

Professional Learning and Development in a New Zealand Schools' Context

Sabbatical Project Inquiry Question: *"How effective is the current trend of online professional learning for teachers in relation to improving teacher practice and making a difference for students' learning and achievement?"*

Research Project Components & Outcomes:

- Review of educational literature linked to professional learning and development.
- Reflection of findings from my 2006 Masters Level Research Paper linked to the key elements of the most effective professional learning models for teachers and the BES Report on Professional Development in Schools.
- Summary of the findings of case studies of teachers currently using the online learning environment for their own professional learning.
- International Snapshot from United States of America. New York City provided the setting for a programme of school visits and meetings with professional learning and development providers (Generation Ready and Visible & Cognition Education International).
- Extend personal knowledge and understanding of what are the most current and effective models of professional learning and development. This will support several of my leadership roles within our region including my home school, Central Otago Principals' Association (COPA), Governance Group for our E-Central ICT Cluster and Liason Principal for our local trust (Central Lakes Trust). When working in geographically challenging areas, such as Central Otago, it is important that those of us currently responsible for making decisions about the professional learning activities we offer in our region are meeting the needs of teachers and are in fact making a difference.

The focus of this sabbatical project placed the lens on teachers by seeking their feedback about the use of the online environment for personal professional development and learning in relation to improving teacher practice and making a difference for students' learning and achievement. Feedback from teachers' narratives has been extrapolated from discussions with teachers, interview questions and research reading and used to construct my conclusion, which is based on recommendations from the teachers involved in this project and current research about effective professional learning and development. Summaries in this research project have been widely referenced to educational literature about teacher professional learning and development.

Introduction

While professional learning and development has long been available to teachers and educators in New Zealand schools, in recent years there have been increased opportunities to consider new and improved ways of providing this, in more sustainable ways. Professional learning and development models need to focus on the teacher as a learner, and be situated in their classroom practice. Today's teachers are very conscious about ensuring that professional learning and development that they engage in is valuable and results driven. Therefore, it would seem that the best way to offer professional learning and development, is to tailor it for each individual school and teacher's context. This requires schools to improve their own self-appraisal and review processes by identifying what it is that they really need and to have the capacity, belief systems and culture to undertake this rigorous self review.

Teachers' stories about the worst professional learning and development encountered are easy to find in educational circles. The day everybody was made to dance in between writing their school's mission statement or the afternoon spent colouring a diagram of the brain to illustrate their personal characteristics are the kinds of silly, meaningless activities that teachers have been asked to do. It has become increasingly evident that what teachers really want is professional learning and development tailor-made for their personal needs and the needs of their school, with direct links to improving student achievement. Educators have moved on from the "one size all" fits all approach, the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff or reactive initiatives, and have engaged in development that is formed around research and evidence. There still remains a tension between Government policy and practice and the professional learning and development provided by the Ministry of Education. Some schools have participated in any professional learning and development that is free, but often not sustainable. Common leadership reflections have indicated that there has been significant professional learning and development undertaken by teachers, but nothing has been embedded. Here lies the greatest challenge. To meet a challenging curriculum, changing society and rapid technological advances, there has to be provision of publicly funded professional learning and development presented in a range of ways for educators. School leaders and teachers want to continue to improve their practice and to do the very best they can for the students in their schools. They demand the support of experienced and professionally respected facilitators and researchers who can add value by working within learning frameworks and using research based models of delivery that recognise where their learners are at, what they need to know next, where they are going and what this will look like.

Professional Development Responsibilities

All New Zealand schools have a responsibility for the professional learning and development of their staff. National Administration Guidelines 2 (Document and Review) requires reporting to Boards of Trustees on professional development action and how the needs are identified. National Administration Guideline 3 (Personnel) includes the necessity for performance management and professional development. In addition, Boards of Trustees, together with staff, are required to develop a strategic plan to show how they are giving effect to National Education Guidelines through their policies. Plans and programmes for professional learning and development are an ongoing part of this. It is hardly surprising then, that professional learning and development for New Zealand teachers is seen to be of prime importance for reasons linked not only to accountability, but a genuine desire to improve students' achievement.

