

**Review of Related Literature for the
Evaluation of Empowering Local Schools**

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To
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Introduction

Agreements between the Commonwealth and States and Territories provide the starting point for this review of related literature. There is reference in these agreements to ‘a mutual interest in enhancing the capacity of schools to make decisions at a local level’ and ‘enabling schools to better respond to local school community needs and provide services to assist their students achieve their best educational outcomes’. A sharper focus is provided for Phase One in the implementation of these agreements which are concerned with:

- Governance arrangements (e.g. strategic planning, school operations, decision making structures and processes that include parents and carers and community)
- Funding and infrastructure (e.g. allocation of resources, infrastructure management, planning and maintenance)
- Workforce (e.g. staffing profiles, recruitment, performance management)

The outputs in these agreements include:

- Modified centralised administrative arrangements which support school based decision making in agreed areas of focus as identified in Implementation Plans, particularly governance, funding and infrastructure and workforce management
- More effective school-based decision-making procedures and processes in agreed areas of focus, particularly governance, funding and infrastructure and workforce management
- Training and professional development for school principals, staff and their local communities to assist them to manage their new and expanded responsibilities effectively
- Increased school responsiveness to the needs of students and the school community, including the needs of students experiencing disadvantage

This review of related literature is concerned with research, policy and practice on matters related to the foci and outputs set out above. It does not review the substance of agreements with States and Territories and other authorities that have been reached in recent months or evaluations of pilot programs that underpinned these agreements.

There are references to an earlier review of policy and practice undertaken for the Australian Government by Educational Transformations (2007a). The Productivity Commission (2012) conducted a review of current policy and practice in Australia, held discussions with various stakeholders, and offered a nuanced recommendation in support of developments along the lines of Empowering Local Schools. Particular attention was given to the range of approaches across the country. Accounts of these approaches will be updated in the current project.

The literature is national and international in scope. An historical perspective is included to help provide a narrative on developments in recent decades with the review organised around 14 themes:

1. Concept of empowerment
2. International trends
3. Driving forces
4. Empowerment in Australia
5. Impact on learning
6. Needs-based funding

7. Empowerment as capacity building
8. Distributed leadership
9. Parent and community engagement
10. Models of governance
11. An 'all depends' approach
12. Impact on workload
13. Preparation and professional development of school leaders
14. Assessing the narrative

1. Concept of empowerment

The concept of empowerment in the context of the Empowering Local Schools program is a very broad one and a review of literature on the theme of empowerment would be too broad. Research, policy and practice on empowerment in the current context is covered in the literature concerned variously with school-based management, local management of schools, site-based management, school autonomy and self-managing schools. The definition of a self-managing school in a system of education may be the most helpful.

A self-managing school is a school 'to which there has been decentralized a significant amount of authority and responsibility to make decisions related to the allocation of resources within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, standards and accountabilities' (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998, pp. 4-5).

Resources are defined broadly in this view of self-management so that personnel, curriculum, pedagogy, technology, facilities as well as money should be considered as resources.

This definition would apply in most respects to systemic Catholic schools as well as public schools. It is applicable to Independent schools to the extent that they must operate within frameworks of professional standards and accountability for the use of public funds.

It is important to distinguish between self-management and autonomy. The extent of decentralization is constrained by the requirement that self-managing schools operate in a centrally-determined framework. Public schools continue by-and-large to be built, owned, operated and funded by a public authority. There is, however, increasing interest internationally in creating relatively autonomous schools within systems of public education. Charter schools in Canada and the United States are examples, but there are still constraints on their operation by the public authorities that established them in the first place or that could close them for any reason.

2. International trends

Most systems of public education around the world have included decentralization of decision-making in their plans for school reform or restructuring. There is a seeming paradox in that there has also been significant centralization. The OECD explained it in these terms:

An important factor in educational policy is the division of responsibilities among national, regional and local authorities, as well as schools. Placing more decision-making authority at lower levels of the educational system has been a key aim in educational restructuring and systemic reform in many countries since the early 1980s. Yet, simultaneously, there have been frequent examples of strengthening the influence of central authorities in some areas. (OECD, 2004, p. 34)

The OECD report described the locus and mode of decision-making in four domains. Locus referred to which of six levels decisions were made: national, state, regional, municipal, local, or school. Mode referred to which of four ways decisions were made: full autonomy at the level concerned, consultation with other bodies at that level, independently but within a framework set by a higher authority, or other. The four domains were organization of instruction, personnel management, planning and structures, and resources.

The report found that ‘in 14 out of 19 countries decisions are taken at a more decentralized level in 2003 than in 1998. The following summarise the major findings as far as decentralization to the school level is concerned:

- Decisions are more often taken at the school level in the Czech Republic, England, Hungary, New Zealand and the Slovak Republic and in particular in the Netherlands where all decisions are taken at the school level.
- Decisions on the organization of instruction are predominantly taken by schools in all OECD countries, while decisions on planning and structures are mostly the domain of centralized tiers of government. The picture is more mixed for decisions on personnel management and allocation and use of resources.
- Just less than half of decisions taken by schools are taken in full autonomy, about the same proportion as those taken within a framework set by a higher authority. Decisions taken by schools in consultation with others are relatively rare. Schools are less likely to make autonomous decisions related to planning and structures than related to other domains. (OECD, 2004, pp. 21-22)

Care should be taken in interpreting some of these patterns, as there are important differences within countries. This is particularly the case in Australia that was reported as being one of the most centralized. In Australia, like Canada and the United States, constitutional powers for making laws in relation to education lie with the states and territories (provinces in Canada), with the Australian Government able to influence arrangements through its powers to make grants to the states through agreements such as those related to the Empowering Local Schools program. The statement that the country is highly centralized is a generalization that cannot be applied to all of the states and territories. Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand and the United States, or states / provinces or districts therein, include some of the high profile examples of self-managing schools.

Another international comparative study was conducted by the World Bank (Barrera-Osorio, Fasih & Patrinos, 2009). It has a sharp focus on school-based management. While it draws from Western literature in explaining the concept, it deals mainly with policy and practice in developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa. It offers sweeping generalisations in several instances, for example it states that in the 1970s Australia ‘increased efficiency through near total autonomy’ (p. 11). Further reference to the study is made in another section of this review that deals with impact on learning.

The World Bank study provided a helpful classification of the forms of school-based management:

1. *administrative-control SBM*—in which the authority is devolved to the school principal
2. *professional-control SBM*—in which teachers hold the main decision-making authority so as to use their knowledge of the school and its students

3. *community-control SBM*—in which parents have the major decision-making authority
4. *balanced-control SBM*—in which decision-making authority is shared by parents and teachers.

In practice, an SBM program usually adopts a blend of the four models. In most cases, a formal legal entity (a school council or school management committee) consists of the principal, teachers, and, in almost all cases, community representatives. (Barrera-Osorio, Fasih & Patrinos, 2009, p. 5)

3. Driving forces

Changes in patterns of decision-making are partly explained by new directions in social and economic policy that have had major implications for schools. The OECD report cited above provided the broad context:

Changing social and economic conditions have given education an increasing central role in the success of individuals and nations. Human capital has long been identified as a key factor in combating unemployment and low pay, but there is now also robust evidence that it is associated with a wide range of non-economic benefits, including improvements in health and a greater sense of well-being ... The benefits of education have driven increased participation in a widening range of learning activities – by people of all ages, from earliest childhood to advanced adulthood. As the demand for learning grows and become more diverse, the challenge for governments is to ensure that the learning opportunities provided respond to real, dynamic needs in a cost-effective manner (OECD, 2004, p. 11).

While these factors explain much of the energy in educational reform, there are other reasons that account for the trend to self-management since the late 1960s. Many of the landmark social, political and religious movements of the 1960s and early 1970s spawned much interest in empowerment. These were the years of social unrest, as seen in the student riots in Paris in 1968, protests against the Vietnam War, and Vatican II. By the end of the 1970s there were important developments in school-based management in Canada and the United States. A review in 1977 identified four factors, working singly or in combination, representing demands for increased sensitivity to local needs and problems, reversal of the effects of size and centralization, accountability and professionalism and a desire for participative management (Caldwell, 1977). One of the noteworthy reforms of this period was in the Edmonton Public School District in Alberta, Canada, known initially as school-based budgeting because the major part of the district's budget was decentralized to schools for local decision-making. There is further mention of Edmonton later in this review because of its pioneering approach to needs-based formula funding of schools.

