Mobilizing the CASS Framework for School System Success

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ABSTRACT: Educational research is increasingly focused on the role that leaders play in the improvement of teaching and learning. Although there is little disagreement concerning the belief that school jurisdiction leaders have an impact on the lives of school based leaders, teacher, and students, the nature and degree of impact continues to be debated. There is recognition that the interplay is complex and context sensitive. The intent of this paper is to explore the work the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) is doing to building system leadership capacity within Alberta's political landscape of reform in order to facilitate mobilizing knowledge for the purpose of improving student learning. I begin with identifying the Alberta educational context that has led to the commencement of this work. Next, I explore the four dimensions of the CASS framework. The paper concludes with how CASS and system leaders can mobilize leadership knowledge and best practice to improve student learning.

RESUME: La recherche dans l'enseignement accorde une place plus importante au rôle que jouent les responsables dans l'amélioration de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage. Bien que l'on ne rencontre que très peu d'avis contraire sur le fait que les responsables de juridictions scolaires jouent un rôle dans la vie scolaire des directeurs, des professeurs d'école et des élèves, la nature et l'importance de l'incidence font toujours l'objet de débats. Il est certain que l'interaction est complexe et que le contexte est un sujet délicat. Cet article a pour objet d'analyser le travail des Directeurs d'études de collège albertain (College of Alberta School Superintendents - CASS) et d'établir un dispositif d'encadrement à l'intérieur du paysage de la réforme politique albertaine afin de mobiliser plus aisément la connaissance qui servira à améliorer l'appréhension nécessaire des élèves. Tout d'abord, je définis le contexte éducatif albertain qui a été l'amorce de cette étude. J'analyse ensuite les quatre dimensions du cadre des Directeurs d'études de collège albertain (CASS). La dernière partie est consacrée à la façon dont les Directeurs d'études de collège albertain (CASS) et les responsables du dispositif peuvent mobiliser les meilleures connaissances et mettre en place de

bonnes pratiques pour améliorer l'apprentissage des élèves.

Introduction

During his visit to the Canadian House of Commons on September 2011, British Prime Minister David Cameron stated that, "Alberta is the jurisdiction with the best educational results of any English speaking jurisdiction in the world" (Kozicka, 2011, September 23, para 2). While it may be common place for Alberta's education system to receive such high praise and recognition, the Honorable Dave Hancock, Alberta's Education Minister at the time, made the following insightful comment in response, "Although we are leading edge, we aren't successful for every student yet.... We still have too high a dropout rate. We still have students who need more" (Kozicka, 2011, September 23, para.9). Such a comment supports the work of the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) who also recognize that ongoing effort to improve student success is required.

The intent of this paper is to review the CASS' continuing efforts to build system leadership capacity, with specific focus on how CASS enhances jurisdiction leaders' leadership knowledge and practice to maximize system improvement and student learning. To better understand the origin of CASS' work I begin with identifying aspects of Alberta's educational context that has led to the commencement of this work. Then given this context and a brief emphasis on varying definitions of leadership, I describe how the components of the CASS *Framework for School System Success* are put together. Given CASS' goal of mobilizing leadership research, the paper concludes with recommendations on how the CASS' board of directors can better mobilize leadership knowledge and practice through direction setting, building staff capacity, and building relationships so that jurisdiction leaders at the board level can better influence school level leaders and teachers in order to improve student learning.

Alberta Context

Governments everywhere have been embarking on substantial waves of reform in an attempt to develop more effective school systems and raise levels of student learning and achievement. Such reforms have tended to focus on: curriculum; accountability, including student testing and public feedback; market forces such as enhancing parental choice for schooling; and the status of teachers and their

