HOW CAN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORKS SUPPORT SELF-IMPROVING SCHOOLS?

Professor Brian Caldwell
Managing Director and Principal Consultant
Educational Transformations

Second strategic think tank of Educational Transformations on the theme 'Are current models of schooling sustainable?' Conducted in association with the Western Australian Primary Principals Association (WAPPA)
28 August 2012

educational
transformations

THE ANSWER IS . . .

- **S**haring knowledge

- **A**ddressing issues of common concern

- **P**ooling resources

THE CHALLENGE IS . . .

- Why limited our thinking to self-improving?

- Can a school be self-transforming?

- How can professional learning networks contribute to this more challenging possibility?

NETWORKING IS . . .

The systematic establishment and use of internal and external links (communication, interaction and coordination) between people, teams or organisations ("nodes") in order to improve performance'

Based on van Aalst, 2003, p. 33

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF NETWORKS OPERATING ALONE OR IN COMBINATION

- A 'community of practice' that involves the relatively informal sharing of knowledge within a network of professionals. The knowledge may or may not be codified and much of the activity within the network involves the identification of who has the knowledge to address a particular issue.

- A 'networked organisation' that involves a more or less formal relationship between autonomous organisations with the intention of adding value to each, the chief advantage being that each partner can remain autonomous yet build its capacity to achieve its mission through synergies achieved with other partners.

- A 'virtual community' may take many forms, with the common element being the medium of ICT.

van Aalst (2003, pp. 36-37)

NETWORKS IN EDUCATION SUCCEED WHEN . . .

- There is a clear and agreed outcome to the network's activity;

- The benefits of networking – creating the network, operating it and maintaining it – exceed the costs, since lack of pay-off is disincentive to continuation;

- The participants are committed to professional learning through collaboration, sharing and joint activity, with agreed ways of working;

- The network contains high social capital and its two key components: trust between members and norms of reciprocity;

- Leadership and management are distributed and supportive;

- There is appropriate support in terms of time and / or resources, an appropriate model for professional development that connects innovation to normal professional practice;

- There is a good balance in communication between face-to-face and electronic and virtual forms and e-networking is instituted after trustful, face-to-face networks have been established. (Hargreaves, 2008, p. 33)

EVERY SCHOOL IS UNIQUE BUT . . .

- Schools not only need to be networked, they have to be able to integrate their activity and authentically learn from each other in ways that have not been mainstreamed in the past.

- Within this 'networked' school environment however, we must recognise that just like students, every school is unique. The history, teacher profile, culture, demographics, size and a range of other variables in each school demand that local solutions must be developed to address identified problems of practice and performance. It is therefore abundantly clear that the 'one size fits all' approach to systemically controlling all schools will not move the nation's educational performance consistently forward.

