

Sabbatical Report of David Macleod

Mahurangi College

Term 3 2012

Purpose:

- (1) To strengthen and revitalise my personal vision of school leadership through participation in the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) short course for secondary principals: "*Leadership: An Evolving Vision*".
- (2) To investigate what we can learn from the education system in Finland given their excellent results in the international PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) testing over a sustained period of time.
- (3) To investigate effective education for boys in a co-educational setting.

Acknowledgements:

- The Board of Trustees and management team at Mahurangi College
- David Kutz, our team leader at HGSE
- The Principals and staff I met with at the following schools:
 - Vikingaskolan in Lund, in the south of Sweden
 - Kulosaaren Yhteiskoulu Kulosaari, an elementary and high school in Helsinki
 - Ressun Comprehensive School in Helsinki
 - Amuri Comprehensive School in Tampere, 200km NW of Helsinki
 - Helsingin Suomalainen Yheikoulu in Helsinki
 - Tenwek Junior High School in Kenya
 - Chebonai High School in Tenwek, Kenya
 - Haileybury College in Melbourne

Methodology:

During the 10 weeks of this sabbatical I spent approximately 5 weeks in professional duties, including:

- attending a leadership course for experienced principals at the Harvard Graduate School of Education
- professional reading related to and arising from the Harvard course
- other professional and motivational reading
- visiting schools and meeting with principals in Sweden, Finland, Kenya and Australia
- attending the 2012 Joint APPA/NZPF Trans-Tasman Conference in Melbourne

A. The Harvard short course for Principals

The 7-day intensive course, “*Leadership: An Evolving Vision*”, at Harvard Graduate School of Education, was targeted for experienced middle and senior high school principals. This is my 16th year as a New Zealand secondary school principal, now in my second school. I felt in need of refreshment and renewed vision. I found it to be a stimulating and invigorating professional learning experience and expect I will be a better leader for it.

There were 115 principals in attendance from 26 different countries. 67% were from public schools, 21% private, 9% religious and 3% charter schools. We were all deeply challenged regarding:

1. Professional Leadership. The need for us all to be continually adapting and improving our leadership through such means as effective reflection; ongoing professional development; encouraging research projects within our schools; making more effective use of data to drive our decision making; building strong, effective, distributed leadership teams within the school; and through belonging to a principal partnership or team that meets regularly to support each other professionally.
2. Teacher Development. Through such means as “instructional rounds”; setting up “professional learning groups” within our schools; sharing of best practice within our schools; increased student voice, particularly student feedback on teaching (this was considered to be the most accurate and useful feedback for teacher improvement, but also threatening for many teachers); and through teacher self-reflection or guided self-reflection (eg based on unedited videos of lessons). *“The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers”* McKinsey 2007.
3. Student Centred Learning. Using assessment data diagnostically (*“good teachers have always done this, right back to Plato, often through verbal questioning”*); student choice in planning what they learn and how; student involvement in goal/ target setting, including devising strategies to get there; and through use of new technologies inside and outside of the classroom.

There were 10 Harvard or guest lecturers who each gave two 90-minute presentations. During the presentations questions were asked of participants with, in most cases, participants named at random for their comment, rather than volunteering to do so. This certainly kept everyone attentive and ensured we did the pre-reading required for each day’s lectures. Each afternoon we spent 90 -120 minutes in our learning groups, which were constructed to give a good mix of principals from different types of schools and countries around the world.

My learning group included four USA principals, two of whom were from what we in NZ would call low decile schools, in low income areas with high numbers of transient and first generation immigrant students. Both these principals felt their jobs were under threat due to the SATs (State Achievement Tests) in which each school is ranked state-wide on its SAT results. In most states the SATs are still 90-100% multiple choice and marks are deducted for incorrect answers. All enrolled students are included in the results for each school until they enrol at another school, even students who have been lost to the system, have not attended all year and cannot be tracked down. Also

included are students with special learning or language needs. Lowly ranked schools, deemed to be “failing schools”, are closed and re-opened a year or two later under a new name, with a new Principal, as a charter school.

The American principals had very little idea about diagnostic or formative assessment. Their curriculum was totally driven by the SATs in their states. They all felt demoralised, discouraged and restricted by the competitive test-driven culture of the American education system.

Instructional Rounds

“Our primary task as educational leaders is to improve the quality of teaching in our schools” Katherine Merseeth, senior lecturer HGSE.

Instructional rounds are based on the medical model where young doctors learn from more experienced colleagues by observation and discussion as they do the rounds in a hospital. Notes are taken and they debrief as a group. This is one of the most powerful learning tools in medical training.

In education the purpose of instructional rounds is not to give feedback to the teachers being observed, although this can be done if that teacher requests it, but rather for the teachers involved on the “rounds” to observe good practice in a variety of classrooms as a stimulus for reflection on their own practice.

“Instructional rounds are one of the most valuable tools that a school or district can use to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills and develop a culture of collaboration. The goal of instructional rounds is not to provide feedback to the teacher being observed, although this is an option if the observed teacher so desires. Rather, the primary purpose is for observing teachers to compare their own instructional practices with those of the teachers they observe. The chief benefit of this approach resides in the discussion that takes place among observing teachers at the end of the observation as well as in subsequent self-reflection.”

Robert Marzano “Making the Most of Instructional Rounds”, ASCD, 2011.

To be effective instructional rounds needs to be a school-wide initiative. The rounds should be facilitated by lead teachers or administrators within the school. Typically 4 to 5 classes would be visited on each round for approximately 15 minutes each. The observed classes should all have highly effective teachers who are recognised as such within the school. The teachers should have either volunteered or been requested for a classroom visit (but not imposed).

