

*An investigation on how principal leadership
can improve school management practices,
particularly with respect to teacher
performance through improved appraisal*

A Secondary Principal's Sabbatical Report

Term II 2015

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Rathkeale College

*A leader must be inspired by the people
before a leader can inspire the people*

Simon Sinek

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After 21 years as a senior manager in three schools, the receipt of a ten- week sabbatical was a refreshing, professionally stimulating and very enjoyable experience. My thanks are extended, in the first instance to the Rathkeale Board of Trustees for encouraging me to take a break and to the Ministry of Education through TeachNZ.

In my absence, I had no doubt the school would be left in secure hands. A competent senior management team did a superb job and their efforts were fully endorsed by the staff and the board. Grant Harper's efforts as acting principal are acknowledged as are those who undertook extra duties caused by the domino effect.

The overseas schools I visited were very welcoming and I thank the principals and their senior managers for accommodating me and the PAs for making the arrangements possible.

I would like to thank the Rathkeale College Board of Trustees and Trinity Schools Trust Board (TSTB) members, teachers and principal colleagues who completed a survey that contributed to my 360° appraisal undertaken as part of the Strategic Leadership programme.

Finally, thanks are due to the Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL). First, and most importantly, for the award of a CCL Scholarship. This enabled me to attend a most worthwhile course. Secondly for their approval to include the two diagrams on page 8. CCL is to be credited for these, presented as part of the "Leading Strategically" programme.

WJK

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Background and Preparation	4
Engagement	4
Findings:	
Strategic Leadership Course	5
School Visits	10
Reading and Research	13
International Boys' Schools Coalition Conference	14
Appendix 1	16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – CONCLUSIONS AND IMPACT

Strategic Leadership Course

This intense five day programme focused on a number of essential outcomes for participants. Critical components included:

- Knowing what drives an organisation and identifying those features that are key to executing the organisations business and leadership strategies.
- How an organisation’s culture impacts on the leadership required and how a culture can be changed for greater performance.
- The way leaders think, act and influence to provide clearer direction, alignment and commitment across the boundaries that exist in an organization and how organisational priorities can be leveraged to reduce conflict.

Identifying my own personal leadership challenges and engaging in a comprehensive 360° Appraisal were integral components of the course.

Key findings:

- ⇒ The importance of school culture and the impact it has on allowing successful change to come about.
- ⇒ What I need to do and be aware of as a leader to influence change. The ability to change my own mindset, actions and behaviours is critical in this regard.
- ⇒ Nine essential leadership competencies that are needed to effective change and three traps that cause derailment.
- ⇒ Identifying my leadership challenges and the 360° Appraisal allowed for an assessment of my strategic leadership skills and a discussion on how these influence the culture of our school and impact on the leadership I and others deemed necessary.

School Visits

We know every school is different. Each has its own culture and idiosyncrasies and this is the same in all schools I visited. There was little from an overarching perspective that I could take, but what was notable was the large influence and direct impact of local and national government policies on schools in Canada and England.

Readings

From the work of Fullan, leaders must be prepared to be vulnerable. This acceptance plays a large part in allowing improvement to come about. The following responses from two principals interviewed by Fullan say a great deal:

- “I have to get out of the way. My role is to remain engaged as much as a participant as a formal leader. I need to take two steps back, so teachers can take three steps forward.”
- “I need to provide structures for sharing, be less prescriptive, listen more, talk less and support innovators by finding ways for things to happen.”

International Boys Schools’ Coalition (IBSC) Conference

The benefits of attending a conference are too many to describe within the confines of a short summary. The impact of the messages given by impressive key note speakers is described later in this paper and benefit of establishing new contacts and professional friendships is immeasurable, especially when this occurs in a country so different to New Zealand. It was a privilege to experience time in South Africa.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

While one can be pleased, one should never be satisfied. To continue to be an effective principal I need to reflect, determine how competent I am and look at ways in which I can better meet the demands of the role at Rathkeale. I wish to build relationships with teachers that will inspire them to become better “enablers” of student learning, more aware of the professional expectations that are held of them and more willing to accept their personal responsibility to be the best they can be.

I have been greatly affected by a statement that can be described as a “Teacher’s Creed” (see Appendix 1) as I believe it describes the ideals of the profession. To move closer to a desired state where teachers are willing to be accountable and able to work together on continuous improvement depends on a school leader’s ability to create an environment for this to occur. The purpose of the sabbatical was to enhance my knowledge and leadership capacity, particularly with respect to determining:

- what good teaching practice looks like and how I can be better informed about it;
- ways in which a more collaborative approach to appraisal can be brought about;
- how to delegate other tasks more effectively in order to spend more quality time with teachers in their classrooms;
- more effective ways of providing for teachers who genuinely seek support;
- how ambivalent or even reluctant teachers can be inspired;
- better ways of acknowledging and rewarding teachers for good practices;
- school management structures that allow for enhanced professional support.

