

TITLE: Leadership Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:  
How are School Leaders identified and developed?

A comparison between: New Zealand, Alberta (Canada) and the England.

*One of the crucial roles of principalship is the responsibility to develop effective leaders from within our organisations.* (Brian Hincho Sabbatical report)

Author, school, period of time sabbatical covers:

Charles Oliver Principal Wanganui Intermediate School  
Shona Oliver Principal Central Normal School  
Our sabbatical was taken during term 2 of 2011.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank our respective Boards of Trustees for supporting us in taking this sabbatical. Having the opportunity to step back from the day to day work in our schools certainly gave us the time to reflect on our own leadership and its impact on leadership development in our own schools. We would particularly like to acknowledge our respective Board Chairs. We value their professional partnership and on- going interest in our work.

Finally, we would like to thank and acknowledge our Deputy Principals and Leadership Teams who led our schools so successfully while we were away. The purpose of our sabbatical, *leadership development and learning*, was illustrated in their superb leadership during that term.

Executive summary:

In the course of this sabbatical we had a fleeting look at how middle leaders are identified and developed in Alberta, England and New Zealand.

The need to develop school leaders was consistently recognised in all places and the identification processes had similarities up to the point of identification. The leadership development programmes available to middle leaders was markedly different however.

In all countries the initial identification of future school leaders came from Principals encouraging teachers to take on leadership roles within their own schools. Development programmes for middle leaders were the most sophisticated and diverse in England where they are fortunate to have a world class leadership centre in Nottingham.

New Zealand has recognised the need to identify and develop school leaders and we are fortunate to have programmes such as the National Aspiring Leaders programme and the First Time Principals' programme. Both of these provide excellent development opportunities for new leaders.

In Alberta leadership development programmes relied on post graduate courses provided by universities. To be eligible for promotion to Deputy Principalship, for example, required applicants to be enrolled in a Masters Degree programme.

The context of schools in each part of the world largely dictated the opportunities for leadership development programmes sponsored by the respective governments.

## Purpose:

The purpose of this sabbatical was to investigate leadership development opportunities provided by educational agencies and individual schools for Middle & Senior Level Leaders in England and Alberta, Canada and to compare these with opportunities available in New Zealand.

## Rationale and Background information:

For many years we have been committed to supporting future leaders develop their knowledge and craft, both within our own schools, and in the wider educational field. We have both been involved in the Aspiring Leaders and First Time Principals initiatives. We continue to admire the calibre of the people taking part in these programmes. We hold a strong belief that New Zealand must continue to teach and nurture our future school leaders. We wanted to find out how well our programmes of leadership development compared with those in other countries.

Having had many of our senior leaders leave our schools to take up other leadership roles on promotion we wanted to take time to look at how well were we preparing these people to take up these new roles. Is the New Zealand system preparing them for new leadership roles?

Here in New Zealand we have a strong research background to sit leadership development on. One of these **BES Evidence**: The focus is on pedagogical leadership. Robinson argues that the more leadership is focused on the core business of teaching and learning the greater its impact on student outcomes. Five dimensions of effective pedagogical leadership in schools are presented. Robinson makes clear that underlying each of the dimensions is the need for positive relationship skills (relational trust), and the interrelationship of each dimension with the others.

The five dimensions are:

- establishing and communicating learning goals and expectations
- strategic resourcing allocated to priority teaching goals
- direct involvement by leaders in planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and curriculum
- promoting and participating in teacher learning and development
- ensuring an orderly and supportive environment so that teachers and students can focus on teaching and learning.

These five areas are ones that can make a difference to student outcomes. They provide five very clear areas for school leaders to focus on.

The **Kiwi Leadership for Principals** document (Ministry of Education) sets a very good framework for what should be the focus for New Zealand school leaders. This provides the 'what' framework. The challenge for individual school principals is **how** to use this framework when working with our school senior leaders. We are fortunate that the Educational Leaders website provides many case studies and support to do this. By

following the Kiwi Leadership framework Principals are able to guide and encourage the middle leaders in their schools as to the next steps they need to be taking.

### Activities undertaken:

During the sabbatical the following activities were undertaken:

- Review of New Zealand literature.
- Visits to four different schools in Calgary, Alberta.
- Meetings with school leaders in England.
- Meetings with educational facilitators in England.

