

Taking the Good School Governance Pledge

The *Pledge*, if considered meaningful to a school board, shapes the backbone of the board charter and various accountability statements to stakeholders and to the public at large. This research paper places to the fore what research indicates are the critical characteristics and therefore deliverables of effective school boards, namely:

- cultural custodianship
- satisfying and being answerable to the school community it serves
- being principally accountable for the school's success
- being responsible, transparent, informed
- continuously renewing and evolving to be the best it can.

The *Pledge* sets out governance promises which are founded on clear actions that the school board can take and thereby give its school community confidence that the board is an active participant in striving for the success of the school.

It is therefore hoped that the *Good School Governance Pledge* will provide practical guidance for governors of independent schools and promote discussion within the sector, becoming the basis of something akin to a self-regulatory code for member schools. As individual school boards adopt their pledge, the promises which form the *Pledge* provide a checklist for the board against which the board can review itself at least annually (this could be integrated with its annual board evaluation process) and provide assurance to the school community that the board is striving to optimise the chances of success for the school.

The Good School Governance Pledge

The *Good School Governance Pledge* identifies eight key attributes, based on the research, which if done well leads to impactful leadership and good school governance. The manner by which a school approaches its pledge will vary according to context, however the essential principles remain true for all school boards.

The Pledge

1. The board is cultural custodian: The school board proactively strives to incorporate the cultural and ethical components of the agreed ideals of school success in their own behaviour – board conduct and behaviour models are in line with what is expected of staff, students and families of the school.
2. The board is custodian of school success: The board takes steps to proactively inform itself of the expectations of the school community on a continuous basis and retains open lines of two-way communication to ensure that it invites and can receive unfiltered perspectives from key stakeholders. The board reaches its own view on the agreed ideals of school success which are published and communicated effectively amongst the school community.

3. The board evaluates school success, including culturally: The school board has developed and implemented a means of evaluating, at least annually, the extent to which the agreed ideals of school success are achieved – including the incorporation of the valued culture of the school – enabling it to identify strategies for improving school success over time.
4. The board’s role and responsibilities are clear: Drawing on a range of accepted sources, and having regard to the agreed and published ideals of school success, the school board has adopted a charter that sets out its role, and specifically that of its chair and other office holders, vis-à-vis the principal and what it regards as its responsibilities to staff, parents, students and other stakeholders. It makes this available to the school community on the school’s website.
5. Board members take their responsibilities seriously: Board members prepare well, attend and participate actively in board meetings with a view to ensuring that the school strives to deliver on its agreed and published ideals of school success and is protected from identified risks. The board regards itself as accountable to the school community for these responsibilities.
6. The board/principal relationship is paramount: The board regards itself as the primary source of holding the principal accountable to deliver the agreed and published ideals of school success. It does this by ensuring that the principal’s employment conditions and role are clear, by setting annually the board’s expectations of the principal against the agreed ideals, and by conducting rigorous performance reviews of the principal, calling periodically on external help for this purpose.
7. The chair is held to account: The board chair is the servant leader of the board. S/he holds office only by the authority of those who are empowered to elect or appoint the chair and regards her/himself as accountable to them and so accounts on a regular basis to the board for her/his conduct in the role.
8. Board composition driven by ideals of school success: The manner in which the appointment or election of individuals to the board occurs includes explicit consideration of the needs of the school in light of the agreed ideals of school success and also includes conscious and transparent consideration of the need for board diversity and continuous renewal, having regard to the tenure of individuals within the board and their continued contributions to the work of the board.

Our hope is that independent school governors will use the *Good School Governance Pledge* as a means by which to measure the board’s performance; to critically hold itself to account through demonstration of practice and character and in so doing, to be a successful board which in turn leads to a successful school.

The governance research papers are member only papers and available through the ISQ website at <http://www.isq.qld.edu.au/governance-and-strategic-services>



Helen Coyer
(Acting) Executive
Director
Independent Schools
Queensland

Leading Innovation and Change

Innovation – the only way forward

Innovation can be defined as creative problem solving that generates solutions to improve the quality of current practices, services or products. In education the definition is strengthened by intentionally linking the beneficial outcome of any innovation to the key stakeholders – young people, families and the community (OECD 2007, 2014).

