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Local Innovation and Autonomy in Contexts of Standardization and Accountability

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From the Four-Part Series Editor

ICSEI offers a platform for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to engage in salient school effectiveness and school improvement (SESI) discourse. It is in this spirit that the four-part monograph series was developed; to both highlight cutting edge scholarship in SESI and to illuminate discussions from the annual ICSEI conference. Each of the four monographs in this series addresses a global SESI area, coupling empirical evidence with issues raised during the ICSEI 2015 symposium, ''Networks for Change: Global Perspectives, Local Practices." The monographs conclude with implications for policy, research, and practice.

The four-part series features:

Local Innovation and Autonomy in Contexts of Standardization and Accountability

Stephen Anderson, Professor, University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

This monograph draws upon data from a comparative investigation of school effectiveness characteristics in 22 Ontario elementary schools selected for variation in performance on provincial tests (high and low) relative to other schools in comparable demographic contexts (mid/high and low SES). Anderson responds to the inquiry, "If everybody is doing the same things, why do we continue to see gaps in student performance between schools?" He calls to question whether meaningful opportunities for innovation and its

diffusion can co-exist with the pervasive press for standardization in education goals, outcomes and best practices.

How do We Create and Exchange Knowledge for Systemic Change?

Louise Stoll, Professor of Professional Learning, London Centre for Leadership in Learning, UCL Institute of Education

A national R&D project, involving the UCL Institute of Education and Challenge Partners, a national network of over 300 schools, explores how middle leaders (department chairs and teacher leaders) contribute to effective practices by sharing knowledge, engaging in joint practice development, and leading and tracking colleagues' change across schools. Stoll explores the question, "Who are the key players in the middle tier between government and schools, and what role should researchers play?" Her study focuses on familiar ICSEI territory of creating collaborative cultures within and between schools – professional learning communities.

Student Voice: A Catalyst for Educational Change

Dennis Shirley, Professor, Lynch School of Education, Boston College

This paper presents a study of cross-national networks for school improvement and educational change. Shirley reports on findings from an educational network organized by the Alberta Teachers' Association in Canada, the Center for International Mobility Organization, and the National Board of Education in Finland, a learning exchange change network that brought

principals, teachers, and high school students from two jurisdictions together to learn about similarities and differences between the two systems and to engender their own strategies for change. He responds to a question, "How can we improve learning, and do so in a way that students have opportunities to express and develop their opinions on matters both large and small?"

Exceptional Effectiveness: Taking a Comparative Perspective on Educational Performance

Alma Harris, Institute of Education, University College London

& Andy Hargreaves, Boston College

This monograph argues that more contemporary empirically-based comparative studies in the SESI field are needed to counter the pervasive influence of popular interpretations of large-scale assessments, such as PISA. At the 2015 ICSEI Congress, a symposium that focused on the opportunities and challenges facing the SESI field explored the relationship between comparative effectiveness, performance, and measurement. The catalyst for a group discussion within this symposium was a comparative study of high performance in three sectors - education, business, and sport - and a recent analysis of the leadership associated with high performance in these three sectors. This monograph proposes that such comparative analyses across sectors and systems offer much deeper insights into the process of educational reform in diverse educational settings. The monograph also addresses the question, "Is co-opetition (a synergistic relation between competition and collaboration) a dynamic opportunity or a grudging necessity in exercising uplifting

leadership that enhances improvement in schools and school systems?"

The authors and I hope the series will encourage ICSEI members to utilize the annual conference as a place to not only share cutting edge research and SESI practices but to also engage in collaboration that generates new contributions to the field.

Helen Janc Malone (editor)
Institute for Educational Leadership (U.S.)

Local Innovation and Autonomy in Contexts of Standardization and Accountability

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Abstract

This monograph draws upon data from a comparative investigation of school effectiveness characteristics in 22 Ontario elementary schools selected for variation in performance on provincial tests (high and low) relative to other schools in comparable demographic contexts (mid/high and low SES). Data from each school included a teacher survey, principal and teacher interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups with students and parents. The study was grounded in the effective schools literature enhanced by research on effective school leadership and organizational culture. We found a high degree of uniformity across the schools in school improvement goals and processes at the school and classroom levels, regardless of variations in jurisdiction, prior performance, and community characteristics. Principals all