The visiting team should be kept small, 3-5 teachers plus the lead teacher. The teachers being visited should let their classes know in advance that the visit will take place and that the purpose is for teacher professional learning, not grading or critiquing the teacher or the students. When the team arrives at a classroom they should knock at the door then enter and move to the back of the room where they can effectively observe the lesson without interruption. Each member of the round should take notes on some specified areas for observation, for example:

1. what is the teacher saying and doing?
2. what are the students actually doing?
3. what is the task/s the teacher has set the students?
4. what would the students actually learn if they did the tasks set by the teacher?

At the end of the visit the leader should thank the students and the teacher as they exit the class.

Immediately after the rounds the team should discuss their observations as a group, with each teacher commenting on what s/he observed. The team leader needs to remind the team members that:

1. the purpose is *not* to evaluate the teachers observed;
2. team members should *not* share what they have observed with others outside their group;
3. team members should *not* share comments made by members of their team with others outside their group;
4. team members should *not* offer suggestions to the observed teachers unless they specifically ask for feedback.

The instructional round finishes with each team member identifying instructional practices they will take back into their classroom, and areas of their own practice they will modify as a result of what they observed.

Book: **“Instructional Rounds in Education”**
Richard Elmore, et al
Harvard Education Press, 2010

Listen up! “Instructional Rounds in Education” redefines the teaching profession. There is no other book on school improvement like it. This is a powerful, specific, accessible treatment of what it means to get in the classroom in order to make a difference in the daily lives of teachers and their students.

Michael Fullan, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto University

Professional Learning Groups

Dr Kathryn Parker Boudett, Director of the “Data Wise Project” at Harvard Graduate School of Education.

To be effective the PLGs (or Data Action Groups) need to be:

- Similar - for example, Y9 English teachers
- Small - preferably fewer than 6 participants
- Safe - places where teachers can feel confident to share and discuss their failures, as well as sharing their best practice

The ACE Habits of Mind

Shared commitment to **A**ction, assessment, and adjustment

Intentional **C**ollaboration

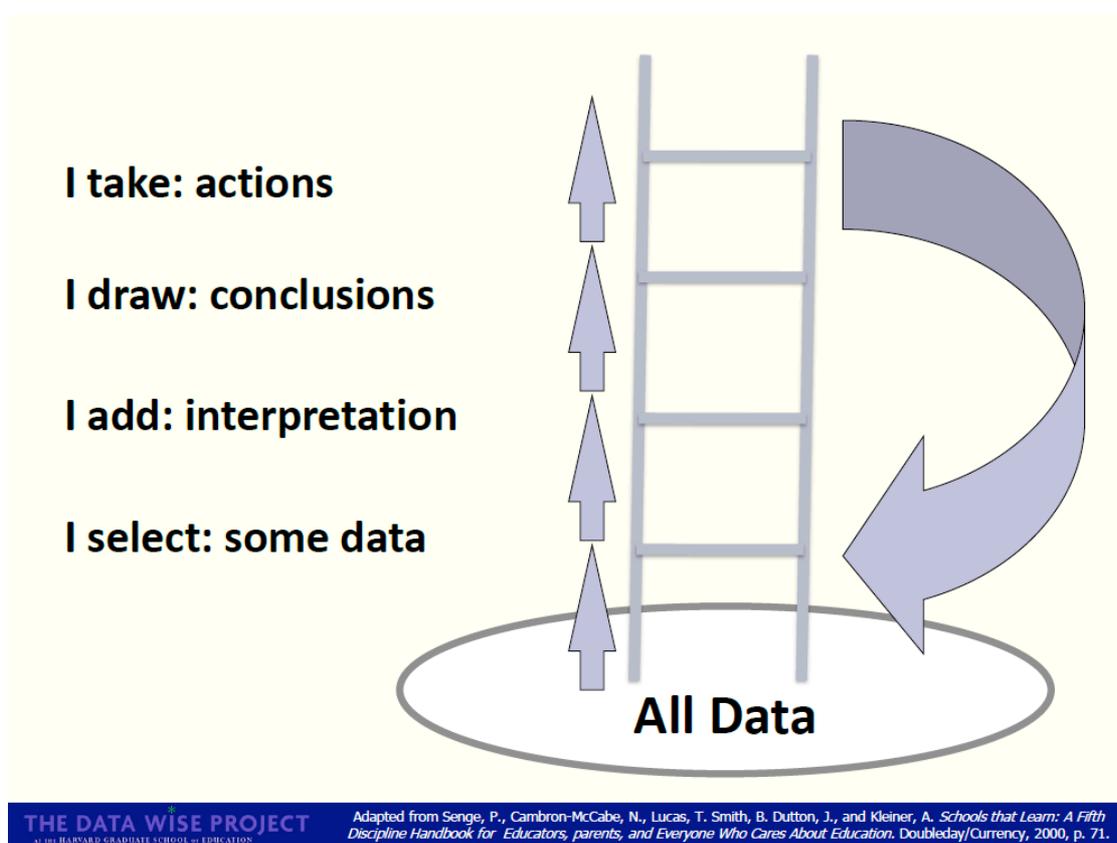
Relentless focus on **E**vidence

They need to have a willingness to **take action** for improvement, to **work together** collaboratively and to keep the focus on what the **data** shows.

A meeting checklist for PLGs can be found at:
<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k84080>

The Ladder of Inference (adapted from Senge)

1. The PLGs must select from the assessment data an area that needs to be improved;
2. From this they identify a learner-centred problem/s;
3. The learner-centred problem/s arising from the data then needs to be discussed openly in the group and some conclusions drawn regarding how it can be resolved;
4. Action then needs to be taken to ensure this will be built into future programmes of teaching and learning:



This needs to be an ongoing process - participants need to understand we rarely get it all right the first time – ongoing tweaking and adjustment will always be needed. Successes need to be identified and celebrated.