organizations through policy and collective bargaining arrangements (Hopkins & Levin, 2000). Alberta's ongoing endeavor for continual improvement means school jurisdictions find themselves working within a political landscape of reform, bound by structured efforts, high levels of expectations for results, and public accountability. This accountability driven environment is framed within centralized educational legislation and policy; a provincial curriculum; and mandated structured strategic planning, accountability, and reporting; coupled with decentralized jurisdiction responsibility for implementing improvements that meet school jurisdiction local context (Hopkins & Levin, 2000). Much of this work has been facilitated by the cordial relationship between Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association stemming from labour peace due to a five year collective agreement. Regrettably a provincial election in the spring of 2012, followed by frequent cabinet shuffles, and tension between the Alberta Teachers Association, the Alberta School Boards Association, and the Alberta Government from unsuccessful tripartite conversations following the expiration of the teachers' collective agreement has stalled much of the efforts of Alberta's *Transformation Agenda*.

Alberta's *Framework for Student Learning: Competencies for Engaged Thinkers and Ethical Citizens with an Entrepreneurial Spirit (Alberta Education, 2011)*, has been produced by Alberta Education as a foundational element for review and development of future curriculum: programs of study, assessment, and learning and teaching resources. It is the culminating document resulting from: educational literature; research; other provincial and international frameworks for learning. As well as a number of government initiatives that have utilized online consultations and face-to-face engagements with parent groups, students, teachers, school administrators, researchers, employers, and non-governmental organizations. Some of the government initiatives include but are not limited to Setting the Direction for Special Education (Alberta Education, 2009), Inspiring Education (Alberta Education, 2010 a). Speak Out (Alberta Education, 2010b), and the Alberta Student Engagement Initiative (Hargreaves, 2009). All of which provided Albertans with an opportunity to participate in dialogues to envision the educated Albertan of 2030 (Alberta Education, 2011).

As previously referenced, the overarching Alberta Government initiative, sometimes referred to as the Transformation Agenda, is a holistic and integrated approach grounded in the effort

to change the education system via the re-examination of: student needs, how we teach students, what we teach them, how to better engage students and communities, and how research can be harnessed to inform change. The emergence of such an extensive reform effort has led to renewed interest in and inquiry about the jurisdiction role in educational change, as system leaders can exert a powerful influence on the kinds of instructional practices favored and supported across their division (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). While Alberta's education system has been undergoing this systemic review, the College of Alberta School Superintendents (2009) has been pursuing "its general professional aim of improving student learning for each student in the province" (p. 1), by strengthening the performance of educational leaders via a methodically executed initiative intended to help build system leadership capacity.

College of Alberta School Superintendent Framework

This section of the article proceeds as follows. I begin with a discussion on the impetus behind the creation of the CASS framework. I comment briefly on the impact varying definitions of leadership have had on the framework. I then take up the framework itself, describing its dimensions. I conclude with a conceptual model that places CASS as the intermediary between Provincial and Jurisdiction roles where the framework is leveraged as a powerful lever for student improvement.

Grounded in the belief that "behind excellent teaching and excellent schools is excellent leadership" (The Wallace Foundation, 2006, p. 1), CASS has proactively positioned itself as a professional organization. Harnessing the power of its members and outside experts, CASS intends to build the capacity of its membership to create and lead positive changes in school and teacher practice for the betterment of student learning.

The CASS framework, entitled the *Framework for School System Success*, attempts to surpass most education reforms which often fall short in adopting, supportive, well-aligned practices and which are typically insufficiently differentiated to allow systems to choose or adapt programs to improve leadership that fit their own particular context. The CASS framework embraces the intrinsic concept of reflection, dialogue, sharing, and collaborating in both formal and informal ways and clearly addresses common concerns and observations that most initiatives have not paid sufficient

attention to how to create a framework for implementation that leaders can utilize to induce changes in practice (Hopkins & Levin, 2000; The Wallace Foundation, 2006).

