

# The IPS policy in Queensland: governance, freedom and the entrepreneurial leader

## Abstract

Australian education, as within other western contexts, has experienced a long but highly varied history of school autonomy reform. Such reform has been driven by the view that more devolved schooling systems will drive up education standards. There has been renewed emphasis on this reform agenda in the states of Western Australia and Queensland with the instating of the most recent iteration of school autonomy policy in Australia, the IPS (Independent Public Schools) initiative. This paper examines the ways in which the conceptions of governance and freedom embedded in this policy foster an entrepreneurial leadership of competition and compliance. It considers how such conceptions shape the ways in which two school leaders from an IP secondary school in regional Queensland think about and take up the policy. It also considers how they use the freedoms and flexibility of entrepreneurialism (promoted in IPS) to create a space for something other than these dominant performative priorities. The paper offers a theoretical contribution in its consideration of the progressive possibilities of entrepreneurialism. As such it responds to calls for more nuanced accounts of entrepreneurial leadership to better understand how current performative demands are impacting on schools and their leaders amid increasingly autonomised education systems.

**Key words:** Independent Public Schools, Australian schooling, school autonomy, governance, entrepreneurial leadership

## Introduction

...it's up to us to make it happen and, in fact, I go to meetings in Brisbane with the Independent Public School principals [and] it's quite exciting for us to think that we are at the forefront of this innovation and we can actually make new policies and new innovation in education and make a real difference. I think it's really exciting.

These comments are from 'Jack,' a veteran principal of a large state high school in regional Queensland that has recently converted to Independent Public School (IPS) status. This status, as with most school autonomy reform in Australia and internationally, grants schools greater freedom and resourcing from centralized governance to manage their own affairs. For Jack, like many of his principal counter-parts, this self-determination was particularly appealing (see Thomson, 2010). He viewed it as freedom to innovate towards making a real difference. There is a sense of action and engagement in his comments that, as this paper will illustrate, is consistent with how freedom is constructed in the IPS policy. Jack embraces this 'freedom' and its positioning of him at the 'forefront' of change where possibilities for self-direction and self-governance are opened up. The paper examines the conceptions of freedom embedded in this policy, which act upon the action of school leaders. These conceptions presuppose the freedom of the governed. They are not about crushing the capacity to act but rather about acknowledging, crafting and utilizing the freedom to act (Rose, 1999). Foucault describes this as a relation of power that "is always a way of acting upon ... acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action" (Foucault, 2002, p. 341).

Within this policy, freedom, as it is instantiated in government as a formula of power, is also about organizing and regulating the work of schools/school leaders through particular normalities, rationalities and sensibilities. Freedom conceptualized within the rationalities of IPS policy is shaped through technologies of responsabilisation (Rose, 1999; Ball, 2003). A mechanism of neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 1991), responsabilisation occurs when the subject assumes a moral agency within the processes of governance. Such agency arises from a positioning of oneself as autonomous, self-determined and self-sustaining in these processes and thus as responsible for bearing the consequences arising from one's actions within these processes (Shamir, 2008; Rose, 1999). While it can be said that obedience was the master-key of top-down governance, responsibility and duty are the master keys of new governance (Shamir, 2008; Olmedo, 2014).

These notions of freedom and responsabilisation have become embedded in education policy discourse across western nations. Indeed, they are part of a global education policy field that has normalised neoliberal reform as a 'commonsense' approach to driving up education standards (see Lingard & Rawolle, 2011; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Freedom (through increasing school autonomy) and responsabilisation (through holding schools and leaders to account through systems of performativity that include instating more rigid testing regimes) are endorsed at a transnational policy level by influential organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank (see World Bank, 2014; OECD, 2011). These organisations view school autonomy within the context of accountability on international standards and measures such as PISA (Program of International Student Assessment) as key to driving up education standards (Lingard & Rawolle, 2011). The authority of this global discourse drives 'national systems of education towards a similar policy outlook' (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 42).