enacted practices aligned with contemporary frameworks for effective school leadership. Similarities across schools also appeared in student learning goals, teacher teamwork activities, and the instructional practices emphasized. We relate this to the cumulative standardizing effects of government direction and support in collaboration with school districts and professional associations for school effectiveness. These effects are generated through curriculum standards, annual assessments of student learning, system-wide interventions that target sub-performing schools, professional support for data-based teacher teamwork in schools and for implementation of common instructional methods, and use of common frameworks for leadership and school effectiveness. This finding prompted us to wonder, "If everybody is doing the same things, why do we continue to see gaps in student performance between schools?," and to question whether meaningful opportunities for innovation and its diffusion can co-exist with the pervasive press for standardization in education goals, outcomes and "best practices." The monograph addresses these two questions arising from findings of the Ontario study, while also drawing on an ICSEI 2015 Symposium discussion, "Networks for Change: Global Perspectives, Local Practices."

Introduction

Contemporary education standards and accountability policies as drivers of school quality and improvement have their roots in the ideology of outcomes-based education popularized in the early 1990s (Spady, 1994). As initially conceived, this approach to student learning emphasized the idea that specification of common outcomes would free up local educators to discover effective ways of accomplishing those outcomes. In theory, an outcomes-based learning system would stimulate widespread pedagogical innovation on the part of teachers and other developers of teaching and learning materials. The idea and practice of outcomes-based education evolved into the establishment of government defined curriculum content and performance standards, coupled with accountability systems to assess the extent to which the outcomes were being accomplished. In principle, there remained latitude for innovation and variability in instructional practice and for instructional leadership and management in schools to support attainment of student learning outcomes. However, the definition and prescription of student learning outcomes and standards of performance associated with those outcomes was soon accompanied by increasingly prescriptive

expectations (e.g., best practices) and policies for standards of professional practice, grounded in valid research and experience with effective practice in the context of common standards for student learning.i The policy shift towards standards and accountability over the past quarter of a century has been accompanied by a parallel shift in thinking about the professional and organizational cultures of teaching, one that centers on the idea and practice of collective responsibility and professionalism, rather than teacher individualism (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Rosenholtz, 1989). Thus, as we look into schools across North America and internationally, rather than high degrees of variability in professional practice, one might expect evidence of increasing harmonization around the implementation of a limited array of uniform practices in teaching and in school leadership for effective teaching and learning, consistent with research and collective professional experience about what works in these standards and accountability driven contexts. This monograph addresses questions that strike at the heart of what it means to be a professional educator in today's schools. In the context of prescriptive standards and accountability policy contexts, to what extent is professional practice in school characterized by variability and autonomy for innovation versus standardization?

A Comparative Study of Effective Schools

This monograph draws from the findings of a comparative investigation of school effectiveness characteristics in 22 Ontario elementary schools selected for variation in performance on provincial tests (high and low) relative to other schools in comparable demographic contexts (mid/high SES and low SES).i Data from each school included a teacher survey, interviews with the principal and four classroom teachers, observation of literacy lessons for the four teachers, and focus groups with students, parents, and an additional group of teachers. The study was grounded in three bodies of research and discourse. The effective schools literature provided a foundation for inquiry and analysis (Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Sackney, 2007; Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995; Teddlie & Stringfield, 2007). Much of the seminal research on school effectiveness characteristics predates the powerful impetus for school improvement associated with the policy driven standards and accountability movement. It seemed reasonable to revisit these characteristics in contemporary school settings subject to the influence of that kind of external pressure and support. Second, the study drew upon the growing consensus about and widespread dissemination of school leadership practices

linked to instructional and school improvement (Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). Third, we explored professional norms and practices associated with organizational culture, in particular, professional collaboration focused on improvement in teaching and learning (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Little, 1982; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989). We anticipated that the persistence of traditional individualistic school cultures maybe diminishing in response to research about the benefits of collaborative work among teachers as a strategy for continuous improvement in teacher and student learning.

The research team observed a high degree of similarity across the schools in school improvement foci and processes at the school and classroom levels, regardless of variations in jurisdiction, prior performance, and school community characteristics, thereby calling into question the utility of the conventional school effectiveness correlates to discriminate between higher and lower performing schools under contemporary standards and accountability regimes. According to the teacher survey, for example, all principals were

practices aligned with contemporary frameworks for effective school leadership. Similarities across schools also appeared in student learning goals, teacher teamwork activities, and the emphasized instructional programs and practices. We attributed this general finding to the standardizing effects of the regional government's direction and capacity building support for school effectiveness in collaboration with school districts and professional associations. This results from the combined and aligned influence of curriculum standards, annual assessments of student learning, system-wide interventions that target sub-performing schools, professional support for data-based teacher teamwork in schools and for implementation of common instructional methods, and use of common frameworks for leadership and school effectiveness.

