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PAPATOETOE HIGH SCHOOL

PRINCIPAL'S SABBATICAL

TERM 2, 2009

Through a combination of review of current school practice, literature research and school visits, establish an effective model of leadership development within a school setting.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The opportunity to have a one school term sabbatical is one that I am very thankful for and I am most appreciative of those who supported my application. I was indeed fortunate to be able to travel to several countries during my time off in a mixture of work, study and relaxation, and being 'divorced' from school and SPANZ duties for ten or so weeks certainly provided plenty of time for reflection and thinking .

The countries I visited (Australia, Brazil, Malaysia, Thailand, the Maldives, Singapore) were diverse in terms of culture, politics and educational opportunities and a highlight for me was the visits I made to schools. The hospitality afforded me by various principals, directors teachers and especially students was generous to the extreme and highlighted the importance of schooling in the lives of young people irrespective of their race, religion or economic circumstance.

During my sabbatical I also attended two significant conferences: the 17th Conference for Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Kuala Lumpur and the International Confederation of Principals Conference in Singapore. Several insightful and inspirational keynote speakers were a feature of both conferences, the most notable been Dr Lim Kok Wing (Malaysia) and Professor Kishore Mabubhani (Singapore).

I especially acknowledge the following for their assistance and support during my sabbatical:

1. The Papatoetoe High School board of trustees and especially the chairperson, Mr Ben Taufua, for supporting my application.
2. Mr Vaughan Couillault, associate principal, for being acting principal in my absence and doing an exemplary job in having to deal with some difficult issues.
3. The rest of the senior leadership team at Papatoetoe High School – Jenny, Lindy, Tim, Barry, Carol and temporary replacement Lloyd, for continuing your excellent teamwork and supporting Vaughan and staff throughout the term.
4. Robyn Muldrew, my PA, who kept me in the loop on the important matters and out of the loop on everything else.
5. Patrick Walsh, Paul Daley and Ros Robson for picking up the presidential duties of SPANZ.
6. The Honorable Anne Tolley, Minister of Education, for inviting me to the Commonwealth Education Ministers' Conference as part of the New Zealand delegation.

From my observations and discussions with other educationalists and exposure to the thoughts of several academics, it is apparent that the compulsory schooling sector in New Zealand is in relatively good heart, especially in terms of the quality of teaching that our students receive. There are areas we need to develop further and

these pose some challenges for our policymakers and politicians. Here are some thoughts – in no particular order:

1. Developing creative instincts

The New Zealand Curriculum provides scope for developing creative instincts in young people and the message about the need for creative minds was repeated at both major conferences I attended. At school level we need to capitalise on the flexibility and opportunity provided in the New Zealand Curriculum to develop creativity in its widest sense. Creativity is not just developed in the arts and music, but we need to provide students with opportunities to be a creative in science, business, technology, etc. Aligned to this are the opportunities that we provide to students to perform and present – it was suggested in one forum that high school students should be spending 30%+ of their time in group work and they should make at least ten formal presentations across subject areas by the time they leave school. The combined skills of creativity, teamwork and presentation are recognised as important 21st century skills.

2. Second language learning:

New Zealand scores badly in this area comparative to the other countries I visited and we are placing our young people at a disadvantage in a global world. It was interesting to note the promotion of tri-lingualism in two countries I visited, and from an early age. A school that I visited in Thailand was teaching English, Thai and Chinese from kindergarten age.

There was a strong message at the CCEM about the need to provide instruction in mother tongue languages and when we consider the original languages of many of our students in our multicultural schools, the message seems to be that these students will achieve better in an English language setting if we provide them with courses in their mother tongue as well.

Second language learning in New Zealand is hindered by a degree of historical academic arrogance – an attitude of “only bright students are able to learn another language” still exists and it will take a high level of political courage and political will to make second language learning a reality for all students from the time they enter school.

3. The Fourth Way:

Professor Andy Hargreaves’ model of *The Fourth Way* provides a particular challenge for New Zealand schools in the context of our self-managing governance model. Hargreaves contends that schools in a geographical area (large suburb, provincial city for example) have a collective responsibility for the achievement of all students in the area and that a cooperative, collaborative approach is the only way to achieve this. Inter-school competition is fine for sports, orchestras, debates, etc, but student achievement and success at school is too important to have a winners and losers approach.