Much has been written about the enterprise or entrepreneurialism produced within this context. Amid the parameters of neoliberal reform, principals are increasingly governed by and govern themselves in relation to these performative demands (Ball, 2003). Such demands incite an 'entrepreneurialization' of the self, where the artifact of freedom is produced in neo-liberal governmentality as a self-responsibilised exercise of choice (Rose, 1999). The self-determination, energy and ambitious mindset of entrepreneurialism is constructed in policy discourse as necessary for renewing the public sector (see Woods, 2015). As Ball (2010, p. 1) argues, enterprise is offered as 'a generic solution to 'wicked' social and educational policy problems'. Entrepreneurialism has been strongly advocated in education policy as requisite to creatively and constructively managing the challenges and risks of the performative era (see Woods, 2015).

This paper examines conceptions of freedom, responsabilisation and entrepreneurialism in relation to the most recent iteration of school autonomy reform in Australia, the IPS policy in Queensland. Following a critical examination of the key intentions and parameters of this policy, the views of two school leaders from a regional Queensland secondary school are presented. The paper examines how the policy's conception of freedom acts upon the action of these leaders to produce an entrepreneurial leadership of competition and compliance. We also consider how these leaders use the freedoms and flexibility of the entrepreneurialism promoted in IPS to create a space for something other than dominant performative priorities. The paper offers a theoretical contribution in its consideration of

the progressive possibilities of entrepreneurialism. As such it responds to calls for more nuanced accounts of entrepreneurial leadership to better understand how current performative demands are impacting on schools and their leaders amid increasingly autonomised education systems (Woods & Woods, 2011; Woods, 2015).

### **School autonomy in Australia**

As public schooling in Australia remains ostensibly a state responsibility, there is marked variance across state jurisdictions in how schools are governed. Such variance has been reflected in the long and complex history of school autonomy reform. At a national level, school autonomy and, more particularly, the idea that responsibility for schools should be devolved to the people involved in the task of schooling, was promoted over forty years ago in the Karmel Report (Australian Schools Commission, 1973). The aim here was to foster schools' greater independence, flexibility and freedom to manage, innovate and better respond to local communities. The policy intentions surrounding various iterations of this reform across the nation since the 1970s have reflected this rationale as evident in the most recent version of this initiative at a federal level, the 70 million dollar Independent Public Schools initiative which aims to give selected government schools more control of local decision making and to help encourage stronger links between schools, parents and the local community. With these freedoms, there is also an expectation that school autonomy will remove the supposed inefficiencies and constraints on personal freedom associated with bureaucratic governance in ways that will improve the innovation and economic efficiency of the public education system more broadly (see Smyth, 2011; Gobby, 2013).

Moves to increase school autonomy in Australia and other western contexts such as the UK and the US have occurred amid rising concerns within public and political discourse about the poor performance of state schools (see Apple, 2010). These concerns have provided strong justification for subjecting state schools to greater and more rigid external and public accountability measures (in the form of national and international standardized testing) to evaluate and compare their effectiveness. These neo-liberal rationalities posit that greater competition and choice in the system will drive up academic performance through creating the conditions for successful schools (i.e. those that do well on these accountabilities) to thrive and unsuccessful schools to fail (i.e. those that do not do well) (see Apple, 2010; Lingard, 2010). Within these parameters, as many have argued, we can see that school autonomy reform, far from being about autonomy is, rather, about freedom exercised within centralised systems of compliance (see Thomson, 2010; Niesche, 2011; Ball & Junemann, 2012; Tseng, 2015).

The most recent iteration of school autonomy reform in Australia at the state level is the Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative introduced in Western Australia (in 2010) and Queensland (in 2013). In these states previous policies of devolution did not impact greatly on the centralised governance of public education as they did in other states. In the 1990s, for example, driven by a conservative government in Victoria, the public education system experienced radical reform. A punitive approach to creating a more autonomous system under the *Schools of the Future* policy was driven by a combination of economic rationalism, competition, consumer choice and external accountability (Blackmore, 1999). This resulted in the closure of over 350 'under-performing' schools. In Queensland during the same

period, policies supporting greater school autonomy were similarly instated. One of these, *Leading Schools*, was introduced by a newly elected conservative government in 1996 but it produced limited reform in light of strong opposition from the Queensland Teachers' Union. This initiative was abolished a few years later with the election of a labour government (see Lingard et al., 2002). Such differential impacts highlight the significance of time, context and politics in shaping how school autonomy plays out (Lingard et al., 2002; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The current political climate in Queensland will be no exception in shaping the way state schools approach and take up the IPS policy under a relatively newly elected (in 2015) labour government.