These same forces were at work in Australia, which had traditionally been considered to have a highly centralized system of education. Reports of distinguished scholars were highly critical of the arrangement (Kandel, 1938; Butts, 1955). While there were precursors at the state level, the seminal event in shifting the balance of centralization and decentralization was the release of the report of the Interim Committee of the Australian Schools Commission (1973), generally known as the Karmel Report. Decentralization, or devolution as it was referred to at the time, was elevated to the status of a value that underpinned its recommendations. The seven values were devolution of responsibility, equality, diversity, public and private schooling, community

involvement, special purposes of schools, and recurrent [lifelong] education. Most developments in self-managing schools, can be traced to these reforms of the 1970s.

The local management of schools in England had its foundation in the community education movement several decades before the major thrust of the Education Reform Act of 1988. The notion of community empowerment ran through many of the developments in several counties about this time, being essentially part of a liberal democratic tradition. However, the tenor of debate changed profoundly with the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act under the Thatcher Conservative Government. This was the era in which the government endeavoured to weaken the power of unions and wind back the influence of the state. Market reforms were in the ascendancy and self-managing schools were seen by many as being part of this movement, despite their foundations in an earlier period. Robust criticisms were mounted (Smyth, 1993).

The 1980s and the 1990s marked a struggle on the merits of the approach, especially in Australia, England and New Zealand. In Victoria, for example, momentum in the early 1980s under the moderate left of centre Cain Labor Government stalled in the late 1980s with resistance by unions to proposals to decentralize most of the budget and significant authority to the school level in respect to the selection of staff. In the 1990s, a change in government to the right of centre Kennett Liberal National Coalition resulted in more than 90 per cent of the state's budget for government schools being decentralized for local decision-making. There were similar developments in New Zealand. However, much of the sting in the debate and its ideological overtones were removed when a return to left of centre governments produced little change. In England, under the Blair New Labour Government elected in 1997, the self-management reforms of the previous Conservative Government were extended, so that more than 90 per cent of the budget for schools was decentralized. The approach of the Kennett Government was continued in Victoria when a left of centre government (Bracks Labour) was returned to power in 1999. There were similar patterns in New Zealand as governments of different persuasion came to power.

4. Empowerment in Australia

As far as public policy on empowerment of local schools in Australia is concerned, the seminal event was, as noted above, the release in 1973 of the Interim Report of the Australian Schools Commission (Karmel Report). Devolution (decentralization) was elevated to the status of a value that underpinned its recommendations. The Committee agreed that 'there is an obligation on it to set forth the principal values from which its recommendations have been derived' (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, 1973, p. 10). The key statements on devolution are set out below:

2.4 The Committee favours less rather than more centralized control over the operation of schools. Responsibility should be devolved as far as possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling, in consultation with the parents of the pupils whom they teach and, at senior levels, with the students themselves. Its belief in this grass-roots approach to the control of schools reflects a conviction that responsibility will be most effectively discharged where the people entrusted with making the decisions are also the people responsible for carrying them out, with an obligation to justify them, and in a position to profit from their experience.

2.5 Many consequences follow from this basic position. In the first place, a national bureaucracy, being further removed from the schools than are State ones, should not presume to interfere with the details of their operations. Secondly, the need for overall

planning of the scale and distribution of resources becomes more necessary than ever if the devolution of authority is not to result in gross inequalities of provision between regions, whether they are States or smaller areas...

These excerpts show that the Committee was concerned with 'control over the operation of schools', not limiting its view of devolution to concepts such as participation or consultation, and that a role for the centre was important in determining an equitable approach to the allocation of resources.

In the decade following the release of the Karmel Report only three government school authorities took up to any noteworthy extent the cause of community involvement through structural arrangements for school councils or school boards. A rudimentary form of school councils was already in place in South Australia. Recommendations for school boards in the Australian Capital Territory (Hughes, 1973) coincided with the Karmel Report and these were implemented with a higher level of local authority and responsibility than in any other system at the time. A range of options for school advisory councils was developed in Victoria in the mid-1970s.

Devolution was a common element of the restructuring movement that began in the 1980s. A comprehensive account is given in a report of a project sponsored by the Research and Projects Committee of the Australian College of Education (ACE) that investigated the administrative reorganization of public school governance in Australia (Harman, Beare & Berkeley, 1991).

The editors of the ACE report suggested that 'the emerging new model for the delivery of public education is likely to be through self-managed schools' as part of an overall reorganization of the system, summarised by Harman, Beare and Berkeley, (1991, pp. 310 – 311) in these terms:

Around Australia in system after system, and often because financial stringency and the states' straightened finances are forcing it, we are witnessing a paring down of the big central bureaucracies, which are divesting themselves of educator staff, who are then reassigned to regions, clusters and schools. ...

At the same time, schools are being given increased legal and professional responsibilities, in the form of a global budget, wide discretion over funding, the responsibility to select their own staff as well as to fill promotion positions from the principal down, the management of the physical plant, and so on. Put simply, Australian *public* schools are becoming self-managing, and are more and more resembling private schools in their modes of governance and operation.

Every state and territory has implemented or extended a form of the self-managing school since the landmark developments described above. Some like Victoria have gone further than others, with 94 percent of the state's recurrent education budget now decentralized for local decision-making within a centrally-determined framework. It is noteworthy that the Bracks Labor Government increased this proportion following the earlier initiatives of the Kennett Liberal National Coalition Government in a parallel to what the Blair Labour Government did in Britain in extending the local management program of the Thatcher Conservative Government. This continuity followed a report (Connors, 2000), commissioned by the incoming Bracks Government, that found that significant benefits had been achieved and that key stakeholders did not wish to return to previous more centralized arrangements.

The Interim Committee of the Australian Schools Commission (1973) observed that ‘after almost one hundred years of public education a reappraisal of relationship of the school to the wider society is taking place in Australia, as it is in most industrialised nations. The isolation of schools is being questioned’, and declared that ‘antipathy towards and apathy about community participation in the governance of schooling is widespread throughout Australia’. While not wishing to be prescriptive, the Committee proposed that ‘educationally, and from the point of view of efficient use of resources, it would make good sense to have the school as the nucleus of a community centre. Joint planning, and even conduct, of schools by educational, health, welfare, cultural and sporting agencies could provide valuable facilities for the school, allow the community access to its resources, and thus generally increase its fruitfulness’ (these excerpts from Interim Committee of the Australian Schools Commission, 1973, pp. 13-14).

The idea that the school should be ‘the nucleus of the community’ in the sense described above, has not taken hold to any great extent and it is still regarded as an innovation. The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister’s statement on the education revolution in 2008 drew attention to initiatives elsewhere, declaring that ‘The United Kingdom’s full service extended schools initiative demonstrates the importance of allowing schools to develop tailored plans to meet the priorities of the local area by bringing different strands of extended service provision together into a coherent approach’ and flagging further reform to ‘achieve stronger links between schools and the services available in local communities that will support their students’ engagement in learning’ (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 29). What is proposed here is essentially addressing one of the six scenarios (‘schools as social core centres’) for the future of schools that arose in the course of the OECD’s Schooling for Tomorrow Project (OECD, 2001).

5. Impact on learning

There has been a consistent demand for evidence that the empowerment of local schools leads in cause-and-effect fashion to improved student outcomes. It was sobering to note the consistent finding in early research that there appeared to be few if any direct links between local management, self-management or school-based management and learning outcomes (Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1990; Summers & Johnson, 1996). Some researchers noted that such gains are unlikely to be achieved in the absence of purposeful links between capacities associated with school reform and what occurs in the classroom, in learning and teaching and the support of learning and teaching (Bullock & Thomas, 1997; Cheng, 1996; Hanushek, 1994, 1997; Levačić, 1995; Smith, Scoll & Link, 1996; OECD, 1994).

A review of research suggests that there have been three generations of studies and it is only in the third that evidence of the impact of decentralization on outcomes has emerged, and then only when certain conditions are fulfilled. The first generation in the 1970s was when impact on learning was not a primary or even secondary purpose. The second generation was in the 1980s when such purposes may have been to the fore but the database was weak. The third, emerging in the late 1990s and gathering momentum in the early 2000s, coincides with a pre-eminent concern for learning outcomes and the development of a strong database (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998; Caldwell, 2002; Caldwell, 2003; Caldwell, 2005).

International studies

The most striking findings have come from recent analyses of school and school system characteristics in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the OECD in 2003 and 2006.