The challenge for us in New Zealand relates to the way that our schools are resourced and the support at a political level of a business model of governance that promotes competition. As a principal I strongly favour our self-managing model but fully appreciate the advantage of collaborating with neighbouring 'competing' schools on area-wide student engagement and achievement initiatives.

EHSAS (Extending Higher Standards Across Schools) was clearly an attempt towards a 'Fourth Way' model but I believe it was too narrow in its scope and too tied to resourcing streams and milestone reports to be successful in a sustainable way.

4. School Design

Four schools that I visited – two in Brazil and two in Thailand – were extremely well designed and specified. The buildings were spacious, solidly built, durable and provided excellent teaching, learning and student leisure spaces. By comparison New Zealand schools, even our most modern ones, appear to be built on the cheap and provide inadequate shelter and facilities for students during non-class time.

5. Why teach what we teach

The relevance of the curriculum offered in 21st century schools was another common message encountered on my travels.

A lot of focus is given to what and how we teach – certainly I witnessed a lot of old style, chalk and talk, transmissional teaching that prepared students for memorisation type testing. Pedagogy in NZ schools is generally (but not always) more advanced.

However, I wonder if our teachers can effectively articulate to their students why they are teaching certain units of work. The often asked question by students, "Why are we doing this? It is boring", needs to be responded to thoughtfully, respectfully and with the bigger picture in mind. If the only answer is "because it is in the curriculum" or "you need to know this because you'll be assessed on it in the exam", then perhaps the students have a very valid point.

The 'bigger picture' might include contexts like overcoming social injustices, environmental issues or economic improvement/advantage.

SECTION TWO: AN IN-SCHOOL MODEL FOR IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING FUTURE SCHOOL LEADERS

INTRODUCTION:

The pathway to principalship is of particular interest to me and it is critical that the right people are attracted to this pathway and receive the support and personal development they require. As president of SPANZ I have had the opportunity to contribute on various reference groups to this very issue – for example, the development of the KLP (Kiwi Leadership for Principals) and the External Policy Group which is responsible for developing a school leadership strategy and associated plans.

Through my involvement as a council member for the ICP (International Confederation of Principals) I have had the opportunity to interact with principals from many other countries and to become familiar with their programmes for identifying and developing school leaders.

Other influences in my thinking have included:

- McKinsley report – *How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top* (2007)
- OECD report on school leadership
- BES – *Teacher Professional Learning and Development* (Helen Timperley et al)
- The work of Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves
- BES – *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why* (Viviane Robinson et al).
- Discussions with principal colleagues and academics
- Dame Geraldine Keegan – ex-principal, St Mary's School, Derry, Northern Ireland.

I firmly believe that any emerging school leaders must be seen first and foremost as educational leaders and they need to have developmental opportunities in this field – ideally they should be involved in postgraduate study. Development of generic leadership skills is also a requirement and we need to realise that most people that enter the teaching profession have had very little if any formal training in leadership.

The goal of the model that I am proposing is to influence future/ emerging school leaders to pursue high level postgraduate study in educational leadership.

ISSUES/EXISTING BARRIERS FOR EMERGING SCHOOL LEADERS

In a fairly typical secondary school career path one could expect to gain some management experience after about five years of classroom teaching, assume a leadership role as an HOD, for example, after ten years and move into senior leadership after fifteen or so years.

This means that teachers are often moving into leadership roles in their late twenties and early thirties – often coinciding with a very busy time in their personal lives, eg,

having a young family, actively involved in sport, etc. The casualty from this lifestyle/career clash is likely to be the pursuit of a postgraduate qualification – a time consuming and costly exercise.

A couple of scenarios then emerge:

- i. Potential school leaders who have an excellent record as classroom teachers are out competed in the job market by those with postgraduate qualifications (understandably) and they then start to look at other career pathways and opportunities.
- ii. People are appointed to leadership roles including principalship and though they may do a great job, there is the potential for risk – for themselves, those that they lead and their schools – because they have not had exposure to certain issues and avenues of thinking.