- While we must share wisdom, knowledge and practice to improve schools within a network, enabling school leaders to innovate and provide flexible strategic direction is essential to improvement at the local level and for the nation as a whole.
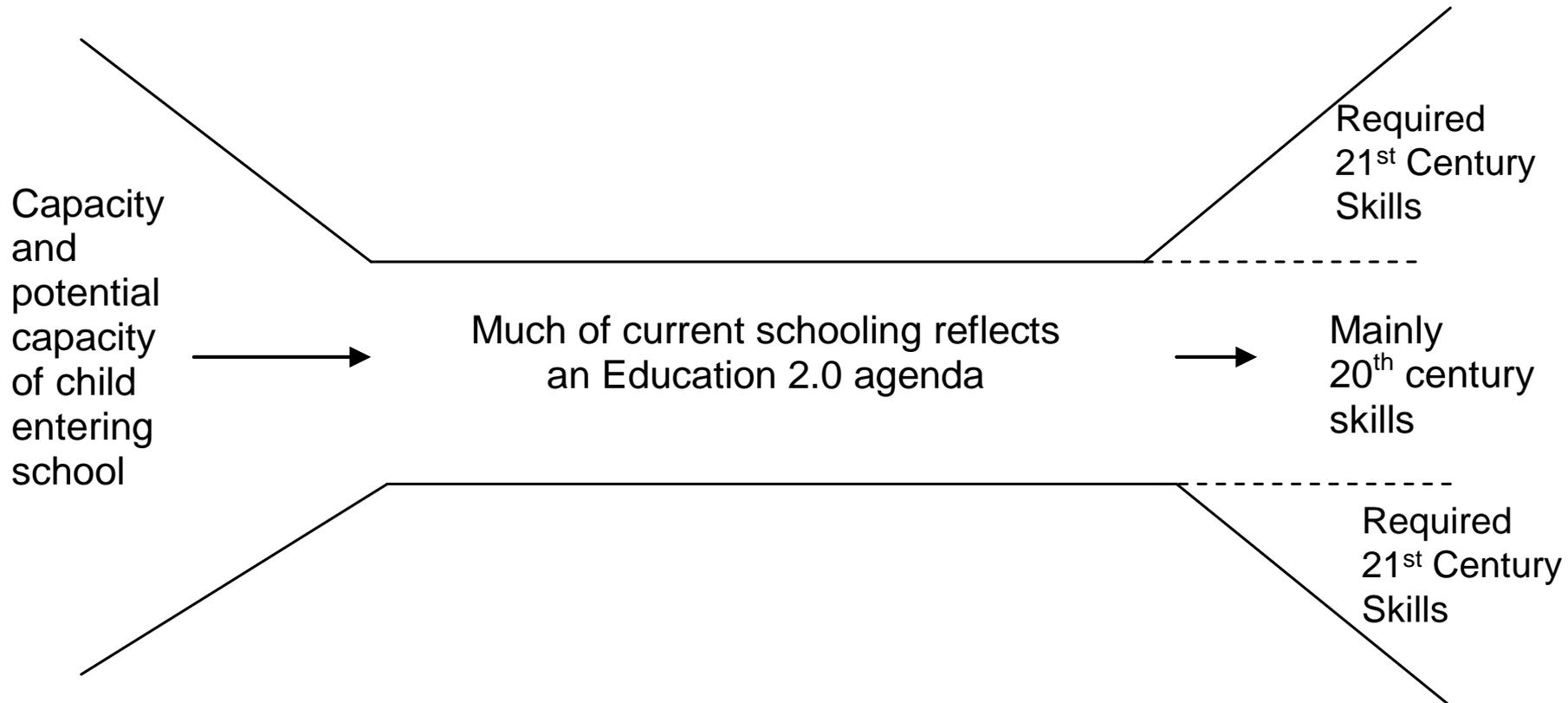
(Watterston & Caldwell 2011, p. 650)

Some big picture thinking

THE YONG ZHAO CONTENTION

Presidential Chair and Associate Dean of Global Education
University of Oregon

Dysfunctional effects of staying with Education 2.0
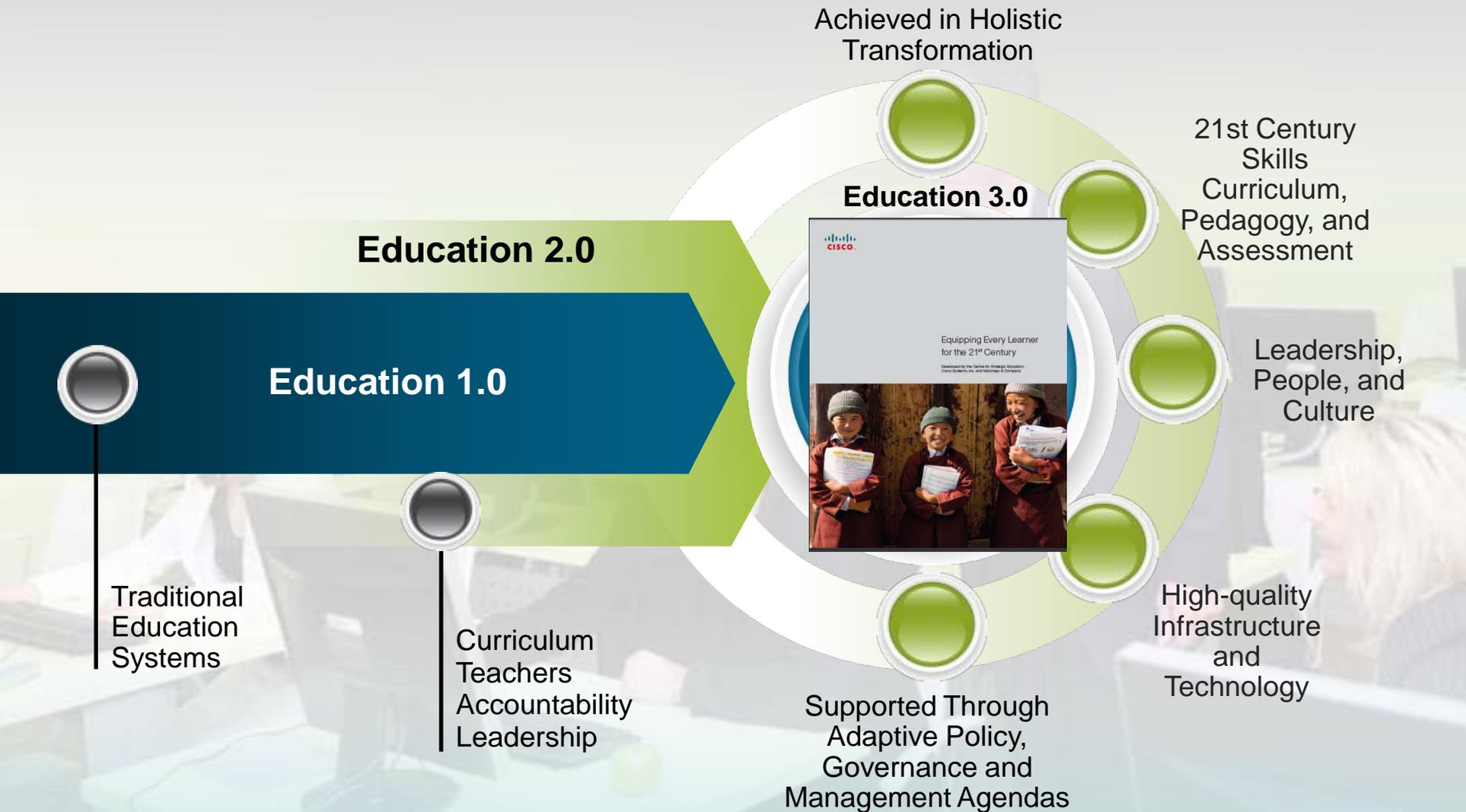[the current or traditional approach to schooling]