Particular attention was given in PISA 2006 to knowledge and skills in science of 15-year olds. More than 400,000 students participated from 57 countries, covering 90% of the world's economy. School principals reported on the extent of autonomy on a range of matters. The following findings reported by OECD (2007) are noteworthy:

After accounting for demographic and socio-economic background factors, school level autonomy indices in staffing, educational content, and budgeting do not show a statistically significant association with school performance. However, a system-level composition effect appears with regard to school autonomy in educational content as well as budgeting. Students in educational systems giving more autonomy to schools to choose textbooks, to determine course content, and to decide which courses to offer, tend to perform better regardless of whether the schools which individual students attend have higher degrees of autonomy or not ... Similarly, students in educational systems that give more autonomy to schools to formulate the school budget and to decide on budget allocations within the school tend to perform better regardless of whether the schools that individual students attend have higher degrees of autonomy or not ... School autonomy variables do not appear to have an impact on the relationship between socio-economic background and science performance, that is, greater school autonomy is not associated with a more inequitable distribution of learning opportunities (OECD, 2007, pp. 252-3).

The report goes further to construct a model to explain the joint impact of school and system resources, practices, and policies on student performance. Of the 15 factors in the model, the system average on the school autonomy index in budgeting is by far the most powerful.

Findings from more recent analyses in PISA confirm that the most successful systems of schools secure an optimal balance of autonomy, accountability and choice. Particularly striking are two studies conducted for OECD by staff at the Ifo Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich (Department of Human Capital and Innovation). These were concerned with accountability, autonomy and choice, with one focusing on level of student achievement and the other on equity of student achievement. On level of student achievement, the following findings are striking:

On average, students perform better if schools have autonomy to decide on staffing and to hire their own teachers, while student achievement is lower when schools have autonomy in areas with large scope for opportunistic behaviour, such as formulating their own budget. But school autonomy in formulating the budget, in establishing teacher salaries, and in determining course content are all significantly more beneficial in systems where external exit exams introduce accountability'. (Wößmann, Lüdemann, Schütz & West, 2007, p. 59)

Students perform substantially better in systems where private school operation creates choice and competition. At the same time, student achievement increases along with government funding of schools. A level playing field in terms of government funding for public and private schools proves significantly performance enhancing. The evidence is less clear on whether choice among public schools has any significant effect on student

achievement across countries, although in urban areas where there are more schools to choose from, student achievement is higher for students who are not restricted to attend the local school and who report that they attend their school because it is better than alternatives. (Wößmann, Lüdemann, Schütz & West, 2007, pp. 59-60)

As far as equity is concerned:

[R]ather than harming disadvantaged students, accountability, autonomy, and choice are tides that lift all the boats ... there is not a single case where a policy designed to introduce accountability, autonomy, or choice into schooling benefits high-SES students to the detriment of low-SES students, i.e. where the former gain but the latter suffer. This suggests that fears of equity-efficiency tradeoffs and cream-skimming in implementing market-oriented educational reforms are not merely exaggerated, but are largely mistaken. (Schütz, Wößmann, & West, 2007, pp. 34-35)

Andreas Schleicher leads the OECD effort in PISA and provided a helpful synthesis of the findings on school and system characteristics in high-performing systems. He makes clear that self-management is but one element in a constellation of approaches that must be aligned if the desired outcomes are to be achieved.

High-performing education systems tend to create 'knowledge rich' education systems, in which teachers and school principals act as partners and have the authority to act, the necessary information to do so, and access to effective support systems to assist them in implementing change. External accountability systems are part of all this, but so are lateral accountability systems. Among OECD countries, countless tests and reforms have resulted in giving schools more money or taking away money, developing greater prescription on school standards or less prescription, or making classes larger or smaller, often without measurable results. What distinguishes top-performer Finland is its emphasis on building networks of schools that stimulate and spread innovation as well as collaborate to provide curriculum diversity, extend services, and professional support. Finland fosters leadership that helps reduce between-school variation through system-wide networking and builds lateral accountability. It's moved from hit-or-miss policies to universal high standards; from uniformity to diversity; from a focus on provision to a focus on outcomes; from managing inputs and a bureaucratic approach to education to devolving responsibilities and enabling outcomes; and from talking about equity to delivering equity. (Schleicher, 2011, p. 63)

Schleicher also makes clear that these capacities can be achieved at scale, especially as far as innovation is concerned. He adds Victoria, Australia and Alberta, Canada to Finland in his comments about the United States:

Of course, the U.S. has many innovative schools and teachers that have tailored curriculum and teaching methods to meet the needs of children and young people with great success for many years. However, what distinguishes the education systems of, for example, Victoria in Australia, Alberta in Canada, or Finland, is making such practices systematic. These systems have clear learning pathways through school and motivate students to become independent and lifelong learners. (Schleicher, 2011, p. 62)

While a balance of centralization and decentralization is evident in the above, it is important to note that, even in contemporary times, there may be no impact on learning

unless purposeful links are made to the student and classroom levels. There is a need to ensure an impact across all schools in a system. Fullan, Hill and Crévola (2006) demonstrated the limits to improvement by describing how gains in literacy had plateaued in England, and how decentralization of decision-making in Chicago, Milwaukee and Seattle did not lead to large-scale improvement: 'They contain glimpses of what will be required, but they fail to touch deeply day-to-day classroom instruction, and to touch it in a way that will get results for all' (Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006, p. 6). They proposed a system to lift the performance of schools to achieve a 'breakthrough'. There are three components: personalisation, professional learning and precision. 'The glue that binds these three is moral purpose: education for all that raises the bar as it closes the gap' (p. 16).

Reference was made earlier in this review to the World Bank study (Barrera-Osorio, Fasih & Patrinos, 2009) which was mainly conducted in developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa. It noted that 'unfortunately there are no rigorous evaluations of the Australian, New Zealand, or UK programs so there is no convincing evidence of the effects of these reforms on student achievement' (p. 11). On the other hand, the report observed that 'SBM reforms of the strongest type appear to have been introduced and been successful in achieving their goals' in developed countries including Australia and New Zealand (p. 103). The study did not refer to the OECD PISA studies reported above that were published in 2007 and did not locate reports of studies in Australia described below.

Australian studies

The most comprehensive Australian study that explored the links between empowerment and learning was conducted in Victoria over five years from 1994 to 1998 inclusive following the further empowerment of approximately 1700 schools under the rubric of the Schools of the Future initiative. The research was conducted by a consortium of the Education Department, Victorian Primary Principals Association, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals and the University of Melbourne. Research support was provided by the University of Melbourne through a team that included Professor Hedley Beare, Professor Brian Caldwell, Professor Peter Hill and Dr Ken Rowe. The touchstone for the project was the objectives of the initiative which were similar to those for the Empowering Local Schools policy:

- Encourage the continuing improvement in the quality of educational programs and practices in Victorian schools to enhance student learning outcomes
- Actively foster the attributes of good schools in terms of leadership, school ethos, goals, planning and accountability process
- Build on a state-wide framework of quality curriculum, programs and practices
- Encourage parents to participate directly in decisions that affect their child's education
- Recognise teachers as true professionals, able to determine their own careers and with the freedom to exercise their professional skills and judgements in the classroom
- Allow principals to become true leaders in their school with the ability to build and lead their teaching teams
- Enable communities, through the school charter, to determine the destiny of the school, its character and ethos
- Within guidelines, enable schools to develop their own programs to meet the individual needs of students
- Be accountable to the community for the progress of the school and the achievement of its students

Surveys were conducted of all principals over five years as the program was expanded from early volunteers to the point where all but a handful of schools were included in the scheme. Substantial reports were prepared and widely disseminated. After the first base-line survey the questions in succeeding years included the same items, enabling the researchers to track the views of principals over the period of the project.

The objectives were generally perceived to be achieved at a high level. A noteworthy feature was the identification in the base-line survey of 25 expected benefits with progress monitored in the surveys that followed. These were grouped in four domains: curriculum and learning, planning and resource allocation, personnel and professional, and school and community. Structural equation modelling of responses by Rowe resulted in an explanatory model of direct and indirect effects among factors influencing principals' perceptions of curriculum and learning benefits.

Detailed accounts are contained in six reports. The following conclusion is noteworthy:

The explanatory model is confirmation of what research elsewhere has shown, namely, that decentralization of decision-making in planning and resource allocation does not, of and in itself, result in improved learning for students. There is no direct cause-and-effect link between the two. What the model does suggest, however, is that if the linkages are made in an appropriate way, then an indirect effect is realised through action in the personnel and professional domain and also confidence in the efficacy of the reform. (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998, p. 51)

The limitations of the research were acknowledged at the time. It was a second generation study in the three generations described earlier; it drew on the perceptions of principals since there were no consistent data sets on student achievement at the time.