What Accounts for Student Performance Gaps Between Schools?

Findings from this investigation prompted us to wonder, "If everybody is doing the same things, why do we continue to see gaps in student performance between schools?" Close examination of the interview data provided insight

into differences in leadership and teacher practices that were not obvious from the survey item responses alone. We hypothesized that the explanation resides in: (1) the skill with which school personnel are implementing school improvement-related actions; (2) the degree of integration and coherence among those actions; (3) the intensity of improvement efforts; and (4) the capacity and ability of school leaders to mobilize, orchestrate, and provide direction for school improvement over time (e.g., the principals in 11 of our study's 22 schools changed over a two-year period). The semblance of uniformity in professional practices of principals and teachers across the schools in our sample also led us to question and reflect upon the meaning of and potential for genuine autonomy and innovation in professional practice in schools such as these in the Ontario and similar standards and accountability environments.

Conversations among participants in the ICSEI 2015 conference Symposium, "Networks for Change: Global Perspectives, Local Practices," generated further reflections on the salient question that emerged from the study, "Why are some schools persistently underperforming in absolute terms and in comparison to schools serving similar student populations?" The scholars

and practitioners at the Symposium, including university faculty from Denmark and Switzerland, district and state school administrators from Ontario, California, and several doctoral students, did not dispute the general assertion that government policies that demand accountability for the accomplishment of common curriculum and performance standards for students in schools have led to increasing emphasis on standardization of practice as well as outcomes through the emphasis on finding, supporting, and requiring school personnel to implement "what works" in relation to the achievement of these outcomes. Notwithstanding an ongoing discourse about promoting and identifying innovative solutions to identified problems where things do not appear to be "working" as well as imagined or desired, current policies and professional norms (e.g., within and between school collaboration) appear to act as powerful constraints on the genuine autonomy for school personnel to innovate at the local level.

In the Ontario research study we hypothesized that professional skill, persistence, and coordination of practice were key factors distinguishing more and less effective principals and teachers who were doing similar things. In our Symposium conversation the concept of skill expanded from its technical

sense to the broader concept of professional expertise. This incorporates the idea that beyond mechanistic implementation of common practices (e.g., principal classroom walk-throughs, construction of data walls that track student progress and performance, use of common protocols for classroom assessments, Guided Reading) school personnel enacting those practices in some (but not all) schools deeply understand how those practices will contribute directly or indirectly to the quality and improvement of teaching and learning. They implement them with genuine intentionality, not just in response to external pressure for compliance. They engage in ongoing questioning and reflection upon the impact of the professional strategies and practices they employ and refine or change them as their understanding of how well their work deepens. This emphasis on professionally and contextually situated knowledge about what works and why resonates with recent arguments about the development and promotion of "improvement science" in education, with its emphasis on "profound knowledge" of practice and its contribution to organizational goals within particular settings (Lewis, 2015).

Encouragement and Support for Innovation and Autonomy

Much interest is communicated by education policy makers and supervisory agents about promoting, identifying, and replicating innovation in classroom practices and in leadership practices that support high quality teaching and learning. As ICSEI Symposium participants argued, the press for innovation often centers on and arises from situations in which standardized common practices do not yield positive results for the lowest performing students and schools. On the one hand, this seems appropriate to ensure that no students and schools are left behind and that failure or marginal success does not get renormalized as a natural and acceptable phenomenon in a bell curve of low to high performance. On the other hand, centering the focus of attention almost exclusively on low performing students and schools can deflect attention to the search for ongoing improvement in what might be regarded as average or even high performing students and schools. In addition, preoccupation with raising test results can lead school personnel to focus their attention on the so-called 'bubble kids' whose performance is just below desired standards for adequate performance, rather than addressing the more

complex needs all students struggling for academic success. In our Ontario study, for example, teachers in some schools were encouraged by school and central office supervisors to pick three students whose performance on diagnostic and formative assessments was just below provincial standards and to focus their improvement efforts on those students. Surely, expectations and support for innovation should not be capped off by the attainment of minimal expectations for proficient performance.

