Neil Harray - Sabbatical report (Term Two 2015)

Over the last couple of years a number of Principals have commented to me on the benefits and absolute necessity of the sabbatical program and the impact it has made to them personally. Having now completed my sabbatical I can now fully appreciate how important the opportunity was and the change it has made not only in my practice but also the awareness of the significant shift in direction our school needs to go to prepare our community for the nature of future schooling.

I would like to thank the Katikati College Board of Trustee's for allowing me to undertake my sabbatical. I have enjoyed presenting my findings to the Board and the subsequent discussions that have arisen. These discussions and the on-going discussions that need to happen, play an important part in shaping the future direction of the school.

Of course there are people that need to "step up" into a number of leadership roles during the absence of a principal. I would like to once again thank Shelley Power in her role as Acting Principal and to the Senior Leadership Team of Louise Buckley and Ian Nicholson that willingly took on additional responsibilities to help out. A sabbatical also provides opportunities for others to shine and it was great that Tina Filipo was seconded into the SLT from her Head of Faculty role. Her passion and experience was a real asset to the SLT team. It is really heartening to see how all of these individuals have grown in their leadership when the opportunity is presented to them.

I have been and continue to be really well supported at Katikati College.

I am also very grateful to the Principals that allowed me to visit their school and how generous they were with their time.

Inquiry:

To investigate the rapid rise of digital learning and the effect on teaching and learning.

Executive summary.

A phenomenal amount of literature has been devoted to the investigation, discussion, theorising, promotion, and at times chastising about the use of electronic devices in schools since the invention of the personal computer. As with each technological development the opportunities to aid learning have been explored and held up as a "must have" for education.

When the first personal computers started to become commonplace in New Zealand in the mid 1980's, schools where the main access point for people to experience computing, at that stage there were very few home based computers. Most homework was completed with pen and paper and the encyclopaedia was the knowledge base. Photocopied material was revolutionary and the fax machine was a staggering invention.

Fast forward to 2015 and we are at the stage where NZQA are experimenting with digitally based assessments. As Karen Poutasi, Chief Executive of NZQA said in her address at the 2014 SPANZ conference, "assessment should reflect what is happening in the classroom".

Society is now mobile, information retrieval/sharing and being "connected" is now the new norm for the majority of New Zealanders; schools once again are in the position of trying to work out how to best address this to enhance the learning of our students.

The challenges are many; cost, infrastructure, use and connections with the community.

Sabbatical structure

The first part of my sabbatical (and probably the most important part) was attending the World Education Leaders Summit 2015 in Singapore. The theme of the conference was around was to "Lead and redefine future schools".

I selected this conference as there was a significant focus on the use of digital technologies and the future application. The conference speakers were outstanding and this certainly shifted my thinking and how I approached the rest of my sabbatical.

The speakers (and congress presentations) at conference were;

- Dr Tony Wagner
    - Designing Education to create innovators that will change the world
    - Change leadership for the 21st century school reformation
- Dr Stephen Murgatroyd
    - Six challenges for the future of education
    - Leading for change and learning in our future schools
- Simon Breakspear
    - Innovation for better learning: How smart education organisations are innovating towards brighter learning futures
- Professor Sugata Mitra
    - Self orgaising systems in future schools
    - Schools in the cloud and the future of learning
- Professor Pasi Sahlberg
    - Finnish lessons: What can Asian education systems learn from educational change in Finlansd?
    - Facts and myths about teachers and teaching

- Professor Yong Zhao
  - Counting what counts: Education outcomes that matter
  - Who's afraid of the big bad dragon: Why china has the best (and worst) education system in the world

There were also two panel discussions:

1. How to reinvent and revolutionize education to strive in the demanding digital age
2. What can we learn and adopt from the best education systems in the world?

From this conference some key themes emerged and resulted in further reading, study and investigations. These were key to shaping how I approached the second part of my sabbatical.

Key learnings from conference: How to lead and redefine future schools.

One of the presenters commented that commented that the theme for the conference should be flipped around. In his opinion it should be "how to redefine future schooling and then lead that change".

From the conference and further reading these key themes really struck a chord for me:

- Globalisation, not only of economies but also the globalisation of cultures. The impact of government policies in Western Society and the influence on education.
- The global perspective of age structures and demographics in the developed and developing countries.
- The changing nature of work. The influence of technological advances that have led to greater automation in manufacturing but also the "science fiction" type of jobs that are now reality. For example 3D printing; from specialist prosthetics to weaponry spare parts in actual war zones.
- Technology and society. The way people connect, socialise and collaborate. The concept of "the internet of things". It is estimated that currently we utilise less than 1% of the data that is available across connected networks.
- Student engagement. The difference between engagement and compliance. What are the essential skills that students will need to be able to live and enhance the world they will live in given all of the challenges mentioned in the previous four bullet points above? Our responsibility. Secondary school is not an end point. This is sometimes seen as the case eg, "if we get them to achieve this then the students will be alright". We have an increased responsibility to ensure that all students that leave Katikati College have the best opportunity to be valuable, productive members of society.

The second part of my sabbatical was visiting schools and looking at the process they had gone through in implementing BYOD.

The schools visited were;

- Taupo-nui-a-tia College
- Albany Senior High
- Hobsonville Point Secondary School
- Mount Albert Grammar School
- Bethlehem College

There is now a wealth of information regarding BYOD. Policies, suggested approaches, PLD providers and of course technology vendors and electronic company's all provide information and advice for schools about start their journey towards students bringing their own digital devices to school.

All of the schools were at a different stage of moving towards their own respective goals of BYOD. Some of the schools had pilot classes at a particular Year level to see how the interaction between teacher and student changed and the hardware implications. Other schools went a whole year level approach became a normal part of a student's school requirements.

All of the schools provided extensive supporting material to their communities regarding the benefits of using digital devices. There was good information and support regarding device requirements and the pros and cons for device type.

Key learnings from school visits.

- Contributing schools have an impact on the type of devices in secondary schools
- There is no fixed model. There are so many device types, types of software/apps and management software options. It really does come down to what works for the school and community.
- Group work using a device allows for deep learning
- In traditional teaching pedagogy individual devices (one-to-one) are more suited to research, simpler tasks and document production and are often a substitute rather than augmented, modified or redefined (SAMR model) use.

Recommendations for Katikati College

- Establish a group of key staff
- Look at blended/organic approach by providing opportunities and time for teachers to trial online learning for example Google Drive/Docs and Google Classroom.
- Allow staff time to develop online resources and to trial teaching approaches
- Self-organising learning environment (SOLE) allows for deep learning in groups

Reference's and key readings

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