Promotion of Leadership and Advocacy in School Psychology

John Kelly and Darren Stops

School Psychologists as Leaders

At the most basic level, leadership theories can be summarized as falling under either the "leaders are born, not developed" or "leaders are developed, not born" categories. The reality is that leadership development probably falls between these two extremes. "Leadership" is one of the most widely researched social science constructs, with multiple theories of leadership development emerging from this research (Shriberg, Shriberg, & Kumari, 2005). Unfortunately, very few "discipline specific" models have been developed, particularly related to the field of school psychology. According to Augustyniak (2014) "Preparing school psychologists for leadership practice inarguably resonates with expressed values of the profession and, because effective school psychologists often serve as catalysts for a variety of change, is intuitively valid from a functional perspective" (p. 28). The need for leadership skills among school psychologists is incontrovertible. The Australian Psychological Society (APS), in The Framework for the Effective Delivery of School Psychological Services (2013), advocates for a broad and comprehensive practice of school psychology. School psychologists in Australia are encouraged to use their expertise and training to be "educational leaders" across the direct services, indirect services, whole school services, and systems services domains.

J. Kelly (✉)
Psychology Department, St. John's University, New York City, NY, USA

Commack School District, New York City, NY, USA
e-mail: jkellypsyc@aol.com

D. Stops
Department of Education Tasmania, Tasmania, Australia

Models of Leadership

To try and understand school psychologist leadership and leadership behaviors, Shriberg, Satchwell, McArdle, and James (2010) surveyed school psychology leaders on how they would define leadership and what constitutes the primary characteristics and behaviors of effective school psychology leaders. In relation to perception of characteristics and behaviors, findings indicated that effective school psychology leaders are characterized as being competent, knowledgeable, and possessing strong interpersonal skills and personal character. Knowing that leaders within the field of school psychology express these qualities and characteristics of effective leadership, a brief analysis of existing models may prove useful in identifying a context for leadership development. While there are no discipline

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specific leadership models for school psychology, Augustyniak (2014) posits that the "Information Processing Model," "Trait Model," and "Transformational Model" of leadership seem to provide frameworks congruent with desired qualities of a school psychology leader identified by Shriberg et al. (2010).

Information Processing Models of Leadership

Information Processing models of leadership (Lord & Maher, 2002) propose that leaders emerge based upon a combination of professional knowledge and expertise along with situational perceptions held by the leader and by the followers. The situational perceptions are generally guided by cognitive schemata or preconceived ideas and frameworks about how leaders should behave. These schemas guide the behavior of the leader, as well as the follower. The essence of leadership is that others perceive you as a leader. Leadership schemas develop based upon past experience with and previous knowledge of leaders. Therefore, the leader's behavior builds a basis for future influence through its impact upon the followers' perceptions of leadership. They are held in memory and allow us to make decisions or judgments about individuals. Identifying an individual as a leader involves matching certain characteristics or traits of this individual to a schema or prototype of a leader held in memory (see Trait Theory of Leadership below). Individuals are often perceived as leaders by others based upon their expert knowledge and their association with positive outcomes for a group (Lord & Maher, 2002).

Identified leaders in school psychology often possess a high level of knowledge and expertise in topics related to the field (Augustyniak, 2014). However, this knowledge alone is not sufficient to result in the emergence of a leader. Necessary conditions include the potential leader's perception of their ability to effectively lead, perception of their relationship to others, and perception of their role in accomplishing activities and goals important to followers. Leaders in school psychology perceive themselves to be in a position to positively influence others and engage in behaviors that result in attaining goals for the group (self-schema). Reciprocally, these leaders are perceived by the group as possessing the knowledge and skills to achieve the goals of the group (leadership schema) (Augustyniak, 2014). Behaviors engaged in by the identified leader and their association with goal attainment reinforce the schemas of the group (Lord & Maher, 2002). It is this mutual process that results in the emergence of leaders.

Central features of this model that result in the advent of a school psychology leader include the individual's ability to attain appropriate school psychological knowledge and expertise; the belief on the part of the leader that they are in a position to effectively lead and influence the group; the perception or schema on the part of the group that the individual possesses characteristic or traits associated with leadership; and the ability of the leader to seek and use feedback to modify their schemas to meet the needs of the group (e.g., talking frequently to the group, providing information, focusing on goals). Essentially, this model posits that the processing of information, both factual/technical and subjective, is critical for leadership development.

