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Next steps

The role of school reviews and this report is to promote reflection and discussion about school improvement in schools, regions and central office. The findings from more than 700 school reviews conducted in 2015 and 2016 show Queensland state schools have made significant progress across all domains of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT), which positively influenced student outcomes. School improvement, however, is a process of continuous learning with no end. Revising the status quo and identifying areas for improvement should be a regular part of the way schools operate and deal with challenges.

This final chapter brings together the findings from the 2016 school reviews, as well as data from final reports of schools that exited the post-review support process in 2016, to explore in more depth the three key levers of school improvement identified in the *School Improvement Unit 2015 annual report* (School Improvement Unit [SIU] 2016): planning, capacity[17] and data.

Data from the 2016 school reviews confirm that these three levers should continue to be a focus of school improvement for Queensland state schools. This chapter provides a detailed explanation of how each lever has been, and could further be, addressed by schools. Learning organisation theory, which links a school's ability to self-improve to its capacity for organisational learning, advances this explanation.

The findings are intended to help schools shape their improvement approaches and strategies. They also provide direction for the SIU's future research, and present valuable feedback for regional offices and central office on how to further support schools in building their capacity to learn and improve.

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5.1 Three levers of improvement in 2016 review schools

School improvement is a continuous process of evaluating and improving instructional practice. Queensland state schools are not expected to be making more changes, but rather they should be making the right changes. Evidence from the 2016 reviews shows that the three levers (see Figure 5.1 below) continue to be important work for schools.
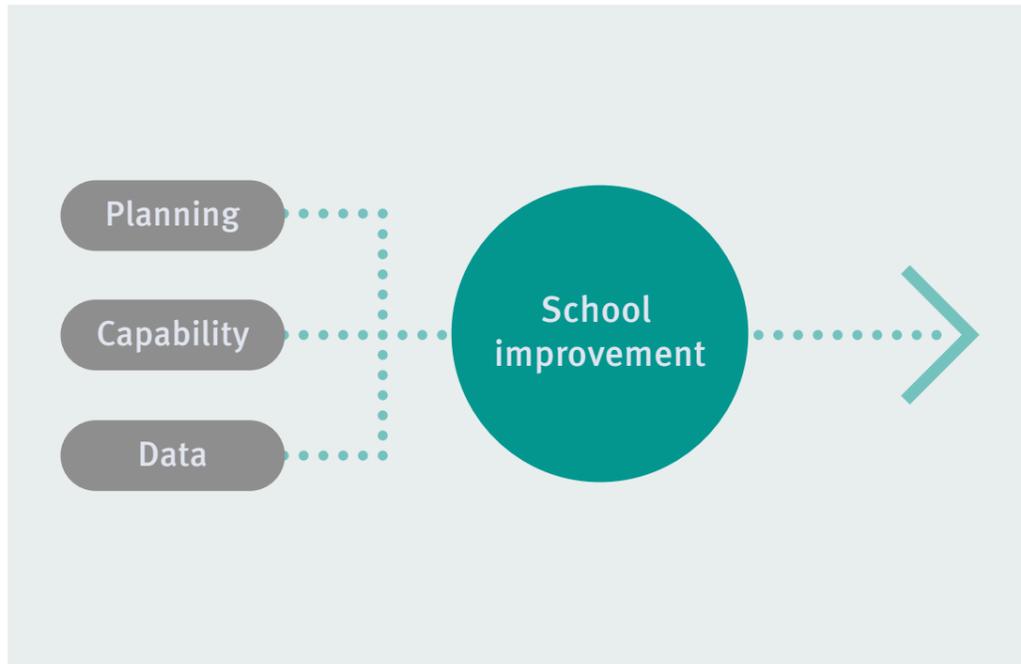

Figure 5.1: School improvement trinity

Planning refers to a planned approach to school improvement, particularly the development and implementation of an explicit improvement agenda. Capability is about continuous capability building, particularly for school leaders and teaching staff. The last lever — data — calls for the critical use of data (and evidence more broadly) to inform school leaders' and teachers' practice, as well as student learning. As the three levers are interrelated, in order to maximise student achievement, schools need to apply them together.

