

# New Zealand Curriculum 2010.

## Leadership the Key Ingredient for Change.

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# Introduction

The intent of this report is to explore how well prepared local primary schools are in implementing the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) in February 2010 as compared to primary schools nationally.

The report also investigated particular factors that may have affected the degree of the implementation of the NZC. These factors included

- Whether the leadership in school was capable of beginning and sustaining the implementation process
- Whether leaders in the school had a good understanding of the NZC
- Whether the processes of consultation were comprehensive and undertaken with all members of the community
- Whether a process of planning had been undertaken and was in place
- Whether resources provided by the Ministry of Education were used appropriately
- Whether other priorities within the school had become more important
- Whether the recent appointments of leaders in the school had an impact on the implementation process.

A questionnaire was written after viewing and reading

- “The Connected Curriculum A Resource for Schools.” NZEI Te Riu Roa and Lester Flockton.
- The New Zealand Herald article printed on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2009, titled “Schools Fall Behind on New Lesson Plan.”
- The Education Review Office report on preparation of the NZ curriculum.
- The online resources about the NZC, as well as the Ministry of Education resources sent to guide schools in preparation for implementation of the NZC.

To assess how well prepared local schools were for implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum a questionnaire was written that helped explore the factors above.

The report included visiting twenty schools in the Wanganui area, speaking to the principals of these schools and seeking information pertaining to their implementation processes.

A mini conference was attended to discuss the New Zealand Curriculum, held in Palmerston North.

A local school cluster meeting was attended at which participants shared their progress in implementing the New Zealand Curriculum.

# Discussion and Findings.

## **1. Background Readings**

### **1.1 “The Connected Curriculum A Resource for Schools.”**

The research began with the viewing and reading of materials that were available to schools for implementation of the NZC. This background knowledge of the NZC allowed for a fuller understanding of the main factors necessary in giving full effect to the implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum.

“The Connected Curriculum A Resource for Schools.” NZEI Te Riu Roa and Lester Flockton. This gave an overview of the NZC. The resource implied that teachers and school leaders needed to understand and appreciate the main themes, directions and ideas of the NZC.

Lester Flockton, the presenter of, “The Connected Curriculum” believes that to further enhance the understanding of the NZC, education professionals needed to store main ideas and themes in their heads. Lester Flockton labels this as “cognitive portability.” The ability to store ideas and themes at the forefront of a professional mind allows for meaningful discussions with colleagues, promotes consideration of present school practices, helps inform and strengthen understandings for those involved in the development of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Lester Flockton in the DVD, “The Connected Curriculum.” spends time looking at the main areas of the NZC, Curriculum Direction, Managing Implementation, Curriculum Fluency, Vision, Principles, Values, Key Competencies, Learning Areas, Teaching Pedagogy, Assessment and Putting it All Together.

### **1.2 The article in the New Zealand Herald headed, “Schools Fall Behind on New Lesson Plan.”**

The article in the New Zealand Herald, “Schools Fall Behind on New Lesson Plan” In the article, 265 primary schools had been reviewed by the Education Review Office through the year. Part of their reviews was an inquiry into how prepared these schools were for implementation of the NZC. The ERO judged how well prepared these schools were for implementation. The schools preparedness was put under four headings, Not Yet Preparing, Some Preparation, Well Underway and Well Prepared. The results of primary schools preparedness are included as below.

Primary schools(265).  
Not yet preparing 2%  
Some preparation 42%  
Well under way 49%  
Well prepared/ready 7%

Looking at the data many schools were at different stages of being prepared for the implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum.

The article highlighted factors that were impacting on implementation. The Principals' Federation president Ernie Buutveld - said teachers were feeling "overwhelmed" as they struggled to come to terms with the new curriculum and the Government's national standards. Ernie Buutveld felt that more time was required to ensure that schools gave effectiveness to the NZC.

### **1.3 The Education Review Office (ERO) report on preparedness of the New Zealand Curriculum.**

Aspects of this report were useful in understanding factors that impacted on schools preparedness for implementation of the NZC.