Case Example: The Informational Expert

Trevor has been a school psychologist within a government school for the past 15 years. He works with three other school psychologists, who are all supervised by an administrator. Trevor's position is the same as the other school psychologists, however, he is considered to be the "lead" school psychologist and others, including administrators and teachers, often look to him for professional guidance. While Trevor does not have a formal position of leadership, he has developed extensive knowledge regarding children's mental health factors and their impact upon learning. He is more than willing to share this information with others and has conducted several workshops for his fellow school psychologists, teachers, administrators

and parents. In fact, Trevor often attends conferences and other professional development events so that he can bring useful information back to the school. Trevor has become an important part of the decision making team at school.

Based upon the Information Processing Model of Leadership (Lord & Maher, 2002), Trevor has become a leader within his school as a result of the informational expertise that he has developed over time and his behavioral interactions with others (e.g., consulting with fellow school psychologists, teacher, and administrators, providing workshops for others). He is engaging in leader schemata, or what others think a leader should "act" like, which results in the perception of being a "leader" by others. As Trevor is given the opportunity to engage in "leadership" behaviors, he develops his own schemata of what behaviors he should continue. This interaction between Trevor's perceptions and schemata and those of others surrounding him form the basis of the Information Processing Model of Leadership.

Trait Models of Leadership

The concept of a unique set of traits or immutable characteristic that are possessed by a leader dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. From Thomas Carlyle's "Great Man" Theory (Carlyle, 1841) to Francis Galton in *Hereditary Genius* Galton (1869), early work proposed that leadership was a unique property of extraordinary individuals, and suggested that the traits which leaders possessed were immutable and could not be developed (Galton, 1869). While these theorists were influential in shaping the dialogue around leadership qualities, researchers began to recognize that specific traits identified in good leaders did not always predict leadership across situations. In 1948, Stogdill proposed that leadership exists between people in specific situations, and that individuals who are leaders in one situation may not be leaders in other situations.

What has emerged in current thinking around leadership traits reflects the interaction of specific individual characteristic and mediating environmental influence, which impact the effectiveness of leaders. Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) have proposed a model which accounts for the effects of leader attributes and performance. The Model of Leader Attributes and Leader Performance (Zaccaro et al., 2004) provides a conceptual framework for the interaction of leadership attributes and environmental influences that impact leadership outcomes. The model draws upon the work of early trait theorists regarding identified attributes correlated with effective leadership and the influence of environment. Within this model, trait-like attributes, such as cognitive abilities, personality, and motives, are categorized as "distal" attributes because they are generally not impacted by environmental influences and exhibit strong cross-situational contributions to leader outcomes. However, the model also accounts for "proximal" factors, such as knowledge or skills possessed by the leader. These individual differences suggest that the characteristics that distinguish effective leaders from noneffective leaders are not necessarily stable through the life span, implying that these traits may be able to be developed.

While the following list of attributes is not exhaustive, all of these factors have been found to be positively correlated with effective leadership (Bass, 1990; Hoffman, Woehr, Maldagen-Youngjohn, & Lyons, 2011; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982):

Distal factors	Proximal factors
Extraversion	Interpersonal skills
Conscientiousness	Problem-solving skills
Openness	Decision making skills
Honesty/integrity	Management skills
Charisma	Technical knowledge
Intelligence	
Creativity	
Need for power	

According to Augustyniak (2014), distal and proximal attributes contribute to the flexibility of the leader's behavioral response to challenges. Augustyniak proposes that "because proximal attributes can be altered substantially by training and experience, they are the implicated targets for curriculum designed to improve leadership outcomes" (Augustyniak, 2014, p. 20) in school psychology.

Case Example: Leadership Traits

Phoebe is often described as a "powerhouse" by her colleagues. She is an outgoing school psychologist who seems to light up the room whenever she is present. Children seem to gravitate toward her in school, as she is known to provide fun and creative projects to work on. Phoebe describes herself as someone who has always wanted to be leader since she was a child. She was the captain of her high school soccer team and continued playing when she went to university. Phoebe is very good at problem solving and is organizing professional development events for teachers and staff and she guest lectures on school psychology practice and child development at her local university. In her first year at her school, she recognized a need for developing emotional regulation techniques in many of her students, and after convincing school leadership, began implementing an evidence-based whole-school mindfulness program, which both teachers and parents alike have noticed considerable improvement in student well-being. Phoebe conducted pre- and post-program evaluations of this initiative and published the results. When a government project related to developing a social and emotional whole-school program was proposed, Phoebe was the first person to be recommended to lead this by her administrator.