Many of the key issues and themes identified in the 2015 review schools are also evident in data from the 2016 reviews. Overall, it is clear that school improvement has been achieved by the 2016 review schools through planning, building staff capability, and using data and evidence. Further work, however, is required in some schools. The analysis of the key improvement strategies formulated at the end of each school review process in 2016 revealed that the areas closely linked to the three levers, namely human resources, a school's explicit improvement agenda and data processes, were among the top five areas most often suggested for improvement[18] (see Figure 5.2 opposite).
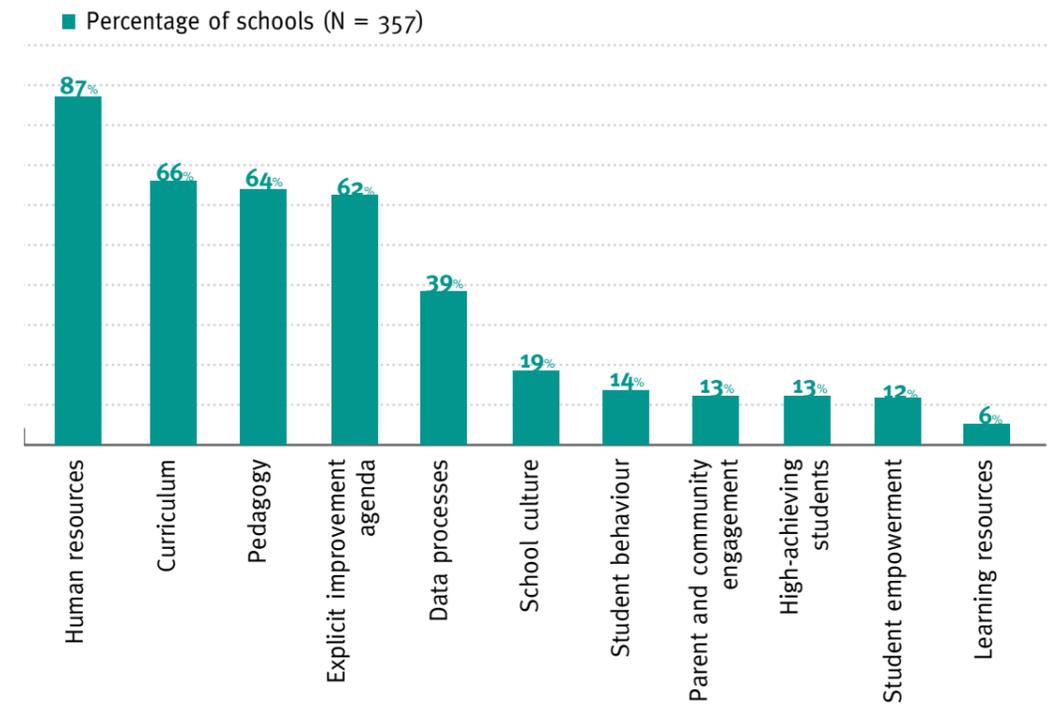

Figure 5.2: Key improvement strategies in review reports, by area, 2016

Note: There are minor differences in the population of review schools used for different datasets. This may be due to the outdoor and environmental education centres not being included in departmental data, the campuses of one school counted as one in departmental data, but included as individual schools in the analysis of data from school reviews, and a small number of self-determined and emergent reviews not included in the analysis of school reviews data due to the unique format of their review reports.

5.1.1 Planning

A planned approach to improvement, focused on the development and implementation of an explicit improvement agenda, has been addressed significantly by the 2016 review schools. The reviews provided evidence of a strong commitment to improvement at their schools from all stakeholders (students, parents and staff), and of school leaders being active change agents. In addition, many schools that exited the post-review support process intensified collaboration linked to the planning processes and to newly developed practices and frameworks. Teams to support improvement priorities were created and they worked closely with school staff to develop and implement whole-school curriculum plans, behaviour management programs and pedagogical frameworks. For example, it was noted in a final report that:

A reading reference group has been formed to support the implementation of the reading agenda. This group has collaborated with the HOC to develop a reading framework which has been shared with staff members (rural primary school, Far North Queensland region).

However, in a small number of review schools, improvement agendas were developed by leadership teams in isolation from other school stakeholders, who were involved only at the implementation stage. Greater collaboration and involvement of teaching staff in planning and decision making is needed in Queensland state schools. This may enhance staff commitment and ownership of improvement strategies. Teachers need to be considered partners in collaborative discussions aimed at identifying student learning needs and related challenges of practice.

The majority of schools that exited the post-review support process were reported to have clarified the priorities in their improvement agendas, sharpened their vision of improvement and maintained this focus over time. The following excerpt from a final report shows the importance of developing a clear direction of improvement:

> Student and staff forums have been conducted to begin to unpack the vision and how it should impact on the learning culture … Teachers overwhelmingly state that a greater unity of message from the school leadership team exists and that teaching staff members have more clarity regarding the school's expectations and how those expectations impact on teachers' roles and accountabilities (urban secondary school, North Coast region).

Similarly, most of the 2016 review schools had a sharp and narrow improvement agenda, and used data and evidence to set clear improvement priorities that were linked to student learning areas such as reading, writing and numeracy, or the preconditions of learning (attendance and behaviour). However, in some instances, these priorities could have been better aligned with other school strategic documents, and based on a thorough analysis of data and evidence. In a number of schools, the lack of continuity in leadership resulted in frequent changes of agenda priorities, which in turn created confusion. Identified student needs should be the imperative that helps schools to maintain the clarity and continuity of their improvement agenda.

Most review schools explicitly defined targets and timelines for the improvement of student outcomes, as well as performance measures to help monitor progress. In some schools, however, specific and measurable targets and timelines for key improvement priorities were yet to be fully established. Improving schools invested considerable time and energy in planning and discussions to unpack the improvement agenda items. Some schools need to bring more precision to their improvement planning processes. Improvement agendas and expectations need to be operationalised by school leaders and teaching staff to determine specific targets for student progress against curriculum achievement standards. This precision will help schools to better monitor progress towards identified targets.

Evidence of the roles and responsibilities of leaders and key staff being revised and aligned with the improvement agenda was found in schools that exited the post-review support process. This positively affected reciprocal communication within these schools, helping schools to gain support for improvement. For example, a final report noted:

> The executive leadership team has developed an organisational chart linked with work responsibilities for each member of the team. Staff report that this has given them greater clarity and line of sight regarding where to seek support if required (urban primary school, Far North Queensland region).

