Briefings

Thought leadership for the independent schooling sector

2020: THE YEAR OF THE TEACHER

From the Executive Director

2020 has been quite a year.

With such a positive start to the year in January (with a 4.2% increase in enrolments in the sector compared to 2019), no one could have envisaged the impact and challenges that a global pandemic would bring from March onwards.

A recent presentation to Independent Schools Australia by Mark McCrindle (McCrindle Research Pty Ltd) highlighted that 57% of Australians have described 2020 as the most difficult year of their life; yet 87% say even though 2020 has presented unprecedented challenges, they have found themselves to be resilient amidst the circumstances.

With all that has transpired this year in schools, it has been the *Year of the Teacher*[1].

The standing of the teaching profession and the work of teachers collectively and individually received a well-deserved boost in the eyes of parents and the community as they adapted to not only online learning but to an extensive range of restrictions and requirements placed on schools and how they operated.

Whilst school governors and leaders are rightfully often focused on compliance and financial metrics, 2020 was a stark reminder that ultimately schools are places of human relationships and successful schools are those which promote social, personal and interpersonal skills within the context of achieving the best possible educational outcomes for their students.

The ability of school leaders and teachers to adapt to rapid change, finding new and improved ways of teaching and learning was a key to 2020. Supporting students through their online experience was just one example of the exemplary work of teachers throughout the year.

Our teachers care for students and their wellbeing was also a feature in 2020 with wide acknowledgement of the impact the pandemic had on the mental health of students.

2020 could also be described as the *Year of the Student*. It was a historic year for Year 12 students who experienced a number of firsts. They were the first to start high school in Year 7 following the state-wide transfer of Year 7 into secondary school in 2015. They are the first to graduate under the new Queensland Certificate of Education in addition to navigating an entirely different senior year that included studying from home, truncated sporting seasons, cancelled events and modified formals, graduations and end-of-year celebrations.

Young people have shown great resilience and taken the twists and turns of this extraordinary year in their stride, displaying resilience and perseverance in their studies, and gratitude for the support of their schools, teachers, family and friends.

Appropriately, Independent Schools Queensland has highlighted some of the exceptional Year 12 students from independent schools in 2020 through social media – see @ISQ_QLD tweets and our corporate LinkedIn.

Whilst schooling in 2020 was still a positive experience for the vast majority

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1   See ISQ's Media Release of 30 October "Teachers Triumph in 2020" at https://www.isq.qld.edu.au/media-resources/teachers-triumph-in-2020---thankqldteachers

2020: THE YEAR OF THE TEACHER

of students, our thoughts are with boarding and international students who have had a most disrupted year.

There is much discussion about the implications of 2020 on the future of education and the role of teachers. Some of this discussion focuses on a view that there will be more online learning in the future and that education programs will be more individualised.

This is not surprising given the McCrindle research indicates that 71% of those who participated in online education in 2020 said it was a positive experience for their household[2].

The experiences of 2020 will not just challenge "business as usual" in education. The world of work could see a significant transformation with working from home as the new normal. Demographic shifts (a move away from the big cities) and the advancement of technology are likely to feature in the future as well as economic challenges with Governments carrying record levels of debt as a result of the stimulus measures implemented in 2020.

Whilst schools were focused on the challenges resulting from COVID-19, there were other significant events in 2020 which will have an impact on our sector into the future.

One of the most significant was the passage through Federal Parliament in March of amendments to the *Australian Education Act* to provide for changes to the Federal schools funding

model. As a result, the SES measure to determine parents' Capacity to Contribute is being replaced by the Direct Measure of Income (DMI).

This change to funding arrangements will see a major reallocation of funding within the Queensland independent school's sector over the next ten years. Under the DMI model, over 40% of Queensland independent schools will receive less Commonwealth funding than what would have applied under the SES system with these schools educating nearly 60% of the sector's students.

Many schools will have to adjust their operating structures and/or increase their fees in order to be financially sustainable under the new funding arrangements.

The transparency and the relevance of the new funding arrangements are likely to feature heavily in the next Federal election scheduled for mid-2022 (although there continues to be speculation about an early Federal election).

There was a State election in October with the return of the Palaszczuk Government for a term of four years. Independent Schools Queensland looks forward to working with the re-appointed Education Minister, Grace Grace in advancing education issues and empowering schools to be able to achieve the best possible outcomes for all students.