Phoebe possesses many of the distal and proximal characteristics of a leader (e.g., outgoing, self-assured, creative, driven, good management and problem solving skills). Because she displays many of these characteristics, Phoebe is thought of as a leader by many of her peers.

Transformational Models of Leadership

Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) is a form of leadership that elevates the beliefs and motives of others, and supports them in achieving higher levels of functioning (Avolio, 1999). Since Burns introduced the concept of a "transformational leader," research in this area has grown to become the most extensively studied model of leadership (Barling, Christie, & Hoption, 2011). Transformational leadership comprises four dimensions; *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *individualized consideration*, and *intellectual stimulation* (Bass & Riggio, 2006). When leaders display idealized influence, they behave as role models and stimulate the trust and respect of followers. Leaders who engage in inspirational motivation communicate high expectations, are optimistic with regard to what followers can achieve, and energize others to go beyond minimally accepted standards. These leaders recognize and adapt to others' individual needs and abilities. Finally, when such leaders engage in intellectual stimulation, they encourage followers to think independently and contribute their own thoughts and ideas (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

According to Augustyniak (2014), "consideration of transformational leader models suggest that school psychology leaders equally reflect on and invest in their organization and its members as they do in themselves" (p.22). Once they recognize their school needs to change systematically to improve student outcomes, they seek and create opportunities to share ownership in collaborative strategic planning (Stollar et al., 2008). Gurr and Mulford (2007) describe case examples of leadership in Australian schools which have resulted in an improvement in student outcomes. Positive outcomes were associated with "clearly articulated values, beliefs and vision, fostering of good relationships, developing staff, and understanding the broader context surrounding schools were all features of the work of the leaders" (p. 1). Bennis (2007) identified six competencies of exemplary leaders that serve as target outcomes of transformational leadership in school psychology: (a) leaders create (or facilitate) a sense of mission; (b) they motivate others to join them in that mission; (c) they create an interpersonal environment wherein others can be successful; (d) they generate trust and optimism; (e) they develop other leaders; and (f) they get results. It is through these competencies that the leader exerts a positive influence on the group.

Case Example: The Transformational Leader

Trudy grew up in a rural area of Tasmania. Her family was poor and she knew what it felt like to come from "the wrong side of the tracks." However, growing up, school was her "safe place." Where she felt valued and encouraged. Trudy developed a love for education and a sense for the power that a good education provides. After graduating from university with a degree in teaching, she went to work back in her small rural community in Tasmania. However, she noticed the barriers to education caused by poor literacy and mental health issues, and felt that she needed more knowledge to be able to truly help. Trudy returned to university to complete a qualification to be school psychologist, and learned evidence-based practices for addressing mental health issues. She also learned about the processes involved in reading development, which were different to what she had been taught as a teacher. Trudy saw education as a social equity issue and believed that the opportunity to succeed at learning was crucial for all children, no matter what their background.

Trudy was able to work within her schools to run programs teaching social skills and using cognitive behavioral techniques to help prevent depression and anxiety. She taught this in conjunction with teaching staff to increase their skills and understanding. At the same time, with the help of parent-volunteers, she was able to implement a reading program for small group of students that was so successful it inspired other teachers to do the same. As the school's literacy levels significantly improved, the programs gained the attention of administrators, and eventually politicians to extend it to other schools. Trudy was able to inspire others with her story, and her belief in the power of education. Others shared Trudy's passion for wanting to help schools to truly address these important barriers to education, and advocated for her methods to be implemented in similar schools.

Trudy was a transformational leader by developing a vision based upon her values and beliefs. This vision resonated with her colleagues who trusted that Trudy was genuine in her desire to help the community. Shared responsibility and leadership resulted in the development of effective programs for addressing mental health issues and for teaching literacy.

School Psychology Training and Leadership Development

In Australia, a variety of titles are used to identify school psychologists. "These titles include educational psychologist, school psychologist, guidance officer and school counsellor. Sometimes, the latter two titles are also used to identify individuals from other disciplines. However, within the psychology profession, psychologists working in schools providing psychological services to students are typically known as school psychologists" (APS, 2013, p. 4). School psychologists work in a variety of settings from preschool through secondary school. Some school psychologists work in single school settings, while others who work within the government system tend to have coverage over various size regions. School psychologists are accredited by the Psychology Board of Australia, with a minimum of a 6-year sequence of training and experience. Within this sequence, it does not seem that school psychologists are usually provided the knowledge and experiential opportunities to develop leadership skills.