Bridging the distance between how a school is currently performing and where the community wants it to be will not be achieved by doing more of the same. 'You have to do something different and doing something different requires innovation' (Kastelle, 2016). Focusing on innovation provides schools with an opportunity to reflect on how effectively the organisation empowers teachers, leaders, students and other staff to engage in creative problem solving that leads to measurable school improvement.

Whilst overall school improvement is one reason to focus on innovation, improved educational practices should also develop young people who can thrive within a global knowledge economy, where the ability to rapidly innovate is seen as particularly desirable. The UK Innovation Unit, which researches disruptive and incremental educational innovations, states that 21st century schools should have an outward-facing orientation

providing students with paths to explore the wider world (Learning Futures p18).

Students emerging from schools need to be 'self-starters who are persistent and have an appetite for measured risk-taking. They will have to think for themselves and possess specialised or technical knowledge to thrive' (Li Jiang, 2015). Schools may ask themselves – to what extent is our organisation investing in innovation that will increase the likelihood of developing young people who are more capable of being leaders of innovation and growth in future communities, businesses and services?

According to the Australian Government, 'only 6% of Australian businesses engage in international innovation, compared to the OECD average of 18%' (Australian Government, 2016). The OECD reports that the Australian education sector is average in terms of its adoption of innovation when compared with other sectors (2014, OECD Country Note, p1). If innovation is to be a part of schools' dynamic response to a rapidly changing global environment, it is clear that a strategic plan is required to manage the structural, financial and leadership challenges that innovation presents. Schools also need an execution process that mitigates barriers to innovative thinking.

Leading innovation

The difference between innovation and invention is that 'invention is generating ideas and innovation is executing them to create value' (Kastelle, 2016). Drucker (1999, p73) contends that those who will survive in a period when change is the norm will be the change leaders, for 'to be a successful change leader, an enterprise has to have a policy of systematic innovation' (Drucker, 1999, p84).

Both these theorists emphasise that innovation needs to be intentionally planned for and executed well in order to achieve significant value add. For innovation to drive improvement school leaders need to determine and clearly articulate:

- Where does a school want to be?
- What attributes do we want students to demonstrate?
- What needs to be done differently to get there?
- How will change be implemented?
- How will the value of the change be determined?

The school principal is responsible for leading, enabling and supporting the effective execution of innovation. 'Leading innovation and change' is identified as one of the five professional practices of the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (2012).

The leadership profiles that elaborate the Standard describe this domain in four levels of professional expertise. A principal operating at the highest professional level does the following:

'Principals embed a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring research, innovation and creativity are core characteristics of the school. They lead educational networks by trialling and exploring new ideas for the system, acting as a guide, coach and mentor to staff and colleagues. They evaluate the personal and organisational effects of change through regular feedback from stakeholders and evidence of impact on student outcomes. They develop an innovative and outward-focused role as a leader influencing school excellence across the system.'

Business is interested in identifying professionals who have the capacity to lead innovation. When attempting to recruit more personnel to lead innovation in their global telecommunications company, Zenger and Folkman (2014) analysed the traits of staff that had already been identified by their peers as innovators. They defined 10 distinctive behaviours of these innovation leaders. They determined that these leaders:

