

Sabbatical Report

21st Century Leadership

**Greg Roebuck
Principal
New Lynn School
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Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the idea of 21st century leadership in primary schools.

Acknowledgements

I would like to formally thank the Board of Trustees for allowing me the time and funding to refresh and develop my thinking around my chosen topic 21st century leadership.

Thanks also to

- The teachers and principals I talked with here and overseas about this topic
- Asia New Zealand Foundation and specifically Vanessa Lee.

Rationale and Background

My interest in this topic stemmed from an increasing interest in how Principals understanding of 21st century leadership impacts on teacher practice and student achievement. How they prepare students for global contexts, understanding the world. Embedded in this is digital literacy that is used to enhance an understanding of the world that connects students with relevant, connected and authentic learning.

The secretary of Education Karen Sewell recently wrote;

'The NZ Curriculum vision calls on schools to help young people become creative, energetic and enterprising. We want young people who are motivated and resourceful, who are informed decision makers and active seekers, users and creators of knowledge.'

As a Principal leading a school in the 21st century my challenge is to prepare students for the future and for teachers to understand how to do this.

How as Principals can we make sure that teachers are capable of making students globally confident and competent?

Being aware of Asia and its impact globally was also of interest. I have been made aware of this through my involvement with the Asia New Zealand Foundation and my participation in the Singapore Principal delegation to Singapore. Developing Asia Awareness within the school is an important aspect of leadership in the 21st century.

Activities Undertaken (Methodology)

During my sabbatical I visited eight schools in Singapore and Malaysia, meeting with Principals, teachers and students to discuss what they saw as effective 21st century leadership in primary schools.

I also met and discussed this with a number of school Principals and staff within New Zealand. I met with The Asia New Zealand Foundation and spoke with Vanessa Lee about Asia Awareness for students and the importance of this in relation to being an effective 21st century leader.

I used some of my time to read articles on 21st century leadership both on line and in education publications.

Findings

Questions

Do you think that having an understanding of 21st century learning impact on student achievement?

In the 21st century more than any other time in history, a principal is a professional leader of learning and, as such, is an active facilitator of change. The purpose of change in school is to produce the best possible learning outcomes for students; students learning outcomes which must necessarily prepare students to be competent and confident in a complex world where, in order to be successful, they will need to be resilient, flexible, curious, creative and able to make considered and ethical decisions. Principals who fail to appreciate that what students learn is less important than how (Inquiry and Collaboration) and why (Purpose, Authentic, Ethical) they learn, will fail their students. A 21st century principal as leader will understand and model this in their practice.

In a time of rapid change and infinite possibilities the Principal cannot predict the world that students will enter when they leave formal schooling but he or she can set the standards, expectations, and the context for success for both students and teachers. This means that decisions need to be made about how scarce resources will be best used and this is one of the main responsibilities of a Principal. In a world where new toys, tools and initiatives are constantly being presented as the only way forward it is the principal's responsibility to make informed decisions about what and why resources for learning should be made available. How principals make those critical decisions if they do not know what resources are available, how useful they are developing and how and why of learning and whether or not they will help build important qualities, skills and attitudes in students.

It brings with it a certain urgency to ensure that children and teachers have the necessary skills to be focused. The sort of learning being referred to is with a focus on self-responsible confident connected, lifelong skills with less of a focus on knowledge as such and more on the need to find ways for students processes of sourcing information to synthesise and make informed decisions about their learning. The Arts are a critical piece within this.

21st century leadership demands that we have an in depth knowledge of the needs of our school community. Our community now live in an increasingly diverse, globalised, complex and media saturated society. We have no idea of what the world will look like in 10 years, much less 20 years, yet we are charged with preparing our students for future worlds.

Our students are facing many global challenges such as a global population explosion and other environmental and social issues. These issues lead to a need for students to be able to communicate, function creates change personally, socially, economically and politically on local national and global levels. Emerging technologies and resulting globalisation also provide unlimited possibilities for exciting possibilities for teaching and learning.

An understanding of the importance of effective leadership equips us to focus on teaching and learning which has a direct correlation to student achievement. To this end it is the promotion of and participation in teacher professional development which impacts most strongly upon student achievement. 21st century leaders of this type model and monitor types of interactions which foster teacher learning and caring about student achievement.