Some of the 2016 review schools, despite having clear agendas that were well grounded in evidence and informed by regional benchmarks, struggled with the lack of alignment between the improvement agenda and key leadership roles. Schools that demonstrated such alignment had invested in their associate leaders, who were often the biggest drivers and promoters of implemented changes. Research shows that middle leadership levels such as department heads have a greater influence on student learning than school-level leaders or schools as a whole (Leithwood 2016, p. 135).

> 'The principal is important, but s/he can only achieve success through the cooperation of others.'
>
> (Hallinger 2011, p. 137)

According to the 2016 review reports, improvement agendas were communicated to staff and other stakeholders in many review schools. As a result, in some schools, the improvement agenda was reported as widely known by staff, parents, students and the community. In others, however, there was a lack of clarity as to the specific learning needs and related problems of practice that needed to be addressed. The awareness of, and commitment to, priorities were greater in those schools where they had been established through a consultation process involving staff. The effectiveness of communication varied between review schools, and feedback was not always sought to ensure that a shared understanding of the school's improvement vision and priorities had been developed.

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Most schools that exited the post-review support process effectively communicated their agendas to school stakeholders, who in turn were able to articulate these expectations. These agendas were informed by collaborative analysis and discussion of data and evidence, which resulted in perceptibly greater teacher commitment to, and ownership of, the agreed improvement strategies. Building a shared understanding of the improvement agenda determines the extent to which staff take ownership of change, as well as the consistency of the implemented strategies across the school.

In order to improve their learning, every student needs quality and timely feedback. This also applies to school improvement — without regular feedback, schools do not know whether they are heading in the right direction. It takes time for most improvement strategies to impact on student outcomes, so it is important to develop specific ways of monitoring the effectiveness of these strategies at school and individual teacher levels. Such systematic self-monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the implementation of the improvement agenda was only found in some review schools.
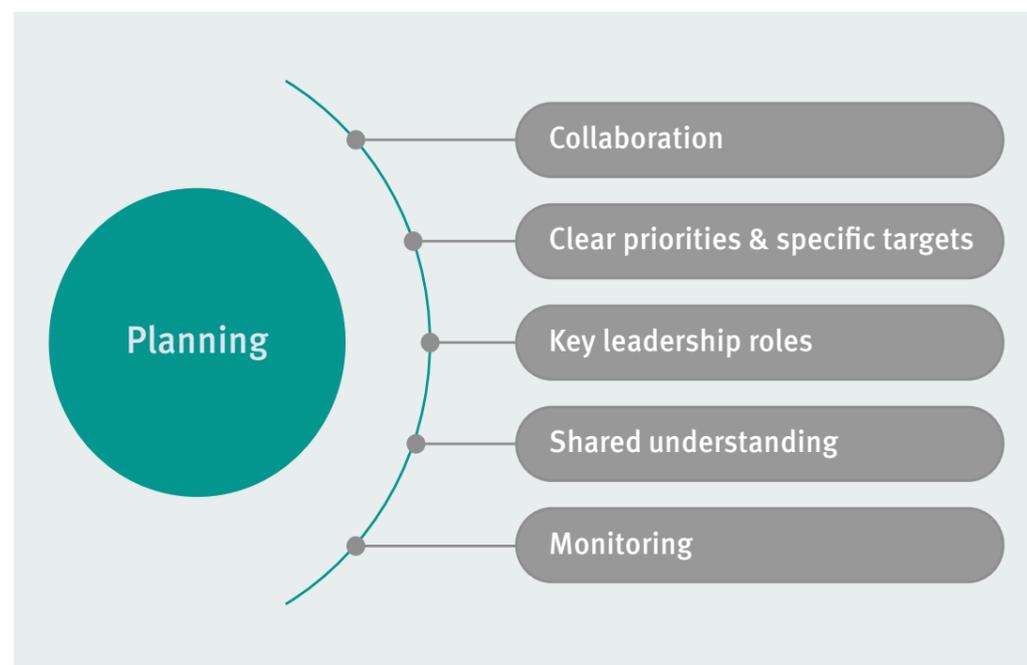
5.1.2   Capability

Investment in the second lever of school improvement — continuous capability building, particularly for school leaders and teaching staff — was widely evident in the 2016 reviews. In most schools, teaching staff were seen as highly capable, professional, hardworking, collegial and committed to achieving improved learning outcomes for students. In almost all review schools, leaders placed a high priority on attracting, retaining and developing quality teachers, despite staffing challenges. Some review schools had not yet fully developed formal professional learning planning processes, but where evident, staff felt these processes helped them to improve their work.

The 2016 reviews provided significant evidence of schools investing in the knowledge and skills of staff (human capital). All principals recognised the continual development of staff as pivotal to improving student learning outcomes. In the vast majority of review schools, staff accessed various professional learning opportunities such as training, coaching and mentoring. Many schools developed whole-school coaching and mentoring frameworks, while in some schools, such learning occurred only on an ad hoc basis between peers or with school leaders. Teacher aide positions had been created in many schools, and their professional development needs were also catered for.