1. **Display excellent strategic vision.** The most effective innovation leaders could vividly describe their vision of the future, and as one respondent noted: "She excelled at painting a clear picture of the destination, while we worked to figure out how to get there."
2. **Have a strong client focus.** What was merely interesting to the client became fascinating to these individuals. They networked with them and asked incessant questions about their needs and wants.
3. **Create a climate of reciprocal trust.** Innovation often requires some level of risk. Not all innovative ideas are successful. These highly innovative leaders initiated warm, collaborative relationships with the innovators who worked for them. They made themselves highly accessible. Colleagues knew that their leader would cover their backs and "not throw them under the bus" if something went wrong. People were never punished for honest mistakes.
4. **Display fearless loyalty to doing what's right for the organisation.** Pleasing some other higher level executive always took a back seat to doing the right thing for the project or the organisation.
5. **Put their faith in a culture that magnifies upward communication.** These leaders believed that the best and most innovative ideas bubbled up from underneath. They strived to create a culture that uncorked good ideas from the first levels of the organisation. They were often described as projecting optimism, full of energy, and always receptive to new ideas. Grimness was replaced with kidding and laughter.
6. **Are persuasive.** These individuals were highly effective in getting others to accept good ideas. They did not push or force their ideas onto their teams. Instead, they presented ideas with enthusiasm and conviction, and the team willingly followed.
7. **Excel at setting stretch goals.** These goals required people to go far beyond just working harder. These goals required that they find new ways to achieve a high goal.
8. **Emphasise speed.** These leaders believed that speed 'scraped the barnacles off the hull of the boat'. Experiments and rapid prototypes were preferred to lengthy studies by large committees.
9. **Are candid in their communication.** These leaders were described as providing honest, and at times, blunt feedback. Teams felt they could always count on straight answers from their leaders.
10. **Inspire and motivate through action.** One respondent said, "For innovation to exist you have to feel inspired." This comes from a clear sense of purpose and meaning in the work.

Leading Innovation and Change

In this industry facing rapid change, these behaviours and practices are needed in those given the responsibility of delivering creative solutions. Similarly schools need to identify personnel who are drawn to innovation and comfortable leading people through change.

However no single individual can be responsible for delivering on innovation, so whilst it is a leader's responsibility to establish a culture where innovation can occur, 'for innovation to flourish it has to be seen as an integral purpose of the whole organisation rather than a separate function' (Robinson, 2011, p525).

The OECD (2016) notes that 'leaders of innovation draw on creativity and discipline in ways that allow them to react effectively in diverse and changing conditions' (p7). The OECD work also identifies evaluation and evaluative thinking as part of the leadership expertise needed to support the effective execution of innovation in schools.

Timperley and Earl place evaluative thinking central to the success of any educational innovation. Their research suggests that evaluative thinking requires a comprehensive definition, understanding and description of the intended innovation.

'This description typically forms the foundation for tracking development, determining progress, and deciding what evidence is important to support and assess the success of the innovation' (2015, p18).

Evaluative thinking and methods 'provide the tools for systematically gathering and interpreting evidence that can be used to provide feedback loops for refinement, adjustment, abandonment and extension of new learning' (p8).

They advocate for a systemic, contextually specific and continuous review of any innovation, 'engaging in routine evaluative thinking allows everyone who has a stake in the innovation to gain a better understanding of the progress of the innovation as it develops and the extent to which it is meeting its intended or evolving goals' (p29). The 2014 OECD report on measuring innovation in education stated that 'the ability to measure innovation is essential to an improvement strategy in education' (p1).

ISQ has committed to supporting schools develop their approach to evaluative thinking. Professor Helen Timperley has worked with ISQ in the Great Teachers in Independent Schools program to embed evaluative inquiry. This inquiry is enabling ISQ to support schools to evaluate the impact of their innovative approaches to mentoring, performance and development and middle leadership.

Sustained and disruptive innovation – a 'both and' approach?

As independent schools determine how much will be invested in innovation and who the innovation leaders will be, they also need a strategic view about their approach to innovation. Schools may approach innovation in a range of ways; incremental and sustaining; disruptive and radical. Each approach will result in different outcomes and require a different organisational change leadership (Arnett, Christensen, Drucker, Moreton et.al).

Established organisations, like schools, are generally good at incremental innovation that involves sustaining the existing culture. However schools are operating within an economic and social context that is being disrupted by technological and social innovation.

Moreton, Hansen and Birkinshaw (2007) described innovation as a process chain with three phases: ideas generation, conversion and diffusion. Ideas generation includes a combination of in-house, collaborative and external stages. The second two phases focus on processes for selecting, supporting, evaluating and distributing ideas that are likely to achieve the greatest impact. The phases are supported by specific questions and key performance indicators (See *Table 1*).