The report identified specific factors that were necessary for effective implementation. These factors were

- that responsibility for the NZC needed to be designated and supported by the leadership team.
- schools which had a specific action plan were able to assure that were giving effect to the NZC.
- schools who made use of support materials, advisory services, teacher only days and professional learning and development sessions were more likely to give a positive effect to the NZC.

The degree to which these factors were implemented had an impact on how prepared the school was in giving effect to the New Zealand Curriculum.

### **1.4 The October 12<sup>th</sup> issue of the Education Gazette on the New Zealand Curriculum.**

The October 12<sup>th</sup> issue of the Education Gazette on the New Zealand Curriculum. An interview was conducted with NZC project manager Chris Arcus. He felt that effective leadership was the key to implementation of the NZC. The leaders within a school needed to have a well planned and strategic approach in which staff had a shared understanding of the curriculum.

Chris Arcus felt that the NZC document resources made available by the MOE were useful however the leadership to bring it all together was essential.

## **2.1 Questionnaire Background**

It was identified through the readings that the biggest impact on the preparedness for the NZC in schools was the capability and the sustainability of leadership within the school.

The leadership capability was highlighted in the DVD "The Connected Curriculum."

“It is widely recognised that the quality and effect of the design and review process is very substantially dependent on the school’s leadership, and a professional ethos of “learning” in the school.”

It was with this background information a questionnaire was written to inquire into how well prepared local schools were in giving effect to the New Zealand curriculum.

The questions asked of school leaders were developed to understand if the level of preparedness were similar to national trends and what factors were impacting on effective implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum. Appendix 1

The questionnaire inquired into how capable the school was to initiate and sustain the implementation process, whether the school leadership had a good understanding of the NZC, whether a consultation process had taken place and to what depth, whether a process of planning was evident, whether resources were used appropriately, other issues had taken priority and finally if appointments of school leaders had an impact on the implementation process.

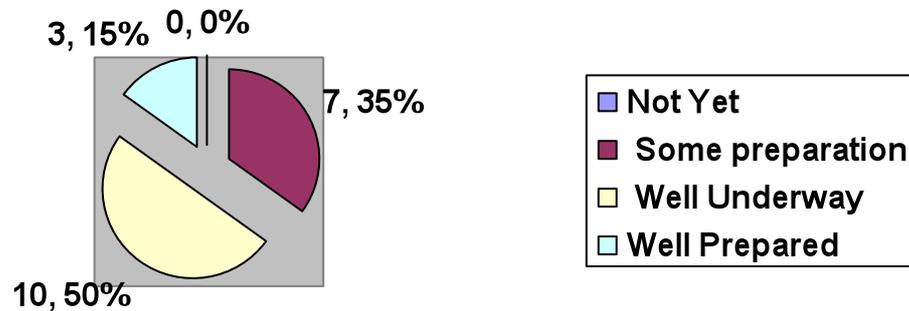
### **3 Presentation of Results**

#### **3.1 Preparedness of primary schools for implementation of New Zealand curriculum.**

To present findings on schools preparedness of the NZC, the same four headings as presented in the New Zealand Herald were used. The headings were, *Not yet preparing*, *Some preparation*, *Well underway* and *Well prepared*. Based on the factors affecting implementation, schools were categorised under these four headings.

The number of Primary Schools visited and surveyed was 20. The results are indicated as below.

## Ready for the New Zealand Curriculum



Not yet preparing 0%  
Some preparation 35%  
Well Underway 50%  
Well prepared 15%

### 3.2 Criteria for Preparedness

“Not Yet Preparing.” The criteria that was established for this category was that the school had not looked at any parts or developed any aspects of the NZC.

“Some Preparation” The criteria that was established for this involved the leadership team as having some degree of understanding in the main themes in the NZC, developing an understanding with staff and had begun consultation with the community.

Schools who had recently appointed principals were put under this category. The short time frame the principal had in the school made it difficult to ascertain whether the school could be assured of making the changes necessary to giving effect to the NZC by February 2010.