As a 21st century thinking principal it is important to continually self-reflect on this question are we as a school meeting the learning needs of students within a constantly changing world?

The use of technology within this is essential however we must use it reflectively to enhance student achievement. We must be aware of what constitutes successful student engagement versus effective teaching.

Preparing students for the future, research shows that they need to be globally aware, communicate well, be adaptable, be creative, be innovative, be able to problem solve as well as use e tools effectively.

Personalising the learning, identifying talents creating learning pathways and moving away from the notion that one size fits all therefore ensuring that authentic real learning contexts are engaging children and allowing good achievement to occur.

Does 21st century leadership have a positive impact on teacher pedagogy on the way you teach?

Leadership is for everyone and as a result everyone is empowered to learn. Teachers are empowered to inquire into their practice to solve learning and teaching problems. There is a research based understanding of how students achieve.

Working with 21st century teachers is much easier when it comes to implementing technologies as part of their pedagogy. Unless one is able to create the shift within teachers pedagogy things will remain much the same. Getting teachers to make these shifts within their practice the outcomes become quite evident. Learners become more engaged and excited about their learning. Teachers need to realize that making these shifts requires making more than a few add on's but rather questioning all their processes and activities. Unless teachers face up to changes that come with 21st century learning things will remain much the same. As leaders of schools we need to acknowledge that learners are naturally a part of social interactive communication. Living in a global village many students communicate using social interactive sites (e.g. Twitter, Face book) we need to teach children how to infuse thinking skills while utilising social media.

It impacts by making connections to prior learning and experience. Involves teaching as enquiry, encouraging reflective thought and action. It creates a supportive learning environment with cooperative and co-constructed learning. Students understand the relevance of new learning. Creates an environment where e learning is resourced and students can enter and explore new learning environments that build global competencies.

Principals who adopt an intelligent strategic and entrepreneurial approach to leadership will be committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for learners; the result of which will be a positive impact on teachers and a successful school.

Effective 21st century leadership is for everyone and everyone is empowered to learn. Problem solving is done collaboratively and teachers are empowered to inquire into their practice to solve learning and teaching problems. There is a common understanding that is research based on how students learn.

Do you believe that the use of e learning enable your students to be active participants in their own learning?

It allows them access to global, national and local information rapidly. It increases ownership, through heightened curiosity and imagination and excitement.

Principals need to be tuned into students to gauge their opinions and views and help identify their next learning steps. This can be done through

- Curriculum mapping software allowing students to map their own learning.
- E portfolios – allowing students to capture their learning journal with parents /caregivers.
- Sharing BOT meetings students presenting information.

To be a school that is operating truly in a 21st century way, e learning needs to be accessible to all students involved and in having a voice as participators in their own learning. It was felt also that supporting and sitting alongside this sits the Assessment for Learning philosophy and a strong understanding of 21st century pedagogy.

E learning is not just about tools that are available in the classrooms; the focus is on creating an environment where learners and learning thrive (students and their teachers). The e part of this learning environment is that ICT provides students and teachers with access to the globally connected world referred to in the NZ curriculum. They are able to access knowledge, develop skills, engage in the important trial and error aspect of learning, reflect, improve, create, and the best thing is that, provided the learner is at the centre of the learning, this can be achieved within the individual learners pace and style.

Do you believe e learning impacts on Maori and Pacific achievement?

Yes it does. In school where homes have limited access to e tools, schools need to provide the resources, this is an equity issue. Enhancing achievement using 21st century tools combined with effective teaching does this. It assists students with acquisition of important 21st century skills that they can share with their families.

E learning has a great impact on Maori and Pacific achievement because they are visual learners. Mobile devices within the classroom environment enhance opportunities to learn and achieve. The use of e learning within the classroom caters for students with diverse learning styles.

E learning is highly motivational for Maori and Pacific students. E learning acknowledges and affirms their position as 21st century learners as distinct from their ethnicity, whilst empowering them to also explore the cultural background and language. Mobile technologies provide instant support and scaffolding for second language learners inside and outside the classroom, allowing them greater access to a differentiated classroom.

