

Sabbatical Report Title: Leadership – the product of interactions

Author: Dr Wendy Bamford, Wanaka Primary School

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'Empowering a Community of Learners'

Acknowledgements:

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Finally I wish to thank Dr. David Stewart, Ariki founder and my long-time mentor for many years, for continually provoking my thinking and stimulating my passion for my work. He has inspired and challenged who I am as a teacher and school leader continuously over the years. With David's passing early in 2013 it is timely that this report is published – sadly he was too ill to read it in its final form. God bless David I bet you are already setting up QLCs in heaven to develop the learning community up there! Be assured you have made a difference to so many teachers, principals and schools. Rest in peace my friend.

Executive Summary:

Leadership in schools is about people, relationships and interactions, with staff, students and the community. It is about continually improving student outcomes and making a positive difference for our kids.

This report links the concept of 'leadership as a product of interactions' with a consideration of the notion of learning communities, and leadership within those communities. Ariki is then reflected on in light of its contribution to building professional interactions, leadership and learning community.

Purpose:

Teachers are not just a group of people with identified skills, plucked from the community and charged with processing young lives into productive economic units, but rather are qualified, thoughtful people who live large portions of their lives within the school and clearly operate most effectively when respected, supported and challenged within a predominantly positive milieu. Every day they make countless thought choices which could be variously defined as prudent,

moral, or just systematic. It is in this area where they make choices which are then exposed to critical reflective discussion that separates the 'good' teachers from others. Teaching is predominantly an intellectual endeavour. Leadership also is an intellectual endeavour, but a role we seem to develop on the job and one we rarely get time to closely analyse.....it just happens! That's how it feels sometimes anyway! This report is the writer's chance to explore leadership as interactions within a school learning community to add rigour and reflection to thinking and enacting within a distributed leadership context.

'School leadership is the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, pupils and parents toward achieving common education aims' according to Wikipedia. Richard Elmore defines leadership as 'the guidance and direction of instructional improvement' (Elmore, 2000, p.13). Leadership in school can also be seen as thinking and acting in a given situation so as to facilitate teaching and learning.

We need to redefine and refine our forms of leadership as we step into a dynamic, but relatively uncharted territory of learning communities and network learning, whilst at the same time work with the imposition of the Ministry's National Standards, compliant one size fits all reporting systems and the threat of league tables, performance pay, and 'teaching to the test' that may yet still be on the horizon.

Principals can create the conditions for change, even imposed change, through professional development for staff and developing systems, **but it is the interactions with teaching colleagues in both formal and informal settings that are important in shaping teachers' instructional changes and bringing about any improvement in student outcomes.**

This report links the concept of leadership as a product of interactions and looks at how this leadership supports the enhancement of a school as an effective learning community and the need for distributive leadership within those communities. Lastly the report looks at ways in which Ariki protocols and practices contribute to a learning community which values the learning of all and how Ariki values work within a distributed leadership perspective in a school.

Background and Rationale:

Schools face many challenges from child poverty to changes in technology that are creating a global communication revolution. Harris (2008) puts forward the notion of distributed leadership that focuses on how the practices of leadership create collaborative learning networks across organisational and inter-organisational boundaries, promoting the collective capability to co-construct knowledge for the purpose of achieving educational outcomes. Distributive leadership under this notion is not a flattening of hierarchy, not a delegation of tasks, not a bossless team, or a leadership substitute approach; it is a more fluid notion in which leadership is a web of activities

and interactions spread across people and situations. Its effectiveness depends on the utilisation of expertise focused on co-construction of knowledge.

Harris sees the need for distributed leadership to go beyond individual schools, if its knowledge and capacity building potential is to be realised. Each part of the education system is embedded within a larger system, with leadership needing to be distributed both within and across networks of systems. Robinson (2004) believes that more focus is needed on the educational content of the leadership influence process. It is not the distribution of leadership per se, but **how** it is distributed.