School leaders need to set this process up and observe what is happening (eg through programmed discussions with group leaders) but to be most effective in changing teaching practice for the better, these groups should be teacher led.

B. The Finnish Education System

Since the introduction of the tri-annual PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) by the OECD in 2000, Finland has been most consistently the top country in terms of student achievement, at age 15, in all three areas tested (Literacy, Mathematics and Science) and in terms of equity (the range of results between different schools and between students). There are 34 member countries of the OECD but in the latest testing for which results have been released (2009) 31 partner countries or provinces were also included, and the Shanghai province of China came out top overall, Korea 2nd and Finland 3rd.

Refer: OECD 2010, PISA 2009 Results: Executive Summary, Figure 1.

© OECD 2010 PISA 2009 RESULTS: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Figure 1.

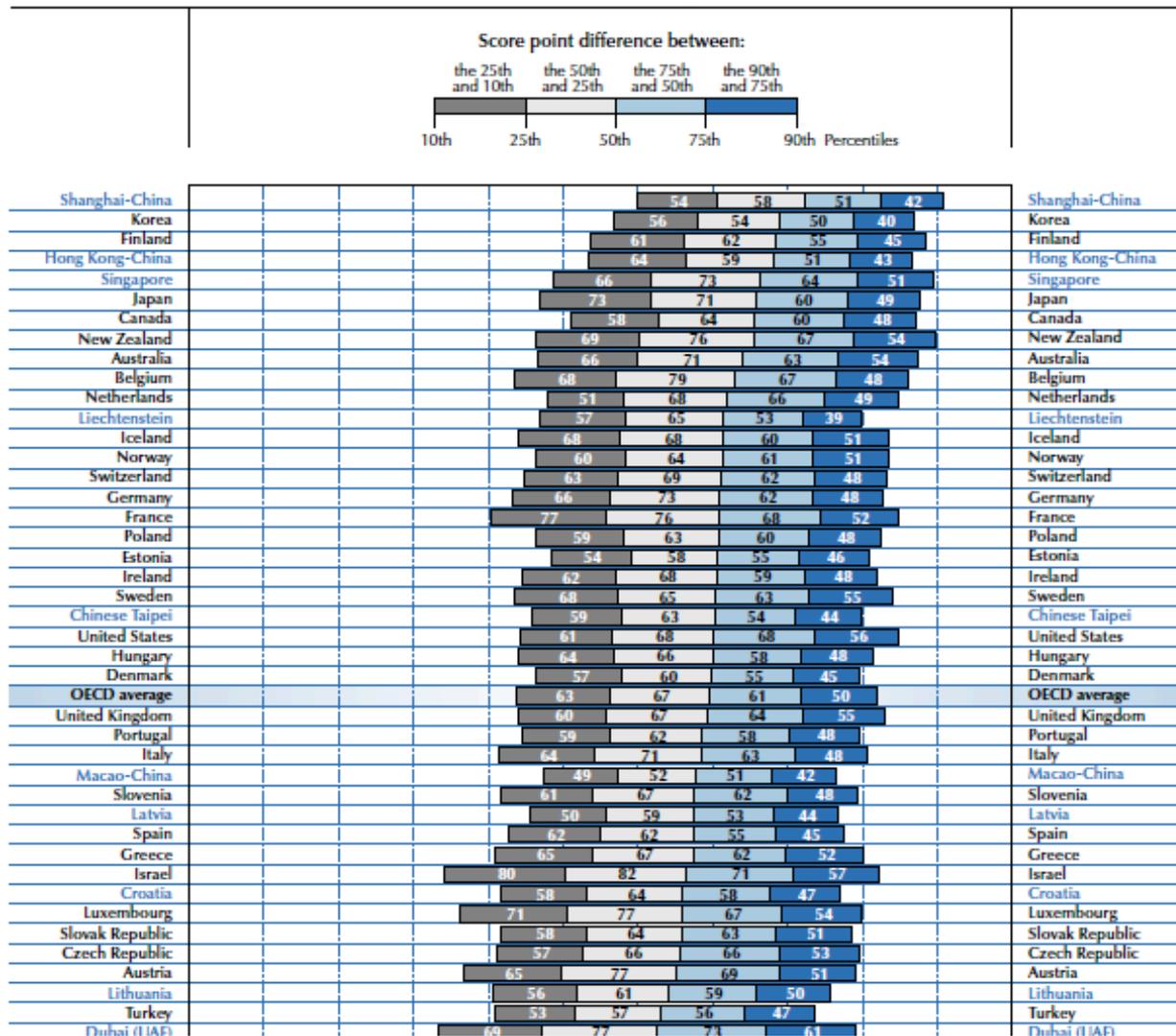
	On the overall reading scale	On the reading subscales					On the mathematics scale	On the science scale
		Access and retrieve	Integrate and interpret	Reflect and evaluate	Continuous texts	Non-continuous texts		
OECD average	493	495	493	494	494	493	496	501
Shanghai-China	556	549	558	557	564	539	600	575
Korea	539	542	541	542	538	542	546	538
Finland	536	532	538	536	535	535	541	554
Hong Kong-China	533	530	530	540	538	522	555	549
Singapore	526	526	525	529	522	539	562	542
Canada	524	517	522	535	524	527	527	529
New Zealand	521	521	517	531	518	532	519	532
Japan	520	530	520	521	520	518	529	539
Australia	515	513	513	523	513	524	514	527
Netherlands	508	519	504	510	506	514	526	522
Belgium	506	513	504	505	504	511	515	507
Norway	503	512	502	505	505	498	498	500
Estonia	501	503	500	503	497	512	512	528
Switzerland	501	505	502	497	498	505	534	517
Poland	500	500	503	498	502	496	495	508
Iceland	500	507	503	496	501	499	507	496
United States	500	492	495	512	500	503	487	502
Liechtenstein	499	508	498	498	495	506	536	520
Sweden	497	505	494	502	499	498	494	495
Germany	497	501	501	491	496	497	513	520
Ireland	496	498	494	502	497	496	487	508
France	496	492	497	495	492	498	497	498
Chinese Taipei	495	496	499	493	496	500	543	520
Denmark	495	502	492	493	496	493	503	499
United Kingdom	494	491	491	503	492	506	492	514
Hungary	494	501	496	489	497	487	490	503
Portugal	489	488	487	496	492	488	487	493
Macao-China	487	493	488	481	488	481	525	511
Italy	486	482	490	482	489	476	483	489

Of the 65 countries or provinces tested in 2009, NZ came 7th overall and was the 5th highest country. The only multi-cultural countries (greater than 10% of population born overseas) ahead of NZ were Singapore and Canada.