Different articulations of school autonomy reform have led to both strong support and strong opposition. Those who oppose this reform (often teachers and teacher unions as well as the education research community) highlight the inequities and perverse effects that can be generated (such as those briefly mentioned above) (see Blackmore, 1999, 2011; Smyth, 2011; Kimber & Ehrich, 2010 for a review of these effects). Others, especially school principals, have embraced the greater resourcing and freedom offered under this reform as positive for their schools and school communities (see Thomson, 2010; Keddle, 2015). Indeed, as Thomson (2010) makes clear, school leaders have long expressed satisfaction with moves to grant them and their schools greater autonomy and a desire for still further extensions of these apparent entrepreneurial freedoms. Furthermore, many of these leaders have mobilized their autonomy in innovative and democratic ways (see also, Niesche & Keddle, 2016). However, as with the notion of school autonomy, more broadly, research investigating principal 'autonomy' consistently highlights the disciplining (and often anti-educational) effects of audit and accountability on the work of school leaders (see Thomson, 2010; Niesche, 2011). Freedom and autonomy are clearly relative notions shaped by the rationalities and practices of audit, accountability and corporate performativity (Gobby, 2013; Savage, 2013), and principals have long resisted how these demands have forced them to narrow their priorities in ways that have undermined a focus on student learning, welfare and equity (Fullan, 2002; Thomson, 2010; Niesche & Keddle, 2016).

The following considers the mechanisms of governmentality embedded within such policies and, in particular, the IPS initiative in Queensland. It examines key aspects of this policy in light of the conceptualisations of freedom, responsabilisation and entrepreneurialism introduced earlier.

### **The IPS policy in Queensland: governance, freedom and entrepreneurialism**

The IPS policy, as noted earlier, was introduced in the state of Queensland in 2013. Consistent with current iterations of this reform across Australia, IPS promises to be a catalyst for school improvement and 'positive system-wide change'. The conditions enabling this change are 'enhanced local governance, advancing innovation, locally-tailored workforce, financial flexibility, building for the future [and] public accountability, transparency and performance' (Queensland Government, no date). System reform is facilitated through the Department 'empowering' IP schools to collaborate with other schools to improve their performance and supporting the 'review' and 'scaling-up of quality innovations and effective practice across all state schools'. IP schools are 'encouraged' to develop and utilize the peer expertise and mentorship offered by such collaborations in

terms of professional advice and support as well as procuring their own professional development.

What is apparent in this policy explanation of IPS is a particular conception of governance and freedom. Governance here is about acting upon action (Rose, 1999). It is about acknowledging and utilizing the capacity of school leaders to act and to be responsible for school improvement and system-wide change. Indeed, schools are positioned as uniquely placed to effectively and efficiently work with their local communities in productive and innovative ways. In this policy discourse, the conditions for entrepreneurialism are created through 'empowering' schools/school leaders to self-govern in reviewing and improving their own performance, in seeking their own professional support and mentorship and in making their own choices about how best to collaborate and share quality and effective practice.

There are currently 250 IP schools in Queensland. This is roughly a fifth of all schools (the total number of state schools, primary and secondary in Queensland, is 1239). The IPS policy does not create new schools as, for example, with free schools in England or charter schools in the US, nor is the policy intended to lead to structural change in the form of school closures as with the *Schools for the Future* policy referred to earlier. The 250 IP schools are established schools selected by the Department of Education (Queensland) that are deemed to be 'high potential' following a 'rigorous' application process (Queensland Government, no date). Schools are selected on the 'basis of their ability to demonstrate the 'distance travelled' in each year of their operation'. The data of most interest here are those associated with school performance on headline indicators (e.g. attendance and disciplinary data and NAPLAN [National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy] outcomes) as well as financial and audit data. Schools are also selected on the basis of their capacity to take responsibility for 'their affairs' in terms of human and resource management.