Tools such as garage band can be used for students to record their oral language communication where students can track their progress and self-assess. Students can also use other tools to record their reading and written language stories. Students can also use blogs and wikispaces to share their learning with family members and the wider community students receive support and affirmation. This support and motivation encourages deeper learning and further enhances achievement.

Are there effective strategies in place to ensure the coaching and on-going professional development, mentoring of teachers to share effective 21st century practice across the school? How do we do this?

A number of ways were cited;

- Performance appraisal linked to strong professional development so teachers understand how to develop learning that is connected to and relevant to students living in the 21st century.
- School wide professional development linked to strategic plan.
- Providing time for teachers to practice and share collegially their practice.
- External expertise was used to assist with coaching and mentoring so that teachers understood this process. Coaching was used to ensure leadership skills and the ability to get teachers to actively inquire into their practice.

What practical ways are we developing the above when working in partnership with the community? How would you do this or are you doing this?

By co constructing a shared vision and working closely with the school Board of Trustees to increase understanding of responsibilities regarding student achievement, and the importance of strategically planning 21st century practice, in the student learning, teacher professional development and education within the parent communities.

Maori and Pacific families are aware of the 21st century demands on learning at our consultation evening. Maori and Pacific families requested that we have more technologies available for students. New buildings have been built with this in mind. Facilities have been created and electronic resources made available to both learners and parent communities. These community facilities work well and encourage partnership between school and home. Students and parents have access to these on a regular basis. Parent computer courses also made available to parent's regularly to build knowledge around 21st century learning.

Formalised and active home school partnerships in numeracy, with ICT and literacy leveraging off the success of the numeracy programme.

Board of trustees training and up skilling programmes including the use of technologies

Implications

From the research conducted here with meeting with Principals and overseas the implications I have formulated are;

- School leaders need to be aware of how to develop new skills, competencies or literacies that are required by students when entering the workforce of the future. Schools must understand the importance of relevant, authentic learning that prepares a student for the future world.
- Literacies at schools need to embrace personal skills including an appreciation of others cultures, communication skills (involving information technology) networking skills collaborative and analytical skills.
- Schools need to develop within their students the ability and confidence to pull together ideas from a range of sources to make intuitive instant judgements.
- 21st century leadership must encourage entrepreneurial talents of all its future citizens.
- Teachers must understand what it is to be an effective 21st century teacher with the abilities to develop the necessary skills mentioned in this paper. Professional development of the teaching staff within this is critical for effective learning to occur and achievement.
- Schools successfully working in a true 21st century way where the leadership fostered and developed teachers and students to create their own learning by engaging in authentic problem solving leading them to where their passions lie.
- A need to identify talents within students and build personalised learning pathways so that it supports
- The need to have digital resources for the development of digital literacy is a fundamental part of an effective 21st century school. However in some cases this was not evident and many students were not accessing the technology that is required for students and teachers to be working in a truly 21st century way.
- An essential piece within 21st century leadership is and supported by Professor Zhong Zhao is the importance of schools developing encouragement and the development of entrepreneurial talents of all its future citizens. This came through in all my readings and discussions as being essential for success in a global world.
- Schools need to develop an awareness of globalisation using the curriculum and contexts of studies that build awareness within the students learning. Asia Awareness is an important part of this piece and a way of building understanding within student's teachers and community.

- Learning another language such as mandarin is a valuable tool for students to enter the world where they will be working.
- Children within schools need to be connected to other communities.
- Understanding what it means to be a global citizen participating within a world. (Social Responsibility)

School leaders need;

- To recognise teachers and students as global citizens.
- Welcome innovation, embrace change and challenge.
- Provide and expose teachers and students to authentic 'real world' learning experiences beyond the classroom.
- Develop a learning culture where strengths are allowed to flourish.
- To be dynamic and adapt quickly – with a future smart eye on what's possible.
- Have an appetite for innovation.
- Have a capacity to take risks and ability to experiment.
- Use e tools for local and global good.
- Create high expectations, champions the journey, not the destination.
- The Challenge for leaders in school in the 21st century is to be able to understand , respond to , and influence teachers to understand the importance of creating an learning environments that is creative, authentic and relevant to students who function within a globally connected world.

Final Thought

The driving question as leaders we must ask ourselves is, what do Students need to learn to help them succeed in the 21st Century and as school leaders how we are doing this?

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