There was a wide range of results in NZ with our Maori and Pasifika students achieving at much lower rates than those students with European or Asian ancestry. Even so, in terms of equity we still rated highly. Part of the reason for our wide equity spread was that our highest quartile was very high. In most equity measures our mean was still well above the OECD average and our lowest quartile was on a par with Australia and ahead of most other developed countries, for example:

Refer: OECD 2010, PISA 2009 Results: Variation of Reading Performance within Countries, Figure 11.1.1 (in which NZ has a wider equity spread than Australia but only because our upper quartile is so much higher)

Figure 11.1.1
Variation of reading performance within countries
Percentiles on the reading scale



In Finland:

- I visited 4 schools, three in Helsinki and one in Tampere.
- I was fortunate to be able to meet with Hannu Takkula, the elected Finnish representative on the European Union (EU) since 1995, and coordinator of the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education (2004-).
- At the Melbourne conference towards the end of the sabbatical I was also able to hear Pasi Sahlberg speak and attend his seminar. He is the Director General for International Mobility and Cooperation in the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

Through all of this I came away with eight foundational principles for the ongoing success of the Finnish Education system:

1. *Equity*

(a) All four principals I met with spoke with pride about the *strong emphasis on equity* in the Finnish system, as did Hannu Takkula and Pasi Sahlberg. This emphasis on equity was a conscious decision made about Finnish education in 1972, which all political parties have bought into. Single sex schools and grammar schools were all re-constituted at that time as co-educational state schools. Prior to that time the education system in Finland was elitist and overall the system performed poorly in international benchmarking, both in terms of achievement and equity.

(b) There are no real private schools in Finland – there are several, such as the international school in Helsinki, which are called private but even these are still largely funded by the government. Special character schools are fully funded by the state and to start a new special character school you would need to go through an almost impossible approval process during which you need to prove the school would offer something extra that no other state schools can offer, and that there will be sufficient demand for that “extra” both now and in the future.

(c) Virtually all students attend their closest school as standards are widely regarded to be the same between all schools. There are no league tables or other competitive comparisons trying to identify the “best” or “worst” schools, teachers or students. There are no distinguishing features between schools, such as uniforms. The emphasis is very strongly on having all schools as great schools. All teachers and schools do seem to work together well, which creates a strong and supportive educational environment. Similarly with students, there are no rewards for being the top academic, sporting or cultural students. The emphasis is on each student achieving his or her potential. All schools are equally provided for with buildings and facilities, although one school I visited (the Kulosaaren school) in a wealthy area, on an island (connected by bridges) just out of central Helsinki, did seem better equipped and facilitated than the other three schools.

(d) No state schools can charge fees, not even for materials or trips, so, much to the disappointment of many teachers and principals, there are very few trips (beyond walking distance during the school day) or school camps. The PTA can raise funds for school trips/camps but still no child can be excluded if they or their parents do not contribute.

