

Explore elements of best practice in dual medium governance, leadership, curriculum design and delivery

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Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge and thank TeachNZ, The Ministry of Education for making Sabbatical Leave available to Principals. The opportunity to step away from a school environment and see what others in similar positions are doing is enriching, thought provoking, refreshing and challenging.

I acknowledge and thank the Te Puna School Board of Trustees for supporting my application for Sabbatical Leave.

I especially thank my school leadership and admin team, for leading the school whilst I was away. Along with our great teachers and support staff, they ensured the school continued seamlessly.

I also thank the principals and teachers of the schools I visited. Their openness and willingness to share made this inquiry valuable and useful

Purpose

The purpose of my sabbatical was to step away from my own dual medium school and to gain a broader perspective by visiting other dual medium schools to inquire, explore and research elements of best practice in governance, leadership, curriculum design and delivery.

I wanted to be able to reflect on the strengths and opportunities present in my dual medium school in order to be able to engage in some guided and informed strategic planning for the future development of my school.

Background and rationale

Te Puna School is a dual medium, full primary school on the edge of Tauranga City. We have all but lost our rural status with the increasing urban sprawl. We offer level 1 Maori medium education in a unit of 3 classes.

Our unit is named Te Puna Matauranga, and it is one of the first units of its type, dating back over 25 years. At that time, local Maori proactively responded to the emerging need for level 1 immersion primary education, as a result of the growth in the Kohanga Reo movement. Since that time the unit has grown to regularly accommodate 50+ children with 3 teachers.

Whanau have always played an important role in supporting and developing Te Puna Matauranga and it has been increasingly important to develop sound governance and management practises to ensure that statutory obligations are met, administrative and management requirements are in place, effective teaching and learning is in place and that whanau maintain a degree of autonomy, control and ownership. This can be a balancing act at times.

In 2015 we had a successful ERO visit and we were challenged with the task of continuing to "ensure that our rich curriculum more clearly reflects its dual medium delivery." Given that we have put a lot of work into aligning our curriculum delivery to our shared vision, we wondered what more was needed and how we might go about meeting that challenge.

When the opportunity to apply for a sabbatical came up, I decided that this would be a good focus of inquiry.

Methodology

In hindsight, I set out with unrealistic goals, given the timeframe, availability of other schools, and a dramatic Kidney Stone incident, surgery and recovery! Nonetheless, this was the plan:

Prior to the sabbatical: Organise Meeting dates with schools for intended visits.

Develop key questions and focus areas of inquiry

Attend the "Developing Strategic Thinking and Change Leadership" course at Waikato University Weeks 1-3

A series of School Visits to various Dual Medium school offering L1 Maori immersion classes..

Professional Readings

Objectives of the school visits to be include inquiry around :

- Strategic planning and integrating with Mainstream objectives
- Maintaining equity of experience for all within dual medium settings
- leadership, mentoring, appraisal & quality assurance
- Curriculum design and implementation- use of Marautanga o Aotearoa / NZC / Nga Whanaketanga / Te Waharau a Kura
- Assessment and reporting tools
- SM Data management, storage, analysis and reporting

Early Week 4

Personal reflection on findings - planning and thinking time. Plan meetings with whanau, school advisors, etc

Late Week 4

Hold 'initial findings' meetings with Whanau / BOT /Key staff. Give them copies of material to think and reflect on

Week 5/6

Attend NZPF Conference

Week 6-10: Personal development, rest, relaxation and recharge.

Post Sabbatical

Meet with key staff to review and reflect on findings. Consider systemic change or development that may be needed across a range of dimensions within our school.

Meet with School Whanau members, BOT, advisors and key personnel to 'workshop' -review and reflect on findings.

Meet with whanau to consider areas of development and possibilities as a result of the visits / information / findings.

Engage support of Advisors Maori /NZSTA-and my school whanau group to map out a plan of self review and strategic planning for my school

Findings

Visiting schools was a valuable exercise regardless of the focus of my inquiry. Schools are dynamic places. We are all in the same 'business' and it is always great to see how others go about doing the job we are all doing. I was inspired, challenged, motivated and encouraged by so much of what I observed in other schools.