The 'operational flexibility' of IPS status 'comes with an expectation that IP schools will be fully accountable to their community and the Department'. There are 'specialised accountability arrangements' that these schools are subject to. They must enter into various contractual arrangements for example, a Delivery and Performance Agreement (made with the Department of Education and the Chair of the School Council) and agreements with three local consultative and accountability structures including the P&C and the School Council. These agreements are central mechanisms through which the Department, school staff, parents and the community monitor the direction, activities and progress of IP schools and hold them to account. In addition, as with all state schools, IP schools are subject to the Department's annual performance review where headline indicators are examined. IP schools are expected to demonstrate continued high standards on these indicators. In the event that these standards are not maintained, IP schools may lose a degree of autonomy (i.e. be placed under greater surveillance from departmental authorities) or they may lose their IPS status altogether.

It is within this myriad of expectations and accountabilities that the freedom of IP schools and school leaders operates and is constituted. In IPS, performance is made inscribable and comparable through the review and monitoring that schools must engage with in order to become an IPS and retain this status. Such mechanisms of autonomy and responsabilisation,

as articulated in much education research (see Ball & Junemann, 2012; Niesche, 2011; Niesche & Thomson, 2017; Tseng, 2015), have transformed the work of schools, teachers and school leaders. A key critique in this research is the ways in which these mechanisms promote an entrepreneurialism of competition, compliance and regulation that is reductive, instrumentalist and suppressing of social equity goals (see Sachs, 2001; Connell, 2009).

There is much conceptual uncertainty and conflict over the meaning (or meanings) of entrepreneurialism in education (Woods, 2015). However, it is generally associated with the economic reform and public sector change arising from a context of New Public Management that emerged from the 1980s and that endorsed business imperatives of economic efficiency, competition and standards compliance in the governing of education (see Ball, 2008; Gunter, 2001; Gewirtz, 2002; Woods, 2015; Blackmore, 2016). As noted earlier, entrepreneurial leadership continues to be constructed in policy discourse as necessary for renewing the public sector and has been strongly advocated in policy to, for example, creatively and constructively manage the challenges and risks of educational leadership in the performative era (Woods, 2015). For Woods (2015) such creativity in its potential to generate positive material, relational and cultural change in schools and in its potential to be sensitive and responsive to issues of context, points to the progressive and transformative possibilities of entrepreneurialism. If, at a general level, entrepreneurialism may be associated with 'achieving valued ends' through creative problem solving and pursuing opportunities for change and innovation, then it has relevance beyond its genesis in the business sphere (Woods & Woods, 2011; Woods, 2015). Such 'valued ends' need not necessarily be driven by the business imperatives of economic efficiency, competition and compliance. They can be inclusive of social, ethical and equity concerns (see also Roomi & Harrison, 2011). Evidence from research in the UK from a number of studies indicates, in this respect, the highly varied ways in which entrepreneurial leadership can play out. Just as it can be mobilized along the lines of business imperatives, it can be put to the service of social and community-focused ends (see Deuchar, 2007; Woods, 2015). Along with business entrepreneurialism, for example, Wood and Woods (2011) offer typologies such as 'social entrepreneurialism' which is focused on 'reducing disadvantage, deprivation and social exclusion' and 'public entrepreneurialism' which pursues the 'values and aims of a public ethos, including community welfare, social justice and democratic participation and accountability' (p. 3).

Mindful of these arguments, the following explores how two leaders of a Queensland state secondary school view and take up the IPS policy.

### **The research context and processes**

The interview data presented in this paper were gathered from a case study of 'Crimson' State High School (see author, year). Crimson High is located in regional Queensland. It is a large school of over 2000 students from diverse backgrounds. Many students are from low SES families (the school's ICSEA score [Index of Community Socio- educational Advantage] is 947 which is lower than the average of 1000) and there is a high proportion of Indigenous students (20% of the student population). The leadership team is very well established. 'Jack' (the principal) and 'Monica' (the deputy) whose voices feature in this paper have been at the school for thirty and twenty years respectively. The case study was concerned with

exploring the politics of student differentiation with respect to a broad range of pedagogical, curricular and whole school processes in relation to matters of equity and social justice. The research involved interviews with key personnel (including administrative and teaching staff) and students, observations of classroom practice and an analysis of school documentation. As part of this exploration, matters of leadership within the context of the school's recent conversion to IPS status became an important focus.