Capacity and potential capacity of child entering school

Much of current schooling reflects an Education 2.0 agenda

Required 21st Century Skills

Mainly 20th century skills

Required 21st Century Skills

EQUIPPING EVERY LEARNER FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Education 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 slide from Centre for Strategic Education (CSE) collection)

Evolution of Education Systems

THE FOURTH WAY

Characteristics of the first three ways of educational change (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009 p.44 with minor adaption)					The Fourth Way
Domain	**The First Way**	**The interregnum**	**The Second Way**	**The Third Way**	**The Fourth Way**
Short Title	Innovation and Inconsistency	Complexity and Contradiction	Markets and Standardisation	Performance and Partnerships	Autonomy, professional trust
Duration	End of WWII to mid 1970s	Mid 1970 to late 1980s	Late 1980s to mid 1990s	Late 1990s to 2011	2011 going forward
Control	Professionalism	Professionalism and bureaucracy	Bureaucracy and markets	Bureaucracy, markets and professionalism	Moves to school leaders and away from regions and 'the centre'
Purpose	Innovation and Inspiration	Quest for coherence	Markets and standardisation	Performance and partnership	Disciplined innovation, partnership, focus on transition points, improved service delivery
Trust	Passive trust	Growing suspicion	Active mistrust	Public confidence	Professional trust; support for the profession
Community Engagement	Mainly absent	Parent communication	Parent choice	Delivery of services to communities	Consumer choice, partnership engagement, service delivery

THE FOURTH WAY (CONTINUED)

Domain	The First Way	The interregnum	The Second Way	The Third Way	The Fourth Way
Curriculum	Inconsistent innovation	Broad standards and outcomes	Detailed and prescribed standardisation	Varying prescription with increased coaching and support	National, with options for specialisation (science, languages etc.)
Teaching and learning	Eclectic and uneven	Prescriptively driven by standards and testing	Direct instruction to standards and test requirements	Autocratically data driven yet customised	Evidence based
Professionalism	Autonomous	Increasingly collaborative	De-professionalised	Re-professionalised	Trust in profession
Professional learning communities	Discretionary	Some collaborative cultures	Contrived collegiality	Data driven and professionally effervescent	Choice for each professional; 'like' groups
Assessment and accountability	Local and sampled	Portfolio and performance based	High stakes targets and testing by census	Escalating targets, self surveillance, and testing by census	National testing, reviews. Possibly increased emphasis on annual reporting to parents. Mixture of self monitored and performance management
Lateral relations	Voluntary	Consultative	Competitive	Networked	Networks with choice

HUME REGION

State Government Victoria
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Why not the best schools?

