Workshop title: It’s Time to Talk: Enabling processes creating innovative culture for school change

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Conference theme: Growing Innovative Culture for School Change

The Abstract

Rapid and troubling change in organisations and educational learning systems demands a focus on growing innovative cultures for school change. Building and sustaining capacity is paramount as schools face continual adjustments often pressured by systemic initiatives and high staff turnover rates. These demands increase the need for improved collective responsibility fostered by effective professional conversations, contingent upon stable organisational cultures and responsive participants purposefully committed to mutually shared goals. Cultures that promote professional conversations require a leadership approach focused on individual and collective engagement. The autono-collaborative leadership approach (Bauman, 2015) ensures that formal and informal leaders work together engaging individuals in collaborative professional conversations. The theoretical construct required for organisational alignment, fostering the key elements that contribute to school success, is that of USQ’s Leadership Research International IDEAS Project for school revitalisation. Founded on over two decades of successful applied research (Andrews, Conway & Smith, 2017; Crowther & Associates, 2011; Chew & Andrews, 2010), the IDEAS Project provides schools with step-by-step processes enabling capacity building for sustainable school improvement. Central to this approach is the building of trusting relationships through strategic and deliberate constructs of professional conversations depending on “how to” formulate and conduct professional conversations - the necessary glue required to generate knowledge that builds lasting, innovative cultures for school change.

References:
Bauman, Cheryl L. M. (2013) *An exploration of the interconnectedness between elementary teacher job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement: a study in two Canadian elementary schools*. [Thesis (PhD/Research)]


**The Workshop**

The purpose of this workshop is to:

- Engage participants in activities that highlight the benefits of deliberate and structured professional conversational protocol at the heart of growing innovative cultures for school change. Specifically, these activities will deliberately focus on metastrategies for clarity of ‘pitch’ by the speaker, astute listening skills of the receiver, and protocols for rigorous and respectful discussion.

- Heighten participants’ appreciation for the benefits of processes that enable the ‘growing’ and creating of innovative cultures for school change. It is the processing of change that is the operative realisation over a period of time, building and strengthening ways of working collaboratively.

Impetus for this workshop is the reputation of the research and development work of the Leadership Research International (LRI) group at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia. Educational leadership and school improvement has been the focus of the LRI spanning almost two decades in hundreds of schools across Australia, four schools in Singapore, and multiple conference workshops in Australia, Scotland and Canada. Integral to the success of sustainable school improvement is the power of building trusting and respectful cultures. Key to this success is the adoption of the autono-collaborative leadership approach and the facilitation of deliberately designed structures and processes for successful professional conversations.
It is posited that this workshop adds value to the ways of deepening school change for scaling: that is, the leadership and conversational skills required for agreed principles of practice, the opportunities for forming innovative pathways for changing cultures, and the potential for ways of building sustainable partnerships. It is envisaged that engaged participants will gain an appreciation for the benefits of designing and facilitating innovative activities, for strengthening the skills of successful professional conversations, and for ensuring that purposefully leadership enables the development of processes for culture change in schools.

The workshop design:

- **Input:** A brief stimulus of the content to be covered from the research in educational leadership and school improvement.
- **Design:** an outline of the two specific activities to be facilitated.
- **Activity 1:** a triad of micro-communication skills engaging participants in the skills of focused delivery, astute listening and effective feedback.
- **Group discussion of the experience of activity 1.**
- **Activity 2:** a focused conversation circle engaging participants in the protocol of skilful discussion, a facilitated conversation of selective layers leading to a shared understanding of outcome.
- **Group discussion of the experience of activity 2 and workshop conclusion.**