Cuban (1988) discloses that "there are more than 350 definitions of leadership but no clear and unequivocal understanding as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders" (p. 190). Most of these definitions seem to link it to influence, indirectly suggesting that it is a process which leads to the achievement of desired purpose, and involves inspiring and supporting others towards the achievement of a vision (National College for School Leadership, 2003). A review of the literature reveals a number of competing models or typologies of leadership that are often referenced when talking about educational leadership. The debates over which typology affords maximum leverage for contributing to learning has diminished in recent years. Today, *leadership for learning* has come to include features of instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and shared leadership (Hallinger, 2003; Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Instructional leadership focuses the behavior on student learning, Transformational leadership increases the commitment of followers and Shared leadership imparts a shared responsibility for achieving a common outcome. Together these three sides of the leadership triangle make up leading for learning and point the way to improved student learning.

CASS recognizes that formal research and evidence about effective practice from educators' experience plays far too small a role in policy and in school improvement. As such, the *Framework for School System Success* also referred to as *Moving and Improving* and *Leadership Learning* is built upon the union of published peer reviewed leadership and school system improvement research and harnesses sound jurisdiction leadership practices that are instrumental to creating the conditions for student and school system staff to succeed (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2009). These sound practices were determined collaboratively by CASS and representatives from Alberta Education, the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) the Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA), Alberta School Councils Association (ASCA) and The Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) to ensure an outside, independent perspective. Transforming a complex educational system, such as Alberta's, requires leadership, effective planning, and commitment to goals and strategies.

CASS' goal continues to emphasize helping guide school jurisdictions improve student learning through leadership development, as actions at the school jurisdiction level such as enhancing leadership capacity are essential to improving schooling and student learning (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2009; Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008). With financial support from Alberta Education, the framework is based on the work of the CASS executive, project director Rick Morrow, Michael Fullan, Ken Leithwood and Ben Levin and contains 11 dimensions organized under five key themes.

A. Vision and Direction Setting
- Dimension 1: Jurisdiction-Wide Focus on Student Achievement
- Dimension 2: Targeted and Phased Focuses for School Improvement
- Dimension 3: Strategic Engagement with the Government's Agenda for Change and Associated Resources

B. Organization Design and Alignment
- Dimension 4: Infrastructure Alignment

C. Capacity Development
- Dimension 5: Jurisdiction-Wide Sense of Efficacy
- Dimension 6: Investing in Instructional Leadership
- Dimension 7: Jurisdiction-Wide, Job Embedded Professional Development for Leaders and Teachers

D. Relationship Building
- Dimension 8: Building and Maintaining Good Relations
- Dimension 9: Engaging Parents

E. The Primacy of Curriculum and Instruction
- Dimension 10: Approaches to Curriculum and Instruction
- Dimension 11: Use of Evidence for Planning, Organizational Learning and Accountability (College of Alberta Superintendents, 2009)

Through the ongoing work of Jim Brandon, past Director of Leadership Capacity Building; Paulette Hanna, current Director of Leadership Learning; and Andy Hargeaves, CASS' framework has

undergone continual modification and will be officially released as a second edition in the fall of 2013. The new Framework contains a twelfth dimension around leveraging technology and has restructured the themes and dimensions as follows:

A. Vision and Direction Setting
- Dimension 1: Focus on Student Learning
- Dimension 2: Curriculum and Instruction
- Dimension 3: Uses of Evidence

B. Capacity Building
- Dimension 4: System-Wide Efficacy
- Dimension 5: Instructional Leadership
- Dimension 6: Professional Learning

C. Relationships
- Dimension 7: District Relationships
- Dimension 8: Parent and Community Engagement
- Dimension 9: School Board Leadership

D. Managing the Knowledge Organization
- Dimension 10: Organizational Alignment
- Dimension 11: Organizational Improvement Processes
- Dimension 12: Leveraging Technology
  (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2011)

Educational policy and standards frequently focus on the knowledge and skills a leader needs, but focus much less on the behaviors that bring about enhanced teaching and learning. CASS's framework is built on the premise that leaders should know how to do what they need to do to have positive learning impact at the student level by applying what Robinson (2011) references as three key leadership capacities: applying relevant knowledge, solving complex problems, and building relational trust, that leaders can use to provide clarity around mobilizing five key leadership dimensions: establishing goals and expectations, resourcing strategically, ensuring quality teaching, leading teacher learning and development, and ensuring an orderly safe and caring environment within unique school contexts. While some may argue that there is nothing new

here, one must be cognizant of the dangers of past practices which equated learning to stimulus response chains. Research foci over the last few decades have transition within educational leadership; shifting from management, which focuses on control efficiency and effectiveness, to leadership which frames leadership practice in context, connections, and contingency. CASS' work supports the applicability and utility of its insights (Davis & Sumara, 2010).

