



ICSEI EXPRESS and DIGEST

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Editor's note:

Welcome to the last issue of the ICSEI Express and Digest for 2014. The Congress is fast approaching, and we will soon have the opportunity to gather together face-to-face. The program is truly exciting, and offers an opportunity to deeply explore many areas of interest. We have chosen to feature a few 'snippets' from the proposals received for the Congress in this issue to offer a glimpse of the sessions that will be available in addition to the world class line up of keynote speakers.

In subsequent issues, we invite you submit international news and updates, or 'Digest' versions of current research and collaborations of interest to the International School Effectiveness and Improvement community. For proposed submissions, be in touch with Paige Fisher at paige.fisher@viu.ca



In this edition you will find:

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Respectfully, Paige Fisher

1.0 Message from the President



The ICSEI conference in Cincinnati is fast approaching and it promises to bring together an exciting line up of keynote speakers and an impressive range of papers, symposia and posters. The ICSEI 2015 programme highlights that the contemporary research undertaken by those in the SESI field remains grounded, relevant and cutting edge. The SESI field continues to inform policy makers, practitioners and researchers around the globe.

The ICSEI networks play a vital role in the formulation and sharing of new knowledge. Their work is pivotal in ensuring that ICSEI remains a vibrant intellectual force and an important source of grounded, empirical evidence. In my experience the network meetings are really engaging, intellectually stimulating and inclusive sessions. The network sessions and meetings will undoubtedly be a highlight of ICSEI 2015.

I am also really pleased to be chairing various sessions at ICSEI 2015. One session that is particularly close to my heart focuses on improving 'low performing' schools. My research, and the research contribution of many others in the SESI field, continues to highlight that schools under the most challenging circumstances can improve, do improve

and continue to improve. These schools radically change the life chances of young people and at best, can transform an entire community.

In this edition of the ICSEI Express and Digest, I would like to highlight the achievement of one tiny, remote school. On a daily basis this school, like so many others in challenging circumstances, makes a significant difference to young people and the wider community. Its improvement journey encapsulates the spirit, the intent and the moral purpose of ICSEI.

As the outgoing President of ICSEI, I would like to thank the Board, the Secretariat, the ICSEI members for all their support and good humour. Thanks to Sam and Kathleen Stringfield for leading ICSEI 2015 so ably. I am also grateful to the entire US ICSEI team for making Cincinnati 2015 a reality. To all the 'State of the Art' contributors and the monograph writers, a huge thank-you for taking the SESI field forward. Last but not least thank you Paige for your patience and your unbridled optimism that my copy for the ICSEI Express and Digest will eventually turn up!

Lost in Space? School Turnaround and Improvement in a Remote Setting

Donnie Adams, Vasu Muniandy, Michelle Jones and Alma Harris¹

'If a Child cannot Learn the Way We Teach, Maybe we Should Teach the Way they Learn'



We hear wonderful stories of school turnaround that inspire and uplift us. But what if you were the principal of a school that was simply in the middle of nowhere? What if you were asked to lead a school more than a hundred kilometres from the nearest town or city that did not register on any GPS system? What if literally, your school was 'lost in space'?

To answer this question we need to go to a school located in a rural part of Malaysia. This school is in the state of Johor, where taking a journey southwards from Kuala Lumpur for a few hours, traversing dirt tracks and unmarked roads, would eventually get you to SJK (T) Ladang Rem, Kota Tinggi Johor. This is a small Tamil school that has served successive generations of families who work in the palm oil plantations that dominate and define the landscape.

Six years ago the school's performance trajectory was unimpressive with many students not reaching their true potential. The school was a 'happy school' at the heart of a proud community but for the new principal who arrived in 2008, that was simply not good

¹ All authors are currently based at the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Malaya

enough. For Mrs Paramaswary A/P Ramasamy, it was her first principal position having been a class teacher since 1986 and subsequently a teacher supervisor at the district level before becoming a principal. With just two weeks of formal leadership training and preparation under her belt she started her first day with only one goal in mind, to turn the school around.

A first glance at the student performance data clearly showed that the young people in her new school struggled to learn. They had problems reading in their own Tamil language and found English, and science especially difficult. The teachers in the school all taught their own specialist subject, so if a teacher was away through illness or for a family emergency a relief teacher was brought in, often for long periods of time. But the challenges did not end there.

The principal did not know about the research on school effectiveness and school improvement. She had not read the latest literature on school turnaround, school improvement or organizational uplift. Instead, she trusted what she knew, deep down, as a teacher, as a supervisor, as an experienced educator who cared deeply about her students. The principal did not know the term 'instructional leadership' but her actions and her approaches reflect a highly accomplished instructional leader. Her observations of every classroom in her first and second week told her all that she needed to know. Pedagogical practice and classroom instruction needed urgent attention if all children were to learn effectively.

Emphasis was not placed on identifying poor teachers or singling out individuals who needed to improve, instead the approach was collegial, constructive and collaborative. The main problem she identified, very early on, was that teachers worked in isolation, rarely sharing ideas, strategies or pedagogical approaches. Therefore her prime and most powerful turnaround strategy was enabling and encouraging teachers to work together.