During the time of our sabbatical we were able to visit some schools in Canada which took us outside 'our square' We visited a Charter School which was one of only fifteen Charter Schools in Alberta, Local Authority schools (Calgary Board of Education) and Special character schools. We, at times, purposefully chose schools that were completely different to any we would find in New Zealand. This was especially so when we visited Bishop Carroll School in Calgary. Bishop Carroll High School is part of the Calgary Catholic School District in Alberta and offers a unique program that allows students to work at their own pace in an individual environment. This 'freedom to succeed' is part of the constructivist model of student-centred learning. Students receive module packages from certain resource rooms and start to work on these packages. The students have a teacher or a TA (teacher advisor) to look after them and keep them on track in weekly individual meetings. This program is available for students who are in Grade 10, 11 or 12. (NZ Yrs. 11, 12 & 13)

At each school we discussed with the Principal the governance model being used, the career pathways teachers needed to follow to become school leaders, the types of professional development available and the leadership programmes they personally were part of.

In England we met with a Board of Governors trainer and visited a Primary School in Dorset. The Head teacher at this school was a mentor for middle school leaders who were undertaking professional development through the National College of Leadership in Nottingham.

One of the greatest benefits of this sabbatical was the opportunity to visit schools that were quite unique and very different from our own. This was especially so in Calgary. Visiting a Charter school and a high performing secondary school gave us an excellent opportunity to view and discuss schooling types we were unfamiliar with.

### Findings:

To compare education systems from different countries is not an easy task because of the many structural and organisational differences. In Calgary, it was easier to compare Board of Education schools with charter schools because they operated within the structures of Alberta. It was clear that charter schools enjoyed greater freedom and independence than the Board of Education schools. The charter school we visited, The Calgary Science School, operated in many ways just as New Zealand Schools do. They were governed by a Board of Trustees, some elected and some appointed. Decisions around curriculum delivery, staffing, property development and finance were all controlled at a school level. (as in New Zealand.) Charter schools were funded directly from the provincial Government (also as in New Zealand).

The Board of Education schools were managed from a central office in downtown Calgary and each area of the city was supervised by a superintendent who was the overseer of groups of schools, both professionally and as a manager. The superintendent ensured that Principals completed all of the requirements of the Board of Education within given timelines. This structure seemed to us to be very similar to the Education Board structures in place in New Zealand prior to 1989.

Leadership opportunities between the two types of school were very different. The charter school senior leaders were appointed by the Board of Trustees and middle leaders were appointed by the Principal and senior leaders in the school. Opportunities for growth and leadership were developed from within the school itself and professional development costs were a charge against the school budget.

In the Board of Education schools leadership pathways were different. To be a Deputy Principal a candidate had to be enrolled in a master's degree course. This was a prerequisite to applying for Deputy Principal positions. Appointments for Deputy Principals were made by the centralised Board of Education as were Principal positions.

Below the positions of Deputy Principal and Principal it was over to the Principal to provide leadership opportunities to teachers. I.e. curriculum leaders were selected by the Principal.

## **National College of School Leadership: England**

### **Growing tomorrow's leaders today - Succession Planning**

Like many other professions and industries across the world, school leadership is being affected by the retirement of many experienced leaders as the 'baby boomer generation' head into retirement. In 2011 statistics showed that 64% of head teachers were over 50 years old and 33% of head teachers were over 55 years old.

The National College of Leadership has adopted a 'local solutions' approach to address this issue and is providing support to schools and local authorities in order to identify high quality leaders with potential to become head teachers from local areas. They are also providing specific and targeted support in those areas facing the greatest recruitment challenges, namely schools in the south east and east of the country, faith schools and rural primary schools.

The National College of Leadership reports that good progress is being made, with an increase in the number of headship vacancies being permanently filled despite an increase in the number of retirements. This is contrary to initial predictions which showed a huge expected increase in permanent headship vacancies up to 2010 and beyond. This is an issue that will continue to require close attention in the next few years.

## **Developing leaders for the 21st Century - Re-designed NPQH**

The college is responsible for the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), which became mandatory for all new head teachers in 2009. The college has redesigned the qualification so that it now focuses solely on those who can demonstrate they are only

12 to 18 months from headship and are committed to applying for posts immediately after graduating from the programme. There is also a much greater emphasis on practical learning and gaining experience of another school/context.