ENGAGEMENT

During the sabbatical, I focused on four main areas of engagement:

- Attending a Strategic Leadership course at the Centre for Creative leadership (CCL) in Colorado Springs;
The initial intention was to attend the Harvard Graduate School of Education Principals’ Leadership course, but a colleague suggested that his experience with CCL was well worth investigating. The receipt of a scholarship enabled participation affordable and it proved to be some of the most valuable personal professional I have ever undertaken.
This week long and very intense “boutique” course was intended for leaders in any business. There were 24 attendees from agriculture, education, government, product development, service and tourism backgrounds (I was the only teacher) which proved to be an eclectic mix.
- Visiting schools; two in Canada and six in England.
Visiting schools in Canada were taken as opportunities during the recreational phase on my sabbatical while those in England were planned. Rathkeale College history is linked to three of the schools I visited in England and the other three were recommendations.
- Reading and researching on matters directly and indirectly related to the purpose of the sabbatical and thinking about my own practices as a leader. In this way Michael Fullan’s work stimulated my interest in how principals need to think and act in a reflective way. Involvement in the CCL course prompted further investigations in this area.
- Attending the International Boys’ Schools Coalition (IBSC) conference in Cape Town.
As a previous attendee at IBSC conferences, and knowing the benefits, the opportunity of visiting South Africa proved too good to miss, particularly as it coincided with our biennial school “GeoTour”.

FINDINGS

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COURSE

Overview:

This intense five day programme focused on the following outcomes for participants:

- Knowing what drives an organisation and identifying those that are key to executing the organisations business and leadership strategies.
- Ensuring leadership strategies align with business strategies.
- Leveraging strategic thinking, acting and influencing skills to maximise leadership effectiveness.
- Gaining a deeper understanding of how an organisation's culture impacts on leadership and how to influence culture change for greater performance;
- How to implement leadership strategies to provide for better direction, alignment and commitment across the boundaries that exist in an organisation.
- How to leverage organisational priorities that may be in conflict.

Over the five days, we spent time receiving and discussing information, undertaking individual and group assessments, working in groups on a business simulation exercise and in other peer learning groups to provide feedback, insight, suggestions and support as we dealt with personal and group challenges.

A comprehensive assessment of strategic leadership skills is a powerful component of the program. In this respect, and in advance of the course, I had to:

- identify my own personal leadership challenge; and
- undertake a comprehensive 360° Appraisal.

These two components aligned my focus for what the entire programme is about and rather than being exposed to learning from a generic perspective, a good deal of what we did addressed our own business contexts and our leadership within them.

To facilitate obtaining the best outcomes I, along with the other participants, were assigned a personal mentor. This person was available before and after the programme.

Preparation:

In advance of the course, I was required to:

- Complete extensive personal assessments that identified my leadership strengths behaviours and preferences and clarified my development needs;
- Submit a comprehensive statement that defined an important Strategic Leadership Challenge and an analysis on how I was dealing with it;
- Have a 60-minute phone call with an executive coach to discuss issues related to that challenge;
- Complete a self-assessment and arrange for 17 others (Board members, Senior Management Team members, HODs, teachers and Principal colleagues) to complete their assessments on my leadership competencies.
- Access the CCL website to read papers and articles and engage in forums designed to reinforce lessons from the upcoming program.

My Personal Leadership Challenge:

Rather than talk about strategic leadership in a vacuum, the programme was anchored in my personal leadership challenge. We were given opportunities to apply our learnings in various scenarios, discuss with fellow participants and given time to develop “blueprints” for our own settings.

This personal challenge needed to be of significant importance to me and the school. It needed to involve others who had an investment in the outcomes and it required a preparedness to change my values, assumptions and behaviours. Setting the challenge required me to:

- Define specifically what I was seeking to overcome / change and present this in a way that that someone not familiar with the organisational (school) dynamics would understand.
- Analyse the challenge bearing in mind the school’s mission, stakeholder interests, potential for conflict, obstacles, previous actions resources and other relevant factors that might affect or be affected by the intended outcomes.
- Identify personal strengths and weaknesses in dealing with the challenge and areas that can be developed.
- Discuss the above with a mentor before the course.

360° Appraisal:

This required input from the BOT Chairman, Bot members, HODs, and Teachers as well as colleagues (principals). Seventeen people (raters) in total contributed to the appraisal survey by completing a comprehensive three-part survey mainly focused on my leadership behaviour. These raters needed to know me well, but did not need to have intimate knowledge about how the school was performing or about me as a teacher. It was focused on relationships and the factors that impact on that. I completed the same survey.