As a result of these efforts, the school started to improve and it has sustained its trajectory of improvement. In 2014 the school was designated as a 'High Performance School' (HPS), which is a significant achievement. Out of 523 Tamil schools in Malaysia, this school alone was awarded HPS status. The literacy and numeracy levels of young people remain higher than the State average.

While there are no 'silver bullets' for school improvement or magic formulas for sustained success, there are some lessons to be learned from this turnaround example that transcend geographical, contextual or cultural boundaries. Focusing upon innovation rather than just improvement in the classroom is one very important lesson. This turnaround example underscores that to secure and to sustain high performance means not just doing things better (improvement) but also doing things very differently (innovation).

The story of SJK (T) Ladang Rem, Kota Tinggi school brings home the importance of ensuring that context must not constrain expectations. As this school has clearly shown, with high expectations and with effective instructional processes, exceptional achievement is perfectly possible even in the most remote and challenging contexts.

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2.0 ICSEI News and Updates

Redefining Education, Learning, and Teaching in the 21st. Century: The Past, Present and Future of Sustainable School Effectiveness

NB: Conference registration is still open as some members and ICSEI colleagues are currently receiving permission to attend conference through their organisations. Please register online at <http://www.icsei.net/index.php?id=1623>

The ICSEI Office will be open throughout the rest of December and up to and including Conference. Main contact details will be jennylewis@icsei.net and cell phone **+61 477517974**.

2.1 The 2015 International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement

Invitation from the President Professor Alma Harris

As President, it is with enormous pride and pleasure that I invite you to be part of ICSEI 2015 in Cincinnati, USA. This promises to be an exceptional conference and also a very important one.

With so much debate about PISA and the various ways of transforming education systems, the title of the conference is particularly pertinent. If we are to 'Think Globally, Act Locally, and Educate All Children to Their Full Potential' what exactly will that take? If we are to secure equity and excellence in our education systems, what are the right and the wrong drivers for lasting positive educational change? To help us think through these issues at the ICSEI conference 2015 there is a truly impressive line-up of speakers.

Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director for Education and Skills and Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) will present detailed results of the most recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Vivian Tseng and Kim DuMont of the W.T. Grant Foundation will examine efforts to scale up reforms, taking them from the idea stage to dozens and thousands of campuses.

Robert Marzano of Marzano Research will present results from his meta-analyses of school- and system-level educational effects and discuss High Reliability Organization structures in educational results. Tom Good, University of Arizona, and Daniel Muijs, University of Southampton, will highlight the latest trends in teacher effects and what practitioners need to know. Dan Duke from the University of Virginia will discuss his persuasive work on turning around low-performing schools and how to prepare principals for this difficult work.

It remains the case that the Global Education Reform Movement shows little signs of slowing down. So it is particularly important for educators around the world to look at the evidence and consider the facts. With more than thirty years of research on the theme of school effectiveness and improvement, ICSEI has a critical role to play in this current debate. This conference will be an opportunity for Practitioners, Policy Makers and Researchers from around the world to discuss and deliberate important global and local issues, as well as sharing the latest evidence from their own contexts.

For almost three decades, ICSEI has remained an organization that is committed to equity and excellence. Over these years its moral purpose has never wavered and its core intentions have not been derailed. ICSEI remains committed to social justice and educational success for every child, whatever their background, race or context. In such turbulent times, it is more important than ever that we, as educators, learn from each other and share with each other. There is no ceiling on educational success and no limits on learning but we must invest in those changes that are evidentially based rather than commercially driven.

I want to thank Professor Sam Stringfield and Tom Shelton for making ICSEI, 2015 happen. Without their drive and enthusiasm and the work of their exceptional team, it would not have been possible.

Let's ensure ICSEI 2015 is a landmark conference for the return of principled and evidence-based educational reform. I look forward to seeing you there.

Professor Alma Harris

ICSEI President
University of Malaya

2.2 Board Elections

The Board Nominations Committee is pleased to announce that the elections for the 2015-2017 Board have been completed. The 2015 – 2017 Board will be confirmed at the 2015 ICSEI AGM. Board membership includes:

- President - Michael Schratz (Austria)

- Past President - Alma Harris (Malaysia)
- President Elect - Andy Hargreaves (USA)
- Treasurer - Chris Chapman (Scotland)
- Student Representative - Abigail Felber-Smith (USA)
- Board Member - Susan E. Elliott-Johns (Canada)
- Board Member - Paige Fisher (Canada)
- Board Member - Suwarsih Madya (Indonesia)
- Board Member - Sam Stringfield (USA)
- Board Member - Hechuan Sun (China)

3.0 ICSEI DIGEST

Expect another issue in early 2015. We will share some news and highlights of the Cincinnati Congress and Digest versions of some of the papers presented. If you would like to showcase a Digest version of your Congress paper in the next issue, be in touch with Paige at paige.fisher@viu.ca.

