

The 'Castle of Goodies, Baddies, Kings and Queens':
An exploration of personalising learning

Moira Howard – Campbell: Term 2 2016
Principal Levin North School



Acknowledgements

This sabbatical was made possible through Teach NZ and the full support of the Board of Trustees and the staff of Levin North school. I would like to thank all those people who took on extra responsibilities and in particular Hoani Perigo who acted as Principal in my absence.

Thank you to all of the schools that I visited around New Zealand for so being so open to the challenges you had faced and were facing. Your insights and sharing of ideas have helped me to think through many aspects of my work but also the development of personalising learning in our school.

Executive summary

The time away from the school (or time to stand on the platform and view the valley as I once heard in an NZCER seminar) allowed me to think very clearly about the development of our approach in personalising learning. It is often hard to see the path clearly when you are stuck in the middle of everything as I'm sure many of you as readers will understand. We can get stuck in 'busy being busy'.

I have to say however that the more I read the more confused I became, as personalising learning to my mind was not just 'tinkering' with the edges of learning in schools but a total rethink. A school that succeeds in personalising learning will have to have let go of the 'prison asylum mix' (Hargreaves 1994 p.37) whereby every moment and movement of a student is dictated by the school. This move towards 'letting go!' could be a big challenge for some in education (I think.)

So with the time away from the 'hustle and bustle' and I came to understand that:

- The term personalised learning in practice, is interpreted very differently across the schools and no one way was necessarily more correct than any other. There were broadly speaking three interpretations of the term which were individualised, differentiated and personalised learning. The notion of a localised curriculum was alive and well.
- All forms of personalised learning required well developed across school systems and structures. These systems and structures had evolved from need but were consistent across entire schools where an approach to personalised learning was successful. These schools had a sequential development of the skills required.
- The biggest challenge to implementation was the knowledge and understanding required by the teachers. Teachers needed to really understand what it means to collaborate, have extensive knowledge of the curriculum, demonstrate 'ako' and an understanding and commitment developing their practice. They also needed to have a very secure understanding of what it really meant to develop a relationship with learners and put them at the centre of everything.
- Personalised learning was a complete departure from the 'factory model' of teaching. As Hargreaves stated 'schools are still based on a curious mix of the factory the asylum and a prison (Hargreaves 1994 p.37). The approach required a solid foundation in three principles; partnerships, metacognition and student centricity; easy to say but not easy to enact.

- The role of leadership in 'driving' the approach was crucial. Leaders that I spoke with believed in their vision, surrounded themselves with people who supported the vision and had the courage to 'stand firm' in the face of pressure from a number of areas.
- Personalised learning is different to a personalised approach to school culture. The latter has many more tangents than just a focus on learning.

Purpose

The purpose of my sabbatical was to help me to develop my understanding of how educators interpreted 'personalised learning' so that as a leader I could plan more effectively for its development in our school.

The title of the report is based on the learning experiences of a group of five-year-old learners in our school. These boys 'hated' writing in the traditional form so their teacher, rather than killing the love of learning and forcing them to write 'on paper', gave them space to develop their castle on the whiteboard. These three boys were fascinated by castles, kings, queens and goodies and baddies and the language that emerged during their discussions while they were creating was amazing. Each day I would go in to see the latest adventure, ask questions and have a discussion about the adventures of the characters. The creation remained untouched on the whiteboard for at least month and by the end of this time it was a little like 'Where's Wally?' Their teacher did not look at their 'skills' through deficit eyes but went with their strengths, interests and passions. The pride they had in their creation and eloquence with which they could retell the experiences of the characters was beyond anything they could 'write'.

This example reflected our school philosophy which is that we try to put learners are at the centre of everything. We endeavor to offer a holistic education.

We are also working towards developing a consistent model of personalising learning and we recognised that this needed more consistency as children moved through our school

Our development in the approach started in 2012 where we began to explore personalised approaches in the junior school and various models of student agency in years 5 and 6. This was prior to my appointment as principal and over the next two years we continued our development with the result being reasonably successful. The main challenge that remained was that we needed to develop some consistency across the school for learners (and teachers) so that skill development was sequential, but what skills?