Near the end of the course I received a 28-page report and this provided further context for the programme. The report detailed information on my Leadership Competencies related to:

- what others see as important in terms of the success of the school;
- strategic and organisational planning;
- influencing and building relationships;
- bringing about change.

The comparisons and the associated comments between different categories of raters proved to be interesting as were the norms compared to my own assessment. Rater disagreements with self and the lowest and highest ratings clearly identified strengths and weaknesses. The ensuing discussions with course participants and the ideas gleaned from them and my mentor proved to be incredibly helpful.

Learnings during the course:

The integrated nature of the programme makes a summary of findings by activity impossible and it would be exhaustive to cover everything. The following areas contain salient points I think are worth noting partly because of their relevance to our work as principals in an ever-changing environment, but also because they were new and interesting. The points made relate essentially to the personal and inter-personal dimensions of leadership and the personal leadership challenges the participants in the course faced.

The description of my personal challenge and the outcomes of my 360° Appraisal will not be described in this report. However, a summary has been presented to the entire BOT and discussed with the BOT Chairman. I would be happy to discuss the programme and specific aspects of the personal challenge and the appraisal with anyone interested in the programme. It was challenging, but very worthwhile.

- **Leadership** – an overarching comment. No matter what the setting, descriptions of what constitutes leadership and the challenges leaders face are common. Leadership is leadership, whether the business is product based, service, government or any other.

As we know, effective leadership revolves around having and articulating a vision, developing a strategic approach and ensuring that plan is carried out. All leaders made comments around the following personal challenges:

- finding the time within competing constraints;
 - maintaining personal effectiveness;
 - motivating staff and themselves at times;
 - acknowledging and rewarding staff;
 - having effective appraisal programmes
 - having difficult conversations
- **Drivers** – I found this aspect of strategic leadership interesting. In schools, we talk about vision, mission, value, goals and plans etc but the concept of what drives an organisation is less talked about in my experience. The drivers for an organisation are those forces which shape our strategy. The drivers come before goals and, some would argue, before determining a vision. They can be external such as NZQA requirements and other legislation, competition for students, technological changes parental expectations and so on. Or, they may be internal, for example, personnel disquiet, curriculum, special needs.

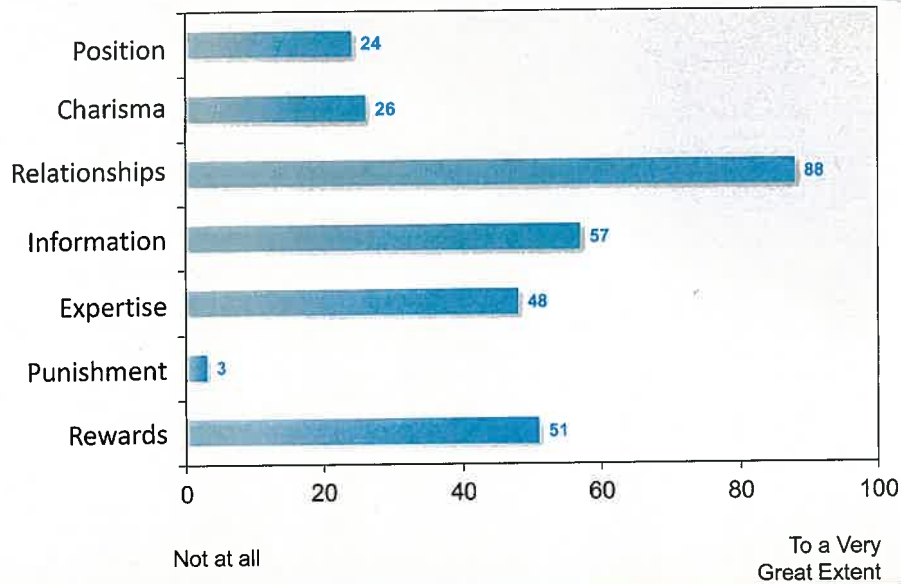
- Essentially, **Strategic Leadership** is about executing, performing and learning. It is a process that involves
 - assessing the internal and external environment of an organisation
 - setting vision, mission, values and goals
 - discovering the drivers
 - creating a strategy
 - developing a leadership strategy

Strategies should be developed under each driver.