Traditionally, school psychologists in Australia have been teachers first, and psychologists second (Faulkner, 2007). In the majority of jurisdictions, the school psychologist came from a teaching background, and then completed psychology qualifications, or alternatively, followed a dual pathway, whereby they were qualified as both psychologists and teachers. As training requirements in both professional streams have increased, this dual pathway has become more difficult, and training in psychology has predominated. This has perhaps also restricted the capacity for educational leadership, by disconnecting school psychologists from the teaching profession. Augustyniak (2014) summarized it best when she states:

> "… school psychologists often find themselves confronting issues that have a great deal of breadth, complexity, and visibility. These include occupying key roles in instructional leadership teams, consultation for behavioral and academic concerns, mediating cultural biases, crisis intervention, school violence deterrence and response programs, and a variety of other prevention and harm-reduction programs aimed at curtailing youth risk. Often, these roles place high demand on school psychologists' professional and interpersonal competencies in order to work effectively across internal and external boundaries within the school and broader community. Success often requires the ability to build alignment with and inspire commitment in diverse groups of people over whom the school psychologist has no direct authority and whose views and objectives might be vastly different from their own"(p. 23).

As a result of these demands inherent in the school psychologists' role, explicit leadership development opportunities at the graduate preparation level would seem beneficial. As the training of school psychologists in Australia is transitioning to a greater focus on psychological practice and away from the traditional teacher preparation, leadership development and advocacy-related skills need to be part of this education. Augustyniak (2014) provides a reasonable framework of these leadership tenets for integration into school psychology training experiences. Essentially, Augustyniak recognizes various leadership development opportunities inherent within the current structure of many school psychology training programs. She advocates for the development of leadership skills for all school psychology graduate students as part of their training program.

Advocacy as a Leadership Development Activity

School psychologists, are invariably placed in a position where they may need to advocate for individual clients, parents and families, systemic changes, their role, and their own profession. Advocacy at the micro level often involves advocating for individuals within a system (e.g., speaking up for a student in a disciplinary hearing; helping a parent understand their son/daughter better). However, advocacy at the macro level involves advocating for groups within a system (e.g., presenting to the education minister in order to preserve school psychologist positions; working with an elected official to get a bill passed authorizing a new grant program).

A great example of school psychologist advocacy is in the United States, by way of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), as outlined in the Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Priorities statement (NASP Vision, Mission, and Goals, http://www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/strategicplan.pdf). NASP's current strategic plan also specifically identifies increasing the number of school psychologists and graduate students trained in advocacy skills as a broad advocacy objective. In Australia, there is no equivalent body as big and as comprehensive as NASP. As a result, any leadership or advocacy that has taken place has very much been the result of individual school psychologist "leaders" who have worked in leadership positions dedicated to the support of school psychologist members in the APS but who have done so without the people-power needed to create significant change schools Australia-wide. These leaders have all worked as school psychologists themselves and are highly dedicated to ensuring the profession is not only maintained within schools, but that school psychologists themselves are resourced and supported to undertake their complex and important work. Without the school psychologist, the services that students need to overcome barriers to learning may not be available or accessible to them and this may compromise their ability to learn and to graduate from school (Skalski, 2009).

The need for advocacy may be dependent on factors ranging from political, systemic, individual workplace, or how others value and understand the role of school psychologists and their purpose. Given that much of their work is not visible to others, their role is particularly vulnerable at points of change, for example where a new principal is appointed in a school, or a new Minister of Education who wishes to stamp their mark on the system.

School psychology is also certainly not immune to the factors that impinge upon the pro-

fession as a whole: genericization of roles, cost shifting, cost saving, and competition from other professional groups. These factors are compounded where there is a lack of understanding about the school psychologist's role and the issues presenting in the school setting. In this regard, we should certainly take heed of our social work colleagues in Australia, whose practice of advocacy and promotion of change processes is central to their professional practice. Why advocate? School psychological services are often the initial resource for young people with problems, and are far more likely to be accessed when they are available in the schools. Sometimes, they may be the only professional services that are available in a community (Boyd, et al. 2007; Juszczak, Melinkovich, & Kaplan, 2003; Rickwood, Deane, & Wilson, 2007).