In my years as a principal I have interviewed dozens of applicants for positions at HOD level and above and I am constantly amazed at the large number of candidates who cannot articulate a vision or philosophy for education or give priority to student learning and student achievement in relatively straightforward questions.

THE MODEL

The purpose of the programme is to provide attendees with a wider perspective on educational issues and to encourage them to pursue further study. In no way will it attempt to replace or duplicate existing tertiary programmes. The proposed model is suited for up to ten (ideally 6-8) staff, runs over the course of the school year and is composed of a mixture of whole group sessions and individually tailored work.

- Selection into programme
- Group sessions (2 per term)
- Individual work programme
- Presentation to the group
- Evaluation

Selection

Staff would self-select but be required to make a commitment to attend all sessions and attend to the individual work programme. It may be the case that certain members of staff are 'shoulder tapped' and encouraged to join the programme, and if numbers exceed the available spots then some sort of selection process would occur.

Ideally there would be a range of experience in the group from those without current management responsibilities through to HODs and senior leadership.

With total self-selection there is a possible problem that some unsuitable candidates would put themselves forward (eg, too early or too late in their career) but having a group solely selected by the principal would run the risk of being perceived as elitist

or 'the chosen few' type syndrome. A blend of the two is therefore the preferred option.

Group sessions

The group would be a distinct professional learning community, meeting twice per term at after school meetings to discuss and be introduced to:

- Generic leadership issues
- Developing a vision and philosophy for education
- Current NZ education issues and trends
- Global education issues
- Sources of professional reading

Each member of the group would give a short twenty minute presentation relating to a current issue they have researched.

Initially the group sessions would be facilitated by the principal but that involvement would decrease as the programme progresses. Visiting experts could well be involved also.

Individual work programme

The individual programme takes into account the relevant experience of the staff member and involves:

- Maintaining a *Journal of My Thoughts* as promoted by Dr John Edwards as a tool for developing their metacognitive skills.
- Relevant professional reading (as discussed with the principal).
- Developing networks
- Prepare a presentation on an agreed issue
- Develop a personal career plan

EVALUATION

A measure of success will be that programme attendees enrol in postgraduate study and ultimately gain promotion.

There is a scope to develop the model further by establishing a partnership with a tertiary provider – I have observed such a model in St Mary's School in Derry, Northern Ireland, under the guidance of Principal Dame Geraldine Keegan (now retired). Potential partners have been identified and preliminary discussions held but I am unable to provide details in this report because there is some sensitivity surrounding these 'negotiations'. With the approval of our board I intend to launch our in-school model in term 4, 2009.

SECTION 3 (part A):	REPORT ON 17TH CCEM (CONFERENCE OF COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS), KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, 14-19 TO JUNE 2009
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INTRODUCTION

As president of SPANZ I was privileged to receive an invitation from the Honorable Anne Tolley, Minister of Education, to be part of the NZ delegation to attend the 17th CCEM. The conference was composed of five forums: Ministerial Meeting, Vice-Chancellors' Forum, Stakeholders' Forum, Teachers' Forum and Youth Forum. I attended the Stakeholders' Forum along with Professor Alister Jones (Dean, School of Education, Waikato University) as the New Zealand delegates.

The theme of the conference was *Education and the Commonwealth: Towards and Beyond Global Education Goals and Targets*, with the Stakeholders' Forum having a focus on *Making Connections and Building Partnerships*. To this end the forum addressed four sub-themes:

1. Making inclusive access and learning a reality, targeting groups who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion.
2. Achieving a continuum in education – from early childhood to tertiary.
3. Re-defining quality in education – examining the contexts, content, input processes and outcomes that help education achieve social change,
4. Realising the potential of non-state actors.

I have focussed on workshops relating to the last two sub-themes as they had more direct relevance to a New Zealand context when considering the degree of deprivation in many developing Commonwealth countries.

OVERVIEW

I will not provide details in this report of the various keynotes and panel presentations that I attended over the four days of the conference. Most of the papers are available on the conference website www.17ccem.com

Many of the keynote addresses identified and quantified the nature of the problems faced by many Commonwealth countries as they attempt to achieve "Education for All". There was a lot of rhetoric expressed on possible solutions which was understandable given the complexity of issues and the unwillingness of participants to openly criticise the policies of fellow member countries.