Another factor in my focus was that as a school, we were also at the point of needing to 'formalise' our school curriculum. Documenting an approach to personalised learning was becoming an integral requirement of teachers understanding their role and the developing document.

My sabbatical (as planned) had three phases which were:

- Taking the time to develop some foundational knowledge; reading about approaches to personalising learning in curriculum development and its relationship to the role of leaders and teachers and increased engagement and achievement.
- Visiting a number of schools to view examples of best practice with a 'personalised' learning curriculum in an Innovative Learning Environment.
- Interviewing leadership teams to better understand their processes of developing their approach.

Background and Rationale

Education that really meets the needs of the learners is not a new concept. I had never read the **United**

Nations First Call for Children (1990) and on the recommendation of an experienced principal in Auckland I read it!

Amazing that way back in 1990 these three sections, in effect, talked about a curriculum that should fit the child not one that the child should have to fit!

- Article 3: in all actions concerning children the best interest of the child shall be the major consideration
- Article 12: the right of a child to express his or her opinion and to have this taken in to consideration
- Article 29: – Education should foster the development of the child’s personality and talents, preparation for a responsible adult life respect for human rights as well as the cultural and national values of the child’s country and that of others

The idea of personalising learning in New Zealand is not new. Steve Maharey (way back in 2007) in an address to school leaders in Wellington talked about education in New Zealand needing to be a system that fitted the learner rather than one that the learner needed to fit. (MoE, 2007a, p.3). This required ‘unlearning practices’ in education which weren’t aligned to the system change and indeed a governmental inquiry in 2008 stated the expectation that all schools should ‘ensure the principles of personalised learning underpin the delivery of the curriculum.’

Bishop and Glynn (1999) helped me to understand the link between to the Treaty of Waitangi and personalised learning. My understanding (now) is that the first principle of Tino Rangatiratanga is all about self-determination which in education terms could well be interpreted as self-managing learners in a personalised learning framework. I also understood from their work that the treaty identifies choice, partnership and seeking opportunities specific to an individual in this first principle.

The second principle: Taonga Tuku iko (treasures from ancestors) also links to personalised learning in that students are not making choices in isolation. Each child has a distinct history which needs to be respected and allowed for in the educational environment; surely this is different for every child regardless of their background and surely finding out about each child should be a foundation of personalised learning practice.

Further reading identified that for personalised learning even **to exist** there needs to be an awareness and understanding of metacognition, that is that students need to be able to think about their thinking, talk and understand their learning, thorough pedagogical assessment and strong relationships between teachers and students.

For personalised learning to **be successful** there are some further foundations that most researchers agree need to be reasonably successfully implemented in schools and, if not already in place, be part of an implementation action plan.

My experience in education however has been that, with the best of intentions, we have paid lip service to this idea. It is not without frustration that as an educational leader I have observed the learner being forced to fit the system rather than the system being adjusted to fit the learner. I observe contexts for learning that expect learners to be interested in things that are totally unrelated to any of their experiences. We then wonder why these same learners make little or no progress and become disengaged with school? I was concerned that if we always approached mainstream education as we had been doing, the tail of underachievement would remain and the potential for some of our gifted learners to excel would never be actualised.

There are three inspirational New Zealand educators who over the years have influenced me in my role and in my view, had learner centric views. These three people have inspired me throughout my career and without minimizing their impact on education in New Zealand there were some key points that have continued to resonate with me and probably driven me as a leader to change things.

The first of these was Clarence Beeby, who was and is well known as visionary educational thinker. His views have shaped and been the foundation of many of today's policies. In the following quote he formally committed the 'state to enabling every child and citizen to reach their potential'. His idea was that the education system should be responsive to the needs of the individual, which was rather novel for the time! Perhaps personalising learning is a way of renewing his vision of equal opportunity for all students.