In addition, the evidence from final reports also indicated that almost all schools that exited the post-review support process invested in the knowledge and skills of their staff. Learning activities were focused on supporting staff in consistent implementation of practices in priority areas. These schools also supported the development of their leaders, and aligned organisational professional development processes with the improvement agenda. For example, a final report noted:

> Staff members report that they have been well supported in the writing agenda through regular and ongoing professional development activities, within and beyond the school campus. The writing agenda is a mandatory component in teachers' annual performance plans … [and] became a key focus in the induction program for new staff members … School leaders have focused on improving teacher skills in assessing student work and ensuring consistency in the use of assessment standards (combined school, Central Queensland region).

The results of these continuous professional learning efforts were significant, with reported improvements in staff understanding, knowledge or confidence, particularly in understanding the Australian Curriculum. Examples from final reports included:

> Teacher confidence in using assessment criteria to grade student work is increasing, thus providing more accurate benchmark data. Teacher confidence in implementing Explicit Instruction has also gained considerable traction (combined school, Central Queensland region).

> The collaborative work regarding curriculum planning has led to a greater teacher understanding of the Australian Curriculum. Teachers talk positively of now using the Guide to Making Judgements and assessment standards as the starting point for planning (urban primary school, Metropolitan region).

Schools need to better align professional learning to their improvement agenda in order to support staff in the implementation of improvement strategies. When identifying their professional learning needs, teachers should consider data and evidence related to student learning needs, and how they could be addressed by changes in instructional practices. The process of inquiry based on the analysis of data and evidence should be seen as an important part of staff professional learning.

There has been a growing focus in review schools on building teaching staff capability to implement evidence-based pedagogies, as well as developing teachers' knowledge of the Australian Curriculum. An area of strategic importance for review schools was the data literacy of school staff. The 2016 reviews showed teachers in schools most frequently developed their data literacy skills through formal or informal data conversations during staff meetings. Reported to have different levels of competence and confidence in data literacy, teaching staff often recognised the need to extend these skills. Collaborative forms of professional learning are needed to continue to develop human capital in this area.

The 2016 school reviews provided significant evidence of school leaders creating a variety of collaborative opportunities for professional learning (social capital). The most frequently noted activity was staff meetings, usually linked to school programs or year-level teaching teams. At the same time, limited evidence was found of learning collaboration across year levels. Review school staff learned through collaborative planning, professional teams, specialised teams and committees created to support improvement priorities, and networked learning relationships with other schools. Some schools established professional learning communities, while others developed their own unique forms of collaborative learning.

The evidence of increased levels of collaboration among staff was found in most schools that exited the post-review support process. Some of these schools were also reported to have intensified their external collaboration through new partnerships, collegial relationships developed by school leaders with the leaders of other schools, connections with cluster schools, and best practice observation and networking. For example, a final report noted:

> Staff members have engaged in unpacking curriculum units in collaboration with staff members from the neighbouring schools. Teachers are positive about this process and view the cluster planning as very valuable and a good opportunity for professional conversation with colleagues (urban primary school, Metropolitan region).

In some review schools, however, there was little evidence of structures to support collaboration. Social capital of review schools can be enhanced by promoting collaboration and group work among staff, developing whole-school formal structures for collaborative learning, and extending professional networks and relationships outside of school.
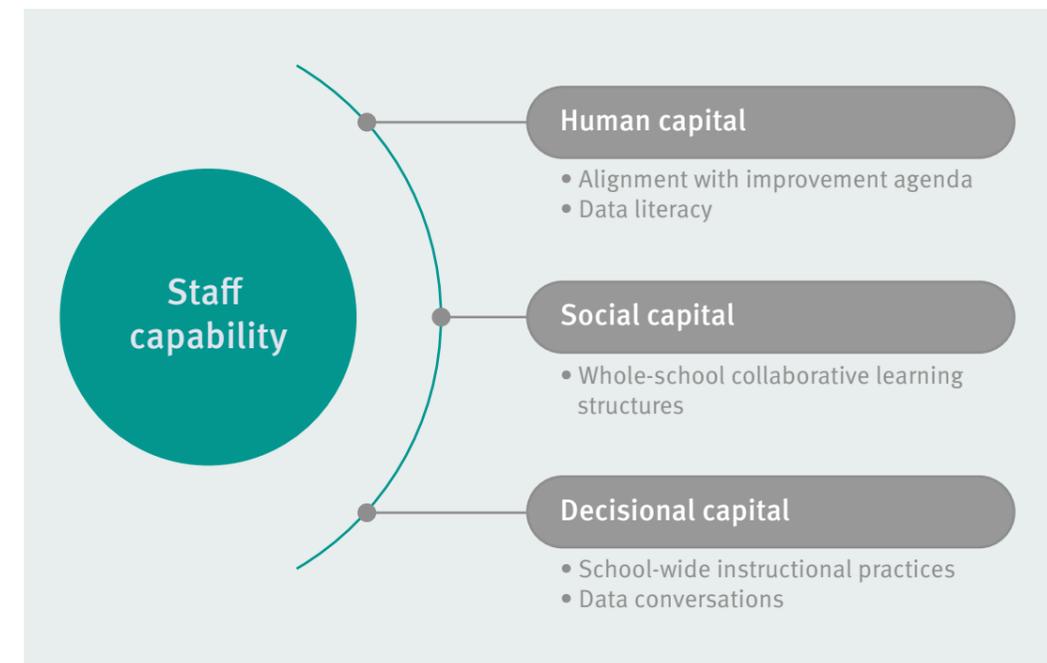
Many of the 2016 review schools had developed practices that could contribute to enhancing their school's decisional capital. Instructional leadership practices such as modelling teaching or walkthroughs, as well as the peer observation and feedback practices, were evident in many schools, but not always consistent. Consequently, improvement strategies formulated for this area at the end of review focused on school leaders implementing consistent whole-school instructional leadership practices, and involving all teachers in peer observation and feedback processes.