What we have learned from outstanding schools around the world

Expectations have been raised in Australia and comparable countries for an 'education revolution' that will secure success for all students in all settings. Such a revolution must ensure the alignment of educational outcomes, the skills required for a strong economy, and the needs of a harmonious society. *Why Not the Best Schools?* offers a ten-point, ten-year strategy that will ensure that, when all is said and done, people will look back and say a revolution has occurred and all schools can be fairly described as 'best schools'.

This book draws on a five-year study culminating in The International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools conducted in Australia, China, England, Finland, the United States and Wales. The findings are consistent with the McKinsey & Company report on the world's best performing school systems and those arising from OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). It goes beyond system characteristics to provide an in-depth account of how transformation occurs in schools. Fifty indicators are provided to help shape strategies for policymakers and practitioners in schools and school systems. Guidelines for leadership and governance ensure a future-focus for those who are determined to ensure that all students will succeed in the 21st century.

Brian J. Caldwell is managing director of Educational Transformations and professorial fellow at the University of Melbourne where he served as dean of education from 1998 to 2004. He has undertaken more than 450 professional assignments of one kind or another in or for 38 countries. His previous book for ACER Press was *Re-imagining Educational Leadership* (2006).

Jessica Harris is director of research at Educational Transformations and research fellow in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. She conducted a comparative study of schools in Australia and Finland before serving as manager of the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools.