Before linking the elements of learning community, distributed leadership and Ariki this report explores each aspect independently.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

1. Involvement in a Professional Learning Community programme through PPLC groups over the last 10 years.
2. Involvement in the Ariki Project over the last five years as a principal at Wanaka Primary School, where all staff have participated in Ariki initiatives.
3. Involvement as a regional facilitator to provide training and support in Ariki protocols in 10 Central Otago schools, 6 Southland schools and 4 Dunedin schools over the last 3 years.
4. Acting as an Ariki Director for 5 years and benefitting from the mentorship of Dr David Stewart as well as the intellectual and pedagogical challenge, the professional support and sharing of working with the 4 other principals who are also Ariki Directors.
5. Studying 21st century leadership styles as a doctoral thesis in 2003 where attributes of effective leadership were explored; this has led to my thinking and action around distributed leadership, leading a 'learning community' and the alignment these have with the Ariki protocols.
6. Focused reading during my sabbatical leave to read, think about and reflect on the readings and research, and to align this with my own work within Wanaka Primary School. What follows is a drawing together of the key notions around learning communities, distributive leadership and Ariki protocols as a means of living the vision and of 'empowering a community of learners'.
7. A Google survey (see appendix) to gauge teacher and principal feedback around the concepts of learning community, leadership and the role of Ariki was sent to teachers in a number of Ariki schools. A summary of responses is considered in the final part of the report.

FINDINGS

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) describe schools as living systems interconnected by mutual influence. These living systems have communities of practice where people come together for mutual engagement and develop a shared repertoire of how they do things together. They have networks of communication. Communities of practice need leaders who can design a culture in which leadership is distributed in an emerging and benevolent way, so the community engages in robust dialogue in an evidence informed and grounded manner about the best means to promote goals of deep and broad learning for all. Networked, evidence informed research derived practices personalise every school as a learning community. This gives teachers more voice in the profession and school based decisions that are made, and spread innovation.

Griffin (cited by Sergiovanni, 1994, p.154) believes that as principals and teachers inquire together they create **community**. Inquiry forces debate among teachers about what is important. **Inquiry** promotes the understanding and appreciation for the work of others. Inquiry helps principals and teachers become a community of learners. Principals along with teachers are learners too, questioning, investigating and seeking solutions for school improvement. Sergiovanni (1994, p. 214) explains that 'sources of authority for leadership are embedded in shared ideas not in the power of a position'.

A professional learning community is characterised by; shared values and vision, collective responsibility for students' learning, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, and the promotion of group, as well as individual, learning. The *Effective Professional Learning Communities Project* (Stoll et al., 2006) definition of a learning community is 'has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning.' The collegial and facilitative participation of the principal, who shares leadership, is an important part of a professional learning community culture. Culture emerges from community. When people come together and work toward a common goal a community is formed. In schools that goal is learning.

Teacher characteristics in professional learning communities include; having a clear sense of mission, sharing a vision of the conditions they must create to achieve the mission, working together in collaborative teams to determine the best practice to achieve the mission, organising into groups headed up by teacher leaders, focusing on student learning, being goal and results oriented, collaborating with each other, holding shared values and beliefs, committing themselves to continuous improvement, and seeing themselves as life-long learners (Hord, 1997).

School culture is one of the most complex and important concepts in education. (Stoll, 1998). Stoll explains culture as the deeper level of basic assumption and belief that is shared by members of an organisation that operates unconsciously, and defines an organisation's view of itself and its

environment. Culture describes how things are and act as a screen or lens through which the world is viewed and is often described as the way we do things around here. School culture is most clearly seen in the ways people relate to and work together, the management of the school's structures, systems and physical environment, and the extent to which there is a learning focus for both pupils and adults.

Professional learning communities describe schools in which teachers and administrators in a school continuously seek and share learning, and act on what they learn. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals, so students benefit. They are communities of continuous inquiry and improvement. Current educational reforms in New Zealand place a great pressure upon the relationship between leadership and school improvement. The dominant message from the research base is unequivocal – effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and on the achievement of students (Leithwood & Janzi, 2000). Extending leadership responsibilities beyond the principal is shown to be an important lever for developing effective professional learning communities in schools.

Rosenholtz (1985) maintained that teachers who felt supported in their on-going learning and classroom practices were more committed and effective than those who did not receive such confirmation. Support through teacher networks, co-operation among colleagues and expanded professional roles increased teacher efficacy in meeting student needs. Further, Rosenholtz found that teachers with a high sense of their own efficacy were more likely to adopt new classroom behaviours and also more likely to stay in the profession. Rewards of community tend to be internal rather than external. The sense of common purpose, of responsibility for each other, and of achieving something that is morally good serves to unite people in community. Rewarding or punishing people (salary increases, position advancement, and yesperformance pay!!!) are barriers to learning communities. Tying community performance to unrealistic measures of success creates a pressure, rather than a desire for performance. Enforcing collaboration among large numbers of teachers may fall flat. Communities decide their own size and will achieve because of their internal desire for success. They flourish as long as members feel a need and desire to work together.

