989. Although his professional designations did not include teacher certification, he received a Merit Award at the University, and left as a tenured Professor in 2004. His 15 years at the University of Manitoba also included three years as Dean of Continuing Education that broadened his perspective beyond schools to include the value of life-long learning. During his final 3 years at that university, Levin was seconded as Manitoba's Deputy Minister of Education. Dr. Levin then returned to OISE/UT 20 years after his graduation from that institution to hold the Canada Research Chair in Educational Leadership and Policy (Institute of Public Administration of Canada [IPAC], 2005; Ontario Institute for Studies in Education [OISE], 2007). As a result of Levin's extensive experiences with school boards and trustees across the country throughout his career, he has cultivated a particularly realistic perspective into typical school board decision-making processes and the critical imperative of an involved, attentive citizenry (Yeo, 2003; Levin & Gaskell, 2007).

Levin identifies three men that he regarded as innovative leaders who were influential to his own development. Levin named former Peel Board of Education Superintendent Bill Lambie as an early influence on his career, due to Lambie's balanced leadership style and his capacity to accomplish many tasks without losing focus. Lambie's focused leadership style shaped Levin's leadership significantly (Clune, 2005).

As one reads through Dr. Levin's impressive curriculum vita, Mr. Lambie's influence is evident. A senior public servant that worked closely with Dr. Levin during his tenure as Deputy Minister in Manitoba said that:

Deputy Minister Levin was. . . a very strict time manager. . . he limited himself to involvement at strategic points in the process to ensure. . . a sense of coherency, and [did] not allow himself to get drawn into interminable meetings on other matters where his participation was not absolutely essential. (Yeo, 2003, p. 8)

As a leader, Levin evidences the skills of an excellent manager; able to prioritize, organize, and discipline himself to accomplish the goals of a large governmental department.

Dr. Levin has also mentioned Dr. John Wiens, with whom he shared roots in Seven Oaks School Division, Winnipeg, as an influential mentor. Levin said he learned a tremendous amount from Dr. Wiens, now the

Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba (Clune, 2005). They have also published together (Levin & Wiens, 2003). He was further influenced by the late Hon. Dr. Ron Duhamel, a scholar, a Manitoba Deputy Minister, a university administrator, and also a federal Canadian Cabinet Minister and Senator. As an academic and politician, Dr. Duhamel shared Dr. Levin's understandings of the workings of government and the development and implementation of public policy into the area of education. Dr. Levin has also declared that he was influenced by Dr. Duhamel's respectful treatment of people and his strong advocacy for young people (Levin, 2008a; B. Levin, personal communication, June 13, 2004).

While Benjamin Levin is known as a prolific academic and a hard-working public servant, balance has been a key message in Levin's lifestyle and in his more recent writing. Beneath his many academic distinctions and professional contributions, Dr. Benjamin Levin is a balanced man. Despite his copious publication record and senior public service responsibilities, Levin takes his allocated holidays every year and confesses that he finds an important release through the "compulsive" reading of fiction (Clune, 2005, n.p.). Dr. Levin has encouraged others to build down time into life and stated:

Each of us has to learn to accept that we cannot do everything and to live within our needs and limitations while also striving to be better at our work. Like most everything important in life, it's a matter of constantly changing balance. (Clune, 2005, n.p.)

Levin recognizes balance as a leadership quality in some of his former mentors (see Levin, 2008a), and he is quick to acknowledge that his family and parents are the foundation on which his achievements have been built (Levin, 2005b; B. Levin, personal communication, July 23, 2007). While maintaining a high-level career, he makes time for his family and invested many hours watching his daughters' progress through synchronized swimming at Winnipeg's Pan-Am Pool, for example.

Significantly, Dr. Levin said that his parents were great influences on his work and thinking. He dedicated one of his books "with love and gratitude" to them (Levin, 2005). His father was "very political, at least in his thinking and talk," while his mother poured her character into her son (B. Levin, personal communication, July 23, 2007). Family is important to Levin, a value he has carried to his role as a Deputy Minister. In both Ontario and Manitoba, parents and Parent Councils are included as critical stakeholders invited to collaborate on education policy, reflecting an acknowledgment of the many interests that must be balanced in the development of education policy.