Within the equity focus of the research, a series of interview prompts were created to stimulate discussion about the IPS initiative. Jack and Monica were asked to articulate their thoughts about the initiative, including its equity implications at a school, systemic and community level and its specific impact on their school. They were also asked to comment on any future challenges that they projected for their school and the system in light of policy trends towards increasing autonomy and accountability. Jack and Monica were interviewed several times for approximately an hour each time.

The data were analysed with reference to the notions of freedom, responsabilisation and entrepreneurialism explained earlier. This analysis sought to foreground 1) how conceptions of freedom within the IPS policy acted upon the action of these leaders to produce an entrepreneurialism of competition and compliance and 2) how the freedoms and flexibility of entrepreneurialism (promoted in IPS) created spaces for something other than these dominant performative priorities. The following sections are organized to represent these 'themes' in the data. In their presentation, we do not seek to make definitive claims about notions of freedom, responsabilisation, entrepreneurialism and school leadership. While, to be sure, these data will incite a sense of 'verisimilitude' for some readers in relation to resonance of experience, the key aim in presenting these data is theoretical in the insight generated and the critical, and new lines of, thinking promoted.

### **IPS: producing an entrepreneurial leadership of competition and compliance**

Both Jack and Monica expressed highly positive views in relation to their school's conversion to IPS status as enabling them to manage the school more efficiently and effectively especially through greater financial flexibility and staffing to better respond to the needs of the school community – as Jack noted: 'now they're cutting red tape, they're giving us the ability to staff our schools and make resource allocations and make strategic decisions about the purpose of the school and the nature and running of the school...' For Jack, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, what was particularly appealing about the level of self-determination granted with this status, was the freedom to innovate towards making a real difference. He expressed excitement at being at the 'forefront of this innovation' with his IPS counterparts.

There is a sense of action and engagement in these comments that is consistent with how freedom is constructed in the IPS policy. Jack embraces this policy and its positioning of him at the 'forefront' of change where possibilities for self-direction and governance are opened up. The policy clearly positions his leadership and his school as capable in this space and trusted to be effective within its parameters (Rose, 1999). In further conversation with Jack and Monica, it became clear that this positioning was also welcomed as an indicator of the school's effectiveness and success in comparison with the performance and leadership

within other schools. In Monica's view, the school was clearly ready for the responsibilities of IPS. However, 'not all schools' were. Jack further explained:

[As a leader of an IPS] you've got to be out there and you've got to be proactive and you've got to be leading in the community, looking for ways to meet the needs of your community ... but you know not all principals have that ... I know a principal down the road who ... will never be able to be a leader of an independent public school, because he doesn't want to be independent. He wants the work to be done for him. I mean I could be provocative and ask the question as to why he should be paid the same as a principal who is willing to show that leadership ... is that ... dependency principal-ship ... an old mentality where everything just arrives from someone outside, is that still viable in the 21st century - well quite frankly I don't think it is.

In these comments, becoming an IP school is seen as affirming the school's excellence. Gaining IP status is seen as a vote of confidence that the school is performing well within the contingencies of IPS policy. As the policy intends (and consistent with school autonomy reform in other western nations) autonomy is understood here as something to be earned through the school's performative success – a success in line with that prioritised by the Department of Education (see Queensland Government, no date; Wilkins, 2015). Being granted IPS status is also, for Jack, a welcome marker that his school is performing better than others (see Ball, 2003). This is particularly evident in Jack's positioning of his independent, proactive and responsive leadership in favorable contrast to his colleague's dependent principal-ship – which he views as outdated or redundant in the 21st century (see Ball & Junemann, 2012; Wilkins, 2015). Jack clearly affirms the parameters of this policy (and indeed its necessity for the future) in associating his 'proactive' leadership with it and disassociating his colleague's dependent leadership from it. It reflects the 'freedom as autonomy' notion described by Rose (1999, p. 145): 'as the capacity for self-realization which can be obtained ... through individual activity.'

