

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2015.015.202](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.015.202)

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GENERATING WHOLE-SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: THE STAGES OF SUSTAINED SUCCESS

Abstract:

Vic Zbar is an Australian education consultant and former senior executive in the Victorian Government who is recognised internationally for his writing on education and range of education reports. He is co-editor of four volumes of *Leading the Education Debate*, published by the Centre for Strategic Education, and co-author of *Better Schools, Better Teachers, Better Results* published by the Australian Council for Educational Research. He also wrote the best sellers *Managing the Future* and *Key Management Concepts* published by Macmillan. In 2014 he conducted a review of middle schooling for the Minister for Education in the Northern Territory.

In this short presentation Vic Zbar will outline research and school practice since 2008 that has helped specify the stages schools need to go through to generate whole school improvement and thereby achieve sustained success.

He will begin with research he led into how eight under-performing socio-economically disadvantaged government schools in Melbourne, Australia became and remained high performing schools over a decade or more. Since each achieved this in the same way, the researchers were able to identify a theory of action for how whole-school improvement is initiated and maintained which has been adopted across whole regions in Australia and by a large number of schools. Central to this theory of action is the need to ensure that a set of preconditions are in place for whole-school improvement to take hold.

He will then explain how the most disadvantaged region in metropolitan Melbourne, comprising 195 schools, not only took these preconditions to scale and achieved substantial improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes for the more than 75,000 students they enrol, but transcended the performance plateau that often is reached by ensuring consistently better teaching in each school. This was achieved by using an instructional model to improve teaching practice, along with teacher planning and coaching in triads, or teams of three. Together, these helped drive better teaching practice through the school, thereby supporting more teachers to work like the best, which research has shown to be the greatest source of improvement in any school.

The presentation will conclude with an outline of five specific teaching theories of action employed by this larger group of schools to enable the better planning of instruction they initiated to be translated into better, more research-driven practice in each class.

Keywords:

School improvement; Preconditions for improvement; Theories of action; Sustained success