“Well Underway” The criteria that was established for this involved schools providing evidence of a consultation process, that staff were well informed about the NZC, the leadership team were able to articulate the intent of the New Zealand Curriculum and the processes they had worked through clearly. The robustness of these processes should ensure these schools will be giving a positive impact to the NZC by February 2010.

“Well Prepared” The criteria that was established for this involved those schools who had established a shared understanding with all members of the community, schools who were able to share the beliefs of their community in curriculum documents. The depth of understanding of the NZC from school leaders would be strong, the vision from the school leaders would be compelling and the sustainability of the developments would be evident in the school. These schools would be able to demonstrate that they were already giving full effect to the NZC.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1 Analysis' of schools in the not yet category**

No schools that were surveyed met this criterion.

### **4.2 Analysis' of schools in the some preparation category**

This category had seven schools.

Four of the seven schools were first time principals.

The First Time Principals were clearly able to articulate the intent of the NZC and the processes that they wished to apply to ensure the full intent of the NZC.

One principal felt that the staff had little knowledge of NZC when first arriving at the school. The principal confirmed this by giving teaching staff a self assessment activity on their knowledge of the NZC. The principal understood the need to lift staff understanding of the NZC. The principal organised staff meetings, call back days in the holidays were enforced and development of an action plan was deemed essential in lifting the capacity of the teaching staff. The principal of this school stated the process of improving staff knowledge as gaining momentum. The principal was confident that within the short period of time of their appointment, staff capability and capacity had improved markedly. A reapplication of the self assessment activity confirmed a significant increase in the understanding of the NZC. Community consultation was through a questionnaire and the response was approximately 25%. The principal felt the Board knowledge of the NZC was poor. The schools action plan was from Term 3 2009 through to Term 4 2010 which should ensure the school will have a positive impact on the intent of the NZC.

Another first time principal had only been at the school for 15 weeks. The principal was dealing with surplus staffing, school property issues and gaining creditability with the staff. The principal was leading the curriculum change process through a comprehensive action plan and staff were working through a shared understanding of the curriculum intent. In the action plan reference was made to weekly staff meetings that would begin with 5-10 minute discussions on a component of the NZC, extra Board of Trustee meetings to be held and special community functions for consultation purposes. The Vision statement had been reviewed and was being redefined. There had been discussion with the students of what learners at their school looked like. The Key Competencies were being unpacked by staff and students. Once a week at assembly, a staff member shared an aspect of the Key Competency to students. The week following, designated students shared back to pupils and staff how this would look around their school

The third first time principal had been appointed to a challenging school. The principal was able to articulate a strong and compelling vision through their interpretation of the NZC. The documentation of curriculum programmes using the

NZC was precise and thorough. Aspects of the school vision had been discussed with staff however community consultation was proving difficult as feedback from the community was limited. Despite the difficulty in the consultation process the principal had a strong sense of the purpose provided by the New Zealand Curriculum.

The fourth first time principal had a longer tenure than the three previous principals. The principal had spent a great deal of time working with the community and staff to establish a shared vision. The students were able to share the collective understanding with relative ease. The vision espoused by the principal was compelling. The principal used a variety of resources to help staff develop better understandings of the NZC including Lester Flockton's DVD, Ka Hikitia, and use of Ministry of Education resources and on line resources.

These four schools were led by First time principals. They were able to articulate the vision and provide evidence of working through a process of giving full effect to the NZC. The timeframe to provide effective impact to the NZC was the challenge for these schools however evidence provided indicated that with further time these schools would be able to give full effect to the NZC.

The other three schools put in this category were run by experienced principals. The discussion and evidence provided through the dialogue indicated that there was a lack of development in the exploration of the NZC. There was no evidence of an action plan, staff appeared to have a low level of knowledge and little consultation had taken place with the community.

One of these principals had given the responsibility for the NZC to the assistant principal however there appeared to be no evidence of progress being made.

The principals in these schools had smaller rolls than the other schools surveyed. A number of these principals were expected to teach, deal with behavioural issues and curriculum delivery.

### **4.3 Analysis' of schools in the well underway category**

The ten schools that were in the *Well underway* category for implementing the New Zealand Curriculum were able to demonstrate they had gained a good understanding of the NZC. The school leaders knowledge of the NZC was of a high degree. The discussions with the leaders of these schools were well focussed and informative.