The high level of need for mental health services for children and adolescents has been repeatedly documented in studies, and is highlighted by the fact that suicide is the leading cause of death in Australia for young people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). School psychologists are uniquely positioned in schools to facilitate the development, delivery, and monitoring of culturally responsive mental and behavioral health services for prevention and intervention. As Hughes and Minke (2014) have observed, "school psychologists are situated in real time in the biopsychosocial system where children spend 35 h or more a week" (p. 29). School psychologists' broadly focused preparation as academic, mental, and behavioral health service providers, coupled with their engagement in and familiarity with schools' organizational and cultural context, equips them to specifically play a primary role in multitiered and responsive school-based mental and behavioral health programs.

Basics of Advocacy

Advocacy is the act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; it is about providing active support for an issue (Merriam-Webster, 2015). There are several basic elements to effective advocacy campaigns (NASP, 2006). However, before engaging in any type of advocacy, it is important to understand why this type of action is needed. Considering the following issues will help to identify some of the key elements for your campaign:

1. Know *what* you believe and understand about a specific topic or issue.
2. Know *why it matters* to you and should matter to someone else.
3. Know *what you want to do* about it.

The answers to these questions provide the basic outline for any advocacy campaign. Based upon this information, key messages that inform others about the issues are crafted and a strategic plan to engage in purposeful actions is developed. Kathy Cowan, Communications Director of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), devised the "advocacy equation" (NASP, 2006). She posits that strong leadership plus a well thought out communication plan leads to inspiration of others and an intentional planning process which results in effective advocacy.

Identification of effective leadership is a critical component of the strategic plan. It is this leadership that will make informed decisions about the campaign, communicate the key messages, and guide others in support of the campaign. Leadership is often a team effort, which requires time and commitment from all involved. Advocacy campaigns are often compared to training for and running a marathon. Continuity of efforts over long periods of time (sometimes years) is vital. However, the "leadership team" is often led by one individual who serves as a "champion" for the campaign. This leader guides the efforts of the team based upon the vision and mission of the campaign. Key characteristics of the leader include being easy to "follow," embracing and encouraging others participation, and communicating effectively with others. It is said that a successful campaign is dependent upon having an ethical, visionary leader *and* courageous followers.

Effective communications should be incorporated into any strategic plan and involves a num-

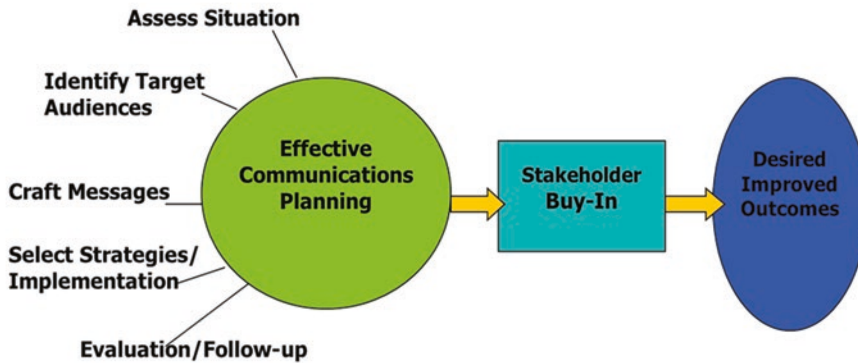

Fig. 1 Communication planning and message development (NASP, 2006)

ber of steps. Good communication in an advocacy campaign is responsive to emerging situations and the needs of key audiences. Determining what people need to know and why this matters is critical. Effective communication is vital to achieving the goals and objectives of school psychologist, whether trying to improve services at the school level, secure funding at the state level, or shape policy at the national level. Failure to communicate well can result in negative outcomes and missed opportunities (NASP, 2006). Engaging in an intentional planning process will enhance this message development (Fig. 1).