Table 1: The Innovation Value Chain

	IDEA GENERATION			CONVERSION		DIFFUSION
	IN-HOUSE Creation within a unit	CROSS-POLLINATION Collaboration across units	EXTERNAL Collaboration with parties outside the firm	SELECTION Screening and initial funding	DEVELOPMENT Movement from idea to first result	SPREAD Dissemination across the organisation
KEY QUESTIONS	Do people in our unit create good ideas on their own?	Do we create good ideas by working across the company?	Do we source enough good ideas from outside the firm?	Are we good at screening and funding new ideas?	Are we good at turning ideas into viable products, businesses, and best practices?	Are we good at diffusing developed ideas across the company?
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Number of high-quality ideas generated within a unit.	Number of high-quality ideas generated across units.	Number of high-quality ideas generated from outside the firm.	Percentage of all ideas generated that end up being selected and funded.	Percentage of funded ideas that lead to revenues; number of months to first sale.	Percentage of penetration in desired markets, channels, customer groups; number of months to full diffusion.

<https://hbr.org/2007/06/the-innovation-value-chain>

This process flow may be useful for schools leaders to determine which aspects of the innovation process may need more attention within their current culture and change structures to improve the likely impact of innovation accordingly. For example there may be time and expertise for effective ideas generation, but a lack of human resource to provide the specialised leadership that ensures a conversion process takes place. This could mean that valuable innovations are not developed adequately and not diffused broadly across the organisation. The conversion and diffusion phases require the ability for a school team to engage in evaluative thinking.

Whilst schools are engaging in intentional and sustained approaches to innovation, they exist in an environment that is undergoing radical change as a result of disruptive innovation. According to Arnett (2014) there are three reasons why disruptive innovation, enabled by new technology will play a significant role in schooling.

Arnett claims that disruptive innovation:

- *‘is making personalised learning accessible and affordable to the masses therefore scaling the impact of great mentors and instructors so that their expertise can be available to every student*
- *is a mechanism for bringing about a personalised education system*
- *circumvents the political battles that have historically been at the centre stage of education reform. Existing policies tend to favour the incumbent system, and hence changing those policies requires battling with those incumbents in the political arena. In contrast, disruptive innovations take root in areas outside the domain of the incumbents. Instead of challenging the status quo head-on, disruptive innovations take root and grow outside the purview of the incumbent system.’*

Schools are also engaging with disruptive innovations to continue to meet expectations of families for efficient communications, transactions and interactions with data and services.

As the market delivers instantaneous data, financial transactions and personalised feedback, students and parents will continue to demand that schools have the infrastructure and services to deliver services in the same way. New approaches to service delivery provide schools with the opportunity to reconsider the ways in which they provide learning, engage with families and do business.

Schools will need to develop an innovation culture and workforce that can adapt service models to the real economic and socially connected context.

A particular challenge for independent schools developing an innovation strategy is balancing communities’ preference for the continuation of traditional or founding values, views and culture whilst evolving enough to meet the challenge of providing high quality contemporary education.

Leading Innovation and Change

Chad Barnett, Head of a 200-year-old West Virginian independent school, reflects on the ‘productive paradox’ facing independent schools i.e. how can schools ‘consistently fulfil the traditional side of their mission and adapt to changing conditions’. He says:

‘when schools are affirming practices and policies through self-referential logic — tradition for tradition’s sake — (they) lose the opportunity to contextualise their best practices for contemporary times.

On the other hand, schools who are constantly looking outward to shape their mission risk losing a steady sense of purpose and direction. As we are compelled by economic pressures to innovate in the face of staggering challenges, we will be well served to seek a thoughtful balance of mirrors and windows’ (2011).

Autonomous and system-driven change

Ken Robinson (2011) states that ‘current systems of education were not designed to meet the challenges we now face. They were designed to meet the challenges of a former age. Reform is not enough; they need to be transformed’ (p51).

A challenge for independent schools is balancing the advantages of innovating as autonomous organisations with opportunities that come from working as collectives of schools and systems. Collaborating may enable the opportunities from

innovation developed in some schools to benefit the whole independent sector and in the end, the young people, families and communities that surround schools.