These investments in an entrepreneurialism of efficiency, externality and competition (see Ball & Junemann, 2012) were also evident in the strong awareness both leaders expressed in our conversations of school status and hierarchy and, in particular, where the school sat in terms of this hierarchy. Jack's comments were illustrative:

Quite frankly I hated the whole idea of league tables ... [people] don't need a league table to tell them what school to go to ... I mean our school currently has 2100 students - we've had that many for over 20 years - I've got three schools around me that have 400 each and you can ride a bike to them ... Why are those schools half empty? Well it's as plain as the nose on your face - the schools aren't meeting the needs of the parents and 'cause they're underperforming. And that's the reality.

Along these lines, Jack expressed concern about the underperformance of many state schools in Queensland. While in these comments he expresses an objection to the idea of leagues tables, he also noted the significance of more rigorous standardized testing and public accountability as providing a 'wake up' call for schools (including his own) to lift their game. He described the performance of state schools as 'dire' and as resulting in an exodus



of students to the private system. He was adamant that the state system had 'brought' this situation upon itself through its poor performance and that they needed to 'do better'. He thus welcomed competition between schools, as he explained, 'if some of the stratification ... produce[s] excellence, I think that's good. The answer is not for all schools to be mediocre ... we've had too much of that'. For Jack, exercising freedom through systems of performativity were important to improving school performance:

...we should be accountable and take responsibility for our actions and I think that's a very important thing ...schools are going to have to be more accountable or they'll die on the vine and schools that are accountable and successful will remain and they will become stronger.

Consistent with the ways in which the IPS policy governs through acting upon action, what is evident in these comments is an entrepreneurialism of efficiency, competition and externality but also one of self-responsibility. Amid the systems of performativity driving his work and governing his school, Jack views choices made by himself on behalf of his school as expressions of his active exercise of choice, he also views the consequences of these choices as his (or his school's) responsibility (see Shamir, 2008; Keddie, 2015). Responsibilisation is also evident in Jack's view of school stratification as a positive mechanism to highlight the underperformance of the state system and of particular schools in order to impel the system and schools within it to act on themselves to improve. As he believed that the state system 'brought' the situation of dire performance on itself, he also believed it was responsible to 'do better' (Rose, 1999; Shamir, 2008; Ball & Junemann, 2012).

### **IPS: enacting other forms of entrepreneurialism**

From the remarks presented in the previous sections, we can see how the parameters of IPS policy produce entrepreneurial leaders who accept and adopt the self-steering knowledges and practices of the performative environment (Rose, 1999; Ball & Junemann, 2012). This entrepreneurialism of efficiency, competition and compliance (Woods, 2015) tends to be seen as suppressing of socially-oriented goals (Sachs, 2001; Connell, 2009). This suppression did not seem to be apparent for Jack and Monica. Monica, for example, explained the significance of such orientation in her account of the school's 'moral purpose':

We've always talked about [our] moral purpose here, it's all about the students, [they] must be the focus of your school, and you must focus on them as learners, and as people. So you must have really strong wellbeing structures in place that support your academic structures, and that's something that we've probably always done intuitively ... we are in a community that ... needs some healing and needs some improvement and I think this school can be the hub of that and I think that is the ethos that does surround this school and it's probably what drives us to a large extent.

Both leaders spoke of the strong emphasis at the school on caring for students, not only on their academic learning, but also on their personal wellbeing. Monica's mention of the community needing some healing refers to the 400 Indigenous students and their families at the school and the economic and social hardship they have experienced from a long history

of racism in this area of regional Queensland. As part of this healing the school had in place many programs to support Indigenous cultural and political recognition including curricular and extra-curricular activities and mentoring/leadership programs (see author, year).

Both leaders viewed the autonomy and responsabilisation promoted within IPS as supporting the school to strengthen this purpose. The school's prioritizing of student-centredness in terms of learning and wellbeing was seen to be improved, for example, in response to the findings it received through participation in an external audit. Jack explained:

...when we did the Council of International Schools audit we actually found out that ... we didn't have programs that were up to standard ... one of the things ... was we didn't have a lot of student voice in the school ... and so that was something we addressed and we got in place measures to give students a lot more voice and ways which we seek their opinions on issues...