"The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that all persons, whatever their ability, rich or poor, whether they live in town or country, have a right as citizens to a free education of the kind for which they are best fitted and to the fullest extent of their powers. So far is this from being a mere pious platitude that the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system."

Peter Fraser and Clarence Beeby, 1939

The second is Elwyn Richardson whose work in education had profound implications as to the nature of the learning process. He is mainly known for his book 'In the Early World' (NZCER 2012) and this was described by one reviewer as "possibly the best book about teaching ever written". There was also a DVD produced entitled 'Song of the Bird' which related his experiences in his small rural primary school at Oruaiti in Northland. His experience in 1950s became an international symbol of progressive education in New Zealand with a child-centred approach to learning focusing on creative and environmental education. His school featured an integrated curriculum, values education, inquiry learning, philosophy, te reo Māori and creative thinking. He cast aside notions of the children 'fitting the mold' and was not viewed favourably at times for 'stepping outside the norm' however he continued to put the needs of the children first to ensure that equal opportunity was an entitlement rather than a stroke of luck. 'Song of the Bird' demonstrated that by learning through things that mattered to the children, learning was intrinsically motivating.

The third is Sylvia Ashton Warner. She was known as gifted but complex teacher who worked with Māori children in New Zealand from the 1940s onwards. Her approach was founded in a belief that children had two visions, an inner vision and an outer vision, and it was the inner vision which burned brightest. She was best known for her work in 'organic' reading and writing. Her views, once again, were that learning must be real and it must start from a person's experience and relate to their world.

The common theme for these educators was the learner centric approach and their commitment to helping children to learn in ways that mattered (to them). All perceived personalising learning, as it is known today, as having the potential to meet the needs of far more of their learners than the 'sparrow in standard two'. (Elwyn Richardson – Song of the Bird.)

From my reading learning it seems that there are also common foundations that are needed to develop a curriculum of personalised education and learning and in our school experiences, this would be the case. These are noted in various documents but those that are most aligned with the needs in our school are those in the Melbourne Department of Education and Early childhood development's paper. This paper was produced in 2007 and is entitled 'Personalising Education from research to policy and practice.'

This paper identified three general themes; these being Learners at the Centre, Information and Communications Technology and Communities of collaboration. Within each theme there are further aspects which need to be given consideration and I have summarized these below.

Theme One: Learners at the Centre

a highly-structured approach that places the needs, interests and learning styles of students at the centre

Learners must be at the centre of all decision making. There needs to be an understanding of what it means to be a self-directed learner for both students and teachers. 'Learning how to learn' and helping students to develop strategies that will help them to be successful are vital.

engaged learners who are informed and empowered through student voice and choice

Understanding learners as people and giving them voice requires a strong relationship to be built. Teachers

need to take the time to develop this relationship and students need to understand what they learn, where they learn and how they learn it. They need to have curriculum choice and the teacher's role is to guide and facilitate learning pathways so that students learn the 'learning to learn skills'.

assessment that is related to meaningful tasks and includes assessment for and from students

Schools need to understand and be places that use assessment to inform all practice. This requires teacher and student knowledge about its purpose and the information it provides. It also places a heavy emphasis on formative practices.

a focus on improving student outcomes for all and a commitment to reducing the achievement gap.

This requires an understanding of how this might best be achieved and to me an understanding of what a strengths based approach would look like rather than deficit thinking.

Theme Two: Information and Communications technology

ICT as an enabler

Use of ICT is an opportunity for flexible approaches to learning programmes. Schools need to have an understanding of the power of technology to facilitate flexibility and the resources available in terms of teacher capability and knowledge and 'devices'.

Theme three: Communities of Collaboration

promote a 'community of learning' approach and cultivate strong relationships between adults and students

This also links to the understanding that learning doesn't just happen between the hours in a school's day and that parents and whanau are partners in the education process.

develop and promote the notion of networks rather than existing in isolation

These networks can be within a school or between schools and provide extensive opportunities for learning in 'schools without walls'.

have strong links with the home, community, local institutions, business and services.