The body of global and national research into the role that systems play in diffusing innovation between schools is growing. There is a broadening view that collaborative approaches can accelerate the benefits of innovation. ISQ’s Self-improving Schools program encourages considered, data-informed and intentional sector-wide innovation. The program drew together global school improvement literature to develop a common matrix. The matrix defines the indicators for high quality contemporary schooling. However each school builds their own unique strategic improvement plan aligned with this common framework. The data gathered throughout the process can act as an evaluative tool to measure the impact of priority change projects, many of these projects are defined as innovations in each context.

Armstrong’s research into London public schools points to the ‘positive influence of inter-school collaboration on teachers and teaching, with practitioners reporting an increased motivation to engage in professional dialogue with their colleagues, knowledge

mobilisation and a general shift towards more learning-oriented and enquiry-based cultures in schools that have been collaborating (Stoll, 2015).

There is also evidence of inter-school collaboration facilitating curriculum development and problem-solving’ (Ainscow et al., 2006, p4).

Hallgarten, Hannon, and Beresford in the 2015 WISE report *Creative Public Leadership: How School System Leaders Can Create the Conditions for System-wide Innovation* state that:

‘Whilst systems can be far better at creating the enabling conditions and cultures for innovation, schools need to take ultimate responsibility for their own ethos. Inevitably, this points to a significant leadership challenge at all levels. We need leadership which has authentic conviction about the potential for education as humanity’s best hope; and which can both assemble and communicate a compelling case for change. We need leaders who understand that this is not a quest to converge on a single solution; leaders who have the political savvy to create the legitimacy for radical change, and who draw on international networks as a source of imaginative ideas rather than prefabricated policies’ (p9).

Conclusion

It is claimed that Henry Ford said the following about innovation: 'if I asked the people what they want, they would have said faster horses'. Whether or not this attribution is accurate, this statement highlights a great challenge for conversations about innovation; schools, leaders, teachers and parents do not always know what is possible.

This briefing contends that an intentional and deliberate strategy about innovation gives schools a better chance of finding and implementing creative solutions to the current and future challenges of delivering high quality education.

It is also clear that leadership in a period of rapid change calls for the ability to create a culture where innovation is considered integral. Schools are required to balance an outward orientation towards the disruptive influences that change the delivery of education services, with the mission and values that incrementally build a sustainable foundation for young people living in the midst of radical disruption.

Leaders of innovation work strategically and creatively and plan for careful execution and ongoing evaluation of innovations to ensure the benefits of change are maximised. Finally, the strength of educational innovation is a consistent focus on the intended outcomes of any innovation for key stakeholders. Our schools are responsible for delivering education in ways that enable young people to engage in and lead innovation that will improve our local and global communities.



Josephine Wise
Assistant Director
(Education Services)

References

- Arnett, T., 2014. *Why disruptive innovation matters to education* / Christensen Institute. [online] Christenseninstitute.org. Available at: <http://www.christenseninstitute.org/why-disruptive-innovation-matters-to-education/> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2016].
- Ainscow, M. (2014) *Towards Self-Improving School Systems Lessons from a City Challenge*. London: Routledge
- Barnett, C., 2011. *Tradition and the Pace of Change in 21st Century Education*. [online] Nais.org. Available at: <http://www.nais.org/Magazines-Newsletters/ISMagazine/Pages/Tradition-and-the-Pace-of-Change-in-21st-Century-Education.aspx> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2016].
- Caldwell, Brian J. (2001) "Leadership and innovation in the transformation of schools." Keynote address at the Vision 2020 (2001).
- Christensen, C., 1997. *The innovator's dilemma*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.
- Christensen, C., Horn, M. and Johnson, C., 2008. *Disrupting class*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Christensen, C., Raynor, M. and McDonald, R., 2015. *What Is Disruptive Innovation?* [online] Harvard Business Review. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2015/12/what-is-disruptive-innovation> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2016].
- Earl, L. and H. Timperley (2015), "Evaluative thinking for successful educational innovation", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 122, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jrxtk1jtdwf-en>
- Druker, P., 2005. *Managing Oneself*. [online] Harvard Business Review. Available at: https://hbr.org/2005/01/managing-oneself?cm_sp=Topics--Links--Read%20These%20First [Accessed 1 Apr. 2016].