Further ways in which the freedoms of IPS were seen by these leaders as strengthening the school's social and moral purpose was through direct funding. Direct funding enabled the school to target greater and more appropriate resources to disadvantaged students. In Jack's view, it supported greater equity for the school's Indigenous students because the school could use its discretion to employ a greater number of community education counsellors than they were otherwise allocated by the Department of Education as a non-IPS. These education counsellors were key to improving levels of school attendance, participation and achievement for these students. Direct funding also enabled the school to employ two extra staff members per year which it utilized to support students with language and speech disabilities (see author, 2015).

Independence in terms of staff recruitment was particularly important in Jack's view given the school's vision to be a 'school for all' that is inclusive of a diversity of student interests that may not be considered core or mainstream. The significance of this was evident in Jack's story of his response to a regional director 'berating' him for attracting too many students and for offering non-core curriculum subjects such as dance:

I said 'Look, this student's come up from [XX] because they wanted to dance, and no other school has dance' and she (Regional Director) said to me, 'But [Jack] this is a state school and dance isn't part of the core curriculum, it's just a frill'. Now that sort of mentality underlies, in my view, the people that just want a statewide system [of] ... commonality and quite frankly ... mediocrity. If schools are going to really aspire to be the best they can, they need to have an individual identity, they need to be different in order to cater for the particular clientele ... so I need the ability to go and recruit staff who can fit my needs.

Being a school for all in terms of focusing on the welfare of students and responding to the diversity of their interests was similarly important in Monica's view. She mentioned that the school was now at capacity and was subject to 'enrolment management' by the Department of Education which meant they were unable to take on any more students. Such circumstances, particularly with the added freedoms of being an IPS could, as Monica

pointed out, be leveraged to create a more 'elite' school – an idea she was very much opposed to:

...if we were deciding that we wanted to be elite, that would be very marginalising for others ... if we want to promote ourselves and we say we are an independent public school, and we use that as some sort of marketing tool to say we are so much better and we can demonstrate all this in terms of results and ... cut back on our [non-academic kids] and we're just going to bring in all the [high achieving] kids or something like that. We could [do that], but we ... never [would] and I think that's at the whole notion of moral purpose ... that is something that I think the system needs to be very careful about.

What these remarks suggest is that IPS for these leaders is opening up spaces for an entrepreneurialism that is not simply about competition and compliance. To refer to Woods and Woods (2011) research, these socially-oriented goals, reflect a 'social entrepreneurialism' that, as mentioned earlier, is about finding creative solutions to reducing disadvantage, deprivation and social exclusion (Woods & Woods, 2011). Indeed, we can see that the mandates for compliance with external audits within IPS have enhanced these goals in, for example, the school's 'student voice' program. While of course such programs are far from unproblematic in how they operate in schools (see Smyth & McInerney, 2012), we can see here that efforts to position students with agency and to value their input into decision making arose from externally-driven performative demands.

These examples bring to light the progressive possibilities of entrepreneurialism as achieving 'valued ends' (Woods, 2015). It does seem that the entrepreneurialism of competition and compliance expected within IPS policy does not, for these leaders, conflict with their efforts to pursue socially-oriented goals. In the views of Monica and Jack, the school's moral purpose – i.e. its student-centredness: in relation to academic learning and social welfare; in relation to political agency and student voice; and in relation to greater distributive justice for culturally and physically disadvantaged students – seem to be maintained and even strengthened by the mandates of competition and compliance within IPS policy. Certainly, this would not necessarily be the case with all IP schools. As is well recognized in other education research, the freedoms granted by school autonomy reform can be mobilized in highly varied ways and there is strong evidence to indicate that some of these ways are far from student centred or socially inclusive goals (see Gobby, 2013; Keddie, 2015). This variation brings to light the significance of what Monica describes as 'moral' purpose in the school's leadership in shaping how the 'freedoms' of IPS are understood and taken up. It highlights the significance of the valued ends to which entrepreneurial freedom is directed, and the complex interactions of policy and context that shape the determination of these ends (Woods, 2015).