© Cover photography by ULTRA.F|Digital Vision|Getty Images

ISBN 978-0-86431-955-5

9 780864 319555

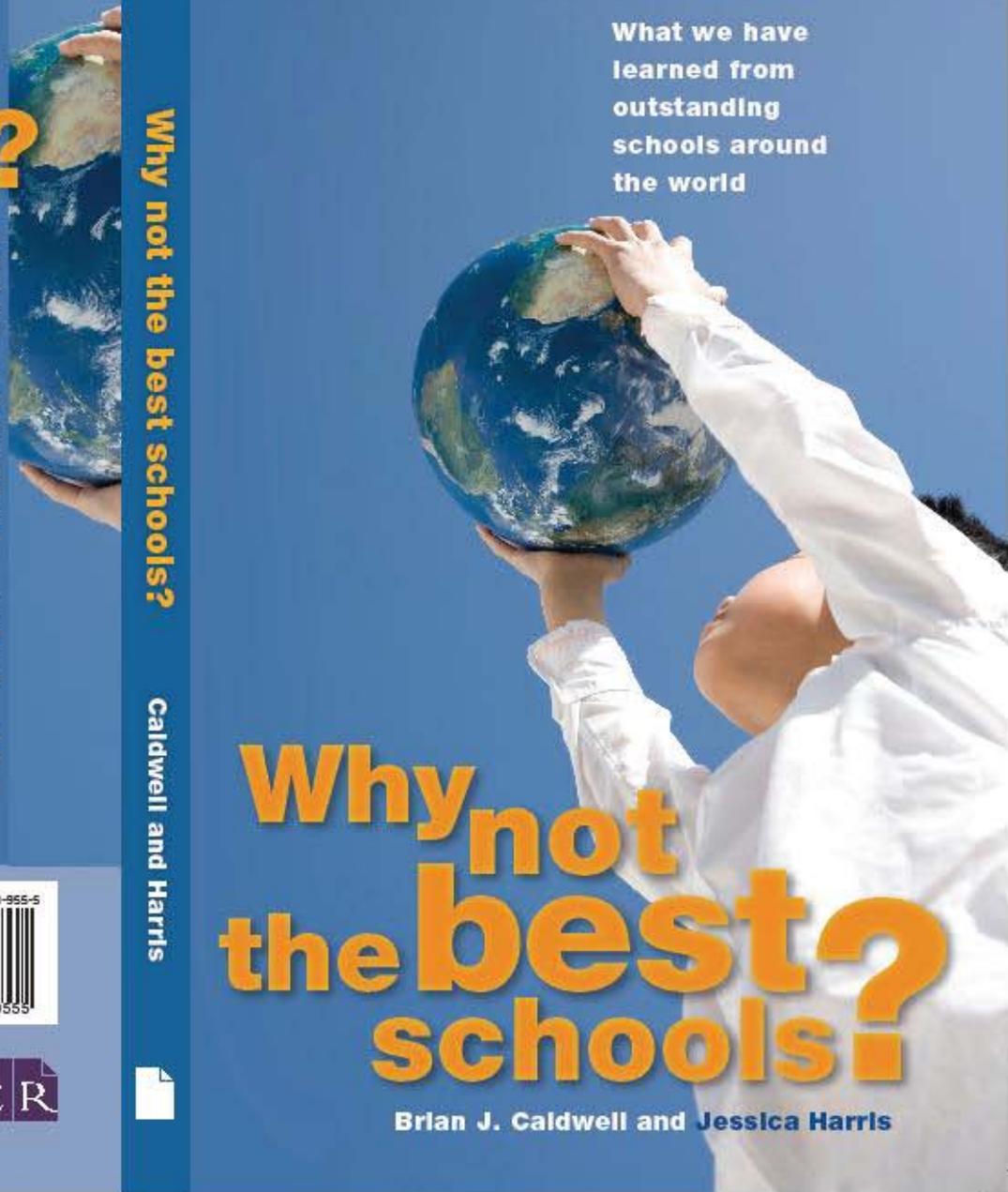ACER

Australian Council for Educational Research

Why not the best schools?

Caldwell and Harris

Brian J. Caldwell and Jessica Harris

Transformation is significant, systematic and sustained change that secures success for all students in all settings

The global challenge...

INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

SOCIAL CAPITAL

STUDENT

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

SPIRITUAL CAPITAL

GOVERNANCE

...creating unprecedented opportunity for learners and learning

INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL

- Intellectual Capital

  The knowledge and skill of those who work in or for the school

- Social Capital

  The strength of formal and informal partnerships and networks that have the potential to support or be supported by the school

SPIRITUAL AND FINANCIAL

- **Spiritual Capital** The strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence among values, beliefs and attitudes about life and learning