Well known now in education are the cultural norms Stoll & Fink (1996) identified that positively influence school improvement;

- Shared goals – we know where we are going
- Responsibility for success – we must succeed
- Collegiality – we are working on this together
- Continuous improvement – we can get better
- Lifelong learning – learning is for everyone
- Risk taking – we learn by trying something new
- Support – there's always someone there to help
- Mutual respect – everyone has something to offer

- Openness – we can discuss our differences
- Celebration and humour – we feel good about ourselves

These norms are interconnected and feed off each other. They do not just represent a snapshot of an effective school. They focus on fundamental issues of how people relate to and value each other and the interactions and inter relationships of the norms. They are the key elements identified as attributes of an effective culture, and hence an effective learning community.

DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Glickman et al. (2001, p.49) terms an improving school as a 'school that continues to improve student learning outcomes for all students over time'. At the top of their list of the characteristics of an improving school appears 'varied sources of leadership, including distributed leadership'. Similarly research by Silins & Mulford (2002) has shown that student outcomes are more likely to improve where leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and where teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them.

'Distributed leadership is first and foremost about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines and structures....A distributed perspective frames leadership practice in a particular way; leadership practice is viewed as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers and their situation' (Spillane, 2005, p.144).

Rather than viewing leadership practice as a product of a leader's knowledge and skill, the **distributed** perspective defines it as the **interactions between people and their situation**. These interactions, rather than any particular action, are critical in understanding leadership practice (Spillane, 2005). Leadership is further described as a system of interacting practices that is collective more than the sum of the individual actions of leaders.

School leadership for improvement is imperative in the seven critical areas (Spillane, 2004); distributed leadership, instruction, culture, human resources, strategic planning, external development and micropolitics. Any co-leadership relies on the leaders having shared values, goals and aspirations. Effective leadership is perceived by followers in terms of the leaders; human capital (knowledge, skills and expertise), cultural capital (interactive styles that are valued in particular contexts), social capital (a person's network by connections and the prevalence of norms such as trust, collaboration and a sense of obligation), economic capital (money and other resources) (Spillane, 2005).

Distributed leadership therefore means multiple sources of guidance and direction through a common culture. *'It is the glue of a common task or goal – improvement of instruction and a common frame of values for how to approach that task'* (Elmore, 2000, p.15). The job of those in formal leadership roles is primarily to hold the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship. Their

core role is to create a common culture of expectations around the use of individual skills and abilities (Harris, 2005).

School leaders are important gatekeepers to change and development, guiding their schools in a clear and purposeful direction. Working through teams and individuals is common in the management of change. Harris (2005) noted the difficulties of adopting models of distributed leadership, listing the pitfalls as; the challenge to authority and ego, top down management structures, and functions and systems that maintain bureaucratic and hierarchical structures. Distributed leadership roles cannot be successfully imposed by management. Teachers need to be involved in the process of deciding what role, if any they wish to take on, and must then feel supported by the schools administration in doing so.

The success of distributed leadership within a school can be affected by a number of interpersonal factors such as relationships with other teachers, and school management. Inertia, over-cautiousness and insecurity can lead to hostility to colleagues in distributed leadership roles. Overcoming influences such as these require a combination of strong interpersonal skills on the part of the 'teacher leader' and **a school culture that encourages change and leadership from teachers.**

A central message from studies of successful leaders is the recognition of the limitation of a singular leadership approach, and effective leaders seeing their leadership role as being primarily concerned with empowering others to lead. Schools are effective when both the cognitive and affective lives of the schools combine; structural (e.g. clear goals), political (e.g. built alliances), educational leadership (professional development and teaching improvement) with symbolic acts of leadership such as presence, inspiration, this leading to empowering others through distributed leadership practices. 'These leaders built self-esteem, enhanced professional competence and gave their staff confidence and responsibility to lead development and innovation' (Harris, 2005).

Viviane Robinson (2004) believes educational leadership could be examined by investigating all the school routines and interactions which are intended to influence how teachers teach. The most crucial practices are those that are most likely to lift the quality of teaching and learning; where a community has a similar way of solving problems and teacher practices contribute to, and reflect a community of practice. The more that leadership is distributed the more co-ordination is required so that the school's overarching goals are achieved (Robinson, 2004). Distributed leadership will not improve teaching and learning unless the leadership practices of all staff are aligned to similar goals. There are numerous ways in which coordination is achieved in organisation such as shared understandings of overarching purposes and of how those purposes are pursued through particular teaching and management practices. Teachers need opportunities to work together to describe or demonstrate how they teach, analyse their students work and to use evidence to figure out how to help their students' achieve more. In a distributed leadership situation the role of the principal is to ensure co-ordination and alignment with educational purposes. Credibility and effectiveness in that

role does, however require sufficient curriculum and pedagogical knowledge to be able to accurately evaluate the information and advice others provide' (Robinson, 2004).