Government, A., 2016. *Global Innovation Strategy | National Innovation and Science Agenda*. [online] NISA. Available at: <http://www.innovation.gov.au/page/global-innovation-strategy> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2016].

Hallgarten, J., Hannon, V. and Beresford, T., 2015. *Creative Public Leadership How School System Leaders Can Create the Conditions for System-wide Innovation*. [online] WISE.ED Review. Available at: <http://www.wise-qatar.org/sites/default/files/appli-rsa-2016-03-03.pdf> [Accessed 4 Apr. 2016].

Jiang, L., 2015. *Getting Smart*. [online] Why education innovation is the most important thing you should pursue. Available at: <http://gettingsmart.com/2015/04/why-education-innovation-is-the-most-important-thing-you-could-pursue/> [Accessed 30 Mar. 2016].

Kastelle, T., 2016. *Fostering Innovation – What is innovation?* [online] Isqconnectandlearn.qld.edu.au. Available at: <https://www.isqconnectandlearn.qld.edu.au/d2/le/content/6680/viewContent/4148/View?ou=6680> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2016].

Luebke, R., 2016. *Innovation Excellence | Peter Drucker on Innovation*. [online] Innovationexcellence.com. Available at: <http://www.innovationexcellence.com/blog/2010/07/30/peter-drucker-on-innovation/> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2016].

London: Department for Education (DfE), 2015. *Effective school partnerships and collaboration for school improvement: a review of the evidence*. London.

Miller, R., 2016. *Technology is disrupting everything*. [online] TechCrunch. Available at: <http://techcrunch.com/2016/03/16/technology-is-disrupting-everything/> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2016].

OECD (2014), *Measuring Innovation in Education: A New Perspective*, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264215696-en>

Robinson, K., 2011. *Out of our minds*. Oxford: Capstone.

Stoll, L. (2015) *Three greats for a self-improving school system: pedagogy, professional development and leadership: executive summary* (Teaching schools R&D network national themes project 2012-14). London: Department for Education (DfE).

Timperley, H. and Earl, L., 2015. *OECD Education Working Papers*. [online] *Evaluative Thinking for Successful Educational Innovation*. Available at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/evaluative-thinking-for-successful-educational-innovation_5jrxtk1jtdwf-en?crawler=true&mimetype=application/pdf [Accessed 1 Apr. 2016].

Zenger, J. and Folkman, J., 2014. *Research: 10 Traits of Innovative Leaders*. [online] Harvard Business Review. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2014/12/research-10-traits-of-innovative-leaders> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2016].

2016. *Leadership Profiles | Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership*. [online] Aitsl.edu.au. Available at: <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2016].

2016. *Radical and incremental innovation*. [online] Innovation Policy Platform. Available at: <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/content/radical-and-incremental-innovation> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2016].

ISQ thanks its 2016 Alliance Partners

Platinum Alliance



CommonwealthBank

Gold+ Alliance



Gold Alliance



Silver Alliance



Bronze Alliance



Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is to the best of our knowledge and belief correct at the date of publication. However, no warranty or guarantee is or can be given by Independent Schools Queensland or any member of its staff, and no liability is or can be accepted for any loss or damage resulting from any person relying on or using the information contained in this publication.

© April 2016
Independent Schools Queensland
Licensed under NEALS



**Independent Schools
Queensland**

choice & diversity

Independent Schools Queensland Head Office

1st Floor, 96 Warren Street, Spring Hill Q 4000
PO Box 957, Spring Hill Q 4004
P (07) 3228 1515 F (07) 3228 1575
E office@isq.qld.edu.au W www.isq.qld.edu.au

Independent Schools Queensland Professional Learning Centre

Level 5, 500 Queen Street Brisbane CBD Q 4000
PO Box 957, Spring Hill Q 4004
P (07) 3228 1507
E events@isq.qld.edu.au