The majority of schools that exited the post-review support process implemented instructional leadership, and peer observation and feedback practices, as part of their improvement actions. As a result, teachers engaged in discussions about their work, were supported in their classroom to trial new pedagogical strategies and received comprehensive feedback on their implementation. This positively influenced their confidence to make decisions about changing their classroom practice.

Overall, instructional leadership practices were often reported to focus on quality assuring the consistency of implemented pedagogies. Their role in building staff capability and confidence to make decisions about improving teaching practice was less evident. There is a need to redefine the notion of instructional leadership in the practice of schools to emphasise its role in enhancing decisional capital and improving classroom instruction. Research suggests that '… part of an administrator's supervision of instruction must also be to empower teachers to make decisions that are in the interests of students' (Lochmiller 2016, p. 81). Instructional leadership can enhance teachers' effectiveness and impact by helping them to develop confidence in making decisions about changing their teaching. So far, the question '… how, why, and when instructional leaders are successful in altering teaching and learning' has been largely unanswered (Neumerski 2012, p. 334). Schools need to develop their own ways to make this practice better focused on building teachers' capability to make judgments and decisions to address the learning needs of students.

Professional conversations to scan and assess data were another tool identified in reviews as playing an important role in the development of the school's decisional capital. Through these conversations, teaching staff are developing, not only their data literacy, but also the ability to support their decisions with data and evidence. The practice of data conversations was frequently reported as present in review schools, but not always as a whole-school, systematic approach.

School improvement could be accelerated through more intensive development of all three components of professional capital, resulting in improved staff capability to better address student needs.

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Staff capability

Human capital
- Alignment with improvement agenda
- Data literacy

Social capital
- Whole-school collaborative learning structures

Decisional capital
- School-wide instructional practices
- Data conversations

5.1.3   Data

The third lever of school improvement, the critical use of data and evidence to inform decision making and practice, was strongly acknowledged by most of the 2016 review schools. This lever refers to the use of any evidence of student learning, including what students do, say, make or write, as well as what teachers assess and observe in classrooms. Improvement in this area requires establishing consistent and transparent processes for collecting, analysing and using data, with a clear division of roles and responsibilities, supported by continuous enhancement of the data literacy of school staff.

Review schools collected a significant amount and variety of evidence of student learning. The processes of data collection, however, were not always consistent within schools, and not all of the 2016 review schools were using a clearly documented school data plan describing what evidence was collected and how it was used. Key improvement strategies formulated at the end of review in this area tended to encourage data collection to become more structured and consistent within schools, with clear descriptions of what data are collected and used by whom, when and how. The majority of schools that exited the post-review support process had already implemented strategies and actions aimed at improving data processes within the school. Further data collection in schools needs to be more balanced by relying more on formative assessment tasks linked to the Australian Curriculum.

Data analysis in review schools occurred at whole-school, year and classroom levels, but regular, systematic processes were not evident in all schools. In some schools, this practice was only emerging. More than one third of all schools had identified this as an area for improvement, in particular suggesting greater focus on data analysis and use, rather than collecting more or different data. In addition, the need for greater consistency of practice around collaborative discussion and analysis of data in order to inform leadership decisions and teaching practice was evident.

In schools that exited the post-review support process, there was evidence of the more extensive use of collegial data discussions between school leaders and teachers — both formal and informal. For example, one of the final reports indicated:

> Teachers appreciate the opportunity to share and discuss achievement data in the collaborative learning teams setting and indicate that the collaborative nature of these discussions has built collective ownership of student achievement (urban primary school, South East region).

Collaborative discussions of data should become a regular school practice that promotes reflection and improves teaching practice.

Data-rich schools need to focus energy on ensuring that collected data and evidence are later used to identify and address the problems of practice. The 2016 reviews provided significant evidence of teachers using data and evidence of student learning to inform their teaching, but in many instances, this practice was developed in isolation by individual teachers and not implemented systematically. Schools that exited the post-review support process reported an increase in the use of data and evidence to inform teaching practice and to stimulate discussion regarding effective teaching pedagogies. For example, in a final report it was noted:

> Processes around the use of data have become part of school practice. There is increased teacher confidence in the use of data to inform teaching and learning strategies and intervention programs (urban primary school, North Coast region).

Improvement in the use of data could be achieved by regular data monitoring (already evident in many review schools), accompanied by thorough, teacher-led data analysis and supported with continuous professional learning in data literacy. These elements need to be closely linked to assessment and moderation practices that could focus more on enhancing teachers' capability to interpret and use data to improve student learning.