1. Assess situation—During the assessment phase, the problem that is being addressed is defined. Factors related to the problem or potential supports are identified. Goals for the communication plan are outlined during this phase.
2. Identify stakeholders—The audience for your messaging may vary, but is important to know their priorities. Identify their knowledge or level of awareness of your issues and their perspective on these issues. Recognize potential barriers to their understanding of your message and their willingness/ability to take action. Anticipate potential obstacles or individuals/groups that may oppose your efforts. Avoid "turf battles" that others need to mediate. Identify and engage your allies or partners. Working with a "coalition" of organizations that share your goals provides "strength in numbers."
3. Craft your message—Define your main point. Choose three key messages based upon your main point, with two to three key supporting facts. Use simple language, but resonate with your audience. Avoid facts and statistics (e.g., 25 % of the deaths of individuals in Australia between the ages 15–24 are caused by suicide). Instead use personal stories or "social math" to illustrate your point (e.g., Suicide is the leading cause of death for young Australians, claiming the lives at least 281 15–24-year-olds in 2008). Offer solutions or benefits to what you are proposing.
4. Select strategies to implement—There are three levels of strategic communication:
   (a) Proactive communication: Engaging in communication that offers information or an action on your part, but requests nothing in return. This type of communication facilitates visibility with key stakeholders (e.g., administrators, policy makers) and/or allows others to raise awareness or comfort level with an issue. Building relationships with others is accomplished with this type of communication. Examples of this type of communication include articles in school newspapers, webpages with relevant information for parents, providing information on a crisis event, or commenting on legislation being discussed at the state or national level.

(b) Action Requests: Engaging in communication that offers information or action on your part, with a request for action or support for your issue. This type of communication is utilized to facilitate audience "buy in" and a decision to do something. Strengthening relationships is accomplished with this type of communication. Examples include needing support for the implementation of a mental health program in school, you offer to participate in the planning and design of the program, or wanting legislative support for an important issue, you offer to serve on an "educational advisory committee."

(c) Crisis communication: Engaging in communication that is intended to minimize potentially damaging consequences of a situation (e.g., school shooting, proposed cuts to school psychological positions). Using preexisting relationships often facilitates this type of communication. There is often need for a rapid response, with designated contacts to deliver the message.

Understanding the inter-relationship between all three communication strategies is important. Proactive outreach leads to relationships that result in action requests which strengthen relationships needed for crisis communication.

5. Evaluation and Follow-up—Establishing measurable and concrete goals for your communication plan will allow for an assessment of the effectiveness of your actions. Do not hesitate to change strategies if your desired outcomes are not achieved.

Case Example: Australian Education Union vs. Tasmanian Department of Education

In 2009, a significant industrial campaign was waged in Tasmania by the Australian Education Union, on behalf of school psychologists employed in government schools (Brown, 2009a). One of the authors of this chapter (Stops) had a significant involvement in organizing and running this campaign. The Department of Education in Tasmania was (and still is) the largest employer of psychologists in the state, and there were few other psychological services available to young people outside of this. However, with no designated training pathway for a number of years, poor pay, a lack of career structure, and no way for new psychologists to enter and be retained by the system, there was a dire risk the service would disappear (Australian Education, 2009; Australian Education Union, 2009b; Brown, 2009b, Thielking, 2009)

Historically, there had been more than 20 years of committees, reviews, attempts to reestablish training courses, and a number of other initiatives with no visible outcome. The campaign was a result of four years of protracted industrial negotiations, also with no outcome, and the employer was unwilling to negotiate (Brown, 2009c).

Union "organizing" is a professional activity done by unions with a body of theory and processes behind it (O'Halloran, 2006). Part of this is the Anger, Hope, Action model, attributed to Saul Alinsky. There was already a significant amount of anger about work conditions, loss of staff, and the length of ongoing negotiations. Hope for change was generated through the plan to take action.

The action plan included a great deal of preparation by school psychologist members and the union Organizers, of the key messages, strategies and the identification of key stakeholders. People who were likely to take action were personally approached by individual members, with Union support and timelines were set for a range of activities within the campaign. A major strategy was to identify allies: other stakeholders who have an interest, such as school councils, parents and friends groups, community organizations related to mental health and disability, the school principals association, the unions, children's commissioner, antidiscrimination commissioner, and professional organizations, such as the Australian Psychological Society, The APS College of Educational and Developmental Psychologists, and the Australian Guidance and Counselling Association.

There were several press releases and media interviews, and a number of journalists were keen to take up the issue given the core themes of social justice, youth mental health, and schools. The campaign was remarkable in its scope and breadth, including for more than three weeks, including front-page articles in newspapers, double page spreads covering the issue, and many, many, letters to various newspapers from parents and other key stakeholders. APS senior management also participated in radio interviews, which had a huge impact.