Financial Capital The money available to support
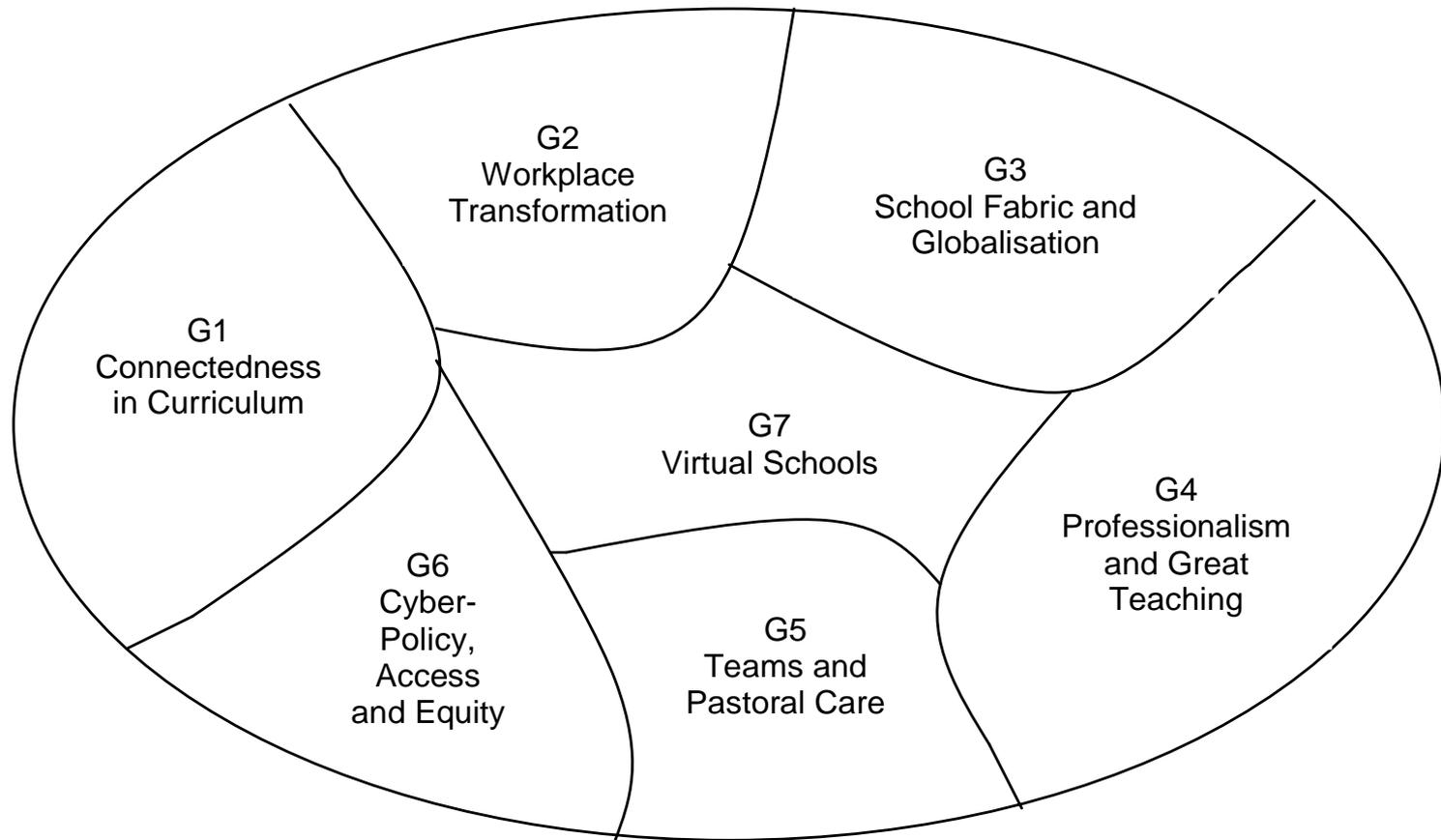