The leaders of these ten schools were able to articulate the processes they had worked through, where they were presently and where they were heading. Evidence of comprehensive action plans was not always seen in these schools however through the dialogue and opportunities to view classrooms there was enough information to indicate that they had made substantial progress in giving a positive effect to the New Zealand Curriculum. The leadership of one of these schools shared, "The principal needed to understand the big picture. When the picture was clear it was easier to share with all participants."

The leadership in these schools had also been consistent for a number of years. The principals in these schools had implemented the processes from the beginning and had been sustaining the changes.

The process of consultation was relatively comprehensive in these schools and had defined the areas that the wider community felt was important. This was evident in all ten schools visited.

The leadership of these schools had a strong professional sense of what was already working well in their school and that the New Zealand Curriculum complemented their thinking.

Each one of the schools had a good appreciation of the NZC and was developing at least one aspect more fully than others.

One principal felt effective pedagogy was important in meaningful change within their school. The principal, felt to lift academic standards and social behaviours that the teacher and teaching methods were pivotal in making this effective change. The principal of this school wished to inquire into this aspect more fully. The principal felt that this would also be useful in meeting the National Standards requirements.

Another school felt that playing sports was a very important aspect of their school. They acknowledged sports supported many values expressed in the NZC.

A Christian values based school was using Key Competencies to help develop students social skills in the classroom. The expectations of how this should look were on display in all classrooms.

In these ten schools all of the staff seemed well aware of the processes involved in the New Zealand Curriculum and felt well informed.

The principals of these schools also sought Professional Development and had used Ministry of Education resources.

#### **4.4 Analysis' of schools in the well prepared category**

The three schools that were in the *Well prepared* category for implementing the New Zealand Curriculum were already following the principles of the NZC. The school leaders were able to speak with confidence about the NZC intent, consultation of community was comprehensive and members of the school community had a clear understanding of the shared beliefs of the school.

Two of the three schools had been recently visited by the Education Review Office and their reports made reference to the NZC preparedness as exemplars of excellence.

One of these schools had to appoint a new principal but the deputy principal was given responsibility for implementation at the beginning and had continued the process. This supports the ERO report on the implementation process that a team or person be delegated to the role and supported by the leadership team.

In these three schools, the leadership of those implementing the NZC was visionary, well planned and well consulted. The implementation process was conducted through a leadership team or the principal.

It was clear in all three schools that there had been full, comprehensive consultation with students, staff and parents. The communities in these schools recognised the specific issues of their schools and these were then addressed.

As stated, the consultation process had been completed and there was clear evidence in written plans, classrooms, behaviours of staff and pupils. Actions of the principals, school leaders and staff were aligned with the philosophy of the NZC.

All three schools had spent some time working through the process of implementation of the NZC. This process was well documented. The amount of time involved with discussing shared expectations was extensive. All members of the school community had developed a sense of ownership of these expectations.

One school shared that every staff meeting over a year was connected with the NZC. It was a process that was collectively owned by staff, students and parents. There also seemed to have been an opportunity for reviews, to allow better ways of meeting needs.

#### **4.5 Analysis' of general trends through all schools**

All schools had accessed professional development on the NZC to some degree. When asked about resources that were most useful to their schools, seventeen of the schools had either looked at the DVD 'The Connected Curriculum' or had heard Lester Flockton speak or both. One school principal stated they "wished we had the resource earlier to help understand the big picture."

Information sent out by the Ministry of Education either on line or through hard copies was used to varying degrees by schools. All schools had received information. The school leaders who had a strong understanding of the NZC were better able to choose how the material could be used constructively.

There were two clusters established in the Wanganui region to help with implementation of the NZC. One school leader explained that they were disillusioned with their cluster as it didn't meet their needs. They chose to leave and explore other avenues. Another school leader spoke of the merit of the cluster as an opportunity to reflect on practices that were been used in their schools and listen to others experiences.