Schools with strong distributed leadership have more staff that are knowledgeable about, and take responsibility for, improvement of educational outcomes. Such leadership also protects the school against consequences of loss of key personnel. Spillane et al (2004) see leaders and followers as having a transient status. Followers are collaborators in the accomplishment of group tasks rather than subordinates. Spillane insists leadership is more than aggregation of the leadership acts of interacting individuals. Such a focus ignores the ways in which leader and follower interactions are structured by aspects of the situation, including the tools that structure the work and communicate task relevant knowledge. *'What is critical are the interdependencies among the constituting elements – leaders, followers and situation, of leadership activity'* (Spillane et al, 2004, p.16).

Effective leaders have the capacity to identify, develop and release the leadership capacity of others for the benefit of all (Dinham, 2005). Dinham's research focused on thirty eight secondary schools in Australia achieving outstanding educational outcomes based on performance in standardised tests. This study cited the following key findings about effective leadership practices; awareness and understanding of the wider environment, engaging with a positive attitude to change, innovation, experimentation and taking risks, high level of interpersonal skills and relationships, being a good communicator and listener, vision, expectations and a culture of success, common purpose and collaboration, and a focus on teaching and learning. They summarised their findings by concluding distributive leaders need to be reflective and look to enhance or develop attributes for effective leadership for the successful achievement of outcomes.

Elmore (2000) concluded that for large scale school improvement, and to ensure that the complex tasks of schools are addressed, it is imperative that leadership and knowledge are distributed. He also believes that a model of distributed leadership requires establishing the protocols for the activity and determining how the leaders will share responsibility.

Distributive leadership has positive impact on students' outcomes suggesting gains in learning and achievement (Wong, 1998). Student outcomes are more likely to improve when leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community (Silins & Mulford, 2002). The research also suggests teachers' participation in decision making is positively related to school effectiveness (Rosenholz, 1985; Sickler, 1988). School improvement is more likely to occur when leadership is distributed and when teachers have a vested interest in the development of the school (Gronn, 2000).

The buy in of positional leaders to the concept of distributed leadership is imperative. Many school leaders profess the need to be in control, on the ready to intervene and to meet the expectation that they will exert their authority to solve problems and make life easier for staff. They admit to the anxiety of not being in charge and they worry about too much surprise. Others admit the dependency upon them can reinforce feelings of being in control, enjoying authority, and identity that is respected.

MacBeath (2005) sees distributed leadership as a developing process with different steps of levels of leadership being distributed;

1. **Formally** distributed through designated roles and jobs
2. **Pragmatically** distributed through necessity often delegation of workload and decision making
3. **Strategically** distributed when focused on long term goals and planned leadership
4. **Incrementally** distributed where the distinctive purpose is sponsored growth focused on professional development of people who have proven their ability
5. **Opportunistically** distributed where leadership is taken rather than given, assumed rather than conferred with capable people willingly extending their leadership roles
6. **Culturally** distributed where people exercise initiative spontaneously and collaboratively, with no necessary identification or followers. Leadership is a community of people working together to a common end.

Opportunistic distribution of leadership is seen by MacBeath as more in line with distributive leadership with the ultimate being a community of leaders of learning and the leadership being part of the culture of the school.

Spillane et al (2001) cited the identified functions essential for effective educational leadership; constructing and selling a vision, building norms of trust, collaboration and academic press, supporting teacher development and monitoring instruction and innovation.

Spillane et al (2004) point out that the research suggests that leadership responsibility is often distributed among people in different roles according to their areas of expertise rather than neatly divided among them. Structures that support communication and information are necessary as are efficient organisational arrangements. Spillane et al explained leadership as a product of the interactions of leaders, followers, situation and tools. Situation is a significant factor underpinning and resultant of leadership activity. Aspects of the situation facilitate or limit leadership activity. Leaders' work is impacted by a range of artefacts ranging from tools such as memos, meeting agendas, computers and policies to more abstract things such as workday schedules. A distributed perspective on leadership seeks to identify the artefacts that are relevant to leadership practice and differentiate the way that these characterise and are characterised by leadership activity (Spillane et al, 2004).