Parents and whanau as partners in education, links as noted above once again provide valuable authentic experiences.

At our school we have been redeveloping our curriculum document. This has been a two-year process and the fundamental principle of its development was to **really** meet the needs of individual learners.

Initiatives had been started in the school prior to my appointment, including extensive ICT purchasing and professional development exploring Montessori and Steiner education by the leadership team.

These continued in 2012 with developing a personalised approach along a 'Reggio Inspired foundation' to learning. This approach was and is ostensibly a model that acknowledges that 'learning should matter to the learner'. It requires teachers to build strong relationships with a child and their family and 'notice' what is happening for each child in the learning environment. Learning programmes then tap into their interests and curiosities. While it a widely understood and accepted approach in Early Childhood education, it also fundamentally challenges traditional views of primary school education which historically has seen the teacher as the 'sage on the stage.'

In our junior school one of our leaders saw the potential in a curriculum that focused on a **strengths based individualised** approach to learning, rather than a deficit, one size fits most model. In the senior school, some teachers took the opportunity to trial an individualised approach. Many of them believed that children were competent thinkers about their world with a profound interest in, and many theories about, things around

them but how to keep develop some consistency and keep this philosophy to the fore in the primary school setting seemed to be a challenge.

One of these challenges was (and is) our School Entry Assessment information. As in most schools our New Entrant children had an 'SEA' and for most, the results were not great. Our teachers required courage not to panic about the results and think in a deficit model of each child with the looming requirements of 'National Standards after one year at school'. We needed to balance the pressure to 'get moving in learning' with creating engaged lifelong learners! The challenge was to develop learning programmes that reflected learners' life experiences and their real curiosity about the world this so that the 'leap' from ECE/ home was not too great. We wanted our learners to be intrinsically motivated.

The approach also seemed a logical extension from Te Whariki and the approach of Early Childhood educators who watched for the teachable moment and the passions and readiness of the child. We felt it would also facilitate a smoother transition to school for our learners.

Our progress in the approach further developed as we tried to link the personalised approaches in the junior school with various models of student agency in years 5 and 6. The main challenge that remained was that we needed to develop some consistency across the school for learners (and teachers) so that skill development was sequential, but what skills?

However, we continued to struggle to find a way for the key aspects of what we liked in a Reggio inspired model to fit in the senior school. We created an adapted (as yet unnamed) model which looked more like self-managing learners using technology. Students started to be increasingly responsible for setting their own timetables and attending workshops. The approach in this space focused on students 'earning' the right to become a 'chicken nugget / transit' as the students names themselves however what was missing was the learning in contexts that mattered to the child.

We also began to realise very quickly, that while we were on the right track there were still some pieces of the development puzzle that were missing and we needed to document our 'curriculum' hence the focus of my sabbatical.

Activities undertaken

I started out with the following focus questions however these morphed into others as my understanding developed and my experiences in the schools were not as I had expected.

- What does personalising learning look like in your school?
- How does your approach reflect your school community?
- How did you engage with your community in its development?
- How has this approach impacted your learners in terms of engagement and achievement?
- What are the challenges in the approach for the teachers and the learners?
- How do/did leaders manage the 'shift in approach' implementation effectively?

I read numerous publications (these are listed at the end of this report) to understand the development of personalising learning and to clarify my thinking about the questions above

I also visited schools a number of schools around New Zealand. These were sourced by searching for key words on the internet or as suggestions from principals of other schools. It was interesting to note the impact of a change of principal in the approach to learning and teaching in a couple of the schools I visited. This for me reinforced the role of leadership.

Findings

Trying to summarise my findings has been difficult as in some ways I am more confused than I was when I started however the experience has given me some ideas about how to proceed in our school and if these are useful to others – great!

Developing a successful approach to personalised learning in a school is a complex process. It may look a little ‘laissez faire’ from the outside but there is an incredible amount of professional development required for effective implementation and structures and systems for when it is ‘up and running’ so that students don’t slip through the ‘net’.