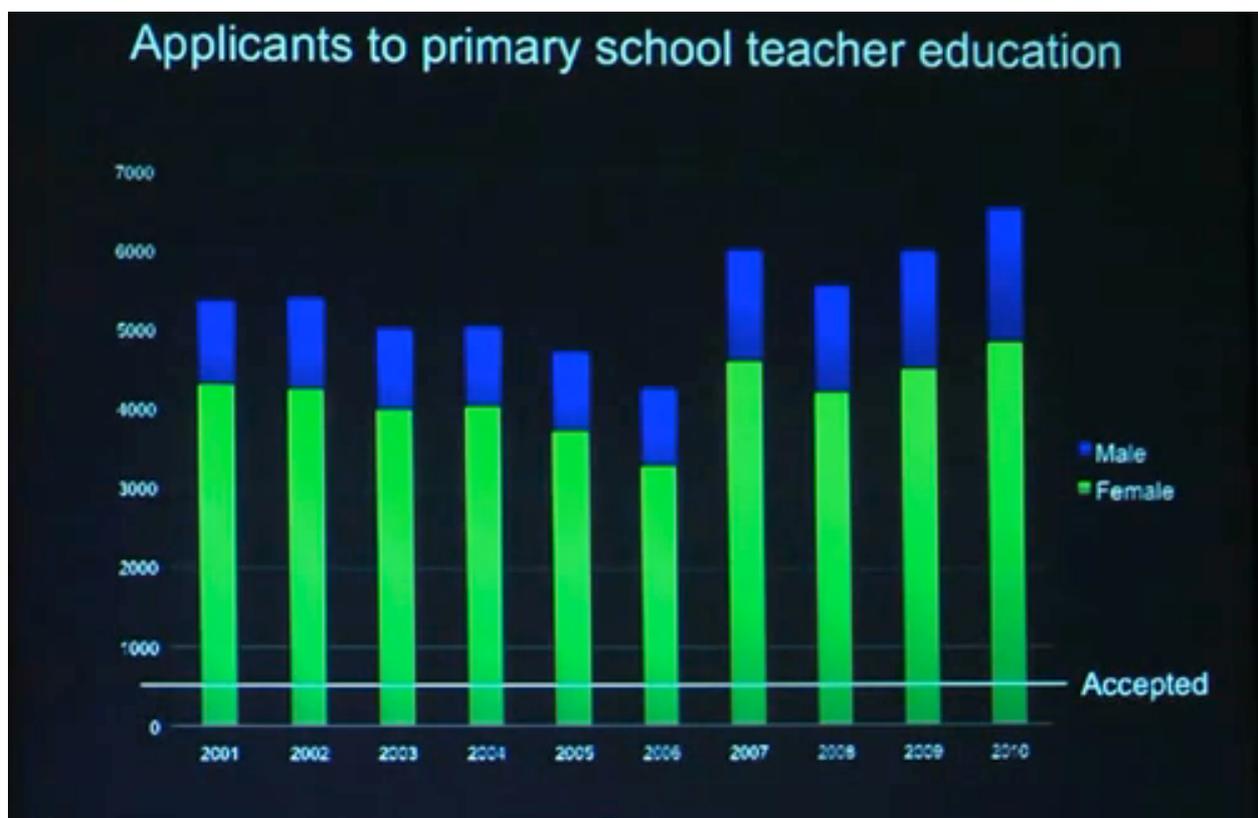
(e) I read prior to visiting Finland that they have strong systems of support for disabled students, but I did not see any evidence of this in the mainstream schools I visited. All four schools I visited were multi-storied and only one of these was accessible with lifts to the higher levels, but even that school had no disabled students. (In comparison, at Mahurangi College we currently have 8 very high needs and 6 high needs students, all from our local community. These students are “mainstreamed” so they attend whanau classes every day, mix with the other students as much as possible, participate in all school inter-house and other school-wide activities, participate in school trips and camps, and attend regular classes as they are able, particularly in the junior school. Their special needs are catered for with two full-time specialist teachers, 8 teacher aides, various visiting support staff, some very expensive assistive technology and good specialist facilities, all fully funded by the government. Their accessibility needs are also well catered for on our site, which is sloping and has many double storied buildings.)

2. *Inquiry Learning*

There is a strong emphasis throughout the Finnish system on students following areas of interest in depth, and on teachers having sufficient freedom in the curriculum, and trust from education authorities, to allow this to happen. The aim is for all children to enjoy their learning without being put under stress by strict adherence to a tight curriculum, by over-assessment or by comparisons with other students in terms of their academic achievement. Virtually all feedback from teachers to students about their work is formative rather than summative ie it is to assist them in their learning rather than to allocate grades. It was felt this creates a love of learning amongst the students and encourages the development of the inquisitive and creative skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century world.

3. *Teacher Status*

In Finnish society, teachers are held in high esteem and teaching is regarded as a preferred occupation by many young people and their parents. Only 1 in 10 applicants are accepted into teacher training, and this after a rigorous application and interview process.



At junior levels teachers follow the same cohort of students through the school for several years, so strong bonds form between them and their students and parents.

4. *Teacher Training*

All teachers in Finland have a Masters degree as a minimum tertiary qualification and are expected to participate in an ongoing programme of professional development throughout their teaching career. Teachers are well paid by NZ standards, but the Finnish GDP is 23% higher than in NZ, so in Finland teaching is not regarded as a highly paid profession.

5. *Student Attitude and Behaviour*

I was surprised at how reserved and compliant many of the Finnish students were. Helsinki has just been declared the “Design Capital of the World”, so there is certainly not a lack of creative energy, but the students I saw did not seem to have the life and “spunk” of kiwi young people, but of course that is a judgement based on a very few classroom visits, always accompanied by either the principal or a senior staff member. Finnish society is very ordered and the people, partly due to their harsh climate, like to be cautious and well-prepared. None of the schools had any real behavior issues. Any issues that did arise were dealt with by the teachers themselves, or the school counselors, rather than management. I was told the teachers would be offended if management tried to intervene in a classroom difficulty, and would feel undermined by this. In Helsinki they do have 7 special schools (equivalent to our Alternative Education) each with less than 10 students who are withdrawn by school counselors from local schools for a period of time for intensive help, the purpose being to return these students to the mainstream as soon as possible. I am not sure how effective these schools are but, from what I was told, it seems their main clientele is boys from Estonia and some gypsy children.

6. *Education Facilities*

In the four schools I visited, there was a mixture of classroom facilities and equipment. One school was quite new with very modern facilities, but two were old and even a bit run down by New Zealand standards. Two have inter-active white boards in some classrooms, but two were still using blackboards with chalk. Only one school (Kulosaaren) had a set of iPads for use as learning devices by students in classrooms.

7. *Immigration*

Finland has much lower levels of immigration than most western nations and by comparison could be regarded as largely mono-cultural. Only 5.9% of their residents are foreign born whereas in NZ we have 22%.

8. *No National Testing until end of schooling*

In Finland there is no national testing of students until the end of their final year at school. There is some sampling done between schools in year 9 but these results are not returned to individual students or published, but are for in-school use only.

C. Effective Education for Boys

In recent years Mahurangi College has been above the average for decile 8 schools at all three levels of NCEA, however, in keeping with national trends, we have had a significant achievement gap between boys and girls, in favour of girls, which does diminish as students move through college. Recently (prior to the “transformation” of the RTLB service in 2011) the primary school RTLB in our cluster reported she had been working with 31 students during that year, of which 27 were boys.

In 2011 the gender gap nationally between boys and girls in NCEA results was 9%. One possible means of addressing this that we are investigating is parallel classes in which boys and girls are taught in separate classes, but in a coeducational school.

Haileybury College is a large coeducational private school in Melbourne. It was a boys' school until 2001 at which time the Board deliberately brought girls into the school to change what they considered to be an unhealthy school culture. Classes however remained single sex, running a parallel system for boys and girls.