- Assessing **Organisational Culture** is important. It is possible to determine how the organisation (school) can identify with leadership systems, intentions and performance. The question - Does the organisational culture have to shift to achieve the desired outcomes and what do leaders have to do to effect this?
- **Strategic Leadership Mindset - Thinking, Acting and Influencing:**
 - **Thinking:** A traditional approach to leadership is rather linear. Thinking involved analysis of accumulated data and solutions are spelt out in a logical and explicit manner. Innovative thinking is non-linear. Information is synthesised and decisions which are more implicit and flexible and take into account the impact any solution might have.
 - **Acting:** Leadership requires the ability to set a direction, establish priorities and create effective teams. A key factor to success as a leader is to have the courage to act and the ability to continue despite any uncertainties that might exist.
 - **Influencing:** Strong leaders have the ability to engender commitment to initiatives that allow an organisation to achieve its goals and, ultimately, to carry out its mission. There are two paths to influence. One, the more traditional approach is based on a leader's position and the expertise possessed. Increasingly, effective leadership works through building relationships (social capital) and ensures that the necessary information flows through the network.

The following chart shows the future impact of extent of power / influence sources.

MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES OF POWER/INFLUENCE IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS



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Determining one's influence style was another area of discussion. A diagnostic exercise allowed us to determine the tendencies we had in our approach and what these looked like in the eyes of our colleagues. The chart below summarises this and it was interesting for us personally to think about find out the impact our style has and to consider areas for development.

INFLUENCE STYLES

You insist that your ideas are heard and considered and you challenge the ideas of others.

You put forward your ideas and offer logical, rational reasons to convince others of your point of view.



You advocate your position and encourage others with a sense of shared purpose and exciting possibilities.

You build relationships and connect with others through listening, understanding, and building coalitions.

You look for compromises and make concessions to reach outcomes that satisfy your greater interest.

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- **Open and Closed Organisational Structures** To be effective in achieving the strategic outcomes being sought it is important that people who have a relationship with leaders also have a relationship with each other. The extent to which they know each other can be described as the structural diversity of the organisation; a continuum from open to closed working relationships. A diagnostic exercise can determine to what extent this is the case. Based on a score out of 100 (with 100 being totally diverse to 0 being totally insular, a score between 65 – 90 is ideal. Issues arise when relationships in an organisation are extremely diverse or insular. Another valuable exercise is for leaders to determine the breadth of their own relationships with people in the organisation and how well they personally know those who they depend on.
- **Change-Capable Leadership:** To be an effective change manager, successful leaders describe three main features:
 - **Change yourself** – To lead change successfully means spending more time outside one's own comfort zone and spending it in the zone that you expect others to be in. This means changing your mindset, actions and behaviours.
 - **Don't go it alone.** Leading change is a team activity and requires people coming together, driven by a compelling and frequently communicated message as to why the change is required.
 - **Know the signs.** Be very clear on what success looks like and be aware early of any signs that the initiative is heading for a derailment.

Nine change competencies grouped into three categories were discussed; the three Cs, leading the process and leading people:

- At the heart of change are the three Cs – **Communication, Collaboration and Commitment.** These competencies are the glue that hold together the change process and the way leaders connect with others responsible for and impacted on by the change.
- **Leading the Process.** Steering change in the right direction requires - **Initiative, Strategy and Execution.** These competencies impact on the initiation, planning and action stages of any change process:
- **Leading the People.** Providing stability, but an impetus for change requires – **Support, Persuasion and Learning.** These behaviours engage people in the change process by removing barriers, gaining support and learning from each other

Three Change Traps that identify if change is going down the wrong path:

- **Passive Leading** – where leaders are too hands off, incisive and rely too much on delegation. Leaders need to find the balance between exerting too much control and giving any change too little attention.
 - **Leading in Isolation** – where a leader's style is too authoritative and controlling causing people to not come out of their silos because collaboration is not invited.
 - **Focussing on the Small Stuff** – when leaders are pre-occupied by management and the how of change rather than why the change is needed. Involvement in management shields leaders from the bigger picture.
- **Change Style:** A diagnosis of a leader's approach to change can identify one's personal tendency on a continuum from Originator to Conservator. In between lies the pragmatist. The characteristic, strengths and weaknesses of each style provide an insight as to how we are seen by others, particularly those who are important in implementing any change.

SCHOOL VISITS

Canada (two schools)

Brittania High School in Vancouver is a mid-sized state school containing a diverse student body. Some 25% of students are Canadian Aboriginal and, by New Zealand comparisons, the school would be considered a decile 2 -3. Catering for Special Needs students is a priority in this community based school in which facilities are provided by and shared with the local district.

Government funding for education in Canada is state based and receives no federal support. In British Columbia, the state is divided into seven districts and some districts operate a bulk funding arrangement. Vancouver is one of these districts. Schools are hamstrung when dealing with their own priorities, because the district determines the funding each school receives for different aspects of its operation, including professional development.

Principals and school boards are supported by government liaison people. Because of the strength of the teacher union and the high incidence of grievances, there is often personal conflict between principals and teachers.