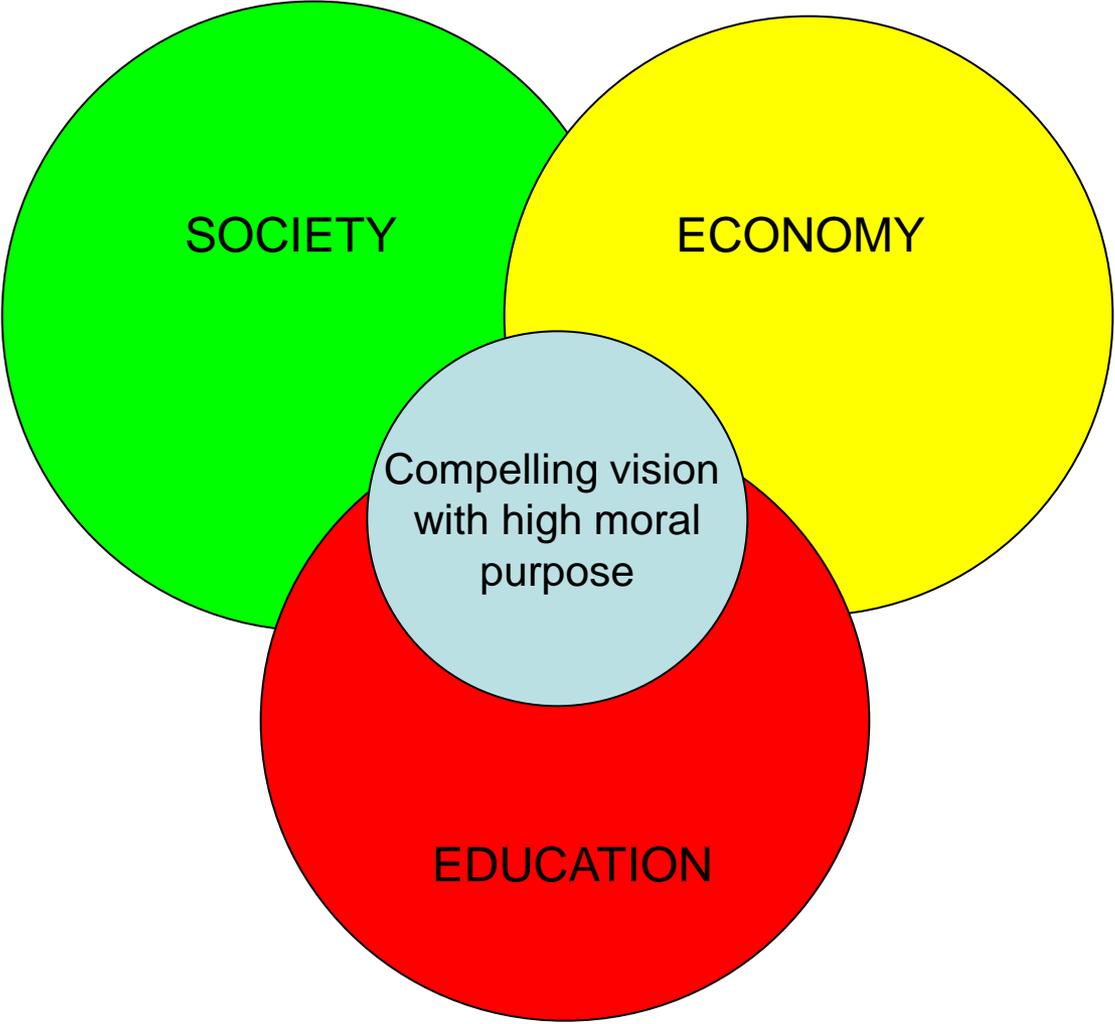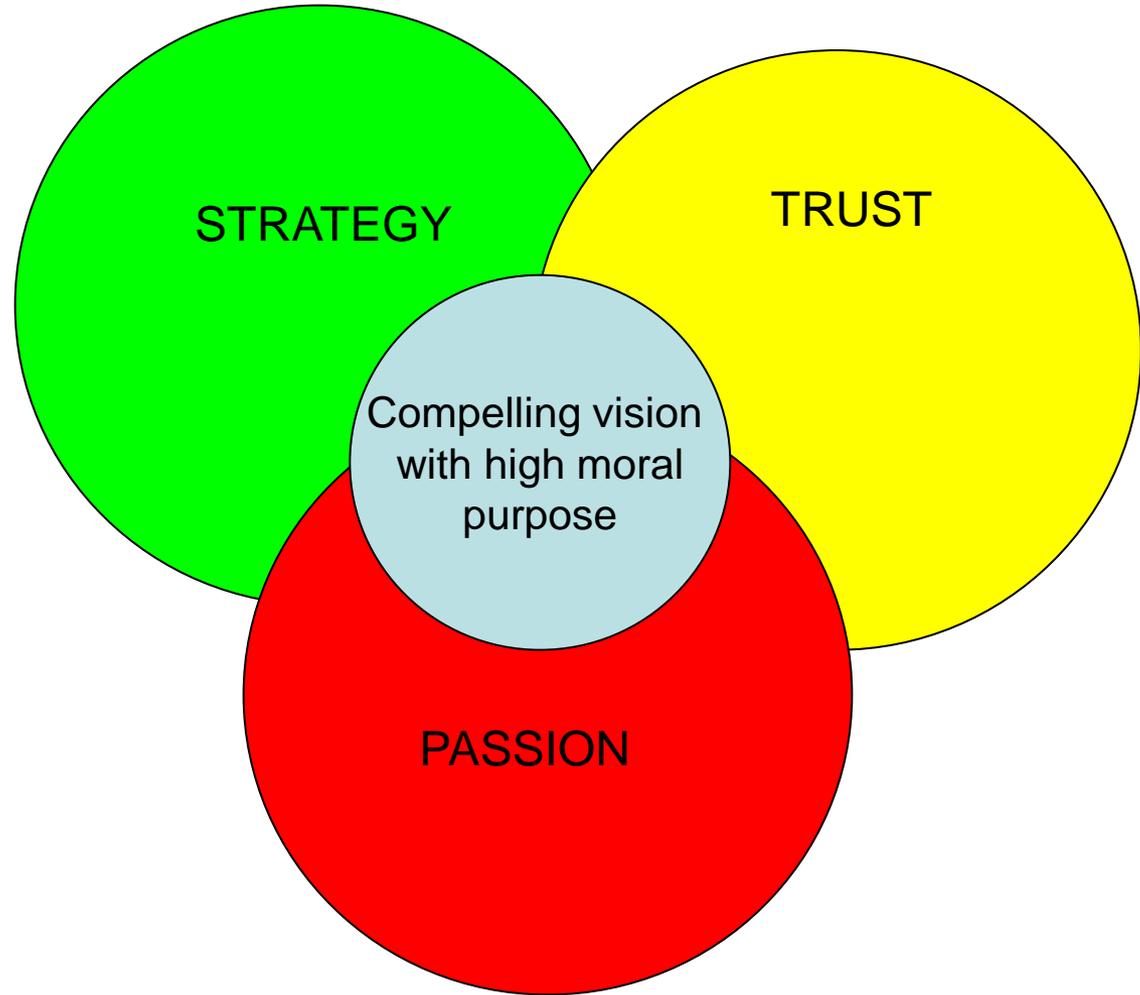the school