I found that the term personalised learning was interpreted very differently across the schools and no one way was necessarily more correct than any other as each school was in a different community and had varying levels of expertise and experience in their teaching staff. Those that really demonstrated personalised learning had moved well away from the ‘factory model of teaching’ and were clear about the concepts of partnerships, metacognition and student centricity

I did observe quite a range of practice despite trying to ‘hone’ my visits to those schools focused on personalised learning. There seemed to be, broadly speaking, three interpretations of the approach which were **individualised, differentiated and personalised learning**. (‘Making Learning Personal’ Bray and McClaskey 2015. (This text, by the way, is a must read for anyone interested developing a personalised curriculum for their school.)

‘Individualised learning’ in schools tended to be dominated by the teacher who provided instruction to an individual learner. Programmes of learning were designed to meet the individual learning needs of the child in reading, writing and maths based on assessment information. Learning needs were accommodated but things weren’t necessarily adjusted along the way with planning tending to be at least a week in advance rather than changing each day to meet the needs as they emerged.

In some schools, students identified their learning needs and in others these were still determined by the teacher. In terms of next learning steps there was also great variation with some having students identifying them ‘independently’ and others still needing teacher input.

Within this model, there were quite big variations in the way that other curriculum areas such as social sciences, science and technology were taught and this ranged once again from school to school and even within schools.

Junior school approaches tended to have some sort of provocation question or event which triggered an inquiry for the entire class. In some cases, this was for a short period of time for example a week and in others several weeks or an entire term. This approach provided teachers an opportunity to teach the skills of questioning and presenting findings which seemed to be foundation skills of a personalised learning curriculum.

Senior school classes tended to develop more individual inquiries and the students used the questioning and presentations skills that they had learned in their earlier years.

There seemed to be a mixture of assessment practices. Some tended to be ‘of’ learning and informed the teacher so that they could plan next steps but the children weren’t in the loop and others had started to include children in the loop.

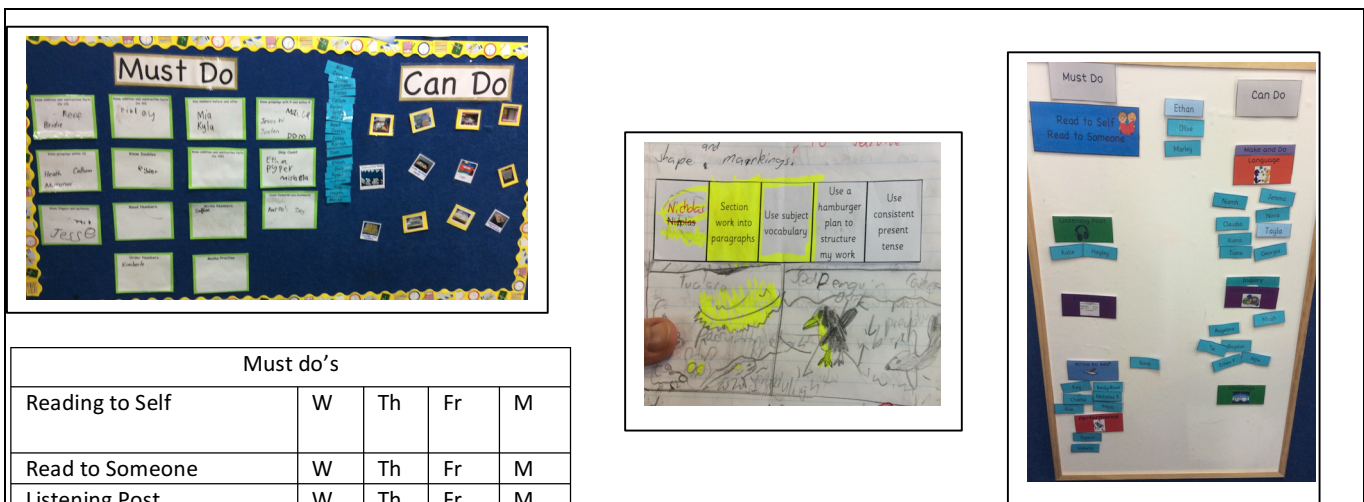
‘Differentiated learning’ was also still fairly teacher dominated and tended to be small group focused rather than individual child focused. Programmes of learning were still based on need but the needs tended to be grouped. Assessment practices tended to be of and for learning however student’s involvement in this process was still developing.