While there is “Supervision for Teacher Learning”, a formative process intended to assist teacher development, an “Assumption of Competence” model appears to compromise the autonomy that should be associated with professional growth. Teachers do set personal development goals, but the focus is more on achievement. Essentially, teachers are deemed to be competent unless a “Teacher Evaluation” process proves them not to be. Essentially, this is a low trust model. If a concern about a teacher’s performance arises, it is handled by the school’s Human Resources department. The union is often called in to try to resolve disparity and if there is no satisfactory resolution initially, the conflict becomes a personal grievance issue. The government liaison people often become involved at this point and in the end, the union decides if the “Teacher Evaluation” is acceptable or not.

There appears to be considerable anxiety that exists at management level in schools and there was little said about support for teachers who were struggling or deemed not to be performing. Essentially, “three strikes and you are out” appeared to be the way it is. I believe much of this has to do with the regulations imposed on a school, unreasonable interference from state and district authorities and the inability of schools to set their own priorities.

Selwyn House School, Montreal, is one of only three independent boys’ schools in Canada. It is a government subsidized English language based school where students need a Certificate of Eligibility. All students at all levels in this small (560) K – Grade 11 school study French and in the middle and senior school study in at least one other subject through French speaking and writing.

Professional learning is highly regarded in this school. The school is a member of the International Boys’ School Coalition (IBSC) and staff have attended several IBSC conferences, both annual and topic specific in recent years. The expectation the school must have teachers compile reports, present them to staff and post findings on their website <http://www.selwyn.ca/podium/default.aspx?t=212504> is very good practice.

Teacher development in the school is clearly collegial. Much of Michael Fullan’s work and that of John Hattie’s is evident through an overt expression of the teacher being the school’s most valuable resource. This is modeled by the principal whose open and welcoming style is focused on student relationships. This is applauded by teachers and promotes a high trust environment when it comes to professional support.

Teachers set three learning goals; one focused on personal development and two on professional growth. Peer evaluations against measurable targets often involve colleagues from outside a teacher’s main curriculum area. Additionally, walk-throughs by the principal and any staff member are common place. Essentially, this learning is formative and very much school based. This non-threatening environment is enhanced through no formal attestation requirements. This applies in the state system as well where remuneration is based on years of service. Notwithstanding the good practices that existed, it did appear that self-reflection was not such a formal part of any evaluation of teacher performance.

England (five schools)

Cranleigh School, Repton School and Rugby School are all schools that have a connection with the establishment of Rathkeale College. They are all independent Anglican co-ed boarding schools with a rich history. Part of my desire to visit these schools was to inform the current leadership that the three boarding houses at Rathkeale are named after their schools. None were aware and they were most interested that their schools' 500-year-old histories have recent connections with a school that only one (Cranleigh) had ever heard of. This introduction set the scene for some good conversations and sowed the seed for what will hopefully be a stronger relationship between our schools. However, in terms of facilities we are poles apart. Well-appointed classrooms, expansive gymnasiums, halls, chapels and playing fields made possible through huge bequests was of interest and made for some impressive viewing, but from that perspective, there was little of real significance I could take away.

Cranleigh School prides itself on its commitment to professional development. The newly appointed Director of Teaching and Learning heads the programme and the sharing of ideas and expertise. Programmes and conferences on different themes are often held at Cranleigh. The school and the Director of T & L in particular is seen as a leading light in bring research into innovate practices. The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) being the most notable of these.

The visit to **Repton School** did not allow time for any extensive discussions about systems and processes and the unavailability of the head made the visit less informing regarding the focus of my enquiry. However, the Deputy Head described the school being at the crossroads and was keen to see developments made in this area.

Rugby School has a new Deputy who is charged with the review of the school's performance management systems. He sees appraisal as we know it in New Zealand as integral part of moving forward in their school. The current paper based documentation they use focuses on what will be familiar to most schools in New Zealand. Lesson observations, student surveys and self-review appeared to be standard practice, but an interesting perspective was the seeking of parental feedback. The school appeared, more than any other I visited, to link staff development to its strategic priorities.

All three school heads delegated all aspects of performance management to members of their senior management teams and had little or no direct involvement in the processes. Those who were showed considerable interest in the web based approach *Appraisal Connector* available in New Zealand schools and used at Rathkeale.

Theftford Grammar School in Norfolk is one of the oldest schools in England. It is a small co-ed new entrant to Upper 6th form independent school devoid of the rich resources of the three above-mentioned schools. In many ways, their size and unpretentious environment led to lovely and unassuming relationships between students of all ages.

Staff undergo a two-year appraisal cycle where "the usual" things are "looked at" and two or three lesson observations are followed up with meetings with individual staff. There is some focus on personal development but essentially, goals are focused on developing assessment and curriculum knowledge and practices. Inspectorate visits look at systems but little direction is forthcoming from this department of the Teacher Registration Authority.