6. Needs-based funding

A key issue is the determination of a funding mechanism to allocate resources from central sources to schools in systems of self-managing schools through mechanisms known variously as 'global budgets' or 'student resource packages'. Allocations typically include a per capita component, with weights that differ according to stage of schooling, and needs-based components that reflect student and school characteristics. Allocations for the per capita component generally reflect historical approaches, especially in respect to a class rather than student focus and assumptions about student-teacher ratios. Allocations that reflect school characteristics invariably take account of size and economies of scale; location, especially in remote or rural settings; and stage and specialization in schooling, where there are different resource requirements. Allocations that are more student-focused typically take account of the socio-economic status of the families or communities of students and the extent of special education needs, including disabilities and impairments.

The pioneering system of self-managing schools in Edmonton, Alberta continues to provide a template. Good progress was made in the 1990s in several countries. Levačić and Ross (1999) provide a summary of approaches in Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand, United States and Wales.

By 2007, attention was shifting in extensively decentralized systems of self-managing schools, especially Australia and England, to how allocations from the system to the school level could

take account of efforts to secure success for all students in all settings and to personalise the learning experience as far as possible. Critically important is how resources, once received, are best allocated at the school level. Student-focused planning models are emerging (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008).

Edmonton

What has transpired in Edmonton is noteworthy as it has had continuous experience with needs-based funding in its highly decentralized system for more than 30 years. Its funding mechanism became a model in other jurisdictions in Canada and some school districts in the United States such as Seattle. Edmonton's schools are self-managing but not self-governing and its schools operate within a system-wide set of policies and priorities and clear lines of accountability. Practice in Edmonton shaped developments in other school districts in Alberta as far as school autonomy is concerned and this, together with its robust school improvement framework and the quality of initial teacher education, professional development and encouragement of innovation are usually cited as factors explaining why Alberta was second to Finland in several iterations of PISA.

The Edmonton Public School District is located within the boundaries of the City of Edmonton in the province of Alberta. The population of Edmonton is approximately three-quarters of a million. There are two systems of education in Edmonton, the other being the Edmonton Roman Catholic School District. Both systems are publicly funded on the same basis in a mix of local revenue from property taxes and provincial revenue (the federal government does not contribute except for small allocations to support Indigenous students and children of defence personnel). Edmonton has an increasingly diverse population. The system budget is described in the following terms:

The 2011-2012 Budget is based on the premise that all resources should be distributed equitably in accordance with responsibility for results. Approximately 80% of the district's budget is planned directly by the schools with input from staff, students, parents and the community. Each school receives an allocation of dollars with which to plan the number of staff and the supplies, equipment and services they need to provide the best possible program for all students. The remaining 20% of the District's budget includes board and central services, district level fixed costs and district level committed costs.

The budget was designed to support all students in an inclusive education system that provides choice while still addressing the increased cultural diversity and unique learning needs of our student population. (Edmonton Public School Board, 2011)

Being a city system there are no allocations in the budget to take account of remoteness or rurality. Allocations are made to schools with particular operating needs including Aboriginal education, schools with unique operating needs, the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) and Alberta Small Class Size Initiative [initiatives of the Alberta Government], educational services to which the formulae are not applicable, community use of schools, students attending designated schools from neighbourhoods where there is no local school, introduction of selected new programs in a school or for the establishment of learning resources and supplies in new schools, professional development, literacy intervention funding, primary schools to support literacy intervention programs, schools with small enrolments, information technology services, costs associated with custodial salaries, teacher aides to primary schools, and schools operating in two locations. Noteworthy is additional funding to reflect High Social

Vulnerability, being allocations to reflect the characteristics of a school's student population based on an index of nine indicators of social vulnerability for the community in which the student resides.

While the detail of the approach has changed over the years, Edmonton has maintained the same structure in its funding mechanism over three decades.

Finland

Schools in Finland (are administered by more than 400 municipal governments. Similar approaches to the allocation of funds are employed across the country. It spends about 5.6 percent of GDP on education, just less than the 5.7 percent spent on average across all OECD countries. Significantly, only 2.5 percent of total expenditure comes from private sources (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 57).

The City of Tampere is typical of the approach in Finland. It allocates funds based on the number of teaching hours offered by each school, which is determined by the number of enrolled students. Principals are responsible for dividing the teaching hours that have been allocated to the school between the subject areas. The City of Tampere provides additional funding, determined through a needs-based formula, for schools that have a significant need to provide students with remedial teaching or additional classes. Schools in Finland are also required to provide students with hot lunches and necessary materials, including books, pens and paper. Schools receive additional funding for learning materials. A school may receive additional funding if, for example, the school teaches several languages. Special classes for students with learning difficulties and remedial education for new migrant students will also provide schools with more funding based on the additional teaching hours that these students require. It is important to note that schools submit proposals for their overall budget, with the city authorities determining the amount to be allocated.

Australia

There is no counterpart in Australia to the mechanisms for funding schools that have developed in Victoria over the last two decades. Approaches in the Independent Public Schools initiative in Western Australia are not included here as that project is still in the trial stage [a summary is provided in the report of the Productivity Commission (2012)] and currently the subject of external independent evaluation.

Victoria drew on experience in Edmonton in the development in the early 1990s of the School Global Budget. It has been modified at regular intervals. There are several components in the re-named Student Resource Package (SRP) as listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Components in Student Resource Package (SRP) in Victoria (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008, pp. 198-202)

Component	School type	Basis for allocation
<i>Core student learning allocation</i>		
Per student funding P-12	Primary /secondary	Different rates for different levels (P-2, 3-4, 7-8, 9-12)

Component	School type	Basis for allocation
Enrolment linked base	Primary/ secondary	Flat base, reducing above enrolment threshold
Small school base Primary under 80.1 students Secondary under 400 students	Primary / Secondary	Reducing base
Rural size adjustment factor Primary less than 201 students Secondary less than 501 students	Primary/secondary	Non-metropolitan, non-provincial
<i>Equity funding</i>		
SFO Middle years equity (Years 5-9) Secondary equity (Years 7-9)	Primary / secondary Primary / secondary Secondary	Student Family Occupation index with eligibility based on school's median SFO density (see descriptions below)
Mobility	Primary / secondary	
<i>Special needs funding</i>		
Students with disabilities	Primary / secondary	Based on student disabilities index of 5 levels with sharply escalating rates per student
English as a Second Language (ESL)	Primary / secondary	Based on 3 SFO weightings across 5 levels of per student funding

The approach for schools administered by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) through its four diocesan offices is of particular interest because of the relatively high level of autonomy of schools in the system and because the mechanism for allocating funds to schools has in many ways pre-dated the approach in government schools described above.

CECV adopted the Ross Index of Educational Disadvantage in determining how funds should be allocated to schools on the basis of socio-economic status (SES) (CECV pioneered the use of SES data in 1977). The index was developed in 1983 by Ken Ross, based at the time at the Australian Council for Educational Research (now at the International Institute for Educational Planning at UNESCO), joined later by Stephen Farish, then at the Department of Education. Ross developed the index using 44 variables derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics census data; these were reduced to six to provide a measure of disadvantage reflecting the capacity of students to take advantage of educational facilities: occupation of parent(s), income, accommodation, education, family structure and transiency. An index was obtained for each school by mapping the school's catchment area for students in Grade 4 (primary) and Grade 8 (secondary). Scores on the index were converted into a scale with 16 levels of disadvantage (this account drawn from Caldwell & Hill, 1999, p. 103). Caldwell and Hill drew attention to the approach in one of the diocesan offices, namely, the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne (CEOM) in their chapter on Australia for an international review of developments:

As in Tasmania and formerly in Victorian government schools [prior to the adoption of a revised mechanism for the School Global Budget and later modified for the Student Resource Package] the resource model in its application uses the Ross Index of Disadvantage. All primary and secondary schools receive a total budget that reflects [principles underpinning the needs-based funding model] and placement on the 16-point Ross index. A proportion of funds is retained centrally for such expenditures as school support, teacher development, and long service leave. Of particular interest is the manner in which state and commonwealth grants are combined and provided to the schools, from which sum is deducted an expected local contribution of private income. This last item is essentially a fee paid by parents also determined on the 16-point scale, with provision for exemptions for parents unable to pay. (Caldwell & Hill, 1999, p. 104)

7. Empowerment as capacity building

It is evident that a higher level of autonomy should not stand by itself but be part of an integrated set of strategies that are focused on achieving improvement. Fullan argued in 2005 that ‘Local autonomy, whether it is the “let the thousand flowers bloom variety” or site-based management within a framework of external accountability, does not produce results on any scale’ (Fullan, 2005, p. 13).