In this issue of the Digest, we bring you some snapshots of sessions that will be offered at the Congress in Cincinnati to pique your interest. In addition to a number of sessions that draw on the American context, with Cincinnati as a focus, there will be papers and symposiums from 28 different countries. Many of the sessions feature authors from multiple countries and contexts, which is a signal of the many collaborations that converge and emerge within the ICSEI community. There is also a lively balance between theory, policy and practice which should offer sessions of interest for all participants.

From Compliance to Commitment: Strengthening educational leadership in a time of disruptive change

Belinda Gimbert, Ohio State University, United States

We are lucky enough to be in the profession at a very profound time, where a number of fundamental paradigms are being questioned. We are also in state of flux when we need powerful reformers with strong vision who can lead people through the discomfort and uncertainty of change. Although transformative changes have been proposed before in education, they lacked staying power. Why? Because they were implemented with compliance, not commitment. Taxpayers continue to pour more money into education than ever before with similar or worse results. In fact, rather than reducing achievement gaps through national efforts, our country has actually seen them grow or remain unchanged. Why have these great ideas failed? For three reasons: First, we have tried to incorporate innovative and disruptive ideas into the traditional system, which has led to initiative overload, teacher shortages and burnout, and stagnant results. Second, we have failed to recognize our systems are made up of people. We need to strategically develop our talent if we expect our initiatives to be implemented with commitment, rather than just compliance. Third, we have failed to adequately prepare and develop our educational leaders to design disruptive change and empower and leverage their staff to implement it. This symposium is designed to address these three failures, review what we know about the topics, and provoke meaningful and action-oriented discussion.

Developing Teaching Skills Through Coaching: Five Experiences from Canada/USA, Ontario, Mexico, Scotland and Switzerland

Margery McMahon, Scotland; Beate Planche, Canada; Carmen G. Barrios-Veloso, Mexico; Giorgio Ostinelli, Chile

In their seminal work *Student Achievement Through Staff Development: Fundamentals of School Renewal* (Joyce & Showers, 1995), Beverly Showers and Bruce Joyce illustrated how merely 5% of teachers develop new skills if they are only learning a theory. This grows to 10% if the theory is demonstrated, to 20% if teachers practice what they have learned, and increases to 25% if corrective feedback is added. When teacher learning is followed up with job-embedded Coaching this amount rises dramatically to 90%. Therefore the practice of Coaching and having coaches embedded in schools is critical for the development of teacher professionalism. This session will be presented from five different cultures and perspectives but will maintain the belief that embedding a “knowledgeable other” (Sharratt et al, 2010) in schools will significantly increase teacher learning and ultimately increase student achievement – our core business. A lively discussion will follow five succinct presentations from differing perspectives and models of Coaching: in Canada/USA, Ontario, Mexico, Scotland and Switzerland.

Data-Driven Teacher Professional Development- It Works!

Samir Fadel, Egypt

The paper will identify how data and information guided the Education Support Program, a USAID project administered by the American Institutes for Research in Egypt, to provide professional development in training for more than one-hundred thousand newly appointed assistant teachers. The data not only informed the decision of the topics to choose from but also highlighted the extent to which the project was successful. The feedback we received from participating teachers and the data from observing the teachers in classrooms were valuable to confirm the success of the project. In addition, the impact of the work informed policy and the ministry of education. Currently, all assistant teachers must go through this training in order to be licensed. This model of implementation can easily be replicated in other countries aiming at improving performance of great numbers of teachers. The paper shows the process of planning, implementation and assessment of the project.

Where Policy Meets Practice

Udit Bhatta, Nepal

After years of internal conflict Nepal (one of the world's poorest countries) gradually is trying to design, develop and implement a whole series of education reforms. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is one of the most important sectors that will be affected by these reforms since until today TVET is more or less is the realm of non-formal education. With the support of agencies like World Bank and EuropeAid the national government is underway to define future orientated TVET systems and curricula. The Vajra Academy (an eco-friendly school that offers quality education to children from both middle class and lower class families) is planning to add a TVET track to its already existing basic education program in line with national priorities. Therefore it is necessary to know to what extent the ambitions of parents, students, teachers and stakeholders in the local community are congruent with the ones as these are expressed in the national policy papers.

School Improvement Trajectories: A Proposal for an Empirical Typology

Cristian Bellei, Chile; Juan Pablo Valenzuela, Chile; Daniel Contreras, Chile

The proposal paper is based on a series of case studies of schools which have been identified as improving their performance for almost a decade; it has proposed a number of criteria by which to characterize these processes and by applying, we have been able to construct a typology of school improvement trajectories. The analytic criteria which have been applied point to key dimensions for school improvement, which can be conceived as a gradient; however the combination of factors to sketch the typology is not mechanical. Rather they are complicated and complex combinations which in practice often demonstrate a lack of balance between dimensions and varied time patterns in terms of their progress. The solution has been to develop a series of typologies which cover a full range of improvement processes while at the same time showing the limits and challenges that the schools face at different phases of school improvement.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are interested in exploring the possibility of hosting an ICSEI conference in your country, the guidelines are posted on the ICSEI website www.icsei.net and you can contact Jenny Lewis at the ICSEI Secretariat admin@icsei.net for additional information.

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