In this school, the influence of the principal on how staff view appraisal is most apparent and served to point out that if a school is to successfully implement any aspect of a performance management system, leadership is paramount.

Attleborough Academy is one of the emerging schools focused on school based and vocational education. Formerly a high school, receiving government funding through the county council, it is now funded by central government to advance national initiatives. It is a medium sized co-ed school (850) with a diverse student body and an equally diverse range of academic and vocational offerings.

"Subject Reviews" focus on the teacher through a nine-part process. These include Learning walks and lesson observations undertaken by the HODs or senior management, student views (evidenced by

interviews) student work and assessment (evidenced by collected samples) and formal reviews of improvement plans. These all contribute an improvement plan for the following year. Locally developed “Teachers’ Standards” provide the basis for formative observation recording. A “Subject Improvement Summary” is the summative statement that accompanies the process. This clearly focusses on the quality of curriculum delivery, management and student achievement. A comprehensive set of guidelines and recording pro-formas accompanies different aspects of the process.

In England education is very political and even the insulation of the independent system is insufficient to shield schools from what is considered by many to be ill-informed government intervention. The decree to return to a single three hour examinations as the major summative assessment is considered by many to educationalists be a serious retrograde step.

Through the Independent School’s Association, a work shadowing programme has provided aspiring heads placement opportunities in schools of the aspirant’s interest to gain some first-hand knowledge of what the principal’s job entails. This and the additional support was seen to be a very positive and enlightening experience.

Related Comments:

An interesting, but unrelated observation in all seven schools visited was that e-learning to the extent of replacing paper based learning was hardly in evidence and only just being considered beyond computers in computer labs. However, many senior students used computers, but not as their first tool in the classroom.

From one of the schools I received the publication *Insight* produced by the Headmasters’ and Headmistresses’ Conference (HMC). The June edition reported comments from two notable heads about to leave their schools. The following excerpts are worth sharing:

- *“The exam system is like an egg timer. There is wealth of experience and learning at the top, then it is all squeezed through the narrow bottleneck of exam and pushed out the other side.”*

Tony Little – Eton College

- *“Heads must be kind, but this is often mistaken for being kind just to colleagues. In fact, we have to be kind to the kids and to parents by not taking on poor performing colleagues or bad practices. Unfortunately, heads can easily become managers rather than leaders. They manage the status quo and are not leading a clearly defined set of goals that will really change their schools.”*

Anthony Seldon - Wellington College

READING AND RESEARCH

Most of the reading I undertook pertained to my involvement in the Strategic Leadership course. The findings of which are described in that section.

However, I did spend some time reading **Michael Fullan's work**, in particular, his book, *The Principal*. Rather than focus on the three keys he describes to maximize impact, a summary of what impacted on me seems to be more in order.

Fullan works on the premise of a fundamental human condition; that is, instinctively, we are motivated by doing things that are meaningful for us and working with others. He suggests that if we are able to stimulate and enable these "organic forces" then essential change can occur and this can result in transforming schools into dynamic learning environments.

To lead learning, principals need to focus on building capacity through collaborative effort, rather than demanding accountability through individual solutions. The latter is deprofessionalising teaching and stifling teacher development. Fullan advocates a shift whereby principals need to promote appraisal as an integrated system of improvement shifting the emphasis from a one to one relationship to a collaborative approach that improves quality throughout the faculty or department.

He suggests principals need to direct their energies to developing groups and creating a "collective culture of efficacy". He says purposeful peers will have more impact than any hierarchical approach.

To engage as a leader of learning the principal must be prepared to be a learner and collaborate with teachers. As collaboration becomes embedded in a school culture, the actions of the principal becomes part of that culture and a directive outlook becomes more of a learning one. This commitment is paramount and considered by Fullan to be one of the four essential dispositions of quality teachers (and principals). He asserts that principals who build collaborative environments by being non-judgmental and open and transparent promote personal growth in teachers. The extent to which this occurs depends on the cultural climate that exists in a school. In this regard, building the social capital in a school is considered by Fullan to be the principal's main role. However, he also warns of schools where teacher collaboration is a contrived activity that lacks intensity and effort.

The final point I wish to make about this publication is that in Fullan suggests, we as school leaders can to have a distorted image of how we come across to those who work with us. Because of this blind spot, leaders sometimes take things for granted. He urges principals to tend to their relationships with staff by encouraging feedback and accepting points of view. In asking two principals on how they saw their role he received the following responses:

- "I have to get out of the way. My role is to remain engaged as much as a participant as a formal leader. I need to take two steps back, so teachers can take three steps forward."
- "I need to provide structures for sharing, be less prescriptive, listen more, talk less and support innovators by finding ways for things to happen."