Highlighted Works of Benjamin Levin

Levin's experiences inside public administration and politics have greatly influenced his work, though it is difficult to measure the degree to which his work has influenced politics. A selection of some of Dr. Benjamin Levin's prominent texts are discussed here as an example of Levin's interest and participation in system-wide education reform. Levin continuously emphasizes the vitality of purposeful and proven educational policy direction, while refraining from providing prescriptions for contextually based activities. His focus on an overall commitment rather than specifics may be a discretionary choice reflecting his philosophical respect for effective local governance. Dr. Levin's research, presentations, and publications provide a rich base for access to scholarship to inform education policy. Books, chapter contributions to academic books, presentations, journal articles, conference addresses, reports, and studies represent his commitment to knowledge mobilization, the potential to strengthen the connection between research and policy, and his influence in the field (Levin, 2008b, p. 4; Ontario Institute for Studies in Education [OISE], 2009a). Reform toward improved learning is prominent in Dr. Levin's scholarship. His works persistently stress that the learning experience must always improve, and it must be central in education decision-making. Levin makes it clear that teaching and learning have to come first, and this is perhaps his greatest legacy to politicians and educational leaders (Levin, 2008b). His writings are compelling in their consistent message that there is an obligation for those who know how learning can be improved to share and implement that knowledge through careful policy, research, practice, leadership, and reform. He emphasizes that mobilizing knowledge and implementing its lessons will improve learning.

Levin's book with Riffel, *Schools and the changing world: Struggling with the future* (1997), explored how school systems tried to cope with social change and is based on Levin's research, observations, and conclusions as both an academic and a Deputy Minister. Later, *Reforming education: From origins to outcomes* (2001) examined large-scale education reforms in Manitoba, Alberta, Minnesota, New Zealand, and England. In each case study, reform resulted from public dissatisfaction with school systems. The book explored the realistic limitations of political reform, reflecting the intersection of theory and practice that has been a distinguishing feature of Dr. Levin's career. At the time *Reforming education* was published, Levin was serving as the Deputy Minister of Education in Manitoba with the opportunity to encourage policy makers to pursue researched, outcome-based decisions for school systems.

In 2005, Dr. Levin published *Governing education*, a book that highlighted educational issues in Manitoba. Educational reform toward improvements for students is something that has mattered significantly throughout Levin's career. Importantly, in *Governing education*, Levin commented that "the process would take a great amount of energy and would distract everyone from focusing on things that had more potential to benefit students" (Levin, 2005, p. 143). The book contained interesting anecdotes regarding recent education policy in that province. Some themes in the book were the reluctance of governors to accept research over voter opinion, the frustrations of working within political agendas and timelines, and the value of developing policy in consultation with stakeholders (Yeo, 2003).

Levin's books stand against the myth of the power of the public bureaucracy over democracy (Adie & Thomas, 1982; Goodsell, 1983; Barker, 2008). In *Governing education*, Levin states that politicians will occasionally respect the advice of their senior bureaucrats, but at other times they will ignore the experts in the interests of improved political fortunes. Dr. Levin stated directly that much of the emphasis driving current educational reform is primarily due to political decision-making at the governance levels (Levin, 2005). He has written about the significance of careful policy and the potential for poor decisions due to political motivations. For example, he wrote that the "erroneous emphasis" in political circles "on governance change and test results to effect large-scale change are not empirically driven decisions" (Levin, 2003a, p. 57). Such decisions have not reproduced the results governors perhaps expected, nor do they evidentially correlate with direct benefits for students (see also Levin, 2005; Levin, Glaze, & Fullan, 2007; Levin, 2008a).

Governing education presented examples of how members of the government may make decisions based on polling results over decisions related to sound public policy, despite Levin's relentless commitment to the potential of research to improve education within his former role as Deputy Minister (Levin, 2003b; Levin, 2005). In *Governing education*, Levin also approached the subject of growing public distrust of government. He argued in that text, that "high levels of cynicism about politics, fuelled by a lack of understanding of real dynamics of policy and the political process, are dangerous to democracy" (Levin, 2005, p. i). Evidence suggests that most citizens remain ignorant about the relevance of research to improvement in any given policy area, and therefore their "will" is not necessarily informed (Levin, 2004a; Levin, 2004b; Levin & Gaskell, 2007). This is a problem in a democracy, and a very real challenge to the purposes of public education. Regarding electoral choices and political campaigns, Dr. Levin wrote "the danger is that our attention will be drawn to the wrong things . . . the things that really matter will be ignored" (Levin, 2007c).

Dr. Levin's work recognizes and explores politicians as leaders, which is not a prevalent theme in education literature (Levin & Riffel, 2000; Levin, 2005; Levin, Glaze, & Fullan, 2007; Reimer, 2008). Acknowledging increasing cynicism on the part of those outside of government toward government and elected officials, Levin has boldly addressed the credibility of elected decision-makers. He does not blame the politicians, the school boards, or the democratic process, but recognizes that "when voters want more evidence about policies, government will feel themselves under pressure to provide it." (Canadian Education Association, 2003, p. 10). Performance management literature references this as the responsibility of an attentive public, a responsibility often overlooked by voting citizens (Thomas, 2006, Ch 14).