Talk about autonomy of local educators at the school level and between schools is closely connected to talk about encouragement and support for innovation. Clearly, no one is arguing for unbridled autonomy where every teacher and every school is independently defining their own needs and goals and selecting and implementing their own solutions to those needs and goals, or simply proceeding with the status quo with little pressure and support for improvement. Waters' and Marzano's (2006) concept of defined autonomy, whereby flexibility for autonomy occurs within the parameters of common goals and expectations for school, teacher, and school leader performance aptly captures the nested sense of autonomy in relation to accountability. Even this constrained definition of autonomy is fraught with

tensions and contradictions. A common policy approach to autonomy in prescriptive standards and accountability systems, for example, is to grant greater autonomy from prescription to better performing schools. School reform leaders in England characterize this as a transition from informed prescription to informed professional judgment (Hopkins, 2007),[i] in which the emphasis shifts from reliance on implementation of externally mandated programs and practices toward school personnel learning from and teaching one another about what practices are most effective for common problems and replicating those practices on their own.

This kind of latitude for autonomy assumes that those who are empowered to innovate actually choose to do so. But the flexibility for autonomy can also be a recipe or an excuse for preserving the status quo without effective stimuli and support for exercise of that autonomy in potentially productive ways. The literature states that for site-based management, whereby teachers are granted greater control over decisions about goals and plans for school improvement, there is no strong evidence that this form of governance actually leads to substantial innovation and improvement in schools. In the province of Ontario, the Ministry of Education focused standards and accountability

based reform interventions with positive results initially on elementary schools where 30% or fewer students performed at adequately proficient levels on annual provincial literacy and numeracy assessments (the number of schools in this group dropped from over 800 to about 100 in six years) through the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP) with all school districts. The Ministry then expanded its attention to the large number of schools whose aggregate performance was above the threshold for the turn-around schools program, who were still not achieving the provincial goal of 75% students at the desired proficiency level, and who were not showing evidence of much change. This resulted in a revised three-level program to stimulate continuing improvement in these settings in addition to the lowest performing schools.i Success, rather than creating fertile ground for innovation, can actually act as a disincentive, as teachers and principals may become reluctant to engage in further change because they fear that that might negatively affect the quality of adequate results already achieved for some students, or simply because of the absence or reduction of external or internal pressure for teachers to continuously improve.

An alternative approach to innovation is to emphasize and support radical

experimentation with non-standard practices precisely where traditional and standardized programs and practices are not working for significant numbers of students. This is quite different from providing a bit of extra attention to small numbers of students to raise their test scores to minimal proficiency. Rincón-Gallardo and Elmore (2012) describe the introduction and diffusion of fundamental change in the core technology of teaching and learning through the Learning Communities initiative in isolated rural Mexican schools that were not successful with student learning or engagement using a traditional teacher-directed subject and classroom pedagogy (Rincón-Gallardo, 2015). They argue that the greatest potential for innovation arises in circumstances where standardized norms and prescriptions for practice do not work well. In a prior analysis of differentiated school district support for school improvement in the United States, my colleagues and I concluded that more successful districts set clear common expectations for instructional practice and leadership, establish effective monitoring and capacity building systems to maximize implementation of those expectations, and encourage innovation primarily for students and settings where the standard programs and practices are being well implemented, but are not yielding desired results (Anderson, Mascall, Steigelbauer, & Park, 2012).

Encouragement and support for autonomy to innovate does not remove the expectation and norms of professional responsibility for the quality of those innovations. That is, experimentation with innovative practice needs to be accompanied by local monitoring and reflection on the impact of those innovations with an openness to refinement or even abandonment of practices that do not live up to their anticipated results. It may be more appropriate to frame innovation in terms of experimentation with innovative practices so as not to lose the sense of responsibility for questioning their effectiveness beyond the thrill and public relations value of inventing and adopting new things to do.

When contemporary school personnel talk about greater autonomy their sentiments may be oriented more towards autonomy from external control than towards autonomy from one another within and between schools. The emphasis in and across schools on opportunities and norms of professional collaboration and community was generally welcomed by teachers in our effective schools study, and reflects a more general consensus that has emerged over the past 30 years on the benefits of professional community among local educators for student learning and for teachers' ongoing

learning and commitments to high quality professional practice (Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Institute for Education Leadership, 2006; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). However, there are nuanced psychological and organizational realities of innovation and collaboration that can mitigate against the potential for professional collaboration as a driver and enabler for continuous learning and improvement in practice.