Five out of the twenty schools shared other factors impacting on the school that were delaying the effective implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum. These factors included surplus staffing, staff issues, Board of Trustees conflicts with principal, National Standards and sale of school property.

## **Conclusion.**

The results of this report indicate that nearly 70% of primary schools in the Wanganui area are well underway or well prepared to giving full effect to implementing the New Zealand Curriculum at the beginning of February 2010. This result is in line with national trends as indicated by the ERO report preparedness of the New Zealand Curriculum and the article in the New Zealand Herald headed, "Schools Fall Behind on New Lesson Plan."

The results of this report have indicated that there are variations in the implementation of the NZC. The variation in schools preparedness for the NZC is indicated by the leadership capability and capacity in delivering the change.

The school leaders with a high degree of knowledge were able to discuss ideas, themes and their thinking when discussing the NZC. This knowledge then allowed for the leaders to justify practices applied at their school.

School leaders surveyed had used many resources made available to them. These resources could have been professional development days, cluster meetings, guest speakers and online stories. The school leaders who had strong understanding of the NZC were able to critically distinguish resources that were necessary in their schools development of the curriculum.

The schools that had used action plans were better able to align and sustain the process of change. The leaders of the well prepared schools and first time principals had very detailed and comprehensive plans. This written documentation should ensure that implementation would be more likely to be followed through and completed. This also meant that if other priorities were to impact on the school they could be dealt with alongside the action plan. The three schools that were identified as well prepared had documented the process of planning with action plans and the outcomes were evident in the curriculum delivery documents, Values espoused as important were seen in the classrooms and reflected in the relationships between students, staff and members of the community.

The appointment of a new principal at the school had the potential to derail the implementation process. The recent appointments of the principal at four of the twenty schools meant that the leaders had to ascertain what progress had been made at the school, identify the needs and plan to meet those needs. These schools which had made new appointments did need more time to allow for further implementation.

Finally all schools that were giving good effect to the NZC had sound leadership and management practices in place. Schools not making satisfactory progress should be able to be identified through own self reviewing systems and ERO reviews.

The report has clearly highlighted the importance of good leadership qualities that can and should make meaningful change.

## **Acknowledgements**

A big thank you to the principals, curriculum leaders and teachers who allowed me the opportunity to speak with them about their schools and about their practices. I appreciate you giving up your valuable time.

## **Appendix 1**

Questions asked of schools in local area.

School type? Full primary/contributing etc.

School locality? Urban rural.

School decile?

School roll?

How prepared are you as a school for introduction of the NZC in 2010?

Not yet preparing    Some preparation    Well under way    Well prepared/ready

Who has implemented the changes of the NZC at the school?

Principals    Senior Teacher    Deputy Principal    other.....

What do you think is the purpose of the NZC?

Can you share evidence of the NZC in your curriculum delivery documents or explain where the NZC is evident in classrooms?

The MoE provided two Teacher Only Days how have you used those for implementation of the NZC?

What difficulties have you had with implementing the NZC?

What advantages of the NZC? or are there any?

What support were you given for implementation for NZC?

NZC on line, Ministry of Education information sent out to school, Clusters etc

How well informed are staff about the NZC?

Where did you start on your journey about the NZC?

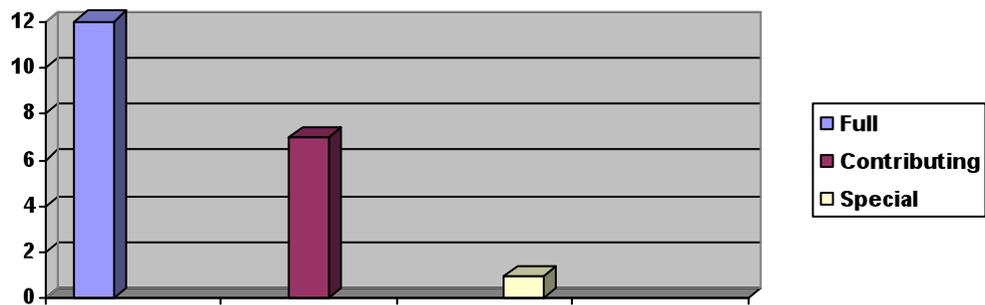
Which aspects of the NZC have you focussed more upon?