The feedback I received from staff and students about this system at Haileybury was very much in favour. Most students I spoke with, boys and girls, enjoyed the coed environment but appreciated the single sex classes as they felt it reduced distraction allowing them to better focus on their school-work, although the boys in a senior History class felt it would be helpful for them to get a female perspective on many of the issues discussed in the social sciences.

The principal, Richard Scott (a Kiwi by birth who played cricket for Auckland in the 1980s), was also very much in favour of this system. He showed me the data for their school - very little difference in achievement between the genders - the girls are slightly ahead of boys in literacy and the boys are slightly ahead of girls in Sciences and Maths. He said parents appreciate the parallel classes, which have become a strong marketing point for their school.

Appendices:

(These are iPad notes as they were taken during the four school visits in Finland.)

1. Kulosaaren Yhteiskoulu Kulosaari (KSYK)

Coed elementary (grades 7-9, ages 13-15) and upper secondary (grades 10-12, ages 16-18) school, of about 700 students.

Principal, Mr Lauri Halla, Deputy Mr Richard Cousins and Assistant Mrs Linda Eklof.

They felt the prime reason for Finnish educational success was found in Finnish society itself, which installs a sense of responsibility and fairness from a very young age. It is a clean and safe society based on Lutheran values. Most children make their own way to school unaccompanied by an adult. There are very few behavior issues. Detentions are overseen by the DP but all teaching staff have an equal role in supervising them. Main issues are disruption to class, skipping classes or lateness to class. Very little drugs although there is some drug education in health classes.

Approximately 10% of students from overseas, mainly other EU countries, but many others as well. All subjects are compulsory in grades 7-9, including Finnish, English and Swedish languages. The language of instruction is English. In grades 10-12 there are 90 courses on offer but 75 of these are compulsory, mainly in the languages and Mathematics.

Subject leaders rather than heads of faculty - sharing between teachers is natural – cooperation. But teachers also have independence to develop their own methods of teaching and their own curriculum. The curriculum documents are very general so teachers have great freedom in what they teach and how – depends on the students in their classes. They have course plans but no end of course tests or exams.

Prizes at end of year are decided by teacher discussion and include contribution to class discussion and helpfulness to others, rather than being grade based awards - they do not go as far as Sweden, where “they do not want anyone to feel bad”, but still they have no top of class or dux of the school.

There are national exams at grade 9 (end of elementary school) but these are optional for students to sit and they are for teachers and schools to use to ensure their teaching is at correct standard – there is a general opinion that these should not be published – individual students cannot be identified and do not get their results from these tests.

Only other exams are after grade 12 for entry to university, called matriculation. Finnish universities charge no fees, including for students coming over to study from other countries – they believe education should be free for all - no one should be excluded because they cannot pay. The universities decide who can get into their courses – may set their own entry tests and have interviews.

Schools are smaller in Finland so there is very little sport - average school size around 200 – no inter-school competitions – sport at school is social rather than competitive - competitive sports are done outside of school. There are also specialist academies in evenings and weekends for drama and dance, but these are not school based.

This school has good modern buildings and facilities but little in the way of grounds. Particular features included theme walls in classrooms and a “green wall” (hydroponic) to freshen the air in the long cold winter months.

Teachers are paid by the hours they actually teach, qualifications, subjects taught, experience... no one knows how teachers salaries are calculated – done by city officials – varies from semester to semester and from year to year. Every one is in the union but there is never any conflict – the union agrees on acceptable rates with the city.

Students are allowed to bring their own laptops and devices to school, and some do, but not many. The school has two sets of 10 ipads which teachers can book for use in their classes. Students are always seated either in pairs or small groups to encourage cooperation and sharing.

Another reason for Finnish success is because children are more receptive to learning when they start school at age 7 rather than earlier – they are more mature and ready to learn at this age – prior to that emphasis in kindergarten is on playing together – cooperation – emphasis in Finland is on getting on with others, enjoyment of learning and following areas of interest in their learning.

Welfare is good in Finnish schools so no children are left behind – the whole country is committed to it – even newly arrived children from overseas are given intensive support to catch up in their work.

Teaching is a highly regarded profession and difficult to get into – when teachers are happy, children are more receptive in their learning – there is no extra time allowance for 1st or 2nd year teachers but all staff are committed to supporting them, and all other staff. Timetabling varies from semester to semester – most teachers usually teach 22 - 24 hours per week.

The principal does not visit classes as the teachers would feel he is checking up on them – as long as no negative feedback he assumes they are doing their professional duties well.

The largest classes are around 35, but in senior school most around 20ish. They have two full time resource teachers to work with slower children – there is some grouping of lower ability groups within classes that they work with and some they withdraw from class for remedial work.

Extension text books for top students. In Maths and English have accelerate classes but all other classes are mixed. Sometimes they challenge their brighter students through getting them to do the same work in other languages.

The only year with an exam focus is final year – most students matriculate in 4-6 subjects but can do so in up to 8 or 9.

2. Ressun Comprehensive School

Principal is Erja (Erlyä) Hovén, who has been principal here since 1992. Prior to that she taught Science and Physics in this same school.

This is a combined primary and elementary school, so students are aged from 7-16 years old (grades 1-9). It is located in central Helsinki, 10 minutes walk from the central plaza, in old double storey concrete buildings with very little in the way of grounds. There are 430 students, which is large by Finnish standards, and many overseas students, which is unusual. The school had no bells but seemed very orderly. The principal does not have time to visit classes but she meets with every teacher once a year. Free lunch and health care for all students so as not to single out those who cannot afford. The school cannot ask for money even for trips, but PTA can. Don't travel because all pupils must go, not some. Fortunate to have many cultural centres nearby within walking distance. The principles of their system are freedom and equality.

