

# Sabbatical Report

## e-learning capability in schools

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### **Study Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore the idea of developing current educational practices to build e-learning capacity within schools to ensure that we are able to meet the needs of all current and future learners.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to formally thank the Board of Trustees for allowing me the time and funding to refresh and develop my thinking around my chosen topic e-learning capability within 21st century leadership. A huge thank you to the Torbay School students, staff and community, and in particular, the leadership team for their support.

Thanks also to the educationalists I talked within New Zealand, on-line and overseas about this topic.

### **Rationale and Background**

The focus of this study has developed from an increasing interest in how educational leaders' understanding of future orientated learning and teaching impacts on teacher practice and student achievement. How leaders prepare learners and their communities for global contexts and crucial to this is the integrated use of digital literacy that enhances an understanding of the world that connects students with relevant, future focussed learning.

The Minister of Education Hekia Parata recently commented in ***Supporting future-oriented learning and teaching; A New Zealand perspective*** that *“Current and emerging technologies play an important enabling role in creating new learning opportunities and ways of learning. These technologies increase learners’ motivation, engagement and achievement and foster innovative ways of working collaboratively. Our investment in 21st century technologies must be matched by new thinking that reflects the best teaching approaches and our natural cultural advantages.”*

As an Educational Leader leading a school in current times, I believe our challenge is to prepare students for the future and for teachers to understand how to do this. How as Leaders can we ensure that teachers are capable of developing students who are globally confident, competent and connected? Developing robust e-learning capability within the school and wider global community is an important aspect of future focussed leadership and lifelong learning.

### **Activities Undertaken**

During my sabbatical I visited or connected with a number with Principals, teachers and students to discuss what they saw as effective future focussed leadership in primary schools, both in New Zealand and overseas.

I used some of my time researching on-line and working with Core Education, NEAL Group and the Blended Learning Advisory Group.

Why is there a need for the development of “future learning”?

In this report the terms “21st century learning” and “future learning” are used interchangeably to describe an emerging cluster of new ideas, beliefs, knowledge, theories and practices.

*A commitment to personalised learning, embracing diversity, rethinking learners’ and teachers’ roles, forging new partnerships — all fuelled by disciplined innovation and new technologies — are identified as the key dimensions of a redesigned, connected and coherent ‘learning system’. Future-orientated report*

## **How can current educational practices help build e-learning capacity within our school to ensure that we are able to meet the needs of all future learners?**

### **❖ Focus Questions**

- ❖ What do you consider of the benefits of e-learning for the learners?
- ❖ How do you support the professional learning of the staff in the development of their e-learning teaching practices? How do you see this developing in the next five years?
- ❖ What will motivate teachers to accept opportunities for e-learning to be included in their teaching practice?
- ❖ What electronic ways do you share learning with the parents and wider community?
- ❖ What are the barriers to the sustainability of e-learning within a school culture and wider school community?
- ❖ How have you planned for future proofing ICT infrastructure in your school? What are your immediate and longer term goals?

### **What is e-learning?**

e-learning’ is learning and teaching that is supported through or facilitated by the appropriate use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Best practice e-learning enables accessible, relevant, and high-quality learning opportunities that improve student engagement and achievement. e-Learning has the potential to transform the way learning and teaching takes place. It is focussed on using technologies effectively across the curriculum to connect schools and communities and to provide accessible, relevant, and high-quality learning opportunities so that every student is better able to achieve their full potential.

*New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) Ministry of Education, 2007, pg.36) encourages schools to “explore not only how ICT can supplement traditional ways of teaching but also how it can open up new and different ways of learning”*

### **Why is change needed?**

International thinking about education began to shift in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to massive and on-going social, economic and technological changes and the exponentially increasing amount of human knowledge being generated as a result. A future-orientated education system must be learner centred and encourage learner engagement.

## **E-learning and teaching**

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) plus changing educational contexts are leading to:

- Changes in **what** is learned,
- Changes in **how** students learn,
- Changes in **when** and **where** students learn,
- Changes in **who is learning** and **who is teaching**.  
(<http://elrond.scam.ecu.edu.au/oliver/2002/he21.pdf>)

## **Attributes of e-learning**

The main benefits of e-learning as seen by students can be summarized as:

- Learner control – of both pace and content
- Accessibility – from anywhere at any time and anyhow
- Availability – just-in-time
- Personalised – it meets their own individual requirements in terms of content and assignments.
- Ability to share with others.

### **School leaders and teachers need to;**

- Develop a learning culture where strengths are celebrated
- Celebrate and cater for diversity of learners
- Offer equitable, open access to all learners
- Inspire individualised learning opportunities and lifelong learning
- Encourage the use of e-tools that support personalised learning
- Promote opportunities for global citizenship and global connectedness
- Welcome innovation, adaption, flexibility and problem solving
- Embrace change and reflective practices
- Support communities of practice
- Engage learners in authentic learning experiences
- Have the capacity to take risks, experiment and accept challenge
- Foster links with the wider community

### **What are the effective strategies to ensure the on-going development of professional learning of teachers?**

#### **A number of ways were cited;**

- School wide professional learning linked to strategic plan and school goals.
- Performance appraisal and coaching plan to develop learning that is connected to and relevant for students.
- Providing time for teachers to practice, share and reflect.
- A supportive learning environment that encourages innovation
- Use of current research and educational experts

- Foster networks within the school, cluster, region and the wider global community

### **What practical ways develop a partnership with the community?**

- By developing a shared vision with all stakeholders.
- Designing Modern Learning Environments
- E resources made available to learners and their communities, ubiquitously: anytime, anywhere, anyhow
- Up-skilling programmes to include the use of technologies
- Support and education opportunities for members of communities
- Providing opportunities for learners to share with the community, resulting in increased involvement and inclusion

Partnerships with communities are integral to the success of e-learning clearly stated in the MOE's e-Learning Planning Framework – *“Partnerships with whanau/iwi and wider networks are enhanced by the use of technologies to improve all learners' achievement, through blended culturally inclusive and sustainable practices”*.

### **Summary of Findings**

The development of e-learning in education has the potential to offer a Blended learning model that uses the best of on-line and face-to-face learning to make the learning more effective and relevant for students. Flipped learning classrooms are a form of Blended Learning that empowers learners to direct their own learning enabling them to learn new content online by watching video lectures in their own time and at their own pace. Face-to-face time with the facilitator involves more personalized guidance and interaction with students, instead of lecturing style of one to many.

The most important development of technology is enabling students to become lifelong learners, who have the opportunity to independently create and collaborate with others. Technology supports learning in such a way that the school, community and global network work in partnership to develop authentic, co-constructed real world learning. This has the capacity to achieve the e-Learning Planning vision of *“students that are equipped to be confident, connected, active lifelong learners”*.

### **Final Reflection**

If you are not willing to learn, no-one can help you

If you are determined to learn, no-one can stop you.

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