

the case studies are only a page or two in length and tend to be somewhat parochial in nature and provide little in depth study on the topic of leadership.

This book has the appearance of a rather hurried publication which fails to fully address its central theme and does not speak to an international audience of teacher-librarians.

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## How to Get Your School Moving and Improving

Steve Dinham (2008)

Camberwell, Vic.: ACER Press

ISBN: 978-086431-931-9

128 pages

\$39.95

A foreword by Professor Patrick Duignan heralds to the reader that this publication, "makes a significant contribution to the literature on school improvement, particularly the improvement of learning, teaching and leadership" (p. vi). Dinham concludes in the final chapter his hope that "you (the reader) have been able to draw from it your own key messages and conclusions that have meaning and value for you in your context and in the years ahead" (p.139). It is without a doubt that both these statements are correct.

Based on research that has been in the main conducted in Australian schools, the text provides educators, particularly those in leadership roles, with the responsibility of moving learning and teaching, professional learning and staff in general, links theory and practice. It also provides a glimpse into the fascinating research work on student learning, teaching, teachers and leadership. Easy to read summaries of research that show "what really works and adds value in schools" (p. xii), complemented by comprehensive lists of references make this a must-read text.

The book begins with a chapter on what we know about student achievement and what really makes a difference. Outlining the work of John Hattie's meta-analyses (2003) to name just one, it is the teacher and the quality of the teaching overall that are the major influences on student achievement. This, then, crystallises the all important work of school leaders – to be leaders of learning and teaching and learning to be the most important focus of their admittedly complex and demanding roles.

Chapter 2 then proceeds to outline the NSW HSC case study that explored the factors that contributed to senior secondary teaching success. This chapter invites the reader to reflect on the qualities, experience, discipline knowledge and use of appropriate teaching

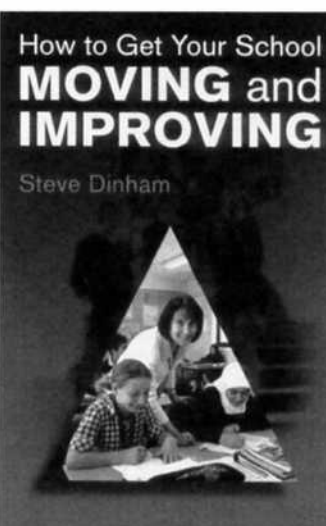
strategies demonstrated by the teachers in this study who were able to, over a five year period, raise student achievement. While the study was specific to the teaching of HSC, there is much that all teachers can learn.

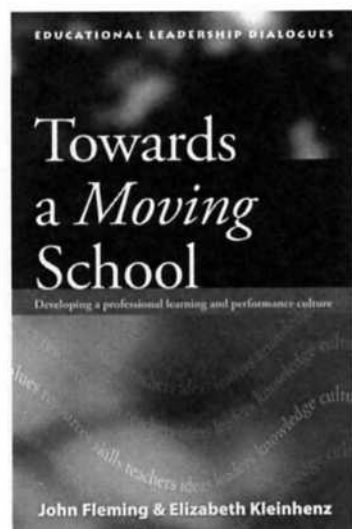
One of the highlights of this text for this reviewer is the chapter entitled, 'What effective school leaders do to promote teaching and learning'. The AESOP (An Exceptional Schooling Outcomes Project) study examined exceptional educational outcomes in Year 7-10 (Junior Secondary Schooling) and, while the NSW HSC case study focused on the teaching of individual teachers and the impact of faculties on individuals, the AESOP study revealed that leadership was a major factor in the excellent outcomes achieved by students, teachers and schools. From analysis of data on principal leadership from this study, seven categories of attributes and practices were developed. These were those that contributed to exceptional educational outcomes. While the purpose of this review is limited, it is important to highlight that the core category of the seven was the focus on students, learning and teaching. This is a must-read chapter for those in leadership and those aspiring leaders.

A chapter that explores teacher and school executive satisfaction, motivation and stress is complemented by an earlier chapter on responsive and demanding leadership, allowing the reader further insights into the complexities of educational leadership. The factors that influence teacher satisfaction and stress are also important for leadership teams to consider in the light of their own context. A further chapter examines the importance of professional learning and, in particular, learning communities. Drawing on case studies (NSW HSC study, AESOP Project and Evaluation of the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program), Dinham identifies for the reader a number of commonalities. These common elements provide an effective framework for those developing or reflecting on the provision of professional learning in their context.