Dr. Levin's more recent publications and presentations also apply research to education policy and practice. Topics include managing change in the public service, school improvement, building student voice,

diversity, what should be taught in schools, accountability and funding issues, outreach to the community, effective resource use, and reliable indicators that education is improving. Each of these represents the exploration of a distinct, yet overlapping aspect of effective education to be researched within his framework for empirically based education reform.

The title of Levin's latest book, *How to change 5000 schools* (2008a), suggests that politicians can be influenced toward educational reform, but does not contain the performance measurement criteria or monitoring required by public administration to assure effective public policy (Thomas, 2006). In an interview with *Principal Connections* in 2005, he stated:

As leaders we all need to recognize that we are NOT indispensable, and that others can and will step forward when needed . . . Leaders have to model being learners . . . and that means finding the time to read, to network, and to involve ourselves in professional learning of various kinds.”
(Clune, 2005, n.p.)

He has collected most of his thinking and learning about leadership in a very readable and accessible format that offers advice and inspiration to readers. Levin continues to explore the influences of the various facets of leadership on improving schools, and concluded *How to change 5000 schools* with the simple statement regarding effective change in schools as “the time is right.” (Levin, 2008a, p. 239)

Innovative Areas of Inquiry

As in his written work, Dr. Levin's primary research interests centre on educational improvement. They include large-scale educational reform, the role of policy and government in education, the impact of leadership on improving school performance and outcomes, equity issues, and school-to-work transitions (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education [OISE], 2008). He has also conducted research in areas that are currently inconclusive in their effect on learning, including poverty and economic status and changing labour markets. Recently, his focus on knowledge mobilization has facilitated discussion among scholars and practitioners toward increased research to strengthen application (Levin, 2008b). However, he is a visionary and a scholar, who leaves practical implementation to public administrations and to his readership.

Over 2002–2003, Dr. Levin was a visiting scholar at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, where he conducted a project on the visibility and effect of education research on reforming education systems (Levin, 2007a). Later in 2003, Levin presented his research in Paris and London with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). He stressed the importance of research to reform in order to assure improvement for learners, (Levin, 2003a; 2003b; 2003c) but the negotiation of appropriate change strategies was necessarily left to the administrators and practitioners of education.

In 2004, Kenneth Leithwood invited Levin to collaborate on a research project at OISE/UT analyzing the impact of educational leadership in England. This is reflective of the international relevance of Levin's work (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education [OISE], 2007; personal communication, July 23, 2007). That inquiry represents an important exploratory work on the effect of leadership on learning. The scholars developed a model to measure the influence of leadership training on education policy and on student outcomes (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; B. Levin, personal communication, July 23, 2007). Dr. Levin now serves as the only non-UK member of the National College for School Leadership in the United Kingdom, and it is interesting that Dr. Levin has served as the Deputy Minister in Ontario implementing reforms similar to those in the United Kingdom (Levin, 2008a).

Levin's recent research probes the role of leadership in education policy and its potential to guide significant change. As Canada Research Chair at OISE/UT, Dr. Levin is the principal investigator of “*Research Supporting Practice in Education*,” a program of research and related activities aimed at learning more about how to build strong linkages between research, policy, and practice (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education [OISE], 2009a). He has worked in close collaboration with prominent educational

administration scholars in Canada, Michael Fullan and Kenneth Leithwood (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education [OISE], 2007; Levin, 2008a).

Although evaluation and assessment have not been Dr. Levin's primary research focus, his overall commitment to authentic assessment to inform classroom practice is a common theme in his research and thinking (Young & Levin, 2002). Furthermore, the evaluation of impact in the research domain is a theme in public administration that Dr. Levin may have brought with him from his capacities in the public service (Levin & Riffel, 1999; Levin, Gaskell, & Pollock, 2007; Thomas, 2006). In this way, the exploration of the application of research to the practices of education is a dominant theme in Levin's work. Assurance that public policy is achieving the desired results is a growing field in public sector management, and its influence is reflected in Levin's writing (Thomas, 2006). He has examined, lived, and explored the relationship between research and educational practice. His work has also explored the influence of research on policy, concluding that there is a critical correlation that can improve education (Levin, 2004a; Levin, 2007a; Levin, 2008a). Confirmed evidence that research translates into better results for students essentializes the responsibility of educators and researchers to support better education policy (Levin, 2003b; Levin, 2008a). Also, knowledge mobilization can inform voters to hold decision-makers accountable for better education policy. Dr. Levin's work provides political policymakers with research to initiate discussions and inform decisions, should politicians choose to consistently adopt policies that will serve the real interests of students (Levin, 2008a).