Data

- Consistent & balanced collection
- Collegial data analysis
- Data-informed teaching

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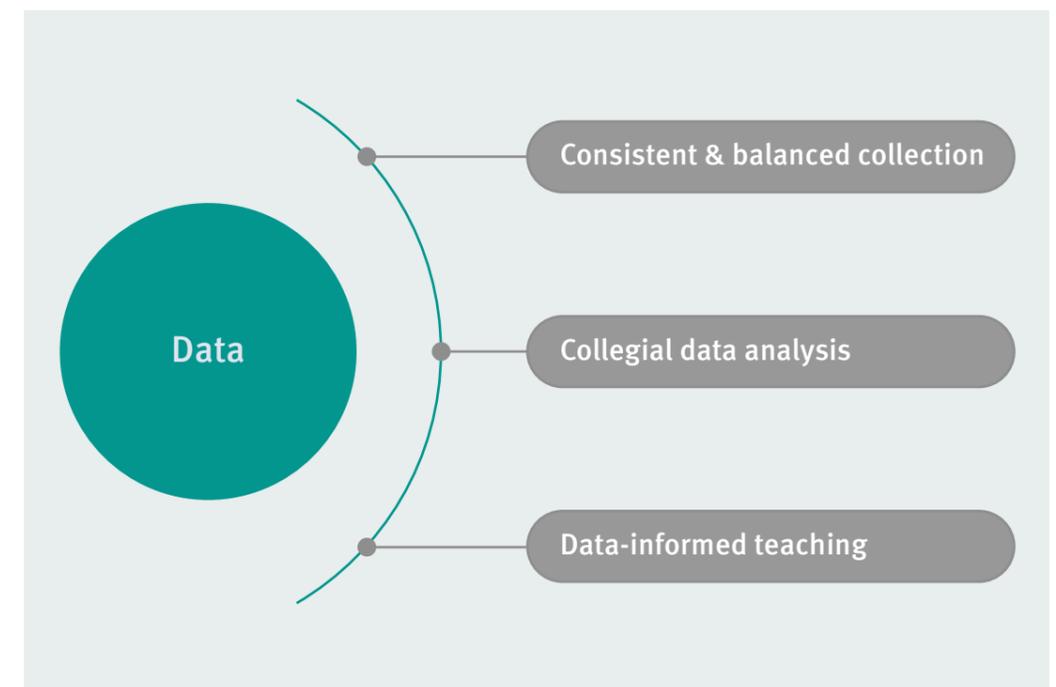
5.2   School improvement and the learning organisation

While schools are focusing on the three levers of improvement, the effectiveness of their strategies to improve teaching and learning is highly dependent on the context in which schools operate, as well as the unique characteristics of each school. The approaches successfully applied in one school may not work well in another. Recent studies of school improvement show that, rather than improving gradually and steadily, schools take different and often unique trajectories (Bellei et al. 2016). This indicates the importance of developing the school's internal capacity for improvement or ability to learn how to improve.

> 'Continual school improvement depends on continual learning about how to improve.'
>
> (Masters 2016a, p. 4)

A school's ability to learn can be examined through the lens of the learning organisation theory. This theory was much advanced after the publication of Senge's book, *The fifth discipline* (1990), applied to the Australian educational context (Johnston & Caldwell 2001; Silins, Zarins & Mulford 2002), and embedded in the national educational agendas of Singapore (1997) and the Netherlands (2013–17) (Kools & Stoll 2016).

> '… [A] school as learning organisation has the capacity to change and adapt routinely to new environments and circumstances as its members, individually and together, learn their way to realising their vision.'
>
> (Kools & Stoll 2016, p. 10)

The rationale behind conceptualising a school as a learning organisation is threefold. From an organisational theory perspective, school improvement is a process of organisational change that has proven to be a continuous, cyclical process in which success is determined by the organisation's capacity for continuous learning.

Secondly, schools educate for future needs that cannot be predicted. Consequently, a capacity to deal with the challenges of a global economy and knowledge society through lifelong learning has become a central focus of education. To address uncertain future needs, schools need to be agile and effectively deal with the changing external environment, so developing their capacity to learn becomes salient.

Finally, according to Masters (2016a, p. 4), the concept of a learning organisation is consistent with the philosophy of a growth mindset, which, when applied to school improvement, is 'the belief in the ability of a school to make continual improvements in how well it is meeting the needs of students it serves', as opposed to the more pessimistic or fixed belief that 'there are natural limits to what teachers and schools can do and to how well students in some schools can be expected to perform'. Therefore, the key to school improvement is not about the implementation of 'silver-bullet solutions', but rather about continuous learning, focused on the improvement of current practices.

An analysis of the work of Senge (1990), Johnston and Caldwell (2001), Silins, Zarins and Mulford (2002), as well as the extensive summary of research on schools as learning organisations by Kools and Stoll (2016), resulted in the identification of the following dimensions:

- shared vision and goals
- collaboration and teamwork
- continuous professional learning
- learning-focused leadership
- culture of inquiry, exploration and risk-taking.

These dimensions offer further interpretation of the three levers of school improvement.

5.2.1   Planning: the role of shared understanding and collaboration

Two dimensions of a learning organisation are closely linked with the planning of school improvement: shared vision and goals, and collaboration.