The penultimate chapter explores the notion of how change occurs in the first instance and, importantly, how it is sustained. Dinham draws together for the reader a concise and succinct summary of some key ideas surrounding change, its nature and its management. An important message that is highlighted is the reminder that change is very much about "changing people – what they know, what they can do and their outlook and approach" (p.120). Again, Dinham provides the reader with a workable three step process for dealing with resistance to change.

The final chapter provides a summary of the journey Dinham has shared with the reader.





He provides four broad and interdependent essentials that, according to evidence from his work, are at the heart of student achievement and successful schools. These are:

- A central focus on students, as learners and people;
- Quality teaching;
- Professional learning;
- Educational leadership.

This text is a must-read for all of those in leadership roles. The key messages in each chapter, grounded in evidence, will provide a framework to inform direction and maintain focus on core business. The concise nature of the material presented, supported by additional reference material, make this an exceptional text for all who are interested not only in moving and improving schools but also those who are committed to improving learning and teaching in their classrooms.

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**Series: Educational Leadership Dialogues – A Bridge between Research and Practice**

**Towards a Moving School: Developing Professional Learning and Performance Culture**

Kleinhenz, Elizabeth and John Fleming (2007)  
Camberwell, Vic.: ACER

113 pages  
ISBN 978-086431-702-5  
\$34.95

**Learning for Leadership: Building A School of Professional Practice**

Anderson, Michelle and Cawsey, Christine (2008)

Camberwell, Vic.: ACER  
141 pages  
ISBN 978-086431-631-8  
\$ 34.95

In current times, under the scrutiny of a new government, and as school principals and their staff steel themselves for an "era of unprecedented of transparency and transformational change" [in which] everything from literacy and numeracy results, retention rates and student satisfaction' (*The Age*, 25/11/08, p.1) could well be published online in a push to make schools more accountable, this new series, published by the Australian Council of Educational Research Press, provides timely reading. Called 'Educational Leadership Dialogues', the series is designed to create a bridge between educational research and practice by bringing together recognised ACER researchers with successful, experienced school principals. Researcher and principal each author their separate sections, which together form a dialogue of research and theory on the one hand, wisdom of experience

and practice on the other.

In his overview of the series, Ralph Saubern, General Manager of ACER Press, warns us that the authors may not always agree completely on all points, but if this is the case, then it promises to make the series all the more interesting. Saubern foresees following issues in the series covering school improvement, mentoring, coaching, the use of ICTs and management issues. Whilst the series' focus is on leadership, Saubern reminds us that the most basic unit in a school, and the most crucial one, is the individual student, whose progress should also be the ultimate goal and purpose of this leadership series.

Each title in the series includes a Foreword from a recognised specialist in the field of education and research, an Overview of the series and a brief set of notes about the authors. The books are, by design, 'to the point' and intentionally limited in length (of the two reviewed here, the longest does not exceed 141 pages) and format is clearly spaced for comfortable reading. Educators engaged in research, or in the business of school leadership, will find the content of this series provides more than just valuable reading: each section directs the reader to a rich supply of relevant references and, furthermore, provides a splendid collection of proven, strategic resources drawn from first-hand experience.

In each case, my reading of the first two titles of this series left me with the feeling of having covered a succinct, well-informed overview of research in the field, which was then brought to life by the authentic, first-hand experiences of the principal practitioners. I believe this series has a lot to offer educators at all levels: administrators, principals, classroom practitioners and, ultimately, school students. Within each section of dialogue, the reader will find an effective mix of research and professional expertise, theory and experience.

**Towards a Moving School: Developing Professional Learning and Performance Culture** by Elizabeth Kleinhenz and John Fleming gives the reader an extraordinarily rich and detailed account of the possibility to transform the learning culture of a school against what must have seemed extremely tough odds. In her Introduction, Kleinhenz explains how the title draws from Rozenholtz's examination of the correlation between student learning and the cultural characteristics of schools. Rozenholtz distinguished between school that were 'stuck', those 'in-between' and those that were 'moving' – the latter category being characterised by teachers who engaged in high degrees of interaction between teachers and between teachers and