Although CASS(2011) and Robinson (2011) both outline a list of dimensions, effective leadership for learning is adaptive and responsive to changing conditions and context and should not be reduced to a list of dispositions, strategies or behaviors that one simply follows (Hallinger, 2011). As such, CASS' framework is built upon the premise of flexibility, and has a bias for action loosely patterned after the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) action research model. Educational leaders work within the context of their own jurisdiction and have the opportunity to focus on components of the framework that have a direct bearing on current areas being addressed within their jurisdictions or areas needing attention. Robinson's (2011) meta-analysis supports the need for flexibility. More importantly, research such as (Robinson, 2011; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) begins to provide an empirical footing for action that is based on jurisdiction needs rather han normative prescriptions about *good leadership* (Hallinger, 2011). Sometimes referred to as *layered leadership*, this dynamic approach allows leaders to prioritize different leadership foci at different stages (Hallinger, 2011). By hybridizing Robinson's (2006, 2011) work with the CASS framework one can apply relevant leadership and system improvement research and harness the power of the framework to solve complex problems.

To build such capacity, I present a conceptual model adapted from The Wallace Foundation (2006), the largest meta-analysis to date that quantitatively confirm the linkage between leadership and student achievement. Addressing three elements that significantly impact the quality of school leadership and the environment that they will either succeed or fail in: (1) standards that explicitly clarify expectations; (2) training that enhances assurances that school leaders have the skills and capacities; and (3) condition such as data, authority to act, and human resource processes that support student learning, this model clearly places CASS as the intermediary between Provincial and Jurisdiction roles and leverages the framework as a powerful lever for student improvement (see Figure 1).
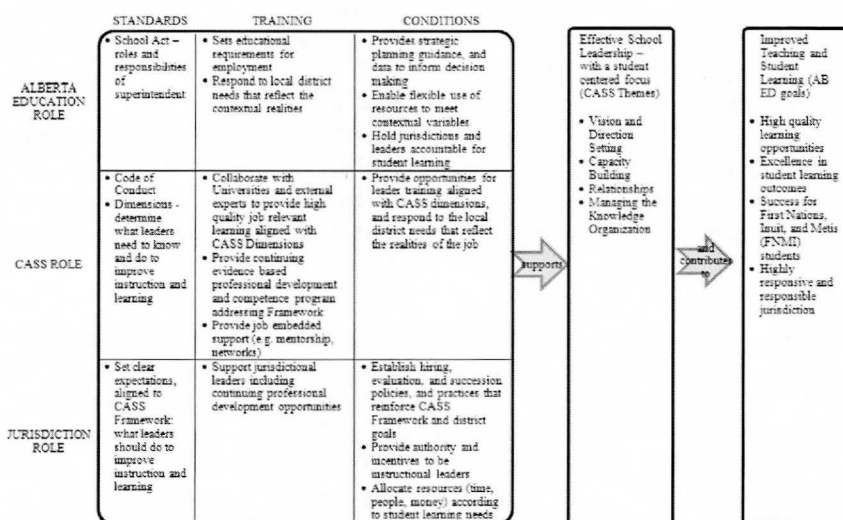
	STANDARDS	TRAINING	CONDITIONS		Effective School Leadership – with a student centered focus (CASS Themes)	Improved Teaching and Student Learning (AB ED goals)
ALBERTA EDUCATION ROLE	• School Act – roles and responsibilities of superintendent	• Sets educational requirements for employment • Respond to local district needs that reflect the contextual realities	• Provides strategic planning guidance, and data to inform decision making • Enable flexible use of resources to meet contextual variables • Hold jurisdictions and leaders accountable for student learning		• Vision and Direction Setting • Capacity Building • Relationships • Managing the Knowledge Organization	• High quality learning opportunities • Excellence in student learning outcomes • Success for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis (FNMI) students • Highly responsive and responsible jurisdiction
CASS ROLE	• Code of Conduct • Dimensions - determine what leaders need to know and do to improve instruction and learning	• Collaborate with Universities and external experts to provide high quality job relevant learning aligned with CASS Dimensions • Provide continuing evidence based professional development and competence program addressing Framework • Provide job embedded support (e.g. mentorship, networks)	• Provide opportunities for leader training aligned with CASS dimensions, and respond to the local district needs that reflect the realities of the job	supports → contributes to →		
JURISDICTION ROLE	• Set clear expectations, aligned to CASS Framework: what leaders should do to improve instruction and learning	• Support jurisdictional leaders including continuing professional development opportunities	• Establish hiring, evaluation, and succession policies, and practices that reinforce CASS Framework and district goals • Provide authority and incentives to be instructional leaders • Allocate resources (time, people, money) according to student learning needs			