An important but less prominent research thrust for Dr. Levin is the principle that learning is for life and adult learning programs are as important to student success as preschool programs (Levin, 1999; Levin, 2003b; Levin, 2004a; Levin, 2004b; Levin & Gaskell, 2007). Levin supports educational improvement across ages and capacities and does not restrict research to public schools or to students within the mandatory age of attendance. As a professor at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Levin said:

While almost everyone is willing to support more opportunities for young children, it is a tougher political sell to advocate second chances for adults. . . . My argument is that if we want to improve educational outcomes for children, we must also pay attention to adults, and improve adult education provision across the country." (Levin, 2004b, p. 53)

Adult education initiatives that began with the previous Conservative government were expanded in Manitoba under Levin's leadership. Dr. Levin's research interests are complemented by his unique career experiences, and his writing consistently supports broad and system-wide educational reform for improvement, based on the purposeful application of research to practice.

Influences and Tensions on Benjamin Levin's Work

Dr. Benjamin Levin is a scholar, but he also stands among Canada's respected practitioners in the field of Educational Administration. He has uniquely held the confidence of two Canadian Premiers and been appointed to the posts of Deputy Minister in Ontario and in Manitoba, a rarity in Canadian education and politics. In 2007, Levin wrote about Ontario's reform strategies. In the document, he outlined "some of the main elements of the Ontario government's approach to supporting educational change and contrast[s] it with many other large-scale change strategies" (Levin, Glaze, & Fullan, 2007, p. 2). Under Dr. Levin's leadership, "schools in Ontario are exciting places" (Levin, Glaze, & Fullan, 2007, p. 2). Whether or not that excitement translates into improved teacher morale and significant improvement in all educational outcomes has not yet been independently assessed, but the excitement is more fully presented and discussed in *How to change 5000 schools* (Levin, 2008a).

Dr. Levin's accomplishments as an academic researcher and professor, and his experiential understanding and respect for the public service have influenced many students of Education. Both undergraduate and graduate students across the nation have found agency through his writings and in particular through his co-authored textbook, *Understanding Canadian schools* (Young & Levin, 2002; Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2007). Nevertheless, it is surprising that there are a limited number of citations associated with Levin's research through the Social Science Citation Indexes and Google Scholar. What is significant perhaps is the

fact that all of his work *is* cited by other writers and researchers, reflecting the broad appeal and applicability of his work.

Levin's contributions build on prior research and explore possibilities in education. Though there are not many policy measurement tools or evidential support of actual improvement contained within the writing, he does provoke discussion and provide opportunities for empirical research. Dr. Levin's conviction that education must be tied to broader policy areas that affect learning (Levin, 2003b; Levin, 2006) reflects the horizontal government principles emerging in the educational systems of Australia, the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, and the State of Kentucky within the US (Peach, 2004; Bakvis & Juillet, 2004). This is likely the practical response of an education scholar who has also spent extended periods inside the public sector recognizing the strength and reality of integrated government. For instance, he voiced this unique perspective upon receiving the Whitworth Award in 2003:

We need to think more systematically about how interventions in schools fit with broader economic and social policy actions . . . we need to focus our work in schools on a limited set of priority areas that have the best chance of actually changing teaching and learning . . . we have to look beyond the schools in our efforts to improve educational outcomes. (Levin, 2003b, p. 4)

Dr. Levin has been invited to share his thoughts and scholarship internationally on numerous occasions; exploring possibilities is globally relevant.

While Dr. Levin was a Deputy Minister in Ontario and Manitoba, he experienced reform. Broad governance changes took place in the education departments. Many choices were based on politics instead of research, and have not produced student improvement in recognized assessments. In 2006, the OECD PISA results placed Ontario schools within the Canadian average, and Manitoba schools were ranked well below the national average. However, in 2008, Canadian Learning International (CLI) identified Canada's formal education processes as "of enviable quality" among world systems (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008, p. 5). Although politicians seem reluctant to base policy on sound research, CLI's findings suggest that Levin's encouragement of research to practice is being heeded in the schools regardless of senior leadership.