From a New Zealand perspective the numbers are staggering. Emeritus Professor, Dr Lim Kok Wing (Malaysia) in his keynote address described the world as a very unequal place:

- Of 6.7 billion people, 900 million live in the 57 'developed countries'
- More than 1.2 billion people live below the poverty line (earn less than US\$1/day)

- 1 billion people are illiterate (unable to read or write the own name)
- Less than 40% of school age children in developing countries are enrolled in schools
- Of those enrolled 60% drop out after just six years of primary school
- Less than 1% of what the world spent on weapons annually could have put every child in school by year 2000
- 3 billion people under 25

He went on to say that the divide between the wealthy and poor countries is deepening because of factors such as the brain drain from developing countries and ICT access and infrastructure. In reference to Commonwealth countries, Dr Lim suggested that the British system of education only reinforces the divide between rich and poor people because of access to it and that it is time for developing nations to reinvent the definition of what it is to be educated. He posed the question, “After 60 years of presumably working for the Common-Wealth of the nations, why is the prevailing commonality that of poverty and inequality?”

What is evident is that in the Commonwealth what is not common is equality, opportunity or wealth. What is common, however, is the desires, dreams and hopes of the people and ‘that they want to be recognised for their unique gifts and talents, and be respected for their heritage and their traditions’.

Dr Lim Kok Wing’s address set the scene for the Stakeholders’ Forum and challenged delegates in their thinking on possible solutions – quite clearly we are failing in our quest for an education for all. The following are other snippets and quotes of interest from forum proceedings that I attended:

- Stephen Bourke (Cambridge University Press) – proposed that world religious leaders should provide more leadership on education issues by influencing governments.
- Ms Simone de Comarmond (Seychelles, chairperson foundation) – on defining what it is to be educated said, “Knowledge from books stay in books. Memorisation is not modern education – young people shouldn’t just be able to read a book but to write their own book.”

On quality education for maths, science and technology.

- Dr Cheah Ui Hock (Malaysia) – Outlined that in the centralised national curriculum adopted by SE Asian countries a problem exists because the curriculum is not implemented the way that the writers intended or anticipated. There was a reluctance for teachers to change from a transmissional style of teaching and they focused on knowledge required to pass exams rather than on developing thinking and values.
- Dr Emilo Afonso (Mozambique) – “It is not only about what and how but why we teach what we teach”, ie, what do we value? She challenged delegates to redefine “development” to take account of environmental degradation and social injustice in designing our curricular.

- Mr Jans Mailon (Lego Education) gave an entertaining presentation of how Lego can be used to address the paradox of the need to be both systematic and creative in developing maths, science and technology abilities.

On the role of leadership and management in delivering quality education:

- Dr Khair Mohamed Yusof (MOE, Malaysia) – presented a mathematical model for assessing competencies of principals. Six areas including 26 competencies were identified and assessment results could be provided on a state-wide and individual basis. Training could then be targeted to address identified deficiencies. There was no attempt to link any of the 26 competencies to student learning outcomes. It is difficult to see such a model being accepted in New Zealand.
- Prof Petros Pashiardis (Cyprus) – co-author of *International Handbook on the Preparation and Development of School Leaders*. Based on findings of his research believes that policymakers should:
 - Foster acceptance of new roles and functions of principalship
 - Create institutional support systems that lead to capacity building of principals
 - Explain to principals what ‘old’ functions should go and what should stay
 - Improve incentives for principals
- Professor Alister Jones (University of Waikato, NZ) – emphasised the need to distribute leadership so that the job is do-able. “Leadership needs to be adaptive, flexible, responsive to external and internal pressures.” Professor Jones outlined the role of leadership and five long-term studies in New Zealand (including ICT/laptop policy, assessment for learning, raising achievement for Maori). The studies show that quality leadership is key to producing sustainable positive outcome. Such leadership is characterised by having a distributive model, effective planning, effective resource management and communications and a sound understanding of the change process.