It used to be a boys' school but is now co-ed. Single sex schools were all abolished in Finland. No real private schools - German school, Jewish school, International school, but all funded by government - international school can charge some extra fees - about 200E pa - as catering for overseas families working in Helsinki. Many leave international school after half year and come here - they have offered IB since 2004 to meet needs of international parents. Some classes are in English and some in Finnish.

She feels the main reason for Finnish educational success is that it is such an equal society - they look after slow children - lots of support - nurse 4 days per week who the children love - children can leave class to see the nurse if they want to - psychologist 3 days, social worker 2 days - students have 24 hour availability to support - principal meets with welfare team twice a week plus 2 specialist teachers - they visit every classroom and know the students' backgrounds - they can co-teach in classes but can also withdraw children and work 1 to 1. Doctor comes once a week - mainly confidential but sometimes discuss eg abuse, suicide - no use to have 10 of us contacting parents so decide who will contact and that person talks with them.

Another reason for success is they start school in year they turn 7 but parents have right to ask to start one year early or late. Most attend pre-school when 6 but main point is how to work in groups, also craft. However, most children can already read and write when they come - parents teach. They all start together - make a group out of them.

Flexible national curriculum - outline only - cities include some more detail but teachers in the school write the curriculum according to the needs and interests of their children. They have 2 classes per grade and teachers follow the children through for 4 years.

Don't like testing - do have standards - plan a lot together - no ranking of students - some parents get upset about this, especially from overseas, and would like some comparisons - only assess to help child to learn how to do it better. There are no prizes for top in subject - do talk as teachers and decide who has done well - does not need to be the best - those who work hard, contribute and make good progress get the awards.

Student council for student leadership. Some challenging parents in this central city area. Some national testing at grade 9 but just in some subject areas - no individual results to children - to standardize between schools - only for schools to use - nothing in

newspapers - gives principal feedback they need without public feedback. No really rich families in Finland so education was the way to get a better life. Finns never had kings to rule over us so always had a strong sense of equality and fairness. Lutheran. We value that every child has education.

When children don't want to learn the teacher must find a way - no other option - teachers do not even think of sending them away - they work hard to keep each of them motivated and wanting to learn – they take pride in children's enjoyment of learning – this is one of the reasons they do not compare children or do too much testing - learning is not a competition - keep emphasis on learning not assessing - teachers try to help child learn and to do their own best - encourage every single child - if being naughty, disruptive, rude... then special Ed teacher will talk to children, parents... it may be because of a learning difficulty so the child needs extra support - classroom assistance - write personal learning programme for child - academic and behaviour - parents come in to help write the programme.

If all this doesn't help then can apply to Ed Dept for extra funds or in some cases the special ed teacher can send them to a small group and bring them back later. Currently there are 7 such special groups in southern Helsinki with less than 10 children in each group - Finnish gypsies do come to school but many of the more transient Romanian gypsies do not - lots of Somalian refugees coming in eastern Helsinki. The Estonian boys from Tallin give the most difficulties - many parents working in Helsinki but live in Tallin, then bring boys over but the boys do not want to be here - language difficulties but also social.

Currently they have 9 children in an immigrant class for those who have come to Finland to stay - intensive Finnish lessons for one year - intensive then full immersion, but also have FSL (Finnish as Second Language) as an option subject for up to 6 years in Finnish school. There are 38 nationalities but many are from Finnish parents who have been overseas and now returned to work in Helsinki.

All teachers have Masters degree, takes 4.5 to 5.5 years, includes teacher training - masters regarded as important because it shows teacher can do research and write reports. Inquiry important - extension is through inquiry in greater depth and presenting the results back to the class. Contact time for teachers varies - minimum in their school is 18 hours per week and max is 24. Children have 21 hours per week when start but 30 from 7th grade. 6 hours per day tuition – 8am – 4pm - 15 minutes between lessons plus lunch hour. Teachers get paid 4-9% more than in other schools due to extra requirements of IB. Most teachers would do one 3-day professional devt course each year plus in-school staff PD about once every 6 weeks.

Most of her time is spent on admin - especially with IB - Ed Dept looks after salaries. She must check all teachers and hours they are working. Oversees budget. She meets with parents only when an issue. If need permanent teacher must ask dept first - then if teacher wants to change school they may transfer them - P, DP and chief of Board will interview them. If a substitute teacher then P can appoint herself. Ministry office looks after buildings, but in practice the school needs to check everything... 1939 building so protected in terms of design – any alterations or upgrades are expensive and slow - need permission from city architect to change colors of classroom - can put work on walls but anything permanent must be retained. Triple glazing of windows.

3. Amuri Comprehensive School in Tampere

Principal is Mrs Pia Mikkola and the Vice Principal is Miss Kaisa Kokkonen.

There are 600 students grades 1-9 (ages 7-16) so it is primary and elementary. It is a large school by Finnish standards. All children are taught in both English and Finnish - first foreign language is taught from grade 3 and a second foreign language (optional) can be taken from grade 4. Tampere has about 200,000 inhabitants and has 4 universities including a medical school - the Nokia factory is a large employer - some heavy industry making machinery - originally a textile town, similar to Manchester in England.

There is no means to deal with teacher incompetence in Finland - once a teacher is registered they are entitled to teach – we assume all are competent – very difficult to get in to teaching and then highly trained – must have right attitude to start with – not just a job – must be dedicated people willing to work hard - can only be dismissed if they do something major wrong, on more than one occasion.

The major sport is ice hockey but played out of school - they do wet an area in school grounds in winter and create an ice skating area for students at recess time. In the classroom all students at all levels are seated in groups, none on their own.