The role of leadership in relation to school culture is central. Leaders' responsibility is the change of school culture by installing new values and beliefs. Schein (2006) argues that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is create and manage culture. Real improvement cannot come from anywhere other than within schools themselves and 'within' is a complex web of values and beliefs, norms, social and power relationships and emotions. Change does not just happen as a result of producing plans or the setting of external expectations and reviews. Nor does it happen by setting targets because data, even valid and sensitively analysed data has suggested that all pupils or certain groups of students could be doing better. It also requires a respect for and understanding of the different meanings and interpretations people bring to educational initiatives, and the work

undertaken to develop shared meanings underpinned by norms that will promote school improvement (Stoll, 1998).

Distributed leadership cultivates a sense of ownership and agency on part of staff, helps develop a vision for the school shared by most, increase staff understanding and sense of responsibility for school matters, buffer teachers from non-teaching responsibilities, develop leadership potential of other staff and distribute leadership to students. It is the principal's approach that determines the nature and pattern of leadership distribution in schools – personality, own stage of development, and their estimates as to the readiness of staff to take on leadership.

LEARNING COMMUNITY and LEADERSHIP INTERACTIONS:

Elmore (2000) describes how schools developed into loosely coupled organisations where there has been relatively weak professionalization among teachers. This posits the technical core of education, that is detailed decisions about what should be taught, how it should be taught, what students should be expected to learn, how they are grouped and what they should do to demonstrate their knowledge, and how their learning should be evaluated, residing in individual classrooms, not the organisation that surrounds them. Loose coupling explains why many instructional practices that grow out of research of exemplary practice never take root in more than a small proportion of classrooms and schools. Teaching is isolated work with instructional improvement occurring most frequently as a consequence of voluntary acts.

Rosenholtz (1985) argues that neither collegial support, nor professional development in schools is likely to have any effect on improvement of practice and performance, if not linked to a coherent set of goals that give direction and meaning to learning and collegiality. Effective schools have greater alignment between values and norms and behaviours of principals and teachers. Principal collegiality with teachers affects school performance only when it is connected to activities that focus the school's purposes and that translate into tangible activities related to teaching.

Participation in collaborative work increases commitment and satisfaction among teachers but is unlikely to result in changes in teachers practice, skills or knowledge without a clear organisational focus on these issues. A focus on concrete instructional practice results in increased student learning.

Teachers in most schools were unable to provide specific evidence about ways in which their daily decisions about instruction and their expectations for student learning were influenced by administrators in their schools or by their colleagues. Hence, when asked to whom they were accountable, they would reply either to no one or to themselves (Rosenholtz, 1985).

Organisation coherence on basic aims and values is a precondition for effective leadership around instructional improvement. Collaboration and collegiality among teacher and teachers and principals are not sufficient conditions for improvement.

Distributed leadership poses the challenge of how to distribute responsibility and authority for guidance in direction of instruction so as to increase the likelihood that the decisions of individual teachers and principals about what to do, and what to learn to do, aggregate into collective benefits for student learning.

Elmore (2008) puts forward five principles that lay the foundation for a model of distributed leadership focused on large scale improvement:

- The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance regardless of role.
- Instructional improvement requires continuous learning – collective learning demands an environment that guides and directs the acquisition of new knowledge about instruction. Leadership must create conditions that value learning as both an individual and collective good. Leaders must create environments in which individuals expect to have their personal ideas and practices subjected to the scrutiny of their colleagues and in which groups expect to have their shared conceptions of practice subject to the scrutiny of individuals. Privacy of practice produces isolation; isolation is the enemy of improvement.
- Learning requires modelling. Leaders must lead by modelling the values and behaviours that represent collective goals. They must be able to model the learning they expect of others. Leaders should be doing and be seen to be doing that which they expect or require others to do and should expect to have their own practice subjected to the same scrutiny they expect of others.
- The roles and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and improvement not from the formal dictates of the school. This kind of cooperation requires understanding that learning grows out of differences in expertise rather than differences in formal authority.
- The exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity. All accountability relationships are reciprocal. Policy usually states the side of accountability in which a person with formal authority requires another to do something he or she might not otherwise do except in the presence of a requirement, like National Standards, where many professionals see them as a set of requirements carrying formal legal authority without attending to the circumstances that make doing the work possible!

'Improvement is more a function of learning to do the right things in the setting in which you work. The problem is that there is almost no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous and substantial learning about their practice in the setting in which they actually work' (Elmore, 2008, p.6).

We have never questioned the importance of capacity building and structuring time for teachers to engage in on-going and deep reflection and critique about student learning and teaching practices to support deep, sustainable change. This is the work of a professional learning community.