The idealized image of collaboration is that if teachers innovate and implement effective practices and opportunities are provided for other teachers in the same and different schools working in similar contexts (especially in terms of student characteristics and performance) to learn about what they are doing, that they will naturally be inclined to adopt, adapt, and replicate those practices in their own classroom and school settings. The desire to adopt and implement "best practices" invented outside one's own classroom and school setting involves more than the disposition to change and must be accompanied by effective follow-up support from peers and relevant authorities. Virtual and in-person professional learning communities are happening increasingly under the aegis of different kinds of professional learning

networks (Katz, Earl, & Jaafar, 2009). One of the longstanding axioms of implementation research in education, however, is that opportunities for learning about promising practices are insufficient to ensure their effective adoption, adaptation, and implementation (Anderson, 2010; Fullan, 1982). As ICSEI Symposium participants noted, the formalized creation of networked learning communities runs the danger of bureaucratization and cooptation of the network agenda and activities more in the service of externally prescribed programs and practices than in the spirit of ground up innovation and transfer of innovative practice (Jita & Mokhele, 2012).

Expectations of innovation and the excitement of doing something new are not substitutes for becoming an expert at what is already being done. Reservations about standardization of common practices, for example, are typically expressed with the unstated assumption that just because standardized programs and practices have been adopted and are being implemented on a widespread basis does not mean that they are being implemented skillfully and with the kind of profound knowledge to be able to adapt and support their use to local circumstances. In short, the press for innovation should be tempered with genuine interest and ongoing support to elevate the skill and

expertise in common practices that are generally regarded as "effective" if done well. Teacher and principal motivation and commitment to high quality instructional and leadership practices are just as dependent upon the positive sense of efficacy that arises from skillful implementation of prescribed programs and practices as they are on encouragement and support for innovation.

Conclusion

In conclusion we return to our opening questions, but with a more nuanced appreciation of some of the tensions, as well as the potential answers to those questions elicit in conversation with our professional colleagues at ICSEI, How can the desire for local innovation and autonomy be effectively balanced with the press for standardization and accountability in education goals, outcomes, and local practices? It seems misguided to suggest that the standardization of a common repertoire of instructional programs and practices that, when well implemented, can predictably lead large numbers of students to perform well on common measures of student learning within basic expectations for student learning is antithetical to teacher

professionalism. We do not expect other professionals, such as doctors, to each come up with their own way of practicing medicine. Standardization of practice, and the accountability that accompanies it, can be viewed as a manifestation of professional consensus around a common body of professional knowledge and practice that all educators, in their respective roles, should master, albeit within the parameters and limits of those standards.

The leverage points for innovation and professional autonomy arise in at least three dimensions. The first is where standardized programs and practices are being implemented well but are still not yielding desired outcomes assessed with well designed accountability measures for significant numbers of students. The second is where acceptable outcomes are being achieved and where there is or should be latitude for focusing attention on more ambitious student learning and development outcomes for which standardized programs and practices are not well in hand. The third relates to the need expressed by many educators and parents to pay attention to a broader range of student learning and development outcomes than those, which are readily assessed through standardized tests. Innovation and autonomy, however, should be imbued with collective professional responsibility amongst

educators for the monitoring, critically reflecting upon, and communicating the results within the education community of those innovations. In the absence of standardized external accountability measures, it seems incumbent upon the members of the profession to hold themselves internally and mutually accountable for the quality of those innovations and for sharing that knowledge with others. Whether the emphasis is on mastering standardized expectations for professional practice in the context of standards-based accountability systems, or on creating innovative practices that complement and extend the standardized expectations and accountability measures, school systems at government and local levels have a vital role to play in creating the organizational conditions and support systems for effective learning and for implementation, not just for externally defined compliance and accountability measures.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

The challenges for research, policy, and practice arising from the aforementioned findings and discussion with colleagues at the ICSEI Symposium are several. For one, the priority given to the search for and diffusion of the best

practices should be tempered with equal or greater attention to evidence about the quality, not just the fact, of implementation of those practices. Considerable knowledge has accumulated through teacher effectiveness, school effectiveness, and leader effectiveness research over the past 25 years about professional practices that are associated with higher and more equitable student and teacher performance. Research and the professional evaluation measures that are used by education researchers and by school system authorities may do a good job of identifying whether or not certain practices are being carried out and with what frequency. As those practices become increasingly standardized as the norm across schools, however, we need to find better ways of discriminating levels of expertise in their use in order to then design and provide appropriate interventions to help raise those levels of expertise. Improving student performance in the classroom or at the school level may be more a matter of helping teachers, principals, and other professionals get better at what they do than a matter of abandoning existing programs and practices and adopting new ones.