Conclusions and Implications

There is a good deal in what I have read in this work of Fullan's that compliments what I encountered in the Strategic Leadership course. It has become obvious to me that leaders must be prepared to be vulnerable. I use this term after hearing it used at the IBSC conference in the context of wanting change to come about. It is a word that to me describes clearly a disposition a principal should have if they are themselves prepared to learn. An acceptance of vulnerability in a school where there a high trust and supportive environment will allow for improvement to come about and the principal must lead the way.

INTERNATIONAL BOYS' SCHOOLS' COALITION (IBSC) CONFERENCE

IBSC conferences tend to focus on the awareness school leaders and teachers should have on the holistic needs of young men and how they can be supported during their school years, particularly during adolescence. As such conference themes tend to focus on character and are titled in ways that reflect this, such as “Windows Into Manhood”, “Building Boys Into Good Men” and “Boys as Global Citizens” to name a few. To hear the keynote speakers’ tell their stories the 2015 conference through the theme *Lessons from Madiba* while gaining some understanding of the challenges of living in South Africa was a unique and very special experience. Attendance at this conference left me with some enduring messages.

The following comments are excerpts from conference speakers or points made that impacted on me or resonate with my views on how school leaders need to act and behave:

Archbishop Emeritus Bishop Desmond TuTu

It was both humbling and a pleasure to hear this man speak and to be in an audience that holds him in the highest regard. In all likelihood, it was one of his last public appearances as he was not at all well at the time of his presentation. He made some heartfelt comments about his own growing up and hopes and dreams for the future:

- He received a Bantu education through a syllabus, separate and dumbed for the black people so teachers could teach less and young people could do less in order to live a life of servitude. However, despite the scarcity of facilities and resources fantastic teachers made him believe the sky was the limit.
- By allowing the constant search for prosperity to dominate our interests, we subvert the innate goodness within us and compromise justice and equity. Searching to extract every metal, every drop of oil, every tuna in the sea and every rhinoceros in the bush is unfettered by ethical or moral considerations.
- We need a new approach to leadership; we need a more considerate, a more tolerant and a more compassionate approach. As leaders, we have a responsibility to instil in our charges (teachers and young people) a greater sense of reverence for others.
- As teachers of boys, we have an added responsibility to unravel a few thousand years of male chauvinism, misogyny and gender discrimination. We need to develop a new cadre of boys more inclined to consider the effects of their actions on others and more inclined to improve the strengths of their arguments than raising their voices.
- But, he said, “We live in a world of hope; we live in a finite space with finite resources, but limitless possibilities. Young people are our future and we must not let adult cynicism affect their dreams and hopes.”

High Court Judge Peter Cameron

Peter Cameron is gay and proudly so. He has campaigned for homosexual rights. He also stated that he contracted aids through same sex activity and he became very unwell. Death threatened and he determined he had to talk about the truth of the disease. He also he acknowledged that he only survived because he could afford to pay for medication which cost him one third of his salary as a high court judge. He remains on medication. The pertinent points he made included:

- One of the most important jobs of a principal is to talk. They should talk about giving the next generation a sense of possibility. We must be positive, we must be motivating and we must inspire young people. We must allow them to have a sense of agency; to use the rights they have in order that we can continue to develop a world that is more just and more meaningful.
- We are strengthened by our diversities. The consequences of ignoring social injustices are intolerable even though so many people do benefit in some way.

- The material possessions of life determine one's ability to enjoy life and in this regard, privileged schools need to remain. However, it is important to think about and to act in a manner that uses the privileges they have for the benefit of others in a deep and meaningful way. It is not right that young people in our schools should feel security behind the walls of privilege.
- Schools are the microcosm of society. Boys are at the most tender phase of their lives in high school and the teachers' impact on their development significantly.

Professor Khalil Osimis

This man spent 20 years in prison in the US because of his rebellious youth, protesting for the rights of American Negroes but not having any real understanding of what the issues were. He became aligned to the work of Mandela and now works in America and South Africa providing hope for those in need. His comments made a clear distinction between his own experiences of being in prison and being in jail:

- Most those in prison will never see a jail
- Being in prison is when you suffer from self-imposed limitations
- He was in prison before he was arrested and he became free before he was released.
- The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.
- As teachers, we must not impose our own self limitations on our students!
- The worst experience you may ever have can be the richest; it can be the lesson to overcome your own self limitations
- He changed because he developed a relationship with God; a God who still cared for him even though he was at the bottom. If it is not God, then it can be someone who still cares for you in your darkest hour that can be a light, even though it may only be a glimmer, that you walk towards.