On technical and vocational skills acquisition:

- Mr David Atchaorena (UNESO) – there is an ongoing debate as to what competencies are needed. What are the new competencies? Employability requires a new set of skills, a core of key competences is required in order to function in a changing workplace. The new competencies were described as: adaptability / ability to communicate / take initiative / problem solving / teamwork / ICT skills.
- Mr George Afiti (Kenya) – “Job seekers are skill seekers.” Labour market signals point to opportunities in ‘green jobs’, ICT, agri-business, transitional arts and crafts.
- Dr Janet Brown (CEO, SQA Scotland) – defined the skills required as identified in Scotland:

- i. Core (literacy, numeracy, ICT, etc)
- ii. Employability
- iii. Enterprise and entrepreneurial skills
- iv. A specific vocational skills – should have parity of esteem with academic.

On private sector involvement in transnational education (TNE):

- Mr Guy Perring (British Council, Malaysia) – TNE represents a new market for international students. Students can gain an overseas degree or other qualification at a lower price, provides better job opportunities, provides an international learning experience while being able to remain at home.
- Dr Rozilini Fernandez Chung (Malaysian QA) – there are 444 private higher education institutions, including 20 universities, in Malaysia providing many undergraduate programmes. 70% percent of foreign students study in private higher education institutions.

On international school partnerships:

- Dr Karen Edge (Institute of Education, UK) – a goal for each school in the UK is to have at least one overseas partner by 2011.

Listening to other presenters at this workshop I reflected on the New Zealand situation where many schools have a sister or partner school relationship with schools in Japan that were typically initiated some twenty years ago. In the main these partnerships have been sustained. Is the time now more appropriate for the Zealand schools to seek partner schools in other Asian countries or the Pacific Islands. Some have initiated such contacts with formal MoU's but this is an exception rather than the norm.

Research conducted by Dr Edge on international school partnerships involving UK schools gave indications of the benefits of these partnerships to students involved.

General comments, points of interest:

- The targets of 20% of annual budget / 6% of GDP expenditure on education for Commonwealth countries was mentioned often. I do not know how NZ fares in relation to these targets but will investigate.
- In a 15 year period the number of children in Mozambique went from 3 million to 6 million.
- As a condition attached to a loan from the IMF, Latvia had to agree to reduce the salaries of teachers by 16-20%. Teacher salaries are the single largest cost in vote education for all nations.
- The World Bank, on a similar theme, has proposed to put cameras into schools to monitor teacher activities in those countries receiving support from them.

- Promoting the development of mother tongue languages is key to improving the literacy levels and subsequent second language acquisition was a clear message throughout several workshops / presentations.
- The wife of the Malaysian prime minister, a very influential person in that nation's education policy making, especially in early childhood, advocated in local media for Malaysian students to learn a third language.

The Malaysian people were wonderful hosts and genuinely proud of their country. A very special school visit after the conference closing portrayed this passion and loyalty and I'll provide some detail of this visit in section four of this report.

**SECTION 3 (part B): REPORT ON ICP (INTERNATIONAL
CONFEDERATION OF PRINCIPALS)
CONVENTION, SINGAPORE, 6-9 JULY 2009**

The Singapore Academy of Principals organised this bi-annual conference and gathered an impressive line-up of keynote speakers and workshop presenters for the 1500 delegates (including 89 from New Zealand) from around the world. In my role as SPANZ president, I also attended the ICP Council meeting that preceded the convention. Apart from general business matters there was an informative presentation by the Ontario Principals' Association on the extensive work that they do to support principals in that part of Canada, which includes the contract for principal licensure training. In 2011 the ICP Convention will be based in Ontario and council voted (13-12) for the 2013 convention to go to Dublin, Ireland (over Cairns, Australia).

Presentations by the various keynote speakers are available on the ICP online website and I don't intend to include any detail in this report. Dr Kishore Mahbubani (National University of Singapore) was a stand-out and his latest book, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*, is an excellent, thought-provoking and challenging read.

Professor Andy Hargreave and Michael Fardyk (Taking IT Global) were the other stand-out presenters in what was an excellent line-up.