All of the Principals that I made contact with and visited agree that dual medium education is excellent, but all expressed frustration about the extra workload created by its implementation. Common shared frustrations and concerns included:

- Parallel systems of planning and reporting, curriculum implementation, student monitoring and assessment.
- Dual Medium schools perceived (by some) as not holding the status or mana of Kura Kaupapa Schools and at times it can be hard to access contestable resources.
- Poorly catered for by SMS providers
- Te Waharoa Ararau implementation late to the game, slow to roll out. Clunky to use (First version)
- Difficult to staff - capable teachers proficient in the Reo are in high demand and short supply
- Effective Appraisal
- Reliever difficulties
- Accessing reliable, quality professional learning opportunities
- Engagement with Whanau
- Representation of Whanau in Governance roles
- Maintaining equity of experience for all students regardless of whether they are in mainstream or immersion classes
- Maintaining a sense of unity across the school
- Managing cultural understanding and acceptance
- Transition into immersion. Relationship with Kohanga and preschool
- Transition out. In some cases there are very limited secondary options for continued immersion.

Solutions to the challenges above were varied. It was valuable to hear how others tackled their challenges in the context of their own schools.

So what learning could I take?

There are issues that schools have no control over -such as the number of teachers available to teach in immersion settings. Those issues have to be parked.

Other issues we need to make more noise about and rattle cages. Access to reliable, quality PLD, for example is something we should be demanding. There is a general reticence to complain, for

fear of insulting or upsetting providers and in the long run, we do ourselves no favours if we do not speak up and encourage our kaiako and whanau to do as well.

Proactive engagement with RTM and Maori Support services is crucial as they are pushed for time and are often spread thinly.

Provision of SMS, LMS, and digital tools is something that we can be more vocal about as a community of schools. Vendors respond better to collective pressure. eTap seems to be the most user friendly and responsive for dual medium schools.

Te Waharoa a Kura has been a great tool, used by and appreciated by all schools I contacted, but it was generally agreed that continued development and more user advice and training is needed.

Clearly, those who had decided to implement Te Marautanga o Aotearoa across the whole school were finding it much less cumbersome than juggling 'the Marau' and NZC. Not all schools were prepared to do this, with a common obstacle being the fear of pushback from mainstream staff and parents. Schools that chose to implement Te Marautanga tended to have a higher percentage of Maori students in the Mainstream and implementation was managed gradually.

During the visits it became clear that it was going to be very hard to cite examples of good practice without sounding like an ERO publication. In all of the schools I visited, broad principles of inclusion, consultation, representation, fairness and a focus on student achievement underpinned the responses, I saw, to the challenges above. But each of us is exposed to localised influences and culture that mean that what works well in one school community may not work well in another.

Schools that felt that they were succeeding in the delivery of dual medium education had:

- Strong Maori Representation on the BOT, some schools have co opted whanau positions as of right, others have chosen to do away with these roles .
- Inclusive Board Practices- real engagement with Maori and non Maori in a range of settings, utilising local facilities, homes and Marae.
- Single school vision. The whole school united under one clear inclusive vision
- Curriculum streamlined. As stated, some have chosen to implement one curriculum, others have parallel versions of implementation plans.
- Strong links with feeder preschools / kohanga. Some have localised entry guidelines developed in conjunction with preschools. The most powerful of these was where the early childhood curriculum, Te Whariki, was used to form sets of aspirational milestone criteria for entry into the new entrant immersion class
- Strong Whanau Support
- Quality Teaching and learning experiences.
- High Expectations of Achievement for all Akonga
- Links with secondary schools

The inquiry gave me a broader perspective of dual medium education. It was valuable for many reasons but a significant outcome was affirmation that we are doing well and that the challenges we face, we do not face alone.

References

ERO "Educationally Powerful Connections With Parents and Whanau"

MOE "Ka Hikitia, Accelerating Success 2013-2017" Te Kawanatanga o Aotearoa