This is a valid comment if it refers to empowerment that is not connected to learning. The way forward is to understand self-management as ‘capacity’ in whole school reform. In this respect, Fullan’s more recent work for the Centre for Strategic Education (Fullan, 2011) is pertinent. He wrote about the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ drivers of reform, suggesting that the ‘main culprits’ were

1. accountability: using test results, and teacher appraisal, to reward and punish teachers and schools, vs capacity building;
2. individual teacher and leadership quality: promoting individual vs group solutions;
3. technology: investing in and assuming that the wonders of the digital world will carry the day vs instruction;
4. fragmented strategies vs integrated or systemic strategies. (Fullan, 2011, p. 5)

These are contentious in the context of current policies in Australia. It is important to note his qualification:

I need to be clear here. The four ‘wrong drivers’ are not forever wrong. They are just badly placed as lead drivers. The four ‘right drivers’ – capacity building, group work, pedagogy, and ‘systemness’ are the anchors of whole system reform. You don’t give up your affinity to accountability, individual quality, technology, and favoured quality components of the reform package. Stated another way, I am not talking about presence or absence or even sequence, but rather dominance. (Fullan, 2011, p. 5)

David Hargreaves made explicit this view of ‘self-management as capacity’ in the drive to improve schools. In *Creating a Self-Improving School System* (Hargreaves, 2010) he argued that ‘increased decentralization provides an opportunity for a new vision of school improvement that capitalises on the gains made in school leadership and in partnerships between schools’ (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 4). In reference to a self-improving system of schools (SISS), he explains that:

At its core, the notion of a SISS assumes that much (not all) of the responsibility for school improvement is moved from both central and local government and their agencies to schools. An obvious forerunner in England is the local management of schools (LMS), the delegation of financial responsibilities to schools in the 1980s, which is generally regarded as a world-leading success story. However, a SISS is not merely the sum total of self-improving schools. The system element in a SISS consists of clusters of schools accepting responsibility for self-improvement for the cluster as a whole. A SISS embodies a collective responsibility in a way that neither school improvement nor LMS has ever done. (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 5)

Hargreaves observed that:

For the last quarter of the 20th century, a major task for school leaders in England was the development of the *self-managing school*, and in this England has led the way internationally. ... Today's system leaders are a direct product of successful leadership of self-managing schools. A major task for school leaders in the first quarter of the 21st century may be the development of the *self-managing school system*. Achieving this status is likely to be a precondition of becoming a *self-improving system*. (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 12)

Once established, a SISS potentially reduces the need for extensive bureaucratic top-down systems of monitoring to check on school quality, the imposition of improvement strategies that are relatively insensitive to local context, with out-of-school in-service courses not tailored to individual professional needs, and external last-ditch interventions to remedy schools in difficulties, all of which are very costly and often only partially successful. (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 23)

8. Distributed leadership

Specifications for the Empowering Local Schools program include an output of 'more effective school-based decision-making procedures and processes in agreed areas'. Research, policy and practice on school-based decision-making are therefore relevant in this review of literature. Particular attention is given in this section to how staff are involved in decision-making, how leadership is distributed, and the relationship between distributed leadership and outcomes for students. There is an extensive literature on distributed leadership and this review is limited to a sample of four recent studies: two from the United States, one from England and one from Belgium.

Data were gathered from 13,000 Grade 3 students and teachers from 195 primary schools in a western state of the United States over a four-year period (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Distributed leadership was moderately and significantly related to change in academic capacity (Heck and Hallinger 2009). Academic capacity was measured on four sub-scales: emphasis on and implementation of standards, focused and sustained action on improvement, quality of student support, and professional capacity of the school. Change in academic capacity was significantly and substantially related to student growth rates in mathematics (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Heck and Hallinger (2009) drew the following conclusions from their study:

We found support for the hypothesis that school leadership and capacity building are mutually reinforcing in their effects on each other over time. This reciprocal effects model of school improvement is underpinned by the notion that in settings where people

perceive stronger distributed leadership, schools appear better able to improve their academic capacity. Similarly, where academic capacity is perceived to be stronger at one point in time, this appears to be advantageous to the development of stronger leadership over time.

(Heck & Hallinger, 2009, p. 680)

A study of 90 schools in nine states of the United States which involved 2,570 teachers found that collective leadership explained 20 per cent of the variation in student achievement (measured over three years). Collective leadership was found to influence teachers' motivation which encouraged higher outcomes for students (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Teachers' motivation was defined as the 'qualities of a person that are orientated toward the future and aimed at helping the person evaluate the need for change or actions' (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008, p. 535). The qualities that influenced a teacher's motivation were considered to be a function of the teacher's personal goals, beliefs about one's capacities and beliefs about one's context. The influence of collective leadership on student achievement was described as follows:

Results suggest that collective leadership does explain significant variation in student achievement across schools. The influence of collective leadership was most strongly linked to student achievement through teacher motivation. Finally, patterns of leadership influence differed among schools with different levels of student achievement. As compared with schools whose students achieved in the lowest 20 per cent of our sample, schools whose students achieved in the highest 20 per cent attributed considerably more influence to most sources of collective leadership. Furthermore, parents and students were perceived to be relatively influential in those schools, as compared with the lower-performing schools.

(Leithwood & Mascall, 2008, pp. 554-55)

More than 700 schools from the primary and secondary sector in England were involved in an evaluation of effective school leadership practices. The study identified schools that had significantly raised pupil attainment levels over three years (Day et al., 2009). Fifteen per cent of the primary and secondary principals of the schools that had significantly raised pupil attainment levels reported that they promoted leadership development. Day et al. found that there were 'positive associations between increased distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities and the continuing improvement of pupil outcomes' (Day et al., 2009, p. 4). Improvements in academic outcomes were influenced by the leadership effects indirectly through their influence on 'teachers and teacher quality and on promoting a favourable school climate and culture that emphasises high expectations and academic outcomes' (Sammons et al., 2011, p. 97). The following recommendation for policy and training was made: 'leadership training for heads [principals] needs to encompass greater attention to the process of distributing leadership and the practicalities of ensuring effective patterns of distribution' (Day et al., 2009, p. 4).

A study of 46 Belgian secondary schools found that school leadership from a distributed perspective accounted for nine per cent of the variance in teacher's organisational commitment (Hulpia et al. 2011). Organisational commitment was defined as members of an organisation who are active players within the organisation and who feel that they have a high status, are willing to contribute beyond what is expected of them and have an impact on what is going on (Hulpia et al. 2011). They summarised the key findings of their research:

This suggests that when individual teachers in a school believe that their school is being led by a cooperative leadership team and that there is a strong participative culture in the

school, they tend to be committed to their school in a similar manner. In contrast, when teachers reported that there is less cooperation in the leadership team and limited opportunities to participate in school decision making, we found more variance in teachers' organizational commitment.

(Hulpia et al., 2011, p. 576)

9. Parent and community engagement

Drawing on and building the capacity of parents and the wider community is an important aspect of the Empowering Local Schools Program and most agreements for jurisdictional participation make reference to intentions to do this. There is an extensive and generally affirming literature.

Educational Transformations conducted a review of literature on parental engagement with findings contained in a report for the Department of Education, Training and the Arts in Queensland (Educational Transformations, 2007b). The review provided the foundation for case studies of what was current practice in Queensland at the time. The findings and recommendations arising from the project are beyond the scope of the current review of literature but the summary of research, policy and practice as set out in Table 2 is pertinent. It drew on a framework of policy and practice constructed by Epstein, with engagement taking the following forms: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995).