The schools' agenda of the re-elected State Government primarily features the employment of 6,000 new teachers and the continued establishment of new schools in high demographic growth areas. However, the influence of COVID-19 on education policy at the State level will be interesting to monitor with the potential for the Government to take the opportunity for significant policy reforms. ISQ is well placed to engage in future reforms with the commissioning of a well-received report *Catalyst for Change*[3] outlining some future possibilities about how schools and teachers undertake their work.

2020 also saw the refresh of our national body to become Independent Schools Australia[4]. Welcome to the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of ISA, Margery Evans. ISQ looks forward to working with Margery as she takes on the critical role of engaging with the Federal Government on matters important not only to independent schools but for all children and their education.

2021 presents limitless opportunities for schools which I am confident the independent sector will not only embrace but take the lead. This includes valuing the teaching profession and increasing teacher collaboration coupled with a focus on engagement with families and communities to build resilience and student wellbeing.

Schools as physical spaces will be more valuable as communities seek social places of certainty and security and whilst technology may transform traditional classroom organisation, our schools will take on renewed importance as safe community hubs. How we support students in an online world will be a dominant topic of debate. "Digitally assisted learning" will appear in school strategic plans.

2   See https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/blog/how-schools-can-prioritise-work-wellbeing-in-the-current-and-post-covid-19-era/
3   Available at https://rms.isq.qld.edu.au/files/Weblive_OSOF/Catalyst_for_change_2020.pdf
4   See https://isa.edu.au/

There is much discussion about the implications of 2020 on the future of education and the role of teachers. Some of this discussion focuses on a view that there will be more online learning in the future and that education programs will be more individualised.

Independent Schools Queensland wishes all our school communities a well-deserved break over the festive season. May it be safe and joyous. We hope every school has a very successful start to the 2021 year.

DAVID ROBERTSON
Executive Director

This is the final edition of *Briefings* for 2020, marking the 24th year of continuous publication of this newsletter. *Briefings* continues to be well known and respected as a medium where new ideas and good research are published for the consideration of the independent sector community. I regularly give permission for articles from *Briefings* to be republished in other journals confirming its role in thought leadership. ISQ is proud to be able to contribute to the debate of schooling policy issues and looks forward to keeping school communities and education policy makers engaged.

Thank you to all who regularly provide positive feedback on *Briefings*. I acknowledge the contribution of ISQ Directors, Mark Newham, Shari Armistead and Josephine Wise and their staff for their excellent contributions through research articles. Thank you also to the ISQ staff, Charlene Stephenson and Sarah Heath, for the excellent production and distribution of *Briefings*.

Looking forward to 2021, *Briefings* will continue to be published monthly bringing you a range of topics to promote debate and forward thinking about education and associated issues.

Independent Schools Queensland trusts that 2021 will be a successful year for everybody. Best wishes for the festive season and the holidays ahead.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS AND CHANGE

SHARI ARMISTEAD
Director (Strategic Relations)

Transformational Leaders motivate followers to perform "beyond expectations" by developing, intellectually stimulating, and inspiring followers to transcend their own self-interests for a higher collective purpose.

(BASS, 1985)

Greek philosopher Heraclitus's view "change is the only constant" is an apt quote for 2020 summing up the continual COVID-19 induced changes. Crisis management, such as during the pandemic, requires rapid reactionary change. Planned change, such as adopting new digital technologies, requires longer term tactics. Common to both types of change is how best to manage people and that is where organisational behaviour research has become an essential tool to help transformational leaders motivate employees in turbulent times.

Organisational Behaviour

Stephen P. Robbins (n.d.) defines organisational behaviour as "a field of study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups, and structure have on behavior within organizations for the purpose of applying such knowledge toward improving an organization's effectiveness".

In other words, organisational behaviour helps leaders to understand why people behave the way they do, so they can use this knowledge to build a better and more productive workplace.

Organisational behaviour (OB) is a multidisciplinary field influenced by developments in a number of allied disciplines including sociology, psychology, economics, and engineering, as well as the experience of practitioners.

Transformational Leadership

Sociologist Dr James Victor Downton was the first to coin the term "transformational leadership" in his 1968 University of California, Berkeley thesis on charismatic leadership which he expanded upon in his book five years later (1973). The concept was further developed by political biographer and leadership expert James MacGregor Burns (1978) with his classification of "transactional" and "transformational" political leaders. Burns described transformational leaders as those who can move followers, through the strength of their vision and personality, to go beyond their own interests to work towards common goals. Unlike in the transactional approach, which is based on reward in exchange for services. American scholar Bernard Morris Bass went a step further in 1985 to develop a way of measuring transformational leadership and its impact on followers' motivation and performance.