As a leader fascinated by what factors can be attributed to teacher practice changes that foster improved student outcomes, I have reflected often on the fact that teaching is an activity which occurs predominantly through interactions. Both the instigator and the receiver process what they hear, see, do in a teaching interaction, through the filter of what they already understand. Hidden within their heads both parties create new idiosyncratic meaning. Before we can decide what changes or improvement would be desirable, or even what next to do, we need to know something about this 'inside head' material.

For teachers at Wanaka Primary School, that requires group collaboration amongst trusted peers. As a team we are focused on shared purpose, vision, values and goals, school improvement and student learning, collaborative learning and shared leadership, continuous inquiry, and changing and improving practice.

Ariki gives us the protocols to question, discuss, challenge and reflect shared conceptions of practice, where our pedagogy and evidence of practice is open to the scrutiny of others.

Ariki

Ariki is an initiative that develops a culture and learning community that has at its core inquiry, teacher leadership, reflection, self-critique of practice and presents to teachers an opportunity to be innovative, collaborative and to also challenge and align with the visioning and purpose of the school. Ariki has been an integral component of Wanaka Primary's culture, learning community protocols, professional learning and teacher inquiry, and has promoted the building of capacity for all involved, thus well serving our school vision of 'empowering a community of learners'.

Ariki engages principals and teachers in collaborative critique based on evidence of practice. Professional conversations and reflective critique help teachers and school leaders establish meaning and authenticate purpose. Ariki provides both a context and a set of protocols for ensuring high quality thinking is applied to the work that educators do (www.arikiproject.ac.nz). A Quality Learning Circle methodology within a school and across schools is the means of progressing this goal. The focus of the reflective critique that follows each teacher's narrative, using Ariki questions, forms the evidence of practice. At the centre of this process are the interactions the participants engage in as they seek to achieve the school's goals. The across school interactions take the form of the principal's forum using the same process and where choices are made based on 'worthwhile activities'.

Four major values are held for Ariki: COLLEGIAL OBLIGATIONS where teachers and principals function as teams, REFLECTIVE INQUIRY AND DISCOURSE, the core of professional learning and development, EVIDENCE BASED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE which is spread across all school activity and PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION, which refers to encouraging multiple ways of thinking and many ways of achieving the same aims.

The responses to the Ariki School's survey showed many links from Ariki as it was happening in their schools to the key notions raised in the literature reviews around learning community and distributed leadership.

Teachers value being engaged in collaborative professional learning in small groups where participants question, discuss and reflect on real life teacher practice – whether it be narrative, research or data that is used to present a teacher's story.

- *Others listen, there are no interruptions as you share your work, people don't go off on a tangent and tell their own similar experience or offer fix-up strategies like they used to – instead you have voice and others listen and reflect on the narrative and link what is said to a critique in their heads of their own practice. It's your chance to tell it how it is and really come to grips with why you teach the way you do.*
- *The protocols and taxonomy of questions makes you shut up and really listen and focus on what you are hearing.*
- *Ariki uses teachers own evidence of practice that is presented, critiqued and reflected and therefore is more meaningful for them and for those who are listening and reflecting on their own teaching.*
- *There is effective use of evidence, data about teaching and learning and this is central to informing teachers' professional practice and individual learning goals. It has also fed into our school development goals and even changed the direction of our visioning goals.*
- *Curriculum outcomes, principal/school intent, strategic goals and paths to improvement are linked to everyday teacher practice.*
- *There can be a sharing and critique of a variety of classroom based teaching and assessment practices so as to provide current and reliable student data and curriculum achievement data for learning and of learning.*
- *Teachers are engaged in talking about teaching and learning with a shared sense of purpose.*
- *The principal provides critical instructional leadership in a supportive environment where innovation and risk taking are encouraged and the principal and the teachers have a chance to 'get inside other peoples' heads' to help them towards more effective teaching practice and pedagogy.*
- *As the Ariki groups are across syndicates I get a picture of what is happening in other classes across the school.*
- *We get to share and work with another teacher we might otherwise not engage so closely with – that's a real positive for me.*