Very little use of computers by students - they are cautious about this as it can reduce social inter-action between students, particularly use of lap-tops. I-Pads may be better and they may go this way as a school but have not introduced them yet... They do have one class of e-Learning where one of their teachers teaches religion to students at other schools who do not have a trained teacher in this area.

In grades 1-2 (age 7-8) students have 21 hours instruction per week, in 3-6 they have 26 hours per week and in 7 onwards they have between 30-32 hours instruction per week. Classes start at 8.10am and most lessons are 45 minutes, usually 8 per day, finish at 3.35pm. Most teachers have 22-26 hours of teaching time per week, but may vary in senior school depending on needs of the timetable. They are trying to encourage more classroom visits between staff but some are resistant.

They have recently started separate classes in Maths for the more capable students, otherwise all classes are mixed abilities - there are 3 learning support teachers in the school who can come into classes or withdraw students needing extra help.

Some teachers follow the same class for several years but not all can do this - some parents are very keen for this to happen and upset if their child has a change of teacher. In Finland a great emphasis on equality so there are no private schools.

No options until grade 8 (14 years old).

They have 3% of children from immigrant families although some others were born to Finnish parents overseas.

4. **Helsingin Suomalainen Yhteiskoulu** in Helsinki

Principal is Jukka Tanska. I was shown around by the Assistant Principal, Sampo Lokki. It has 900 students from Y1-12 and consists of 3 schools, primary, elementary and upper secondary. One of the few selective schools in Finland as it has a long history and puts strong emphasis on language learning. It was the first coed Finnish speaking school – now all are coed. At Y11/12 students have option of sitting IB.

The main reason for Finnish educational success is the selection and training of teachers - difficult selection process - no recruitment problems - one of the most desirable professions - comes from history where there were many hard and difficult wars – they have learned to prepare for the worst – the Finnish are not naturally happy, outgoing people - long winters - lack of sun – so education seen as very important – a way of preparing in case anything goes wrong. He studied for two years at a Sth African university - every morning the sun was shining so it was hard to wake up feeling bad, but here you go weeks on end with no sun.

All those who make it through selection for teaching must then complete a Masters degree before they can teach. But then they are given a lot of freedom in how they teach - outline from govt - then free to pursue their passion – teachers are trusted – no real checking up – if get complaints about a teacher have to be very careful how deal with it – they feel threatened if he visits their class just to see what is happening – they are trying to change this and encouraging teachers to teach with their doors open, which is to invite anyone in who would like to watch – it is saying “come on in and see the good things happening in here” ... but only a few teachers are doing this.

No real testing until end of school - national exams just to moderate for teachers at Y9 – instead get children excited about learning – language skills build from that.

In Holland teachers are graded as green, red or purple – pressure for teachers – takes some of the pleasure out of teaching for his friends over there.

Same teacher teaches child as long as possible - right through to high school - get to know children – means teachers must always vary their lessons every year and prepare new work for their classes - much more interesting for teachers - growing with the children. Class teacher follows through for all subjects except specialties. Teachers teach 20-30 hours per week in senior school. 25-30 for comprehensive class teachers. Base for salary is 24.5 hours contact time - paid more if go over.

Students go home after school and do their sports and hobbies at night - all through clubs not school - children in school from 8-4pm then leave for hobbies.

Teachers meet with parents twice a year for parent-teacher interviews and once a year for a longer meeting, 15 minutes.

Students are taught for 6 hours per day - know children through their tutor class – approximately 24-28 per group depending on level and follow through the school - once a week have 25 minutes with them as well as teach them for one subject wherever possible - if problems in other subject the teacher will come to tutor teacher to sort them out – parents also come - some do and some don't.

They have psychologist and nurse who come into school every day to help deal with any behavior or motivation issues.

Main problems would be size - large school with numbers but restricted space and funding - illegal to collect tuition fees - depend on govt for funding - PTA can only raise money for trips but cannot exclude children if don't contribute, so only do local trips.

Teachers are ambitious for their children to learn - inbuilt - that's their total goal - if there are 24 in the class they want all 24 to do well - do not want a single child not to enjoy their subject or to fail to learn - comes from respect of position - I feel I have been given opportunity to affect these young lives – it is a privilege – the most important thing for all teachers is to get their children to learn and to enjoy learning in their classes.

One of his tasks at moment is introduction of promethium inter-active smart boards – educate teachers to use them – his role is to provide a possibility to use these, not to make them do it – he spoke to a colleague in Belgium where they were telling the teachers what they must do so many did not want it – here it is a possibility for those who want to try it rather than a requirement.

We have a principal as CEO for relationships with national Board of Education in Finland and for finance matters in the school. The vice principal is in charge of learning and every day life of school including salaries for teachers. Then 3 APs - shared leadership - we all have our own teachers - I have 27 teachers to check on but not formal observations - I just call in when have something to speak to them about and see what they are doing – I trust the teachers - parents would complain to me if something was wrong, then talk to teacher and work problems out - if manager not happy and coming to watch a teacher it is very serious in Finland and the teacher would normally leave.

80 teachers all specialists - see all his teachers once or twice a week for informal visits - can give feedback to encourage teacher but not criticism.

In Britain children sit at desks and very formal but in Finland more freedom to express – knows 4th grade teacher in UK – always correcting booklets of children - must mark all details for all students and give written report for principal – in Finland totally the opposite - random marking and feedback verbally not in writing – he might check students' books once year – book marking is not checked up on.

I know my children - if work too easy, extension exercises - can provide some with extension work when they show they need it - every child is important so all must have equal chance to learn.

Very collaborative in decision making at management level - school answers to city who answers to the national Board of Education - organisation very flat - no heads of dept - subject leaders to pass on information to other staff - PLD for staff is organized by management team and by district - aim for all teachers to go on one course per year.

Sharing knowledge important - electronic bank for materials - work pairs - planning lessons - talk together about what has worked and how to improve.