Along with a representative from each of England, Canada and Singapore, I was asked to present on identification and development of principals in our country. Despite each of the four countries having quite different governance models, it was significant to note that they have all increased levels of support to the development of their school principals in recent years.

SECTION 4: SCHOOL AND INSTITUTIONAL VISITS

INTRODUCTION

During my time on sabbatical I was very fortunate to visit several schools in very diverse countries - Brazil, Malaysia, Thailand, Maldives. Although the level of resources and infrastructure varied widely, the one commonality that was very evident was the joy that young people receive from their learning experiences even though the style of teaching was more than often transmissional and didactic.

1. Brazil

My time in Brazil was primarily spent on marketing for international students but there was also the opportunity to visit some schools (four in total) with the possibility of establishing a partnership with one of them. The compulsory school sector in Brazil is characterised by:

- Private schools are significantly better resourced than state schools
- Primary schools (up to year 10) are governed and funded at a provincial level.
- Secondary schools (years 11-13) are governed and funded by central government.
- Virtually all schools, state and private, run dual sessions with typical sessions being morning 7:30 am to 12:00 pm afternoon 12:30 pm to 5:00 pm.
- Teachers also worked either the morning or afternoon session although some earned extra money by working both.
- Security was very tight and schools that I visited with had guards on gates (unarmed) and gates locked or had card-type security entry systems. There was no apparent need for such a high level security.
- Playing fields are a rarity. In Marceio there is a single site hosting six large secondary schools with only two football fields to share between them.
- The design and construction of classroom blocks and student leisure areas in the private schools I visited was impressive and very practical – multistory, spacious, durable, with excellent provision for shade and shelter.
- ICT provision for students is at a much lower level than most New Zealand schools.

Snippets from some of the visits:

- i. Colegio Guilherme Dumont Villares (Sao Paulo) – new entrant to year 13 equivalent. The most extreme example of the self managing school that I have

visited. The principal, Eliana Baptista Pereira Ann, was also the owner of the school along with her husband (obviously there was a family money to start with). The school started very small but has grown to 1500+ students and is situated in a relatively wealthy area. Eliana is a trained biology teacher and her daughter also teaches at the school, is currently a senior manager and is primed to take over as principal at some future date. The school ran dual sessions, is relatively well resourced and class sizes were typically less than 30.

- ii. Positivo (Curitiba). Positivo as an education and IT enterprise in Southern Brazil founded in 1972 with a single classroom and print shop. The owner had an interest in computing and established some after school computer classes as a means of extra income. In time this led the formation of a school and computer business that is growing exponentially, such that there are now 25,000 students studying in Positivo schools and universities in southern Brazil, and the group's education portals serve a virtual community of 2.4 million students, parents and teachers. I visited a junior high school and was impressed with the infrastructure and layout of the campus.
- iii. Schools in Maceio: I made a brief visits to two very contrasting schools in the northern city of Maceio. A private secondary school was similar to those visited in Curitiba and Sao Paulo, but the government a primary school I went to was a completely different story. Space was limited, air-conditioning was non-existent, resources scarce and facilities for teaching staff were very poor.

2. Malaysia

As part of the 17th CCEM I visited Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seksyen 5 – a very high performing secondary school (1880 students) that was selected to be part of the school visits section of the conference. There were only two overseas delegates on the visit – Kate Gainsford (NZPPTA) and me – others who had their names down never showed up and missed out on a truly memorable experience. We were transported to the school on a 45-seater coach with our own police escort!

We were humbled by the welcome we received, traditional Malaysian, and indeed by the hospitality afforded us. The visit lasted over three hours and was almost entirely conducted by students who educated and entertained us. Students and staff were unquestionably proud of the school which featured a large unit for special needs students. There was also a strong sense of national pride.

A summary of highlights of the visit:

- A chemistry lesson conducted by the students that linked color changes of various Redox reactions with colors found in nature – flowers, leaves, crystals and seashells. One of the best lessons I have ever observed.
- An overview of the school's vision, philosophy, history and achievements.
- Interactions with special needs students and observing them doing very intricate craftwork.