- *We focus on students and learning all the time in Ariki sessions – it's not about organising stuff, or the nuts and bolts of keeping the school running – it's all about the kids and their learning.*
- *My Ariki meetings at school and with other principals have ended up with all of us sharing a vision of conditions teachers need to create to achieve our mission. We all have a clearer sense of mission.*
- *Ariki has given me wings to fly and allowed me to take risks, trial stuff I otherwise wouldn't have and be innovative.*
- *For my teachers it has decreased teachers' isolation – they work more as buddies and teams about things they have discussed in QLCs.*
- *Ariki has resulted in our teachers being very interested in the stories of other teachers.*
- *I think it has fostered a shared responsibility for improving learning opportunities for kids by teachers reflecting on how they can make a real difference in their teaching.*
- *Ariki has meant there has been some pretty powerful learning for me.*
- *Ariki has led my school to a higher likelihood of fundamental, systematic change rather than buying into fad cycles.*
- *Our staff now have a collective responsibility for the progress and achievement of 'our' kids and 'our' teachers and can examine data on student performance and classroom interactions to focus attention on how to create better learning outcomes for all students. We don't feel so cut off and isolated from what the rest of the school is doing.*
- *It has meant powerful learning that for me defines good teaching and classroom practice.*
- *I feel inspired to inspire students after our QLCs.*
- *Teaching quality is improved by the continuous professional learning that teachers have the opportunity to engage in during Ariki QLCs and then as their self-critiquing is developed, on a regular basis as they build such processes into their reflective teaching practices.*
- *I feel very well informed about the real teaching going on in classrooms across the school.*
- *It is fast becoming a commitment to significant and lasting change.*
- *It has given us a collegial process to approach accountability for ourselves and our school as a whole. Knowing the intent of the principal has meant I can reflect on my work in the classroom and see if my practice aligns with the vision and school goals.*

Ariki enhances a learning community where continual school improvement requires a continuity of focus on core instruction, highly targeted professional development in classroom instruction, strong and explicit accountability by principals and teachers for the quality of practice and level of student performance, with adults taking responsibility for their own, their colleagues and their students' learning. Ariki provides the ideal culture, context and process for this to happen.

Ariki is a vehicle where a school can enable accountability for practice and performance in face to face relationships. Effective learning communities where adults take responsibility for

performance of children, rely more on face to face than bureaucratic processes. Ariki has the ability to develop everyone's work in terms of improving the capacity and performance of someone else through its protocols and the link to school goals and principal intent.

Ariki limits professional isolation and opens practice up to direct observation, analysis and critique as well as reflection of practice for all. Ariki makes direct observation of evidence of practice analysis and feedback a routine feature of teachers' work. Ariki processes move people across settings creating cross school group and between schools discussions on the learning goals, work of teachers and the whole-school direction. Desired classroom practice is shared and modelled, and the very process of Ariki models desired practice in collegial interactions.

At Wanaka Primary School Ariki has served to further develop collaborative interactions across different levels in the school, as well as within teams, and in a number of cases across schools, particularly as principal groups interact at the principal QLC level and teachers within the school, and from other schools hear about what is happening in class, from colleagues.

A major design principle of addressing change and improvement in learning communities is to organise actions at all levels of the school around an instructional focus or goal that is stable over time e.g. one instructional area such as literacy and focus on that area until practice begins to approach a relatively high standard in most classrooms and performance begins to move decisively upward. Many of our Ariki schools have used the Ariki protocols to examine, critique and move teachers towards lifting student outcomes as part of such targeted professional learning and curriculum development in core areas such as literacy and numeracy. The purpose around Ariki is not just to improve practice but to teach people in the school how to think and act around learning and teaching for continuous improvement. Many Ariki schools are using the Ariki protocols as part of their literacy and numeracy contracts to share teacher practice and bring about fundamental changes through questioning, critiquing and reflecting on teacher practice and student learning outcomes.

Schools that improve are those that have succeeded in getting people to internalise the vision and the schools goals and have managed this internalisation largely through modelling commitment and focus using face to face relationships not bureaucratic controls. Ariki is all about this face to face, these important interactions that make teaching an intellectual endeavour. Teachers make these transitions to take on new teaching strategies and pedagogy by having many opportunities to be exposed to ideas, argue them into their own belief system, practice the behaviours that go with these values, and observe and critique others as they share their practise of these behaviours. Unless new values and behaviours reach into the everyday life of schools there will be no change in business as usual.

Implications and Benefits

Ariki has given teachers at Wanaka Primary School an opportunity to be innovative and develop ideas with the support and professional critique of others. One of the teachers at Wanaka, Laetitia de Vries has recently had a book published about her Pataitai Stations* outlining her innovative organisation of five and six year olds for learning and teaching. The idea started four years ago at an Ariki session and was moulded and formed via subsequent Q.L.Cs, to become an important learning organisation for our eight classes in the junior school and a much sought after published book. She attributes Ariki with helping her to position her thinking and then to continually reposition it, until her thinking and teaching practice developed into what it is today. And she is adamant she will continue to reflect on Pataitai philosophies and continue to refine the practices contained. Teacher inquiry is an important part of a learning community as it is in Ariki. It also leads to distributed leadership. Laetitia started in her own room changing her own practice in 2010 and by the end of 2012 she was leading the eight junior school teachers in their own journeys of change to take on Pataitai.