Table 2: Findings in review of literature on parent engagement according to categories in Epstein (1995) model (as reported in Educational Transformations, 2007b)

Type of engagement	Explanation	Findings in review of literature
Parenting	This category is used to refer to some forms of parental involvement in children's education in the home, including parents' attitudes towards education and executing their choice of a school for their child.	Parents' education level, expectations and beliefs about education are important indicators of student success
Communicating	All forms of communication between parents and the school are included in this category of activities. Two sub-categories of communication describe forms of communication that are structured by schools and less formal communication activities that can be initiated by either parents or the school.	Effective parent-teacher communication can have benefits for student outcomes, particularly in the early years of schooling
Volunteering	This category refers to parents acting as volunteers for the school, which may be directly related to classroom activities or to general school activities.	Parent volunteering activities that take place in the school have a positive relationship with decreases in disruptive student behaviour and increases in student

Type of engagement	Explanation	Findings in review of literature
		motivation, engagement and retention
Learning at home	The activities in this category include all types of parents' support and involvement with school-initiated activities in the home, such as homework or other educational activities to be completed outside of the school.	Parent participation in literacy learning activities has a positive relationship with improvements in student literacy
Decision-making	The decision-making category refers to all parental involvement in school governance, which may be through the Parents and Citizens Association or the school council.	Participation in school governance offers parents an opportunity to share ownership of school decisions
Collaborating with the community	There are many forms of school-community collaborations <i>with the community</i> including parenting programs, which may be initiated by the school or outside organisations.	There is a positive relationship between improved student outcomes and parenting programs that are sensitive to the cultural needs and values of parents

The findings summarised in the third column of Table 2 are positive for each kind of parent engagement. The finding in respect to parent participation in decision-making is constrained to the extent that findings in related studies suggest that there is not a direct impact on learning outcomes. The efficacy of this form of engagement lies mainly in the sense of ownership of decisions. As noted in the report:

Australian research into parent participation in school decision-making activities has a range of benefits which may include increasing their personal social capital by forming connections with other families, or intellectual capital through enhancing their planning and managerial skills (Cuttance & Stokes, 2000; Saulwick Muller Social Research, 2006). These studies have also indicated parent participation in school governance activities are an important factor in increasing parents' feelings of being valued by the school and having input into their child's educational institution (Saulwick Muller Social Research, 2006). Research, however, has not identified any relationship between parental involvement in school governance and improved student outcomes. (Educational Transformations, 2007b, p. 49)

Parent engagement is one aspect of community engagement and a wider view of these kinds of contributions may be derived from the literature on social capital. A review of literature and related research was included in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools conducted in 2007 and 2008 by Educational Transformations with support from the Australian Government and Welsh Assembly Government. Its purpose was to explore how schools in six countries that had been transformed or had sustained high performance had built strength in each of four kinds of capital (intellectual, social, spiritual, financial) and aligned them through effective governance to secure success for their students. The following summary is drawn from a report of the project (Caldwell & Harris, 2008).

Social capital refers to the strength of formal and informal partnerships and networks involving the school and all individuals, agencies, organisations and institutions that have the potential to support and be supported by the school. Intellectual capital refers to the level of knowledge and skill of those who work in or for the school. Spiritual capital refers to the strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence among values, beliefs and attitudes about life and learning (for some schools, spiritual capital has a foundation in religion; in other schools, spiritual capital may refer to ethics and values shared by members of the school and its community). Financial capital refers to the money available to support the school. Governance is the process through which the school builds its intellectual, social, financial and spiritual capital and aligns them to achieve its goals.

There were two stages in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools that built on earlier research and developmental work. The first called for a review of literature on the four kinds of capital and how they are aligned through effective governance. An outcome was the identification of 10 indicators for each form of capital and for governance. The second called for case studies in five secondary schools in each of six countries: Australia, China, England, Finland, United States and Wales (the Australian component also included a primary school and a network of primary and secondary schools). Schools were nominated by knowledgeable people as having achieved impressive improvement, especially under challenging circumstances, or had sustained a high level of achievement over many years.

The following indicators of social capital emerged from the review of literature. Each indicator was evident in a related strategy in every school studied in the six countries. Indicators 1, 3, 4 and 9 were evident in the majority of schools.

1. There is a high level of alignment between the expectations of parents and other key stakeholders and the mission, vision, goals, policies, plans and programmes of the school
2. There is extensive and active engagement of parents and others in the community in the educational programme of the school
3. Parents and others in the community serve on the governing body of the school or contribute in other ways to the decision-making process
4. Parents and others in the community are advocates of the school and are prepared to take up its cause in challenging circumstances
5. The school draws cash or in-kind support from individuals, organisations, agencies and institutions in the public and private sectors, in education and other fields, including business and industry, philanthropists and social entrepreneurs
6. The school accepts that support from the community has a reciprocal obligation for the school to contribute to the building of community
7. The school draws from and contributes to networks to share knowledge, address problems and pool resources
8. Partnerships have been developed and sustained to the extent that each partner gains from the arrangement
9. Resources, both financial and human, have been allocated by the school to building partnerships that provide mutual support
10. The school is co-located with or located near other services in the community and these services are utilised in support of the school

10. Models of governance

The view of governance that emerged from the International Project for the Transformation of Schools was concerned with decision-making to secure an alignment of the four kinds of capital. This was a novel approach given that the concept is normally much broader. A project for the Human Resource Development Working Group of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) consortium on *Best Practice Governance: Education Policy and Service Delivery* (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005) adapted a definition of governance provided by the Governance Working Group of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (1996).

- Governance refers to the process whereby elements in a society wield power and authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life, and economic and social development.
- Governance is a broader notion than government, whose principal elements include the constitution, legislature, executive and judiciary. Governance involves interaction between these formal institutions and those of civil society.

The applicability of the definition to schools is readily apparent if one takes account of the extent to which links with civil society have been made in successful schools in recent years. In the past, many schools had few connections; they were, to a large extent, stand-alone institutions. It is for this reason that governing bodies of such schools did not concern themselves with notions of governance because they could get by with relatively closed approaches to decision-making.

A shift in the balance of centralization and decentralization inevitably involves a change in arrangements for governance including changes in the structures and processes for decision-making. Warwick University's Ron Glatter suggested that changes in governance in school systems results in a number of tensions: between system coherence and fragmentation, between institutional autonomy and the wider community and public interest, between diversity and equity, between competition and collaboration, and between central and local decision-making (Glatter, 2003, p. 229). He described four models of governance (Competitive Market, School Empowerment, Local Empowerment and Quality Control) that reflect different patterns of autonomy. He proposed a fifth to reflect emerging interest in 'learning organisations' (Learning System). The five models are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Models of governance reflecting different patterns of autonomy (based on Glatter, 2003, p. 230 and p. 234)

Characteristics of Model	Competitive Market Model	School Empowerment Model	Local Empowerment Model	Quality Control Model	Learning System Model
Indicative policies	Pupil-number-led funding	Authority devolved to school on finance, staffing, curriculum, student admissions	Authority devolved to locality on finance, staffing, curriculum, student admissions	Regular, systematic inspections	Reform by small steps
	More open enrolment	Substantial powers for school council/ governing body	Substantial powers for local community council/ governing body	Detailed performance targets	Focus on evidence-informed policy and practice
	Published data on school performance			Mandatory curriculum and assessment requirements	Tolerance of divergent views – minimal blame/ derision
	Variety of school types				Creation of test-beds for innovation
					Genuine partnerships built on trust
					Reduction of conflicting incentives
Main perspectives	Commercial	Political and/or managerial	Political and/or managerial	Bureaucratic	Developmental
How the individual school is viewed	As a small business	As a participatory community	One of a ‘family’ of local schools	As a point of delivery/local outlet	As a creative, linked unit within the wider system
Main focus within the system	The relevant competitive arena	The individual school	The locality as a social and educational unit	Central or other state bodies	The connections between stakeholder groups and between system levels

Some approaches to school-based management or self-managing schools are consistent with the Local Empowerment model but elements of the Competitive Market, School Empowerment and Quality Control models are evident in some instances. Recent calls for an evidence base to policy and practice, encouragement of innovation, and networking professional knowledge suggest that

the Learning System model should be added to the amalgam. Glatter recommended the Learning System model in the following terms while endorsing aspects of the other models:

The picture of the school in this model is of a creative unit, well-connected to the wider system. The main focus or centre of gravity is not any one unit, whether the school or the centre, but the connections between the various interest or stakeholder groups and also those between the different levels of the system. However you should not see this as a utopian model, purely rationalist and technocratic. It is nothing of the kind. There must be ideological and political dispute within it. The tensions and dilemmas ... are real and will remain, as will differences of power and ideology. This is not a recipe for bland consensus-seeking because the contest of ideas and solutions plays a vital role in the enhancement of learning. But it assumes a climate of trust and tolerance. The emphasis is on the quality of relationships. (Glatter, 2007)

The Learning System model seems to be especially applicable in Australia as far as Empowering Local Schools is concerned, given that the focus is the improvement of learning. It also sits well with the emerging consensus in international developments that improvement in learning is the primary purpose of self-management. However, elements of the other models are evident in different approaches to self-management, in Australia and elsewhere, along with the tensions described by Glatter.