## **Making a Difference: Future leadership development provision**

The National College is committed to providing leadership development that reflects the ever changing needs of schools and society itself.

The college is undertaking a review of its leadership development programmes. It has worked with the profession to identify its four core curriculum areas which will underpin its leadership development programmes in the coming years: leadership of learning and teaching; outward facing leadership; growing leaders; and the leadership of change. There will be an increased emphasis on: developing middle leaders in order to achieve consistent high quality learning and teaching and classroom practice within and across schools; practical 'in situ' support from experienced heads for new head teachers; and development for excellent heads who wish to support other leaders and struggling schools that need improvement.

It is proposed that the National College's leadership development provision will become more practical and work based, with greater responsibility given to local clusters of schools. This is based on a growing expectation from leaders – including a new generation of teachers and future leaders - for more 'on the job' development. It also reflects research which shows that the skills required of modern school leaders are best developed through practice, peer support and reflection.

## **Middle Leadership Development Programme**

The Middle Leadership Development Programme (MLDP) offers the opportunity for clusters of schools, academies and children's centres to deliver middle leadership development in a way that best meets their needs.

The development programme is focused on developing effective leadership of high-quality teaching and learning in order to close gaps in achievement and variation within schools. The cluster based approach develops a learning culture, giving middle leaders opportunities to learn with others from across and beyond their cluster and draw on a wide range of expertise and support.

Clusters are made up of three or more schools who identify a lead school which must have a good or outstanding Ofsted rating in leadership and management and a good or outstanding rating overall. On average there are between 10-12 schools in a cluster.

Each cluster identifies two facilitators, who are senior or experienced middle leaders from within the cluster schools. Facilitators are trained and assessed over six days and use their understanding of the middle leaders' context and the programme materials to deliver the programme to middle leaders within the cluster.

Free training and assessment for the two facilitators is provided by the national College. The cost of the programme delivery is funded by the cluster.

Clusters deliver the programme to two cohorts of middle leaders within their cluster.

Participants also undertake a leadership challenge. The challenge focuses on their leadership of the closure of a gap in achievement within their own school.

Participants are supported by a learning coach throughout the programme who is an experienced middle leader from within their own school.

### **Implications:**

In England, the leadership development model over the past four years has moved from a centrally delivered model in Nottingham, to a more localised delivery model which enlists the talents and skills of leaders within a local setting. Local school leaders are enlisted to guide and mentor middle leader participants seeking promotion through national programmes which are designed to develop their leadership abilities.

Local solutions to meet local needs is now the trend.

England has a wealth of development programmes through their world class National College of leadership which we can easily learn from. It is important though, that we develop our own programmes incorporating some of the key ideas but ensuring that our programmes are designed to meet our needs not just a direct copy of England programmes.

The **Kiwi Leadership** plan sets a real New Zealand focus to leadership development.

### **Conclusions:**

1. For the size of our country we are on a forward thinking leadership development pathway with all of the developments we have.
2. The core role and responsibility of New Zealand principals is to develop leaders within their own schools. To ensure that aspiring leaders understand leadership and change management and have opportunities to practice this.
3. That national programmes for Aspiring Leaders and First Time Principals are a vital part of developing leaders. This needs to be both school based and on a national level.
4. Quality professional development is essential for the development of our current and future leaders.
5. From our discussions with principals in New Zealand we believe they take very seriously the learning of their leadership teams in their school. But what of the principals own learning? Planned on-going leadership learning should be available for current Principals. The demise of the trial Experienced Principals government initiative was unfortunate. The government continues to relate the quality of school leadership with student achievement. How do principals currently keep up to date with their own understanding and knowledge of school leadership? Usually it is by organising it for themselves.

We give the last word to the principal of the Calgary Science School:

***'We know we are doing a good job if teachers want to leave for promotion'***

## References:

Educational Leaders website.

Ministry of Education. (2008). *Kiwi leadership for principals: Principals as educational leaders*. Wellington.

Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). [School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying what works and why. Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration \(BES\)](#). Wellington: Ministry of Education.

National College of Leadership (England) website

Shona and Charles Oliver