According to what is now known as Bass's Transformational Leadership Theory, transformational leaders motivate followers to perform "beyond expectations" by developing, intellectually stimulating, and inspiring followers to transcend their own self-interests for a higher collective purpose, mission, or vision. Bass also described the psychologic mechanisms underlying transformational and transactional leadership and stated transformational leaders garner trust, respect, and admiration from their followers (1985).

According to Stephen Covey (2004), author of *7 Habits of Highly Successful People* "[t]he goal of transformational leadership is to 'transform' people and organizations in a literal sense – to change them in mind and heart; enlarge vision, insight, and understanding; clarify purposes; make behavior congruent with beliefs, principles, or values; and bring about changes that are permanent, self-perpetuating, and momentum building."

Measurement

In order to measure transformational/ transactional leadership, Bass and his colleagues developed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass et al., 1987).

Four of seven scales, known as the four I's, were identified and defined as characteristics of transformational leaders and two scales as characteristics of transactional leaders. The seventh scale is laissez-faire which relates to the avoidance or absence of leadership.

Characteristics of Transformational Leadership

Idealised Influence (builds trust) involves gaining respect for, trust, and confidence in others and being able to see and explain the big picture vision and mission to them.

Inspirational Motivation (encourages others) involves communicating a vision with urgency and confidence, tapping into key values, increasing optimism, team spirit and enthusiasm.

Intellectual Stimulation (encourages innovative thinking) involves actively encouraging others and challenging them in a positive way, fostering innovation and creative problem solving with the use of intelligence.

Individualised Consideration (coaches and develops people) involves giving personal attention to all individuals, making each individual feel valued. Tasks are delegated according to individual needs.

Characteristics of Transactional Leadership

Contingent Reward (rewards achievement) occurs when the leader rewards or disciplines staff depending on the adequacy of their performance.

Management by Exception (monitors deviation and mistakes) avoids giving directions if established procedures are working and allows followers to continue doing their jobs as always if performance goals are met.

"The MLQ has been examined and tested in several countries and more than 75 research studies which have generally reported statistically significant relations between leader effectiveness and the Transformational scales. The Transactional scale Contingent Reward (rewards achievement) is also positively related to outcome measures, but the association is weaker than with Transformational scales. Not surprisingly, correlations for Management by Exception are low and often negative, if significant at all. Laissez-Faire leadership was significantly negative related to the outcome measures" (Geyer & Steyrer, 1998).

Impact on Motivation

Transformational leaders tap into fifty years of organisational behaviour research to motivate employees. While extrinsic rewards like high salaries will no doubt have an influence, OB research shows motivation does not come from perks or even pay. Sure, these transactional leadership tactics may act as an initial stimulant, however people will likely only perform as long as it takes to get the next raise or promotion. Most of us are motivated by intrinsic rewards: interesting, challenging work, and the opportunity to achieve and grow into greater responsibility. Of course, you have to provide some extrinsic incentives, few of us can afford to live on poor pay rates. The real key to motivating employees is enabling them to self-motivate, otherwise leaders will be trying to do that repeatedly (Herzberg, 2003). Stephen Covey put it eloquently: "Motivation is a fire from within. If someone else tries to light that fire under you, chances are that fire will burn very briefly."

The things that make people satisfied at work are different to the things that make them dissatisfied. Ask staff what makes them unhappy and they will most likely cite an annoying boss, a low salary or bad office or physical environment. But even if all of these gripes were attended to it still wouldn't motivate people to work much harder or smarter.

People are motivated… by interesting work, challenge, and increasing responsibility. These intrinsic factors answer people's deep-seated need for growth and achievement (Herzberg, 2003).

Motivating staff via job enrichment isn't easy, plus employees will likely require more time to master new challenges. However, by developing staff, their enthusiasm and commitment will rise along with the company's overall performance (Herzberg, 2003).

> *People are motivated…by interesting work, challenge, and increasing responsibility. These intrinsic factors answer people's deep-seated need for growth and achievement.*

(HERZBERG, 2003)

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS AND CHANGE CONTINUED

Psychological Safety and Learning from Failure

Building trust is an important factor in the success of transformational leaders. Closely associated with trust is psychological safety, which is equally important. Whether or not individuals learn from failure in the workplace is often debated. University of Cologne and University of Cambridge researchers Wilhelm, Richter and Serauc took a team-as-resource perspective, analysing archival data on individual failure and subsequent performance from 218 employees working in 42 teams and what they found supported their hypotheses, that "[e]mployees are more likely to learn from their failure experiences if they work in teams with medium-to-high levels of psychological safety" (2019, pp. 695-696). The results also show "the behavioural pathway linking failure with subsequent outcomes" (2019).