'Personalised learning' was evident in those schools which encouraged students to develop their own timetables as well as address their own learning needs. This was the approach where students really had the locus on control. They really 'drove' their learning and were active participants in designing what they were learning and when, based on what they knew about their learning needs. These schools also had a very clear understanding of student agency, assessment as a formative part of the learning process and helping students learn to learn.

All had various models of 'must do's and can do's and ways of students monitoring what they had achieved in the week. There was a range of systems of monitoring.

Must do's generally:

- Were related to the student needs – generic enough so that teacher workloads weren't HUGE but so that all students could have the same requirements. These developed as the capability of the students and teachers developed.
- Started on a Wednesday rather than a Monday (simple organizational structure that seemed to work)
- Were small enough pieces of paper to be glued into books (for those who used books)
- Included students setting goals and reflecting on what they completed with a pro forma sheet
- Required Students to note what they completed each day
- Included some method of accountability – names on the chart/ teacher checking lists



The first image shows a 'Must Do' and 'Can Do' board with various tasks and student names. The second image shows a student's writing plan with sections for 'Shape and markings', 'Section work into paragraphs', 'Use subject vocabulary', 'Use a hamburger plan to structure my work', and 'Use consistent present tense'. The third image shows another 'Must Do' board with tasks like 'Read to Self' and 'Read to Someone'.

Must do's				
Reading to Self	W	Th	Fr	M
Read to Someone	W	Th	Fr	M
Listening Post	W	Th	Fr	M
Word Work	W	Th	Fr	M
Work on writing	W	Th	Fr	M
Fitness	W	Th	Fr	M

Professional learning in these schools had included developing understanding in teachers and children of collaboration, metacognition and self-management. This process had developed over a number of years and in one case at least five years.

Teachers worked with each other across two or three traditional classes of children, they planned cooperatively on a daily basis and had shared responsibility for the wider group. The students in these personalised learning environments had a very good understanding of learning to learn and could identify their next steps across a range of areas. These same students attended workshops that met their learning needs. (very few needed to be reminded!).

Flexible spaces and technology were utilized to facilitate the approach and a systematic development of the skills, strategies and knowledge was in place across the school. For example, the concept of must do's and can do's and self-assessment started at the New Entrant level in simplified form.

When framing my findings against the themes from Melbourne paper I noted the following:

Theme One: Learners are central

1. a highly-structured approach that places the needs, interests and learning styles of students at the centre

I observed a continuum of development in this concept across schools.

In those that were further along the continuum, learners were at the centre of all decision making. From an early age in these schools, students developed the skills of being a self-managing learner so that increasingly they chose what they would work on and when; they chose how to present their findings and they also chose contexts knowing that they had to demonstrate particular skills. Teachers knew their students well as people and had developed strong relationships. They also had an understanding of what a 'student centric approach' looked like. The structure in 'behind' the scenes to develop the skills required was well thought through.

Those earlier on the continuum, were still developing their understanding of what it means to be a self-directed learner for both students and teachers.

All however recognised that 'Learning how to learn' and helping students to develop strategies that will help them to be successful were vital.

In yet other schools I visited, learners were at the centre but not necessarily making decisions about what they were to learn, where they learned and how they learned. These learners understood their next learning steps but didn't have the opportunity for decisions beyond this. This seemed to be more of an individualised approach to use Bray and McClaskey's definition.

- **engaged learners who are informed and empowered through student voice and choice**

It was interesting to talk with students in schools who were well along the continuum with their model of personalised learning. These students were extremely self-motivated. They thrived on the freedom to choose what they would work on when and to work on things that interested them; they spoke proudly of their learning and achievements.