The sometimes frustrating accountabilities of a senior civil servant have possibly guided some of Dr. Levin's research questions, though one can only surmise this by comparing educational issues during his tenure in the public service with subsequent areas of research and writing. He writes candidly and regularly of giving thoroughly researched policy advice to elected members of government only to have it ignored (Levin, 2003b; Levin, 2004b; Levin, 2005b; IPAC, 2005; Levin & Gaskell, 2007). A number of his articles reference this type of experience, especially as it pertains to the relationships between research, policy, and practice. During his Whitworth Award speech at the University of Manitoba in 2003, Dr. Levin shared candidly that "Governments are much more interested in what voters think than in what experts think. As one of my ministers told me once at a rather awkward juncture, 'Don't worry Ben; nobody cares what the Deputy Minister thinks'" (Levin, 2003b, p. 11). According to Dr. Levin, this statement identified the realities of government and politics. Instead of personal offense or discouragement, however, Dr. Levin regards these realities as reasons to seek "a better approach to education policy" (Levin, 2003b, p. 1), and so he continues as a strong advocate of research-based policy.

Arguably some of the greatest impact Dr. Levin has had on educational administration have been as a senior civil servant in charge of implementing provincial education policy. In Manitoba, he led the development of the "*K-S4 Agenda for Student Success*" that launched in 2002. Within this agenda are Levin's passions and convictions, and each one is represented in his research areas. Manitoba lists the Agenda items as improving outcomes, especially for less successful learners (Levin, 2003b; Levin, 2004b); strengthening links among schools, families and communities, particularly in the area of community consultations and increased ministerial involvement with parent councils (Yeo, 2003; Levin, 2006; Reimer, 2006); strengthening school planning and reporting (Levin, 2006); improving professional learning opportunities for educators (Levin, 2006); improved pathways among secondary schools, post-secondary education and work; and linking policy and practice to research and evidence (Levin, 2003a; Levin, 2007a; Levin, 2007b). For example, before leaving the province, Dr. Levin established the ongoing Manitoba

Education Research Network as a venue for practitioners to access current research. In 2009, Dr. Levin returned to the Ontario Ministry of Education on secondment as Deputy Minister. His commitment to the integration of research and evidence with policy and practice is again underscored and he accepted the secondment with the proviso that he will continue with his academic responsibilities (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education [OISE], 2009 a).

Research by Levin with Avis Glaze and Michel Fullan in Ontario emphasizes that the populace should seek value and support politicians willing to carefully implement renewable, sustainable, credible change in education. They have written that Ontario's education change strategy embodies vital principles, grounded in "Research that is associated with meaningful and sustainable change . . . a premier with a deep commitment to education and talented ministers [bring] strong political leadership to [a renewal of public education]" (Levin, Glaze, & Fullan, 2007, p. 7). However, the provincial election of 2007 that returned Premier McGuinty to office registered the lowest voter turnout in Ontario history, suggesting perhaps that the assured continuance of public education renewal was not actually important to Ontario voters. While disappointing to those impassioned toward excellence in school systems, this is not unusual: school board elections continue to attract the lowest voter turnout in Canada and the US (Reimer, 2008). However, Dr. Levin diligently continues to produce literature that can inform better decisions, and is available and accessible for those elected decision-makers and citizens who do seek genuine improvement in education (Levin & Fullan, 2008).

Closing Remarks

Dr. Benjamin Levin has made significant contributions to the theory and practice of education for both educators and policy makers. His consistent message has been that we can do better. He has provided extensive literature to inform leadership to govern education responsibly and assuredly. As a leader, he has sought to influence public policy toward improvement, with an attentive focus on those elements of education that research says can make learning environments better. In his sustained challenge to understand and define improved education, Dr. Levin's work reflects attention to educational outcomes. Most recently, his inquiries have led him to research the impact of leadership on student outcomes. Dr. Levin's research is intended to be translated into policy with significant outcomes for all learning environments. Further research is required to empirically validate Levin's messages, thereby compelling governors to establish public policy that will affect positive change and lead to improvement.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to Dr. Levin's contributions will be in the political realm: the willingness of provincial and school board policymakers and education administrators to embrace the import of research on educational improvement, and to make all educational decisions accordingly. At a time when public confidence in educational governance is eroding and concern about educational outcomes, school improvement, and teacher morale continues, Dr. Levin's contributions to education reform are timely and readily available to those who seek to improve teaching and learning while embracing the complex educational challenges before us.

Meanwhile, the central challenge for educational administrators and school professionals will be to effectively translate research into practice with appropriate implementation strategies and careful attention to results. The academic community can support these efforts by providing empirically tested research to support wise reform. Dr. Levin's central message is this: standing on firm research educators, policy makers, and community members must courageously lead ongoing and purposeful reform of education.

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