Other relevant comments from various speakers worth noting:

- Your background doesn't have to define you.
- Do not tell children that 30% is ok because what then inspires them to achieve to higher levels?
- It is a grave error for a leader to be oversensitive in the face of criticism.
- No single person, no body of opinion, no political doctrine, and no religious affiliation can claim a monopoly on the truth.
- Circumstances should not get in the way of a common touch (take opportunities to provide something for any person to remember) and sort out the formalities later
- Always greet / talk to people no matter what their "status" and never forget to say thank you.
- Teach boys what Madiba taught - Reconciliation, goodness, kindness
- We determine what appraisal is and means by the way we use it.
- Leaders must lead themselves first before they can be expected or they claim to be leading others.
- Pain which is not transformed is transmitted.
- ***To be successful with reconciliation we must be vulnerable with each other.*** This was said by Wilhelm Verwoerd, whose grandfather was Prime Minister of South Africa during the apartheid years and when Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. He joined the ANC to combat the apartheid regime.

Conclusions and Implications

- ***To be successful with reconciliation we must be vulnerable with each other.*** This was said by Wilhelm Verwoerd, whose grandfather was Prime Minister of South Africa during the apartheid years and when Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. He joined the ANC to combat the apartheid regime. I think this statement is one we can consider when we as principals can share with teachers and together accept that being vulnerable is an important part of our professional relationships.

APPENDIX 1

A “TEACHER’S CREED”

The following six areas of thought in regard to teaching can perhaps be considered central principles of the profession. It is an understanding of how I expect principals would like to see themselves as leaders and how truly professional teachers see themselves. For this to happen, we must have a system that expects accountability and is focused on improvement.

An adaptation of “Appraisal – A Teacher’s Voice” written by author unknown, presented at a NZ Teachers’ Council Workshop in 2013.

If I take a professional approach to my occupation, then I take a professional approach to my registration as a professional. It also means that I take a professional approach to the Registered Teachers Criteria (RTC). In this context, it is hard to see that I would do other than the following.

Firstly, I take seriously the idea that I am there to enable all the learners that I teach to learn. I take as a normative idea that on average they should at least all learn in one year what other learners would learn in the same period of time. I have a responsibility to ensure that. If I take that responsibility seriously, I will be monitoring their attendance, their engagement, their motivation and their progress very carefully. I will be talking with them about their engagement and progress and about what I can do to increase their learning and progress. I will be talking with them, and enabling them to learn, about how they can learn better - how they can become even more active, powerful learners.

Secondly, I will be conscious of what I am to teach - that I am trained and expected to enable all my learners to learn the appropriate curriculum - all of it, not just the bits I enjoy more or feel more comfortable with.

Thirdly, I will be conscious of the community within which I teach, the community that I serve by teaching their children. I will be conscious of my setting and the goals and targets for improvement that we, collectively, have set. I will be conscious of my role in assisting the achievement of these goals and targets. I will know exactly what these mean in terms of which learners in my class(es) or setting will need to show accelerated progress in which parts of the curriculum. The learners will also know/I will take responsibility for ensuring that I learn what I need to learn in order to best ensure that my learners to reach their goals. I will take seriously the reality that I am part of a team and that I need to be ready to support my colleagues and leaders in what they need to learn so they can perform their roles better.

Fourthly, I will be working with my colleagues to shape and refine a picture of what 'good' teaching looks like that maps against our country-wide description of what professional teaching looks like - the RTC. We will be seeking indicators, descriptions, examples, pictures, videos of teaching that exemplify and enhance what we mean by the RTC, what we mean by 'good'. We will understand what evidence of “good practice” looks like and we will be able to compare that to our current practice. We will understand that all our own teaching practice must be visible to our colleagues and discussable. We would not want it any other way.

Fifthly, I will recognize that I cannot do the first four things if an evaluative perspective is not at the base of all I do. I need to be constantly reassessing what my picture of 'good' looks like. I need to be constantly looking for evidence of how well I am actually understanding the curriculum, how well I am teaching and how well learners are progressing. If I am doing these things I will be able to also be constantly comparing my picture of 'good' with my picture of 'what is' so that I can detect ways in which I might improve. I will be wondering, inquiring, as to what I can do to teach better.

Sixthly, if I am actively doing all five things above, then appraisal will be a naturally, ongoing, central quality of my professionalism. I will have evidence of my learners' progress, their self-regulation and powerful learning, and of my own practices. I will have discussed all of these elements with colleagues and leaders over the course of the year in planned and spontaneous ways. By being personally accountable I will know to what extent I am meeting all aspects of the Registered Teachers’ Criteria and I will know what I still have to work on. If I am open and honest, I can expect to have the support of those around me to become an even better teacher and, in turn, I will be able to assist others. We want to do this for our students.