Figure 1. Linking the CASS Framework for School System Success to Jurisdictional Leadership and Student Learning:
NOTE: Adapted from The Wallace Foundation, 2006, p.7

Mobilizing the Framework

While the CASS framework's content focuses on what to do, it like so many other publications on leadership, focuses less explicitly on how to do it; saying little about the knowledge skills, and dispositions needed to make the dimensions work given the varying jurisdiction and school contexts within which leaders function. The Framework's third theme, that of relationships plays an integral role in mobilizing the other themes and aligns with Robinson's (2011) work as one of the three core capabilities though which leaders actualize the other dimensions. The model (see Figure 1) attempts to address this interplay between knowing and doing as it lays out a process that harnesses the collaborative power of CASS as a professional organization to facilitate such an amalgamation of knowledge and process. Through both formal and informal, ongoing, contextually relevant, job embedded opportunities for professional learning, leaders are able to better prepare themselves to implement the dimensions found within the framework. While it is not explicitly documented in the framework, CASS' collegiality and network structures facilitate discourse between jurisdictions and provides opportunities to draw on colleagues' expertise. Having said this, many of these opportunities will only present themselves should one chose to become a member of CASS, as membership at this time is

optional due to CASS's lack of formal recognition as a professional body. Furthermore, attendance at meetings and professional development opportunities are optional. Members are able to attend those events that address dimensions that are currently relevant and beneficial. I now delve into the four themes of the framework: setting direction, building capacity, relationships, and managing the organization emphasizing the role each plays in mobilizing leadership knowledge and best practice to improve student learning.

Setting Direction
Several studies(Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999) identified vision and goals as two of the most significant avenues through which school leaders impact learning. More recently, Robinson et al.(2008) reaffirmed this conclusion in her meta-analysis of the effects of school leadership. While transformational leadership within an education setting(e.g., Leithwood, et al., 1999; Mulford & Silins, 2003) commonly fails to adequately address what the focus of the vision and goals should be, instructional leadership literature contends that goal-related constructs (e.g., vision, mission, goals) commonly stressed within Transformational leadership literature needs to contain a student learning emphasis (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Robinson, et al., 2008). The CASS framework grounds itself in the notion of a student centered vision and embraces the traits of transformational leadership to mobilize knowledge, empowering people's commitment to the goal, and assisting people to recognize how what they have now differs from the desired future. The likelihood of improvement enhances when individuals perceive discrepancies and problems that are worth acting on and when they believe they have the capacity to achieve the goal and an ability to contribute and influence others in achieving the goal. At times, this may require the creation of an intermediary learning goal, that targets new knowledge and abilities that will assist individuals to acquire the student learning goal (Robinson, 2011). The purpose of the CASS framework is about getting beyond the rhetoric of 'all students can learn' and about developing programs, policies, and teaching strategies that close the achievement gap and raise the bar.