The authors draw on a range of research and theories which show that failure is an uncomfortable experience, consequently people often react defensively. Dissociating failure from the individual or attributing failure to outside sources may salve the individual's self-esteem, however it prevents the employee from seizing the opportunity to learn.

According to the analysed data, teams where there is medium to high psychological safety, have trust and feel safe to talk openly about their failures, without embarrassment, and therefore they become valuable learning opportunities helping them to

adapt and change their behaviour to succeed in the future.

Self-Awareness and Resourcefulness

The seventh habit of Covey's highly successful people is Sharpening the Saw, which includes preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have – you. Self-awareness regarding your physical, social/emotional, mental and spiritual needs is imperative for transformational leaders.

Another aspect of this is realising that you cannot know everything. Leaders need to be well connected for a whole range of reasons including creative performance. The research report *Creative Benefits from Well-Connected Leaders: Leader Social Network Ties as Facilitators of Employee Radical Creativity* results "demonstrate that leaders' network ties both within and external to the team play an important role above and beyond employees' own ties in facilitating their employees' development of radically novel ideas… and radical creativity" (Venkataramani et al., 2014).

Leaders need to make conscious efforts to network with their peers via idea-related interactions in order to

be exposed to diverse information, strategic priorities, and concerns, which are critical in guiding their employees to generate radically creative ideas. At their end, employees need to ensure that they interact with a diverse group of organisational employees both within and outside their immediate teams regarding work-related ideas (Venkataramani et al., 2014).

Kotter (2001) also realised the benefits of informal networks. *"Extensive informal networks are so important that if they do not exist, creating them has to be the focus of activity early in a major leadership initiative…informal networks can deal with the greater demands for coordination associated with nonroutine activities and change."*

Leading through Crisis vs Leading through Change

Leading through crisis requires fast, reactive decision making. Leading through planned change requires a longer-term strategy with many phases. Transformational leaders must be adept at both.

Change Management

According to Harvard Business School Professor John Paul Kotter (1995), after decades of watching companies try to remake themselves, the most general lesson to be learned from the more successful change management cases is:

"The change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time.

Management is about coping with complexity; it brings order and predictability to a situation. But that's no longer enough – to succeed, companies must be able to adapt to change. Leadership then, is about learning how to cope with rapid change.

(KOTTER, 2001, p. 2)

Skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result. A second very general lesson is that critical mistakes in any of the phases can have devastating impact, slowing momentum and negating hard-won gains. Perhaps because we have relatively little experience in renewing organizations, even very capable people often make at least one big error."

Kotter identified eight errors companies make (refer Figure 1). While there would be more mistakes, he stated that these eight are the big ones. Even successful change efforts are messy and full of surprises. But just as a relatively simple vision is needed to guide people through a major change, so too a vision of the change process can reduce the error rate. Fewer errors can spell the difference between success and failure.

And when you consider the alarming statistic from a recent Everest Group study (Bendor-Samuel, 2019) that 78 percent of digital transformations failed to meet their business objectives and 73 percent failed to provide any business benefit whatsoever, it's worth trying to avoid making these big eight errors, well nine errors if you fail to take emotions into account.

In his later work Kotter acknowledged the lack of attention to emotions that arise during change as another key failing. Empathic reasoning is just as important as analytic reasoning in successful change management.

While Kotter's textbook guide is good, it is not the magic bullet. Cambridge Judge Business School's (CJBS) *Transformational Leadership in Turbulent Times* course leader, Dr Andreas Richter, advocates within the course for other research insights to complement Kotter's. Dr Richter tells course participants, of which this author was one, that for planned change it is necessary to adopt an incremental process.

It is important to remember that everyone is at different stages. Change

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Figure 1: Why Transformation Efforts Fail: 8 Errors Companies Make (Kotter, 1995)

Error #1: Not Establishing a Great Enough Sense of Urgency

Error #2: Not Creating a Powerful Enough Guiding Coalition

Error #3: Lacking a Vision

Error #4: Undercommunicating the Vision by a Factor of Ten

Error #5: Not Removing Obstacles to the New Vision

Error #6: Not Systematically Planning for and Creating Short Term Wins

Error #7: Declaring Victory Too Soon

Error #8: Not Anchoring Changes in the Corporation's Culture

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must be tailored as everyone does not respond equally. Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton's book *The Knowing-Doing Gap – How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action* is also helpful. Creating interest and then getting people to try it. Can I do it? – The Confidence Gap. Do I want to do it? – The Motivational Gap.