Shared vision and goals refers to an organisation's capacity to establish a shared picture of the future that fosters genuine commitment from staff rather than compliance (Senge 1990, p. 9). When the vision is developed collaboratively with staff and shared, they are intrinsically motivated to learn and excel, rather than being compelled.

> 'Vision and goals refer to the recognition of and commitment to a coherent and an agreed upon sense of direction that is forged and re-forged to guide a school's everyday actions and decisions as well as shape long-term planning.'
>
> (Silins, Zarins & Mulford 2002, p. 26)

The key to developing a learning organisation is establishing a shared understanding of issues, challenges and developmental priorities (de Jong 2003). Establishing goals and expectations is a high-impact leadership practice that includes 'the setting, communicating and monitoring of learning goals, standards and expectations, and the involvement of staff and others in the process so that there is clarity and consensus about goals' (Robinson 2007, p. 8). In the context of school improvement, the vision and goals targeting student learning needs should be determined (and thereby owned) through reflective collaboration by school staff, who then action this vision by improving their instruction. The vision is the central point of the improvement agenda to which other elements of the system need to be aligned. Developing a shared vision is determined by the effectiveness of communication channels which, in learning organisations, allow for effective and reciprocal dissemination of ideas on four levels: staff and administration; parents, students and local community; other schools and educational organisations; and the research level (Johnston & Caldwell 2001, pp. 99–100). Effective communication channels help school leaders generate community support for improvement.

Learning organisations promote collaboration and create teams to better solve problems. Collaboration around planning, decision making and professional learning of school staff enhances reflection and learning experiences, and also builds a culture of trust and collegiality that is positively correlated to organisational and professional commitment, as well as student performance (Shah 2012). Schools that are learning organisations allocate time and other resources for collaborative working and learning. Their staff work with parents and the community as partners in the education process, and with peers in other schools. Genuine partnerships are developed with other organisations (for example, higher education institutions, businesses, and government and non-government organisations) and social services to respond to student needs (Kools & Stoll 2016, pp. 54–56).

5.2.2   Capability: continuous learning and learning-focused leaders

'Individual learning is a precursor to group and organisational learning' (Schechter & Mowafaq 2013, p. 507). In learning schools, all staff engage in continuous professional learning focused on student learning needs, and their thinking is challenged as part of changing practice. New staff receive induction and mentoring support, and all staff are fully engaged in identifying the aims and priorities for their own professional learning. Professional learning connects work-based learning and external expertise, and is based on assessment and feedback (Kools & Stoll 2016, p. 36).

Leaders of learning organisations are responsible for fostering the learning of teachers and other staff. Leading teacher learning and development is one of the leadership practices that make the biggest difference for students — this practice is about 'leadership that not only promotes, but directly participates with teachers in, formal or informal professional learning' (Robinson 2007, p. 8). Leaders have a key role in modelling professional learning and providing opportunities for co-learning and the flexible exchange of roles between leader and teachers (Johnston & Caldwell 2001, p. 101).

> '[Learning-focused leaders] distribute leadership and help to grow other leaders, including students … develop the culture, structures and conditions to facilitate professional dialogue, collaboration and knowledge exchange … ensure the school is characterised by a "rhythm" of learning, change and innovation.'
>
> (Kools & Stoll 2016, p. 58)

Leaders in learning schools encourage and participate in learning collaborations with other schools, parents, the community, higher education institutions and other partners. They perform the role of instructional leaders directly involved in planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching effectiveness — another practice with a great impact on student outcomes, which focuses on providing 'support and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom visits and the provision of formative and summative feedback to teachers' (Robinson 2007, p. 8). This dimension of a learning organisation emphasises the role of school leaders as lead learners, as discussed in Chapter 3.

5.2.3   Data: a culture of inquiry, exploration and risk-taking

Staff in learning organisations learn, share knowledge and make use of knowledge to change, experiment and innovate in their practice. They 'engage in forms of inquiry to investigate and extend their practice', and view problems and mistakes as opportunities for learning (Kools & Stoll 2016, p. 45). To bring about improvement or innovation, the staff's 'mental models' (Senge 1990, p. 8) need to be identified and re-examined.

In order to enhance their capacity for learning, schools need to support and recognise staff for challenging conventional ways of thinking and taking risks while they adjust their pedagogical approaches to address student learning needs.

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'[School staff need to] feel free to experiment
and take professional risks toward personal and
whole school improvement.'

(Silins, Zarins & Mulford 2002, p. 26)

Developing such a culture is crucial for the effective use of data in school improvement, as using innovative ways of thinking to analyse data may foster better ways of addressing problems of practice.