Building Capacity
The context for building capacity within the CASS framework is threefold in that it refers to building instructional capacity,

leadership capacity, and organizational capacity. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to this as human capital, requisite knowledge and skills; social capital, quantity and quality of interactions; and decisional capital, ability to make discretionary judgments and advocate that through greater specificity and precision, jurisdictions will develop great people, who can work together, and make the right decisions for students. The CASS framework intends to lay the path by which jurisdictions can redefine and refocus their efforts at all levels to build and maximize teaching capacity and improve results for students. The framework is based on an empirical basis for action that counters the notion that one style of leadership is suitable across all school contexts. Rather, leadership is based on the needs of the school rather than normative prescriptions about *good leadership* (Hallinger, 2011). Such leadership capacity is the keystone to identifying how and why some schools maintain and sustain improvement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). As such, jurisdiction leaders aim to build school administrators and teacher leader's capacity for implementing changes that enhance student learning.

Elmore (2004) advocates that for every increment of performance leaders require of people, they have a responsibility to provide them with the additional capacity to produce that performance. While the level of professional development aligned with system improvement efforts being provided by my jurisdiction, the Horizon School Division, have risen over the last decade due to targeted professional learning initiatives such as AISI, evidence from discussions with colleagues and personal observations would indicate that some principals tend to opt out of instructional professional development opportunities. In many cases, I would argue that these administrators lean towards managerial duties, are less visible in classrooms, and less comfortable with leading school wide improvement efforts. Robinson's (2011) meta-analysis suggest that not only is professional learning important but that the Leader's support for and participation in the professional learning of staff produced the largest effect size on learning outcomes of students. As such, this is an area that leaders need to address for instructional leadership must take precedence over the managerial side of school leadership if leadership is going to take a student centered approach and if leaders are going to make improved student learning their focus.

At times, systems and school leaders latch onto concepts like Backwards by Design and Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) and Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002) as ways to improve teacher practice and implement large scale

professional learning. I caution schools with regard to implementing professional learning around rigid approaches to changing instructional practice as change imposed uniformly on everyone, even with intensive training and coaching often fails because individuals have varying capabilities, commitments, cultures, and contexts (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). As we continue to work on building capacity, it's not the knowledge gap about learning that we need to focus on; rather, it is the immense *use-of-knowledge* gap that we need to tackle (Stoll, 2009a). To complicate matters further, feedback collected during Alberta's Transformation agenda is providing evidence of the importance of competencies which broaden the aim of schooling and as such capacity building needs to go beyond focusing on supporting instructional improvement to emphasizing learning (Stoll, 2009a).

Relationships
A critical and consistent finding in the literature on knowledge mobilization is the importance of culture and interpersonal relationships in shaping professional practice (Stoll,2009b). Miller (2001) refers to change as a contact sport, stressing that people change by making contact with other people. People's social relationships play a vital role in their capacity for learning and are a significant lever for changing behavior (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Mulford, 2008). As such system improvements aimed at enhancing student achievement needs to be a collaborative endeavor and requires leaders to push, pull, and nudge their professional peers, community members, and boards to develop new norms and ways of interacting. When leaders reflect on how they can impact student learning, they need to take into account building positive relationships with everyone including those outside of the school building for schools cannot do it alone. While there may be circumstances where relationships get strained, marred or become inoperable, it is the not the effect of individual relationships, for better or worse, here and there, that counts, but rather how you maximize the cumulative effect of many, many positive relationships over time.