Diffusion Theory, adapted from engineering, is also relevant. Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory, developed by E.M. Rogers in 1962, is one of the oldest social science theories. It originated in communication to explain how, over time, an idea or product gains momentum and diffuses (or spreads) through a specific population or social system. Rogers suggests that adopters of innovations can be categorised as 'innovators', 'early adopters', 'early majority', 'late majority' and 'laggards', whose process of adoption over time is based on the classical normal distribution curve. Bass (1969) formulated a model for the diffusion of consumer durables and other products. Since its original formulation, the Bass model has been used for forecasting innovation diffusion in a range of markets including education. The Bass model considers two factors that affect the decision of a person of becoming an adopter of an innovation. Wright and Charlett (1995) adopt the general view that these two factors are 'advertisement' and 'word-of-mouth' and conclude that Rogers's model lacks

predictive validity compared with the Bass model which has considerable predictive power and appears to be well supported by empirical evidence.

According to Dr Richter, within the CJBS course, the key takeaways from planned change management research are: it's a very slow, steady, often tedious process. It requires constant investment and you cannot afford to give up in the middle. Highly respected, highly visible people are needed as change champions to diffuse the negatives. Don't waste time on the late adopters and the laggards in the early stages, wait until later. When you do have to deal with them understand what the root cause of their resistance is and why it exists. For example, they don't want change because they fear it will affect the good service they already provide. You have to *prove* to them that it won't.

The Tipping Point – How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, the debut book by Malcolm Gladwell, first published in 2000, is also useful. Gladwell proposes three laws of tipping points: 'The law of the few', 'the stickiness factor', and 'the law of context'. *The Tipping Point* attempts to correct for people's natural bias toward large, observable events by arguing for the importance of small, often imperceptible changes – changes that, for better or worse, allow social epidemics to tip into popularity (Gladwell, 2000).

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS AND CHANGE CONTINUED

Figure 2: Behaviours to Support Resilience and Warmth (Dettmann & Stier, 2020)

1. People are stressed and uncertain – they need a steady hand taking a pragmatic approach.

2. People want to know that you care – take their perspective and be empathic, take the time to listen to individual needs.

3. People want an honest connection with leaders as real people – be authentically you, share what you are going through, be as vulnerable and transparent as you can be.

4. People feel unfocussed, less connected, less motivated – lighten the burden, bring humour – levity is key to resilience. Give hope for a better tomorrow.

5. People need meaning in a time of crisis and clarity on what is most important – stay true to what matters most to you and your team, "wear your company and personal purpose t-shirt".

This concept is graphically illustrated in health where one small change, such as one person transmitting a virus by moving around their community infecting others who then travel, becomes the tipping point that turns a virus into an epidemic, and ultimately a pandemic.

Crisis Management

The pandemic clearly falls into the crisis management leadership category. An Ernst & Young Global article *Five leadership behaviors for all of us during COVID-19*, taps into the four I's of Transformational Leadership and its decades of research. The authors hail these "behaviors which support resilience and warmth" as necessary for leaders to get themselves and those they lead through the crisis by "being what people need" right now (Dettmann & Stier, 2020). Refer Figure 2.

A crisis is complex, chaotic and filled with "unknown unknowns", a term coined in 1955 by psychologists

Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham in their creation of the Johari Window. In 2002, Snowden and Boone formed a new perspective on leadership and decision-making called the 'Cynefin Framework' based on complexity science. In their book, *A Leaders Framework for Decision Making,* they say leaders need to "probe first, then sense and respond". There are synergies between the Cynefin Framework and the Johari Window, with regard to risk and crisis management (Snowden & Boone, 2002).

When a crisis occurs, people want leaders to 'do something!' The leader sets the tone by bringing order to the chaos. The "top down approach" from Diffusion Innovation Theory works in this case as the leader is the steady hand taking action. In a crisis it is necessary to adapt by modifying decision making styles.

While you cannot predict a crisis, such as a pandemic, you can prepare for one. Preparation is key through

risk management plans, crisis management training and scenario exercises. Crisis leadership requires action and adaption. An investment in support and coaching can make all the difference in the heat of the battle.

Conclusion

A lot has been written about leadership and crisis management during the pandemic. This paper draws on more than fifty years of organisational behaviour theory and summarises research findings and frameworks that may help leaders to become 'transformational' in times of crisis and continual change.

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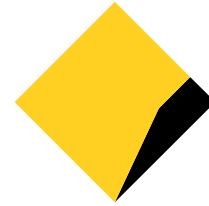
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