(Values, Vision Key Competencies etc)

Who did you consult with when implementing the NZC?

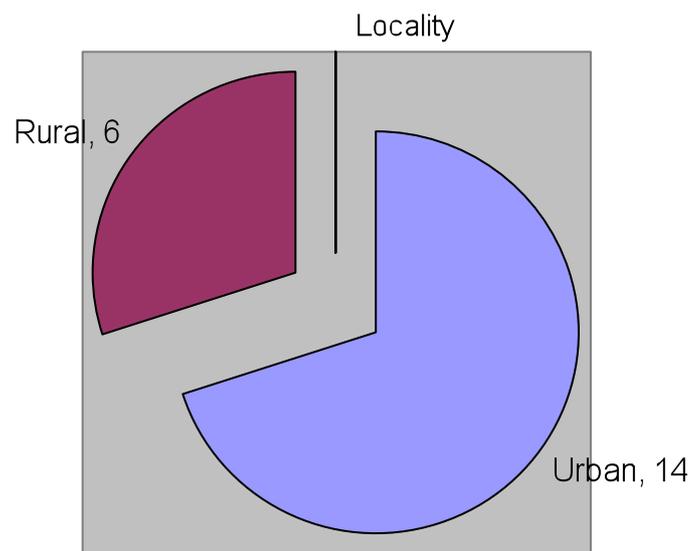
How do you as a leader feel about the NZC? Is it worthwhile or not?

## Appendix 2



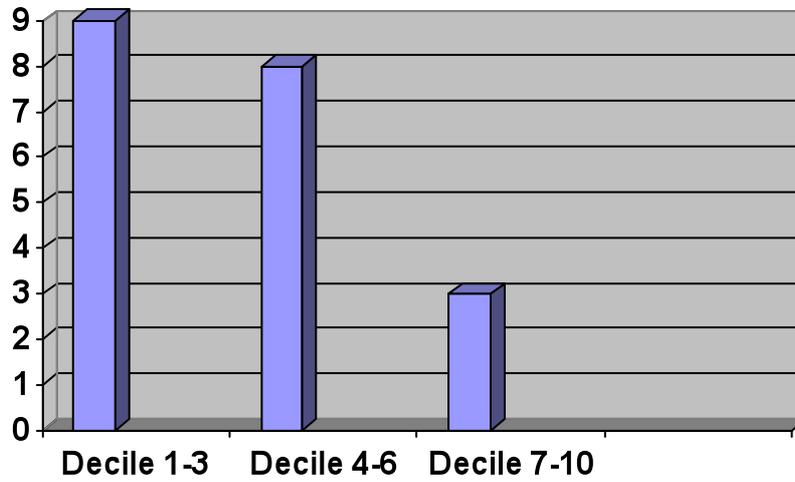
12 full primary schools, 7 contributing schools and 1 special school.

## Appendix 3



The locality of schools were 14 schools classified as urban and 6 rural schools.

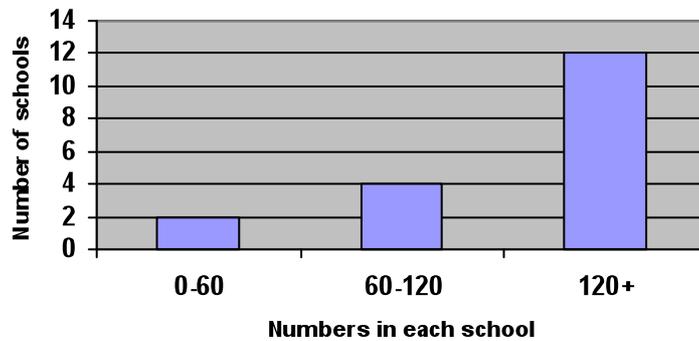
## Appendix 4



Nine schools has a decile rating between 1-3, eight decile 4-6 schools and three decile 7-10 schools.

## Appendix 5

### School size by roll



Two schools had rolls under 60, four schools had a roll between 60-120 and twelve schools who rolls were over 120.