11. An 'all depends' approach

Evidence suggests that there is no one-best-way as far as the empowerment of local schools is concerned; there may be different degrees dependent on the context. Particularly helpful in this regard is the McKinsey & Company report on *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* (Mourshed, Chijioko & Barber, 2010). There were 18 countries in their sample (a total of 20 systems including three from the United States). These were classified on a robust evidence base in four 'journeys': poor to fair ('achieving the basics of literacy and numeracy'), fair to good ('getting the foundations in place'), good to great ('shaping the profession') and great to excellent ('improving through peers and innovation'). There were three main findings:

1. It's a system thing, not a single thing: There is a common pattern in the interventions improving systems use to move from one performance stage to the next, irrespective of geography, time, or culture. These interventions, which we term the 'improvement cluster', are mutually reinforcing and act together to produce an upward shift in the trajectory of the system. Though there is a different cluster of interventions for each stage of the system's journey (poor to fair, fair to good, good to great, great to excellent), there is a dominant pattern throughout that journey.
2. Prescribe adequacy, unleash greatness: There is a strong, correlation between a school system's improvement journey stage and the tightness of central control over the individual schools' activities and performance. Systems on the poor to fair journey, in general characterised by lower skill educators, exercise tight, central control over teaching and learning processes in order to minimise the degree of variation between individual classes and across schools. In contrast, systems moving from good to great, characterised by higher skill educators, provide only loose, central guidelines for teaching and learning processes, in order to encourage peer led creativity and innovation inside schools, the core driver for raising performance at this stage.

3. Common but different: Our findings indicate that six interventions occur with equal frequency across all the improvement journeys, though manifesting differently in each one. These six interventions are: revising curriculum and standards, ensuring an appropriate reward and remuneration structure for teachers and principals, building the technical skills of teachers and principals, assessing students, establishing data systems, and facilitating the improvement journey through the publication of policy documents and implementation of education laws. (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010, pp. 33-34)

The second finding ('prescribe adequacy, unleash greatness') is especially applicable for the journey from good to great wherein only loose, central guidelines for teaching and learning processes are provided 'in order to encourage peer led creativity and innovation inside schools, the core driver for raising performance at this stage.' The 'intervention cluster' for the journey from great to excellent includes cultivating peer-led learning for teachers and principals, creating additional support mechanisms for professionals, and system-sponsored experimentation / innovation across schools (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010, p. 36).

The report provides examples of interventions for each of the three findings. For the first finding ('it's a system thing, not a single thing'), interventions in the journey from great to excellent include collaborative practice among educators, decentralizing pedagogical rights to schools and teachers, creating rotation and secondment programs across schools and between centre and schools, providing additional administrative staff, sharing innovation from the front-line, and funding for innovation (p. 51). For the second finding ('prescribe adequacy, unleash greatness'), the report concludes that 'lower-performing systems focus on raising the floor, while higher performing ones focus on opening up the ceiling' (p. 52). For the third finding ('common but different'), particular attention is given in the journey from great to excellent to 'attracting top talent', with teachers' base salary significantly above per capita GDP (p. 62).

The World Bank study of mainly developing countries (Barrera-Osorio, Fasch & Patrinos, 2009) found that evidence of impact of school-based management on learning was sparse and inconsistent. It is likely that this is at least partly explained by the analysis in the McKinsey & Company report summarised above.

The possibility of a 'default position' on autonomy was raised in the report of the Principal Autonomy Research Project (Educational Transformations, 2007a), cited in the report of the Productivity Commission (2012). Such a position assumes as a starting point that public schools should have a relatively high degree of autonomy but that particular circumstances may call for a reduction in autonomy; for example, in a small school or for schools in remote settings, or schools that are still moving from 'poor' to 'fair' or 'fair' to 'good' in the journeys described in the McKinsey Report cited above. Default autonomy is a core 'non-negotiable' principle in the next part of the narrative in Victoria.

Default autonomy is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity in Catholic teaching over the years, as reflected in the following statement of Pope Pius XI that is often cited in the context of school governance in systems of Catholic education:

Still, that most weighty principle, which cannot be set aside or changed, remains fixed and unshaken in social philosophy: Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to

assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organisations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them (Pope Pius XI, 1931, Para 79).

Such a view in no way detracts from a commitment to a system of schools that share the same values and mission or that develop mechanisms for mutual support. In addition to education departments in systems of public education or the Catholic Education Office in a diocese or archdiocese, even independent schools establish such mechanisms. For example the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) in New South Wales employs a staff of 82 people.

The principle of subsidiarity cited above has particular meanings in particular contexts. In Catholic education, for example, there have been significant changes since the statement of Pope Pius XI was formulated (1931). The role of the parish priest was clear and comprehensive at that time, but less so now.

12. Impact on workload

An enduring issue is the impact of empowerment at the local level on the role of the principal and other school leaders. A study was conducted in Victoria (Department of Education and Training, 2004) on the workload in government schools and its impact on the health and wellbeing of the principal and assistant principals. On workload, the number of hours per week for principals in Victoria was similar to that for principals in England, as reported in a survey at about the same time, being about 60 hours per week. In both places, this is well above the average of leaders and managers in other professional fields in several European nations (about 45 hours per week). The report contained evidence of a negative impact on the emotional and physical wellbeing of principals.

A related study in Sweden reported by Lindberg (2012) was concerned with levels of stress experienced by principals when a management by objectives approach was implemented in association with school-based management. School-based management has been a feature of trends in school reform in Sweden over the last two decades. Implementation was in the hands of municipalities which have authority and responsibility for the administration of schools while operating in a broad framework of national policy on education. The study compared the impact of school-based management at the senior secondary level in two municipalities, one which retained a largely traditional role for schools and their principals and the other which implemented a relatively high level of decentralization. The former provided no choice on which schools students shall attend and decentralized decisions on the allocation of funds for materials, supplies and professional development. Students were free to choose their schools in the latter, with principals able to make decisions on number of employees, salaries, materials, supplies, investments, professional development and actions concerning income.

Surveys and interviews of principals in the Swedish study focused on aspects of stress including role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload. There were important and significant differences in the responses for the two groups:

Principals with more traditional roles experience less role ambiguity, but greater role conflict and role overload compared to principals with an SBM-influenced principal role. The form of role stress that principals with traditional roles experience most is role overload. The role is clearly defined, but it does not give the principal room to manoeuvre. As a result, when the principal tries to find solutions to local problems, s/he

experiences role overload because s/he lacks the possibility to take action. (Lindberg, 2012, p. 168)

The principals with SBM-influenced roles experience less role conflict and role overload, but much more role ambiguity. ... Principals with this particular role might experience more role ambiguity than those whose roles are more in keeping with the old model. On the other hand, because they have space to manoeuvre and local knowledge, they experience less role conflicts and role overload. However, performing their roles is time-consuming and their total workload and working hours escalate. (Lindberg, 2012, p. 168)

There is also evidence that fewer people are seeking appointment to principal in countries with self-managing schools. In England, for example, a typical school seeks a new principal once every seven years, which means about 14 per cent advertise each year. The number advertising in 2005 was 12 per cent, with about one-third unable to make an appointment after the initial advertisement. Education Data Surveys (EDS) reported that re-advertisement reached record levels (Smithers, 2006). Despite the workload and declining numbers seeking to be principals in some countries, it is clear from the results of surveys over a decade that most serving principals in systems of self-managing schools would not wish to return to more centralized arrangements (Bullock & Thomas, 1997; Caldwell & Spinks, 1998; Department of Education and Training, 2004).

There are important implications of the research reported here, especially in respect to the distribution of leadership, discussed earlier, and the preparation and professional development of principals, discussed below. Lindberg summarised the two 'paths':

One is to identify the skills that principals lack and to educate current and future principals in a way that ensures they have the right competence. The other is to strengthen principals in their roles by making sure they have the right support. (Lindberg, 2012, p. 169)

13. Preparation and professional development of school leaders

Programs for the preparation and professional development of school leaders at the end of the 20th century tended to be isolated from the core work of schools, namely, learning and teaching and the support of learning and teaching. As far as graduate programs in educational administration (management) were concerned, subjects like change, finance, human resource management, leadership, organizational development, planning, policy and supervision were in vogue. Participants were expected to apply generic knowledge to areas of professional interest. Studies in curriculum and pedagogy were rarely included.

There was steady change throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, the chief feature of which has been the inclusion of studies in curriculum and pedagogy and building a capacity to analyse and utilise data on student achievement. Most government and Catholic systems have established centres for leadership development and these often involve stronger partnerships between universities, school systems and schools than existed in the past. These developments are likely to continue. Similarly for the work of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) that has developed its own model of leadership to guide its professional development programs.