- Visiting the ‘self-access learning’ room – a specialist room for students to gain assistance in English language via self-instruction and quality feedback.
- Students explaining special programmes in mathematics recovery, computer graphics and media.
- A concert featuring traditional Malaysian cultural dance, martial arts and a very unique synchronised speech making ‘choir’ that apparently performs competitively against other schools.
- Interactions with the principal and senior staff. The school is obviously well led, student centred and high achieving.

3. Thailand

I visited two schools in Bangkok, both private and very well appointed:

- i. St Andrews International School caters for new entrance to school leaver and is run very much on the British system even to the extent that its term times are linked to the UK not to Thailand. The majority of teachers are ex-pats from the UK and fees are expensive, even by New Zealand international student fee standards.
- ii. Kidzone Bilingual School. A private school on three sites that caters for preschool (2 year olds) to school leavers and also has a boarding facility. The majority of students are Thai and fees were at a much lower level than the international school although the facilities were equally impressive. The director of the school (owner) and her husband have a daughter studying at a New Zealand secondary school.

The principal of that school (BDSC) invited me along for this visit and it began with a traditional Thai welcome. If each of the school is its emphasis on promoting foreign languages. Even though it is called Kidzone Bilingual School, all students actually learn three languages – English, Thai and Chinese. We visited classrooms with five year olds were learning English (a very scary situation for secondary principals!). We were guided around the school by a small group of very intelligent, well-spoken senior students.

4. Maldives

Mike Leach (Botany Downs Secondary College) and I visited three schools in Male, capital city of the Maldives. Prior to the school visits we met with one of the associate ministers of education, Dr Ahmed Ali Maniku, and other senior officials of the ministry of education who outlined the various challenges they are facing.

A new president has recently been elected in the Maldives following 30 years of rule by his predecessor. Education has been identified as a priority for the new government and this is evident in the appointment of those at the helm – the minister of education has a PhD from Australia, both associate ministers have PhDs from New Zealand and the permanent secretary has postgraduate qualifications from the UK. Challenges that impact on the country’s education system are:

- i. The quality of teachers. Many teachers, especially in the outlying islands, are untrained. A lot of teachers who teach English are themselves English second language learners coming mainly from India. Pedagogy is mainly didactic and transmissional – chalk and talk and memorisation.
- ii. Male is incredibly overcrowded, has high youth unemployment and drug abuse that pose significant social problems.
- iii. The outer islands are very isolated. The education system was previously highly centralised based in Male but the new government has moved towards a degree of decentralisation and has established seven districts each with its own supervisor.

Mike and I presented a seminar to approximately 100 principals, deputy principals, ministry of education officials and personnel from their teacher training institution. Our theme was on raising student achievement via strong school leadership and it was obvious from the level of questioning and the interest shown after the seminar our story was of interest. There is no principals association in the Maldives and we sowed the seed for them to establish one.

The permanent secretary for education, Mrs Anunya Mamodee, then hosted us and took us to three schools – all single sex, dual session secondary schools. The problems articulated earlier were immediately evident – crowded classrooms, low level of resourcing (books, ICT), didactic teaching methods. Despite this the students were great, attentive, on task, eager to learn – especially in the girls’ schools. We spoke to a number of students in the many classes we visited and couldn’t help but be impressed with the enthusiasm and hopes and dreams they held.

The school’s visited during sabbatical were a real highlight for me. There is something very powerful and special about witnessing the joy of learning. Two of the countries, Malaysia and the Maldives, were Muslim, Thailand mainly Buddhist and Brazil mainly Christian. Adherence to their particular faith was evident in most of the schools visited but actually showed me that there were more similarities than differences in the various belief systems. As an example I share the following which was emblazoned on a permanent wall in the very Muslim SMK Seksyen 5 School in Kuala Lumpur.

TAKE TIME

Take time to think it is a source of power	Take time to be friendly it is the road to happiness
Take time to play it is the secret of perpetual youth	Take time to laugh it is music to the soul
Take time to read it is the foundation of wisdom	Take time to give it is too short a day to be selfish
Take time to pray it is the greatest power on earth	Take time to work it is the price of success
Take time to love and be loved it is God given privilege	Take time to do charity that is the key to heaven