As previously asserted, education standards and accountability systems in general, tend to direct the attention of education policy makers and

practitioners towards low performing students, classrooms, and schools relative to assessed areas of learning and practice. While these may be many, they are by no means all the schools on the map. Under the U.S. No Child Left Behind policy, provisions for schools to provide evidence of Adequate Yearly Progress towards the ambitious goals for 100% of students performing at or above acceptable proficiency levels on state assessments by 2015 had little immediate consequences for non-Title I schools in middle and high income neighborhoods. I visited and studied several school districts with largely middle to high income profiles between 2003 and 2008 as part of a Wallace Foundation funded investigation of leadership and learning at the state, district, and school levels (Anderson & Louis, 2012). In two of these districts, one serving 20,000+ students and the other 50,000+ students, it was only in the last two years of the investigation that any schools failed to meet the incrementally rising state AYP standards, and became a focus of special intervention by school district authorities. A generally unaddressed challenge for policy makers, educators, and education researchers is to inquire about needs for and to figure out how to facilitate continuous improvement in schools that are "average" and high performing relative to basic proficiency standards for student learning.

I interviewed an elementary school principal in one of these districts where 99% of the students were already performing at or above acceptable state proficiency standards. The dilemma for her and her teaching staff was to define student learning goals for their required school improvement plan. This could go two ways. One would be to define more intellectually challenging goals for student learning within the curriculum areas subject to state assessments, perhaps associated with ambitious long term visions of college readiness for all students. A second would be to define and address goals for student learning and development that sit outside the formally tested areas targeted by external accountability systems and measures. In either case, there are implications in terms of our ability as researchers and practitioners to accurately assess and support these kinds of student learning goals on a large scale.i

Policymakers have a responsibility to the public to ensure that expectations and support for continuous improvement in quality are extended to all schools. The "value-added" quality of student engagement and learning in schools should be evident in all schools, and not simply regarded as an issue in those where a large number of students are performing below basic

proficiency levels. For this to occur, I believe that educators, researchers, and policymakers share a responsibility to provide effective pressure and support for the identification and implementation of common practices that yield positive results on a wide-scale. Pressure and support for innovation and systematic inquiry on the results of innovation are needed where good practices are being well implemented but not yielding good results, and where our aspirations for student learning and development stretch or exceed current knowledge of effective practice and assessment of practice.

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Notes

[i] The government of Ontario has established an Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) in 2006, in which the Ministry of Education is the leading partner. The IEL developed Ontario Leadership Framework defines research-based standards of professional practice for principals and other school system leaders in five dimensions: setting directions, building relations and developing people, developing the organization to support desired practices, improving the instructional program, and securing accountability. The OLF document and guides for its use can be accessed at www.education-leadership-Ontario.ca.

[ii] The research that provides the basis for this paper was commissioned and funded by the Ontario government's Education Quality and Accountability Office. The findings and conclusions presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not represent the official positions or policies of the funder or of the researchers' educational institution. The full technical report (Anderson et al, 2013) can be accessed at http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cidec/Research/Elementary_School_Success_Study.html.

[iii] David Hopkins attributes these concepts and their distinction to Michael Barber, the key architect of education reform in the 1990s.

[iv] Information about the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership strategy for turning around low performing schools and stimulating continuous improvement in schools with static progress can be accessed at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/ofip.html.

[v] This may be most relevant at the elementary and middle school levels. Measures of academic excellence at the secondary school level, on the other hand, are often associated with the institutionalized presence of externally defined learning standards such as Advance Placement courses, the International Baccalaureate program, secondary school completion examinations, and post-secondary school entrance tests.

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About the author

Dr. Stephen Anderson's research interests include the implementation of education policy and program change, school improvement and teacher development (classroom, school, and school district levels), and program evaluation. His research and consulting experiences have been situated in Canada, the United States, Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda), Pakistan, and Chile. Current and recent research projects include a comparative study of school effectiveness in 22 high and low performing Ontario elementary schools; a study of school leadership in Chilean primary schools; an investigation of leadership practices affecting teaching and learning in the United States (9 states, 45 schools districts, 180 schools), a pan-Canadian study of policies affecting teachers work, case studies of school district efforts to develop teacher capacity to improve student learning in the United States, and evaluations of school and school district-wide school improvement projects in Pakistan and in Kenya. Recent publications include articles in such journals as the Journal of Educational Change, International Journal of Educational Development, Canadian Journal of Education, International Journal of Educational Reform, School Effectiveness and

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