Managing the Knowledge Organization
Though managing the knowledge organization might appear to be more tightly aligned to management via effectiveness and efficiency practices; the emphasis should remain on leadership's role in aligning practice. This dimension addresses the fact that "we're in a

knowledge economy, but our managerial and governance systems are stuck in the Industrial Era" (Manville & Ober, 2003, p. 48). Although, we have come a long way from 1975 when Miles (as cited in Hopkins, Harris, & Mackay, 2010), referenced schools as "a collection of individual entrepreneurs surrounded by a common parking lot" (p. 3) school jurisdictions need to continue to bring their unified vision to life through collaborative professional learning and implementation of best practices. The evidence from Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis supports the power of instructional leadership and its effect on student outcomes. System leaders need to relentlessly focus on a few core goals that target student achievement and have precision and specificity with regard to strategies that will move the system to achieving those goals; strategies such as systematic and ongoing processes that align policy and practice, empowering others with high expectations, and establishing safe and supportive environments.

Coming around Full Circle
Teaching is a profession and professional autonomy can no longer mean individual autonomy. Rather it needs to foster a shared purpose, collective responsibility, and collaborative learning (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The challenge for schools is to get behind the evidence, explore the strengths and weaknesses they indicate and mobilize this knowledge for the betterment of students. This is not a one person sport. There needs to be a collective commitment, responsibility, expertise, and capability, guided by a leader skilled at bringing about change. One who takes the change on and relentlessly pursues the objective rather than offloading the responsibility for implementation to others. Part of this task is to monitor key change performance factors such as:

- Are people sufficiently dissatisfied with the way things are done now?
- Do people understand and buy in to the change vision?
- Will the leaders do everything it takes to ensure the change is implemented?
- Are change agents effective in designing and implementing change plans?
- Are plans in place to identify and overcome the inevitable resistance from people who are being asked to change their behaviors or beliefs?

- Is it clearly understood what aspects of the change are counter-cultural (to the 'way we do things around here') and are plans in place to modify the culture or the change?
- Are the people who have to change taking personal responsibility for this change?
- Is a process in place to build clarity of understanding and the necessary level of commitment?
- Is there an integrated change plan in place that encompasses people, processes and technology? (Miller, 2001)

We need to adapt the culture to the new way of working. Ensuring that: student learning remains the lens for decisions around: improvement strategies to enhance teaching quality; staff recruitment and evaluation policies that ensure superior, challenging, and engaging teaching; evidence based professional development activities; setting high expectations; clear standards of professional practice; aligned and networked structures that support improvement; and the utilization of ongoing and transparent data based decisions (Mourshed, Chijioke, Barber, McKinsey, & Company, 2010). Changing meanings, methodologies and connections between research, policy and practice will allow today's educational systems to truly create the capacity to take charge of change and sustainable learning.

Conclusion
Much of the early research considered jurisdictions as an independent variable acting as an organizational entity without explicitly and systematically examining leadership practices and effects. What the empirical literature has shown over the last 30 to 40 years is the diversity of leadership attributes and the level of complexity of the leadership role due to the diverse cultural, social, and political context within which leaders must operate. Leaders today can no longer rely on one activity, e.g. creating a vision, rather they need to integrate and relentlessly pursue all the essential components of change (Miller, 2001). This paper has attempted to address CASS' goal for system improvement and some of the key capacities by which the foundation for change, laid out within the CASS framework, can be mobilized to improve student learning and is firmly rooted in the belief that one size does not fit all.

If the impact of systemic leadership is achieved through indirect means (e.g., climate, culture, and instructional organization), then we must take into account the perspective that the leader's role

is best conceived as part of a web of environmental, personal, and cultural relationships that combine to influence organizational outcomes (e.g., Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1990, in press; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990).

As a point of departure one cannot stress that most studies have generally not done justice to the complexity of the reciprocal interaction and linkages between leaders and their context. Uncovering the relationships between the differing dimensions within the CASS Framework and leaders' success at improving student learning represents worthwhile target for future research as does: How much variation in staff commitment to change is explained by the CASS framework? How much of the variation in staff's extra effort is explained by the framework's dimensions and teachers' commitment to change? Do the different CASS leadership dimensions have different levels of influence on staff's commitment to change? The challenge for leaders then is that we must advance our understanding of how such linkages are shaped, uncovering the relationship between leadership and those mediating variables that we now believe influence student achievement and then put this knowledge into action.

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