Possibly the key aspect of the campaign, was the innovative use of emerging social media. All letters to politicians and the media, press releases, media articles and updates on activities were uploaded onto the AEU website, and linked to a campaign Facebook page, as well as circulated by e-mail. The key messages were continuously repeated, focusing on the risk to vulnerable client groups, the essential function of the school psychology service to the community, the integral nature of the service in linking to other services, the fact that the services provided by schools and colleges were not available elsewhere, and the concern about the future of the service.

The campaign was underpinned by a great deal of work by the campaign leaders and other senior members of the profession, who forged very strong relationships with key organizations, community members, and politicians to increase and share an understanding of the role of the school psychologist and lobby for it to be recognized.

One of the most impressive inputs to the campaign, was from a group of young people who, in the space of a few days in their school gathered over 400 signatures and staged a very noisy rally complete with megaphones and placards outside Parliamentary offices, encouraging passers-by to honk their horns in support of school psychologists (Brown, 2009c).

There were, of course, barriers, opponents and saboteurs, who were largely overcome by keeping the focus on the client and the public and community good. With a looming election campaign, the unexpected publicity and overwhelming support for school psychologists lead to unprecedented direct intervention from the Premier (and Education Minister) of the day, David Bartlett. The further promise of what amounted to a 25 % increase in School Psychology staffing, was greeted with widespread relief, and public acclaim from all those involved, and may have had a significant effect on the subsequent election. Unfortunately the extra positions were not honored by subsequent Ministers (Gallasch, 2013) but the overall outcome of the campaign placed school psychologist and their services firmly in the public spotlight, and caused industrial changes which greatly increase the reliability of the service continuing into the future. The campaign provides a model for grass roots advocacy, showing that a marginalized, minority group of professionals could be galvanized to action, and gain the support of the wider community. Public and political awareness of the role of School Psychologists went from almost zero, to top of the news.

Leadership and Advocacy Opportunities for Australian School Psychologists

Psychologists working in schools comprise around 6 % of the membership of the Australian Psychological Society (APS, 2015). There are also a significant number of psychologists working in schools who are not members of the society (HWA, 2014). The APS provides a range of support and opportunities for school psychologists, as well as high-level political and systemic advocacy.

The Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools Association (APACS) also provides support and networking for school psychologists, as well as guidance officers and non-psychologist school counsellors (The latter title being quite confusing in jurisdictions where school psychologists also have the job title school counsellor). Formerly known as the Australian Guidance and Counselling Association (AGCA), a number of state branches in recent years moved to become affiliates of the national parent body, due to constitutional differences about membership criteria.

Some states had constitutions specifying that full members must be registered psychologists, which was at odds with the national body. The name of the organization was subsequently changed, along with the Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling, which is now the Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools. The journal provides a substantial incentive for membership, given that it is the only journal in Australia particularly focused on school psychological practice. A number of eminent figures in APACS, are also APS members of some note, and the two organizations have successfully run combined state activities and participated jointly in a major national conference.

The APS Psychologists in Schools Advisor was a dedicated position based at the National Office to provide strategic advice and recommendations to the APS on critical issues faced by psychologists and schools Australia-wide. The Advisor chaired and worked with the National APS Psychologists in Schools Reference Group, and was also a resource for the APS Professional Advisory Service, ensuring up-to-date advice for APS members working in schools.

The APS Psychologists in Schools Reference Group, (see, http://www.psychology.org.au/practitioner/groups/PSRG/) comprised a small number of psychologists from all states and territories, at varying stages in their career, from public, independent, and catholic schools. The reference group thus provided a conduit of current practice-based information and issues from every state and system, as well as assisting the advisor with specific tasks. These included advocacy and representation on school psychology issues, such as client confidentiality and access to psychologists' files, the ongoing issues with the National School Chaplaincy Program (ABC, 2011; APS, 2014, Zygnier, 2014) professional roles and boundaries, career progression, and other professional and practice issues. Other practical tasks included the development of a generic school psychologist position description, guides for parents, school newsletter resources, a school psychologist leaflet for use in schools, (explaining the role and how it operates), and working on Australia-wide best practice for the assessment of intellectual disability for school-age children.

The APS College of Educational and Developmental Psychologists (see, https://groups.psychology.org.au/cedp/) promotes educational and developmental psychology as a discipline, maintains practice standards, and supports the professional development of its members (APS 2015). However, many psychologists working in schools are not members of the College. The creation of the APS Psychologists in Schools Interest Group was to bring together all psychologists working in schools to provide them with a forum for discussion of school psychology issues, professional development opportunities, an annual conference, and opportunities for peer contact and advocacy.