It is noteworthy that independent schools also conduct programs for the professional development of school leaders, for example, the Association of Independent Schools (New South Wales). The Association of Heads of Independent Schools (AHISA) has developed a Model of Autonomous School Principalship (Shaw, 2012) that includes three levels of autonomy: personal autonomy, professional autonomy and operational autonomy across four domains of leadership: self, community, educational and operational.

The touchstone in these matters is the National Professional Standard for Principals (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011). It is likely that AITSL will draw on the Standard in the design of its Empowering Local Schools Flagship Professional Learning Program on Local Leadership. While the Standard is intended as a resource for all principals in Australia it is striking that its three leadership requirements and five key professional practices assume a relatively high level of authority and responsibility at the school level. The Standard recognises the ‘uniqueness of each school within its community’ (p. 3). Key professional practices include Leading Teaching and Learning; Leading Improvement, Innovation and Change; and Engaging and Working with the Community. The Model for Professional Practice calls for the principal to be able to ‘assess and diagnose a given situation, develop a plan, allocate resources and implement the plan consistent with the vision and values of the school’ (p. 8). Leading Teaching and Learning calls for the principal to:

Place learning at the centre of strategic planning and make sure that there is a diverse and flexible curriculum that is supported by creative, responsive approaches to teaching together with an effective learning environment. Convert the strategic planning into action in the classroom and in designing and delivering learning. Develop educational strategies to secure equity of educational outcomes to enrich the school as a learning environment for its students, families and carers and the wider community. (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011, p. 9)

Engaging and Working with the Community includes the following among illustrative professional practices:

Engage with families and carers, and partner, where appropriate, with community groups, agencies and individuals, businesses or other organisations to enhance and enrich the school and its value to the wider community. (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011, p. 11)

The Standard gives appropriate attention to strategic planning, which is a capacity included in the specifications for the Empowering Local Schools program (see page 1 of this review). Illustrative professional practices for the Leading Improvement, Innovation and Change requirement include a capacity to ‘lead and facilitate through teams the necessary innovation and change to reflect changing demands on and expectations of the school’ and ‘take a strategic role in the development and implementation of new and emerging technologies to enhance and extend teaching and learning experiences’ (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011, p. 10). These capacities call for a high level of adaptability and flexibility in planning and traditional approaches to strategic planning and the writing of a strategic plan that holds for several years are no longer helpful in some respects. One way of doing this is through a process Richard Hames calls ‘strategic navigation’ (Hames, 2007), an approach adapted to the school sector by Caldwell and Loader (2011, pp. 48-49).

Instead of generating a plan with dated and static intelligence, strategic navigation is responding to real-time, current intelligence. Instead of leaders following directions and meeting deadlines, they are free to respond to the situation as they read it. Instead of an emphasis on the plan, the emphasis is upon the navigation. The result is a more dynamic approach to strategy that is more inclusive of staff in both the assessment of the issues and in the development of responses. Strategic navigation is more suited to the current turbulent times where continuous corrections are necessary.

It is noteworthy that the Standard drew on national and international research and drew on the expertise of consultants like Dame Patricia Collarbone who was a pioneering principal and system leader in the empowerment of local schools in England.

14. Assessing the narrative

The empowerment of local schools has been one manifestation of a general trend to decentralization in public education in many countries since the late 1960s, with bi-partisan political support and more widespread practice in the early years of the 21st century. The phenomenon is not a 'fad' as stated in a report to the Review of Funding of Schooling in which the Nous Group stated that "'Autonomy' has arguably been one of the more faddish concepts that has informed education reforms internationally in the past decade' (Nous Group, 2011, p. 63).

The practice was introduced for a range of reasons but much of the heat from often contentious debates about its efficacy has dissipated as most governments and system authorities settled on the enhancement of learning as its primary purpose. The logic of the argument was relatively straightforward: each school contains a unique mix of student needs, interests, aptitudes and aspirations and those at the school level are best placed to determine the particular mix of all of the resources available to the school to achieve optimal outcomes. Early research was generally unable to confirm the logic, either because the design of the reform did not include a connection to learning, or because the data base on student achievement was poorly constructed, thus thwarting any effort to determine the connection. Research at macro- and micro-levels tends to confirm the association but it requires purposeful efforts by a skilled profession to make it effective.

Early efforts placed the focus on management, with particular attention being given to planning and resource allocation. It is understandable that preparation and professional development programs for leaders and managers at the school level tended to focus on these. However, with heightened expectations for schools, especially in terms of success for all students in all settings, the focus continues to shift to leadership and the building of professional capacity to achieve an alignment of all kinds of resource, including curriculum and pedagogy, with the mix of learning requirements at the school level.

Caldwell (2011) referred to views about self-managing schools or locally empowered schools that can be reasonably described as 'myths' since there is little if any evidence to support them. Much of the evidence has been included in this review of literature. Table 4 summarises the responses in each instance.

Gathering further evidence in respect to the assertions listed in Table 4 is an important component of the current project.

Table 4: Summary of evidence

Views about self-managing schools ('myths')	Summary of evidence
1. Self-management is an attempt to privatise public schools	Self-managing schools have remained in the public system in Australia and in comparable countries even when they are described as 'independent public schools'. Contributions from the not-for-profit, philanthropic and corporate sectors have not changed the relationship between government and public schools.
2. Self-management is a fad	There has been a consistent trend to self-management over more than four decades in Australia and most other countries.
3. Self-management is about capacity to hire and fire	'Hire' and 'fire' imply an authority to employ or dismiss that is not evident in public and Catholic schools except for short-term appointments. The loose use of these terms has often given rise to heated debate when the correct terms for the processes are 'select' and 'transfer' since the contract of employment remains with a central authority. The terms are correctly used in the context of independent schools.
4. Self-management harms efforts to achieve equity	Evidence from OECD studies suggests the opposite providing there is a balance of autonomy, accountability and choice. The trend to self-management has been invariably accompanied by efforts to develop a student needs-based approach to the allocation of funds to schools and these normally contain an equity component. The issue is the overall quantum of resources available to schools regardless of the degree of centralization and decentralization. Recent developments include efforts to describe principals as 'system leaders' as well as 'school leaders' as they work with their counterparts in other schools in networks to share knowledge and pool resources. Disparities in achievement between public and private schools are not the consequence of empowering local schools in the public sector.
5. Self-management is associated with efforts to reduce public expenditure on government schools	Self-management has been introduced in good times and bad as far as the resourcing of schools are concerned. Early initiatives in Australia following the Karmel Report were supported by an unprecedented flow of funds to support schools. This was also the case in England under the Blair Government. Reductions in the amount of staff at the central or regional level have not paralleled a shift to decentralization although it is often claimed they should.
6. Self-management should not be implemented because it fails to address the needs of failing schools, small schools or schools in remote settings	A one-size-suits-all approach is not supported by the evidence on successful policy and practice and there are no advocates for such an approach. There are circumstances where a more centralized approach is necessary, including for schools described in the statement.

Views about self-managing schools ('myths')	Summary of evidence
7. Self-management has no impact on learning	While evidence was mixed at best in the first decades of self-management this was because there was no purposeful link to learning and there was an absence of data on student achievement that would enable a judgement to be made. The weight of evidence since the turn of the century supports the case for a positive impact providing decision-making at the local level is focused on learning and teaching and the support of learning and teaching and staff have the capacities to make and implement a student-centred approach.
8. Self-management is a distraction for principals and others who should focus instead on educational leadership	This statement captures a legitimate concern and there is evidence in some settings that this has been the case. Management support has not always been available to principals of public schools as authority, responsibility and accountability have been decentralized. Further evidence should be gathered in the current project in surveys and case studies. Cross-sectoral comparisons will be valuable. A driving force in support of enhanced educational leadership has been the expectation for local empowerment that is intended to improve learning, set in a broader context in which professional development for principals and school leaders is generally more sharply focused on curriculum and pedagogy than in the past.
9. Self-management reflects a lack of commitment to the needs of the system	The responses in #4 and #8 above address this assertion. Networking professional knowledge and resources is arguably more evident now than ever, as is the connection between autonomy and accountability.
10. Self-management is one element of a neo-liberal project that does grave harm to public education	This assertion is made in much of the critical literature and is likely to remain there. While there is an ideological foundation for empowerment, it has generally been more concerned with professional and community engagement than with fostering a market in school education. On balance, especially in the second decade of the 21 st century, empowerment is a pragmatic response to intentions to improve schools.

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