Learning for these students did not just happen between 9.00 and 3.00pm and the use of technology was an integral part of the process. They would often 'google share' tasks with their teachers and families in the evenings or weekends. These students also had the flexibility to choose a 'work space'.

This 'freedom' relied heavily on school curricula that had a key competency approach and helped students to understand the concept of self-managing. Learning programmes were focused not only on what students were learning but why and how they were learning it. The skills of students to manage and challenge themselves, persevere and collaborate were developed as part of the learning process.

This was modelled by teachers and leaders.

- **assessment that is related to meaningful tasks and includes assessment for and from students**

The examples I saw of this once again for those who had moved along the continuum, had students at the centre. Students had learned the skills of learning to learn and assessing their own work against criteria and

exemplars. The skills of peer assessment had also been taught and students gave each other explicit feedback particularly in the google environment. The students understood that assessment was an integral part of learning from an early age.

- **a focus on improving student outcomes for all and a commitment to reducing the achievement gap.**

I did not visit any school that was not focused on this area and those well down the track of personalised learning were no different. Students achieved well when they understood the purpose of education and were an integral part of the process rather than the passive recipients of it. For some of the students who traditionally were in the 'underachievement tail' being able to own their learning was like giving them license to achieve. In a couple of cases that I discussed with school leaders, the results from students feeling like they had some say in their learning, were outstanding in terms of engagement and in norm referenced assessments. Their achievement was accelerated (two years in one) to use the definition that is currently being used by the Ministry of Education.

Theme Two: Information and Communications technology

- **ICT is a key enabler**

Having devices and systems in place for the use of the devices was a huge enabling factor. Generally, those that had personalised learning 'nailed' had 'one to one' devices and the students worked in a google environment. The skills to work in this space once again were developed as the students moved through the school so that by the time they reached year five or six (contributing schools) they were in an 'e' environment.

Schools had budgeted for sufficient devices (or had a BYOD policy), the technological support to ensure that devices were always working and the teachers and students understood the technological space. Students completed their learning tasks in different spaces and shared these with their teachers, peers and whanau. A 'e' timetable for the week was shared and students knew when to attend workshops and complete tasks.

Theme Three: Communities of Collaboration

- **promote a 'community of learning' approach and cultivate strong relationships between adults and students**

Classrooms in personalised learning schools were not the traditional isolated 'cells'. Some schools had been recipients of the Innovative Learning Space upgrades and were quite conducive to 'communities of students' working with each other however others made use of what they had. It was not the buildings that made the difference but the attitude of the people in the buildings towards really collaborating with each other. Once again this collaboration did not just happen, teachers had been involved in professional development to understand what true collaboration looked like and schools' structures and systems fostered and supported this practice.

Teachers in these schools saw their role differently. They saw themselves as facilitators or guides working and learning alongside students. The concept of 'ako' was evident.

- **develop and promote the notion of networks rather than existing in isolation**

The notion of networks in my sabbatical experience included not restricting students to working with peers but creating a 'school village' to educate the child. Students (and teachers) had the opportunity to network and learn from and with each other. Once again technology enhanced this capability.

- **have strong links with the home, community, local institutions, business and services.**

Parents and the community were involved in the education process to varying degrees. In some parents and whanau became resource people and were highly prominent in all aspects of the learning activities and in others they were not so prominent. This for some schools however was not for want of trying! The same could be said for as links with local business; some schools had developed strong links and these links provided authentic learning contexts and others were not there yet.

Implications

So where to now?

I have listed below some ideas for our development as a school as it is very clear that there is no 'one right way'. It really is like trying to 'build a plane while flying it' (Taking a Future focus in education- What does it mean? Rachel Bolstad).

The statements or questions are design to prompt my thinking.

Leaders

As Fullan, 2008, Morrison, 2006, Robertson, 2005 in various pieces of research stated, principals are extremely influential in regards to the processes culture and structure in their schools hence I think we need to be very clear that we understand what we are working towards if the goal is a personalised curriculum. Are we working towards a 'personalised school culture' or isolating this as personalised learning? If it is the former all of our systems and structures should reinforce the culture.