In our experience, it appears that oftentimes many important decisions made about school psychological practice in the schools are not made by school psychologists. Flattened management structures, and barriers to psychologists moving upward into management streams seem to exist in most jurisdictions where there are significant issues for the profession. In systems where there are defined career streams with school psychologists represented at the highest level (e.g., Western Australia) there seems to be greater understanding (and valuing) of the role, and less need for advocacy.

However, history shows that this can change at any bureaucratic or political whim. School psychology services are often subject of reviews and restructures, seemingly for two diametrically opposed reasons. The first is the crucial support that the service provides to the most vulnerable, at risk, and significant students in schools, which repeated reviews and restructures throughout the country have never failed to acknowledge. The second is that particularly in under-resourced government schools, anything that occurs outside the classroom is not seen as core business by some, and therefore always at risk of being undervalued, and its removal seen as a cost saving measure, when in fact the reverse is true. At its most basic level, this can be the decision of whether or not to have school psychologist, some other professional, or no service at all.

Misunderstandings, misinformation and in some case other agendas can have a profound effect on the presence and role definition of the psychologist working in a school.

Examples of myths associated with the role of school psychologists abound within some quarters of education, for example, hostility towards cognitive testing, a decrying of accurate diagnosis as "labelling," and promotion of evidence-based teaching (such as the need for synthetic phonics in early reading). A significant example, of this were the repeated attacks on client confidentiality by the Association of Independent Schools (NSW), including publication of advice and information about psychologists' code of ethics and their practices, which has been vigorously disputed (APS, 2014; Hensley, 2015). Interestingly, in our experience, most of those who seem to express anti-psychologist sentiment or dismiss the role, are not the teachers or others who interact with school psychologists at the coalface, but rather those in bureaucracy or who hold philosophically held belief systems which are diametrically opposed to the scientist–practitioner model.

It is our responsibility to ensure that students and their families have access to a high-quality, effective, evidence-based psychology service, and this requires that policymakers are informed and motivated to provide such a service. We should also be mindful that in some disadvantaged and rural communities, the school psychologist may be the only access families have to such a service. However, the ratio of school psychologist to students varies significantly from state to state and system to system, with none approaching the 1:500 ratio recommended by the Australian Psychological Society (APS, 2013), and the New South Wales Coroner (MacPherson, 2010).

Summary

Recognizing the needs of the children and families that school psychologists serve and external factors that often impact the provision of these services, the emergence of effective leaders within the profession and development of advocacy efforts that influence decision making and policy agendas is critical. However, without state or national mandates to engage in these actions, the responsibility falls upon those professionals practicing school psychology and the graduate preparation programs training future school psychologists to ensure that leadership development and engagement in activities falls within the rubric of activities of the profession. The Australian Psychological Society promotes the enhancement and professional development of requisite leadership and advocacy skills. It is important for school psychologists to avoid the group dynamic of thinking that others will engage in the needed actions or to simply "ride the coat-tails" of others. Instead, school psychologists need to embrace the concept of "personal responsibility" to ensure that appropriate actions are taken when the situation demands these actions. As Winston Churchill once said "I never worry about action, only inaction." However, most apropos to leadership and advocacy is the unknown author who said "if you are not at the table, you may be on the menu!"

Test Yourself Quiz

1. School psychologists in Australia sometimes feel as though decisions about educational programs to improve student learning, mental health and behavior are made without their input. However, school psychologists are often very familiar with the research behind educational interventions and how to use data to make better decisions. Based upon what you read in this chapter, what would you do to take a leadership role in educational reforms within your school?
2. What models of leadership are identified, and which ones do you think apply best to the role of the school psychologist?
3. Identify a current issue that you might engage in advocacy for and consider how you may develop an advocacy plan, implement the plan, and evaluate the impact of your advocacy.

Consider:

(a) How widely and deeply felt do you think this issue is?

(b) How much the issue is relevant:

- Professionally?
- Politically?
- Publicly?

(c) Make a list of potential allies and key stakeholders

(d) Who are the key decision-makers and influential people that you need to get to?

(e) What three key messages do you want to get across?

(f) What are the potential threats and barriers to getting what you want? How can they be addressed?

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