## **Concluding discussion**

As in other western contexts such as the UK, school autonomy reform in Australia has experienced a long and highly varied history. The increasing and ever-more rigid performative demands of the present climate clearly impact on how this reform is being approached and taken up in schools. As Australian education is engaging in new iterations

of this reform at federal and state levels, there is a clear warrant for critically examining the ways in which educational leaders are interacting with iterations such as the IPS initiative in Queensland. As this paper has argued, conditions for entrepreneurialism are created within school autonomy reform through ‘empowering’ schools and their leaders to self-govern and self-improve. Freedom within these parameters is not about binding schools and school leaders into relations of dependency and obligation. It is not about crushing the capacity to act, but rather about opening up possibilities for choice and self-actualisation (see Rose, 1996; 1999). It is also, of course, about containing and regulating these possibilities. As a formula of state power, freedom is governed within IPS policy by a myriad of policy technologies including external accountabilities within which school leaders constitute themselves as self-responsible and performance-oriented. The review and monitoring that IP schools and their leaders are subject to and subject themselves to render them and their activities governable, inscribable and comparable. These processes govern not only through the calculated administration of achievement and success but also shame and anxiety (see Rose, 1999; Ball, 2003; Niesche, 2011). While they may offer a way for schools to craft an identity as outstanding (as seems to be the case in the stories presented in this paper), they may also lead to a loss in status. The performance indicators for becoming and maintaining IPS status are both public and precarious.

Such mechanisms of autonomy and responsabilisation have transformed the work of schools, teachers and school leaders. Discretionary authority and professionalism have been replaced by ‘the politics of the contract, in which the subject of the contract is a customer or consumer’ (Rose, 1999, p. 165). Alongside this have been concurrent shifts to increase network governance between schools to increase school-to-school policing and monitoring of performance (see Queensland Government, no date; Department of Education 2010). All the while, the powers of the state are strengthened as it is the Department of Education that continues to set the parameters of success and failure in terms of school improvement (see Thomson, 2010; Ball & Junemann, 2012; Niesche & Thomson, 2017). Referring to English schooling, Wilkins (2015, p. 1152) argues that such circumstances have allowed:

...central government to present a mirage of increased professional autonomy, with ministers regularly claiming the ‘greater freedom for schools’, whilst creating a self-policing profession within an all-encompassing regulatory framework. In the performative system, this policing, mindful of the panoptic gaze of government, creates a culture of coercive instrumentalism...

This culture of ‘coercive instrumentalism’ has long been challenged by educationalists and education researchers (see Ball, 2003; Connell, 2009; Gewirtz, 2002). In particular, as this paper has noted, the imperatives of competition and compliance embedded in this culture are seen as stifling a focus in schools on socially oriented goals (see Connell, 2009). This paper has drawn attention to the ways in which the freedoms of IPS act upon the action of school leaders to align with these performative demands. It has also, however, drawn attention to the ways in which these freedoms create a space for something other than these demands. As the stories in this paper illustrate, entrepreneurial freedoms can lead to ‘valued ends’ and reflect progressive possibilities (Woods, 2015).

The theorizing in this paper builds on important work that highlights the variety and complexity of school leader entrepreneurialism. Jack and Monica's stories are only snapshots of leadership practice. However, they do provide a nuanced account of entrepreneurialism that offers insight into how the freedoms embedded in school autonomy reform are currently being navigated. They offer insight into varied enactments of entrepreneurialism. For Jack and Monica, such enactments are about compliance, competition and regulation; they are about responsabilisation around external performative demands. They are also, however, about aligning these demands with a strengthening of their school's moral purpose or socially-oriented goals. These leaders do not allow such demands to detract from these goals – for example, their efforts to provide strongly student-centred wellbeing structures, to better support their Indigenous student cohort and to be a 'school for all' that is inclusive of a diversity of student interests and that eschews enrolment restriction and elitism. Perhaps it is this social-orientation that enable Monica and Jack to navigate through and reconcile the potential conflicts between autonomy and performative demands. Their leadership reflects social entrepreneurialism, that engages the 'freedoms' of IPS in ways that do not compromise student equity and welfare (see Fullan, 2002; Woods, 2015). Such engagement indicates the progressive possibilities of entrepreneurial leadership in the present climate to shape how school autonomy is mobilized. While IPS responsabilises leaders around narrow performative demands, there is clearly scope for leaders to responsabilise themselves and their schools around much broader imperatives. The entrepreneurial sensibilities reflected in Monica and Jack's leadership would seem to offer insight as to how this might be possible.

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