This role of leadership in 'driving' the approach is crucial. Leaders must be transformational, believe in their vision, surround themselves with people who support the vision and have the courage to 'stand firm' in the face of pressure for a number of areas.

So, as a leader am I:

- demonstrating learning-centered leadership
- clear about what personalised learning will look like in our school. Does our curriculum reflect this?
- helping to develop a set of values and working towards developing a culture in our school that focus on the learning of individuals
- developing networks and partnerships with other individuals, school or organisations that contribute to our development in personalised learning
- being courageous, leading change and using a best practice change process in order to lead the shift
- ensuring professional development is developing an understanding in teachers of the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to facilitate personalised learning.
- developing systems and structures to support this development in a sequential manner so that we are minimizing within school variation and being consistent as students move through the school.
- ensuring our school works as a community of learning, sharing responsibility, knowledge, skills and ideas

Teachers

Do our teachers understand:

- the complexity of personalised learning (as opposed to individualized learning) and why it could make a difference?
- metacognition and effective collaboration which are the practices that underpin personalised learning
- the concept of student centric approach to learning, student voice and choice
- how important it is to build a relationship first and foremost so that they know each child as a person and do the students know that teachers consider this to be important?
- the concept of the self-managing learner and the importance of key competency development.

Do our teachers:

- hand over the locus of control to students and use technology effectively to foster a personalised approach
- have high expectations of every learner and continue to build their confidence
- teach the required skills and knowledge
- have the opportunity to learn, access to relevant professional development, time to make mistakes and develop their skills
- collaborate with, support and learn from each other
- have a thorough understanding of assessment of and for learning and how to hand over the ownership of this to students
- take a strengths based approach to teaching and learning
- support and facilitate a diverse range of learning opportunities for students
- have a thorough understanding of the New Zealand Curriculum
- constantly reflect on who owns the classroom

Students

Do our students:

- Understand and articulate what they are learning, why and how to improve
- Have a safe and secure environment to learn in
- Have high expectations of themselves from the moment they start school
- Are our students empowered in the organisation of the learning environment?
- Do they have ready access to technology?
- Understand what it means to 'self-manage' and 'persist' when things are difficult
- Set their own goals, self-assess and reflect on their learning
- Understand their responsibilities in this approach

In summary personalised learning is not a new idea, but one that is not as prevalent in schools as I thought I would have found. I found a continuum of development and understanding in the schools I visited but notwithstanding this, great practice. The experience has confirmed for me that personalised learning has the potential to meet the needs far more effectively of today's and tomorrow's learners. It has helped me to focus the development in our school and I hope that this summary stimulates discussion and thinking amongst my colleagues.

References

- Bishop, R. & Berryman, M. (2006) *Culture Speaks: Cultural Relationships and Classroom Learning*. Huia publishers
- Bolstad, R. (2011) Taking a Future Focus in Education: What does it mean? An NZCER working paper from the Future- Focused Issues in Education(FFI) project
- Bray, B., & McClaskey, K. (2015). *Making Learning Personal*. California: Corwin.
- Gilmore, B (2015). *Personalising Learning in Primary Schools*. Sabbatical Report: www.educationalleaders.govt.nz
- Hargreaves, P. J. (2010). *Personalising Learning: Principals' Perspectives* (Thesis, Master of Educational Leadership (MEdLeadership)). The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10289/4296>
- Leadbetter,C. (2010) Education Innovation in the Slums <http://www.ted.com>
- Maharey, S. (2006) *New Zealand Principals Conference Address*. www.beehive.govt.nz
- Osbourne, M (2016) *Innovative learning Environments – White Paper* <http://www.core-ed.org/>
- Pink, D. (2009). *The puzzle of Motivation* <http://www.ted.com>

Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (2007) *Personalising Education: from research and policy to practice*. Education Policy and Research Division Office for Education Policy and Innovation Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Melbourne