The discussion of the dimensions of a learning organisation in the context of the three improvement levers is summarised in Figure 5.3 below.
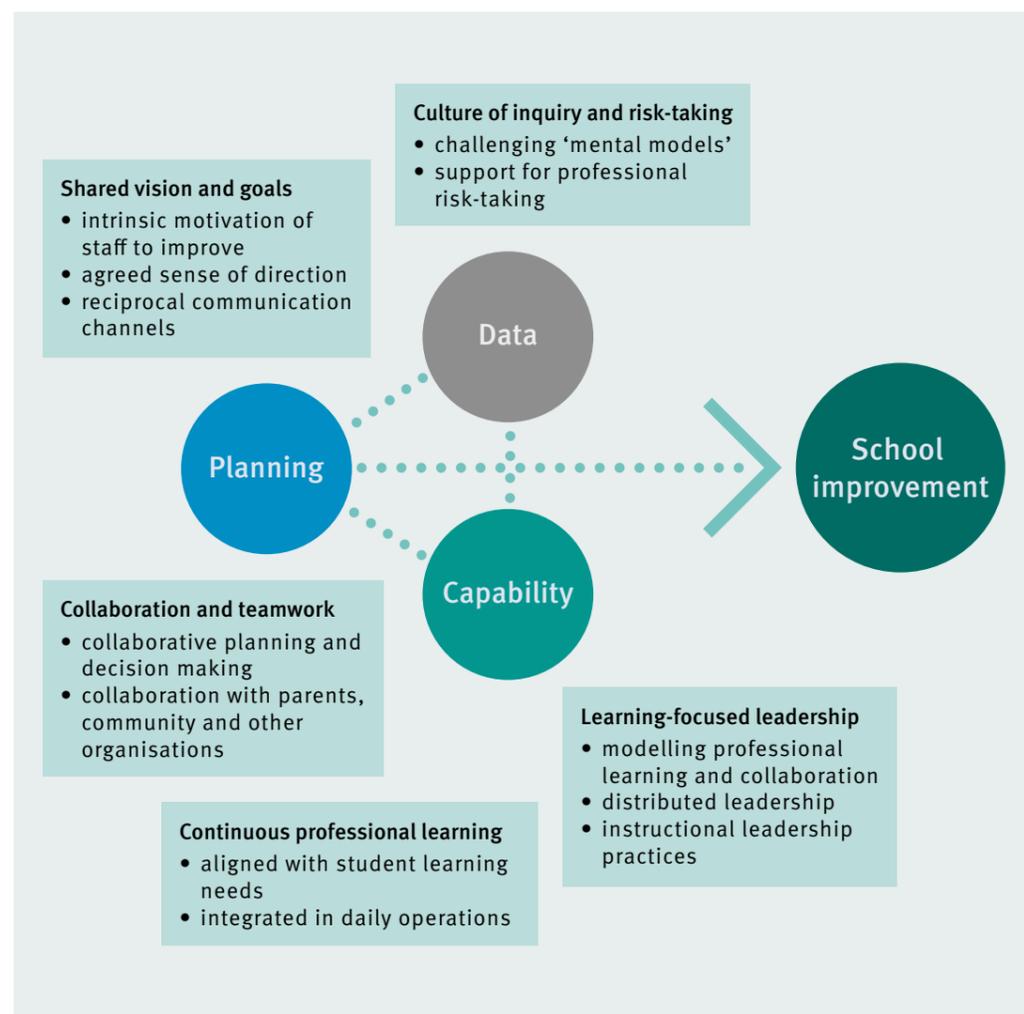

Figure 5.3: Three improvement levers and the dimensions of a learning organisation

The results of the SIU's research presented in this chapter highlight the significant amount of work done by review schools in 2016. Schools are readily engaging in the School Improvement Hierarchy (which uses the nine domains of the NSIT), and identifying where they are on their school improvement trajectory. As school improvement is a journey, this work needs to continue in the areas of improvement planning, staff capability and the use of data. This chapter has provided deeper, more advanced interpretation of these levers for the consideration of schools, regions and central office. The school review process continues to help Queensland state schools to improve and develop their capacity as learning organisations.

In 2017 school reviews, to be analysed and presented in the next SIU annual report, we expect to see schools engaging more in the other aspects of the School Improvement Model (see Chapter 1), that is, using the Inquiry Cycle to understand and address their problems of practice, and the Standards of Evidence to evaluate the improvement initiatives undertaken.

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5.3 Further research

Research findings presented in this report have been formulated mainly to benefit schools by providing them with feedback on the current improvement practices in Queensland state schools. In the context of SIU research work, these findings could be further expanded.

Data from final reports presented in this report (Chapter 4) provided key themes that have been inductively derived and quantified. This research could become a starting point for a longitudinal study aimed at monitoring the effectiveness of improvement strategies in Queensland state schools. The 2016 findings from final reports could be verified and extended using a randomly selected sample of review schools each year. Such research would require the SIU to develop a more comprehensive method and tool to identify and measure the outputs and outcomes of improvement strategies and actions implemented by schools. This could be done in collaboration with school, regional and central office leaders and staff.

Continuation of such research would be a source of valuable ongoing feedback for the SIU, which could be used to revise the ways in which the SIU supports Queensland state schools. But most of all, this research would benefit Queensland state schools by providing them with much needed feedback on their improvement progress. This feedback, potentially in concert with schools' self-assessment, could assist schools in evaluating the effectiveness of their improvement strategies and ensuring they continue on their intended trajectory.

A significant part of the proposed research could investigate schools' capacity to learn and improve. As this capacity is determined, to a great extent, by school leaders' ability to create and successfully lead learning organisations, the analysis of school leadership could become a part of this research to provide the SIU with feedback on the impact school reviews are having on school leaders' practice.

'[Schools need to] individually and collectively, routinely learn from the world around them and to apply this learning to new situations so that they can continue on a path toward their goals in an ever-changing context.'

(Stoll 2009, p. 125)

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