Ariki protocols facilitate multiple avenues of interaction among classrooms and schools as well as between schools, always focusing on the acquisition of new skills and knowledge where discussions are about the work. This promotes inquiry oriented leadership and inquiry oriented classrooms. The purpose of getting better at the work is the common currency of exchange in all relationships.

Ariki schools see innovation and change as an integral part of day to day activity. Resilient schools manage change as a core part of what they do. The leaders in the school are seen as leaders of change. Principals in Ariki schools viewed school to school collaboration and networking in the form of the Ariki QLC as an essential component of sustaining change and managing enforced changes such as National Standards and 'Reporting to the Ministry'. Learning community theory has deep cultural change at the heart of successful transformation. School cultures that support innovation are high risk and high trust. Ariki supports a culture that is high risk and high trust as teachers are empowered to talk about and inquire into what is meaningful for them in their class, role, or their school.

Ariki further supports learning community notions in that there is a focus on use of data and self-evaluation. Principal intent in the Ariki process is linked to purposefully distributed leadership. Ariki allows school leaders and teachers to learn while innovating as feedback systems allow them to refine and develop processes as change is happening, as mentioned with Laetitia as she developed Pataitai at Wanaka Primary School. Ariki enables teacher voice that can have the capacity to inform and even redefine the schools pathway to achieving the vision.

* See reference for Action Stations. Publishers changed Pataitai to Action Stations as they believed this to be a more user friendly title for overseas marketing

The link to principal intent for within school QLCs, and also for the principal across school QLCs, ensures that vision and core values of the principal are the catalyst for change and development at the school. Effective learning communities have strong shared vision and values. Ariki is part of the culture in Ariki schools and clearly defines the quality of professional interactions present in the school.

Use of Ariki protocols for all the leaders in a school, empower rather than control, ask the right questions rather than provide right answers, and focus on flexibility. Ideas are welcomed, innovation fostered and collaboration assured. Ariki protocols can end up becoming a habit of the mind as critique and reflection becomes embedded in a teacher's way of thinking about their work. Ariki sits well within learning community philosophies and has proven itself to align with the building of teacher leadership within the school.

Ariki is a valuable part of the Wanaka Primary School learning community philosophy and practice that leads to leadership and accountability for learning outcomes being shared with others. As teachers and principals inquire they create healthier learning communities, collective responsibility and collaborative reflection. Ariki allows teachers to have a voice, lead with their own innovations and passions, and to critique their own work and that of the school against the cultural expectations and goals. With the Ariki QLCs, participants have voice by talking about the evidence of their practice and reflect on whether that activity is worthwhile and has positive effects on learning outcomes for all students.

Most change requires time. And the notion of reculturing schools, coupled with the pressure of outcome-based education that National Standards and the associated reporting brings with it, and the threat of high stakes testing, seemingly creates incongruences that leaders in education question. Time is a luxury not afforded to us in schools. It is my belief that more and more schools will turn to professional learning community ideals and processes, establishing protocols and teacher leadership, such as those Ariki offers, to improve the deeply rooted problems that challenge education.

I am convinced that the overall impact of Ariki processes in schools means that schools are in a better position to cope with change, from within the school and from enforced change such as that we are experiencing more and more. Once leadership is distributed within the learning community and a process is set up whereby the school can question, challenge, critique and reflect on teaching practice, then the school can base 'change' decisions on robust, evidence informed and grounded information in a sustained manner. Accountability, resilience, alignment with learning community principles around shared goals and collective responsibility, concerns with evidence and improved student outcomes have already been set in place. The process for change is an integral part of the school culture.

Leadership is indeed a product of interactions. Schools are dynamic learning communities where distributed leadership and teacher empowerment is a must if schools are to remain

resilient, confident, self-improving and focus on the real issues in education that we in schools know will make more of a difference for all students. More than the publishing of schools' achievements around National Standards, league tables and the blame and shame mentality we seem to be heading towards.

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6. How do you think you can change a teacher's thinking to bring about a 'real' change in teacher practice?

7. What particular routines connected with leadership function lead to student improvement?

8. What are the best ways you have seen where a principal (or other school leader) has shifted or redirected the leadership focus for the entire school?

9. Since working within the Ariki project what have been some of the interactions and leadership actions that have changed or developed?

10. What has been the overall impact of having Ariki processes in your school? Please consider both positives and challenges