GOVERNANCE

Governance

The process through which a school builds its intellectual, social, spiritual and financial capital and aligns them to achieve its goals

SCHOOLING FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

G2
Workplace
Transformation

G3
School Fabric and
Globalisation

G1
Connectedness
in Curriculum

G7
Virtual Schools

G4
Professionalism
and Great
Teaching

G6
Cyber-
Policy,
Access
and Equity

G5
Teams and
Pastoral Care

Brian Caldwell and Jim Spinks in *Beyond the Self-Managing School* (1998)

STRATEGY

TRUST

Compelling vision
with high moral
purpose

PASSION

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

A 'SPLIT SCREEN' APPROACH IS NEEDED IN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS

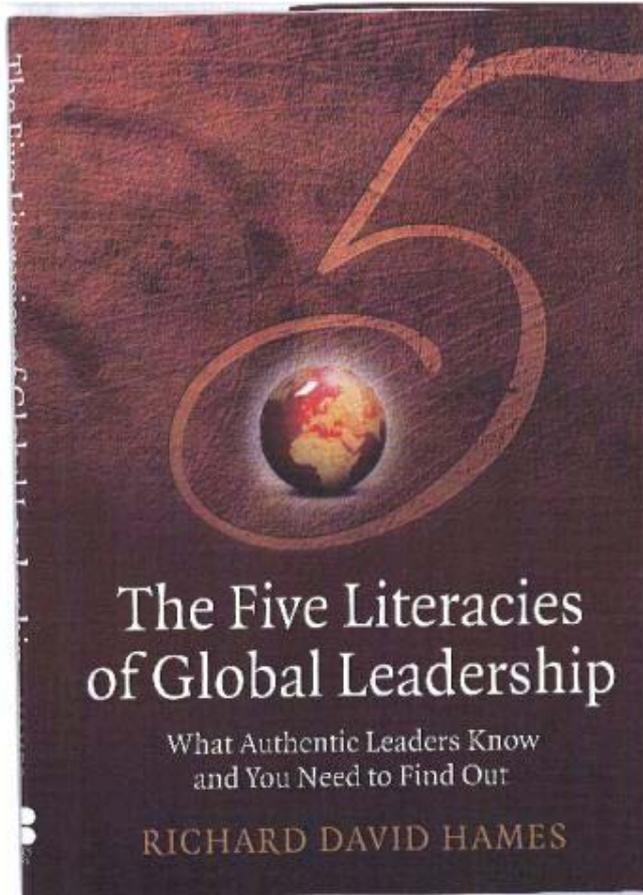| SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION
Securing improvement in the context of the current approach to schooling	Securing success for all students through the design and implementation of new approaches to schooling

WHAT IS A FUTURES FOCUSED SCHOOL?

A futures- focused school 'sees ahead', but it also 'sees behind', honouring and extending its accomplishments in the past. It 'sees above' in the sense of understanding the policy context. It 'sees below', demonstrating a deep understanding of the needs, interests, motivations and aspirations of students and staff. It 'sees beside' by networking professional knowledge to take account of best practice in other schools in similar settings. It 'sees beyond' by seeking out best practice in other nations and in fields other than education. It is consistent and persistent; it 'sees it through'.

LEADERSHIP TO REACH A GLOBAL DESTINATION THROUGH LOCAL JOURNEYS

The Five Literacies of Global Leadership

What Authentic Leaders Know and You Need to Find Out

RICHARD DAVID HAMES

Literacy 1: Networked Intelligence ('infolust')

Literacy 2: Futuring ('deep structural patterns')

Literacy 3: Strategic Navigation ('strategic activism' and 'strategic decision theatres')

Literacy 4: Deep Design (''integrating multiple perspectives')

Literacy 5: Brand Resonance ('creating uncontested market space through collaboration')

SIX PROPOSITIONS

1. Command-and-control, carrot-and-stick approaches that run from the capital to the classroom do not lead to sustainable improvement let alone transformation

2. Schools can be self-improving and possibly self-transforming

3. Self-transforming schools draw their knowledge and secure support from a range of sources including 'the system'

4. Many organisational arrangements that are described as networks are in fact administrative units with minimal networking

5. An effective professional network disseminates knowledge about good practice faster than a top-down approach

6. Self-transforming schools participate in many constantly changing networks

DO WE REALLY MEAN IT?

- In an eloquent statement at the launch of the NAB ACER Schools First initiative in 2008, Julia Gillard declared that 'All children have some gift and even some potential greatness within them. Finding that gift, nurturing it and bringing it to life is the responsibility of every single one of us'.

- Her words echo those of Sir Ken Robinson, who is a powerful advocate of an intensely personal approach to learning. Writing in *The Element* (Robinson, 2009) stated that:

  Education doesn't need to be reformed – it needs to be transformed. The key to this transformation is not to standardise education but to personalise it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions.

ARE WE EXPERIENCING PETER DRUCKER'S DESCRIPTION OF TRANSFORMATION?

Every few hundred years in Western history there occurs a sharp transformation . . . Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself – its world view; its basic values; its social and political structures; its arts; its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world . . . We are currently living through such a transformation.

Peter Drucker in Post-Capitalist Society (1993)