In New Zealand, teacher development is an extremely costly exercise in terms of money and time invested with the intent of improving teachers' practice. A myriad of changes has seen schools and teachers nationwide involved in a multitude of professional learning and development initiatives. Some of these have been created by the Ministry of Education through the introduction of the new curricula in the mid to late 1990s, some linked to new initiatives and trends and more recently the National Administration Guideline 2A requirements have seen the narrowing of Ministry of Education funded professional learning and support programmes to Mathematics and Literacy in particular. Other professional learning initiatives in schools have been initiated by schools themselves, as the result of a perceived need. Stoll and Fink (1996) describe this as practitioners being swamped by innovations. However, they believed that fortunately for sanity, many new ideas seem to come and go with incredible speed. "Teachers have learned to treat innovations like kidney stones: they may cause considerable pain but, in the last analysis, this too shall pass" (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p5). Much of the professional learning and development teachers have engaged in, has been about curriculum content, with very little about the advances of pedagogy. Millions of dollars of individual schools and government

funding has been invested in professional learning and development programmes. However, the question still remains - what impact has this professional development had on teacher practice and student achievement? Since 1990 the successful implementation of professional development projects such as Literacy Enhancement, Numeracy Project, Information and Communication Technology and more recent examples including ALiM, ALiL, MST 1 & 2 highlight the practice of basing professional learning and development programmes for teachers on pedagogy and the principles of effective teaching and learning. This has taken into account the characteristics of learners and groups of learners and the dynamic process involved in learning.

An article in the 2014 Education Review series “Leadership & Professional Development” welcomed the Ministry of Education’s overhaul of professional learning and development for the school sector. The article suggested that the provision of professional learning and development was “inadequate, piecemeal and incoherent” and questioned whether the Government’s investment of \$70 million into this area each year was money being well spent. Minister Parata acknowledged that the long-term level of under-achievement in New Zealand’s education system will not be shifted by doing what has always been done. She said “We are determined to raise the achievement for five out of five young New Zealanders and to do this we must ensure that the professional learning and development resource is targeted to back our teachers. This review provides the opportunity to ensure that our teachers are getting the right level of support for their development needs and are being challenged to raise the achievement of all students.” PPTA President Angela Roberts said that this was an opportunity to radically improve professional learning. She said “the professional needs a nationally consistent, locally trusted state model of professional learning delivery. It is time to move past private providers driving professional learning and development design and delivery and towards an infrastructure that we believe should be university based and available in all schools. The best professional learning must learn from the best evidence to stay sharp. It should be available to every school, rural or urban, on a planned and secure basis. Professional learning can then truly be said to promote equity, support professionalism and guide practice.”

What will this mean for future professional learning and development for teachers remains the big question?

- Will Ministry funding be provided to support the creation of special positions in schools to help improve the ability of schools to respond to professional learning and development?
- Will funding for professional learning and development become less, contestable and more accessible and have a wider focus? This relates to the current narrow criteria the Ministry has had for acceptance into professional learning and development programmes usually driven by decile rating, National Standards data and the percentage of Maori and Pasifika students attending the school.
- How much influence will the work of Helen Timperley have in relation to evidence extracted and analysed from the BES, Ministry Milestone Reports and from other sources? The article confirmed that discussions have centred on the coherence of the system and building the capabilities of the school to enable leadership and self-review.
- As an outcome of this review, will the Ministry’s new set of principles and vision satisfy everyone’s notion of what professional learning and development in the school sector should look like is questionable, but evidence-based research is surely a solid place to start.

Educational Literature and Professional Development

Literature linked to professional learning and development of teachers is widely available. Sergiovanni (1991) confirmed much of the thinking that underpins the philosophies behind many current professional development programmes. He believed that social interactions among teachers are essential for promoting and institutionalising, or building into school life, change in schools and is related to successful staff development efforts. He went on to say that when provided with opportunity and encouragement, teachers learn a great deal from one another and trust one another as sources of new ideas and as sharers of problems they face. He argued that if change is not responsive to the world of teaching, as teachers experience it, it is likely to be viewed as irrelevant. The Stoll and Fink (1996) concept of a moving school is directly linked to people actively collaborating to respond to their changing context and demonstrating commitment to ongoing development. Fullan (2001) supports the notion that school improvement happens when a school develops a professional learning community that focuses on student work and changes teaching. He proposed that in order to do that, you need certain kinds of skills and capacities and relationships. Those are what professional development can contribute to. He believed any school trying to improve has to think of professional development as a cornerstone strategy. Barth (2001) goes even further by promoting schools as “communities of learners”. He believed learning is a continuous process and that when teachers stop growing, so do their students.

The ongoing development of people, especially those working in education is important for a number of reasons. These include the rapidly changing climate in education and the importance of ensuring that people undertaking the work are able to adapt their thinking and understanding and working styles in relation to change, both internally and externally. Learning and development are seen as essential if teachers are able to adapt to ever-accelerating change in their field of practice. Development is part of the teaching profession and must be viewed as never complete or conclusive, with no closure on the need for further learning. According to Barth (2001, p23), “teachers and students go hand in hand as learners, or they don’t go at all”. He believes that teachers need to be asking themselves what they have learnt today and that school communities must be committed to the goal of being lifelong learners. He wants teachers to continually be discovering the joy, difficulty and excitement of learning, and schools a place where we are all learning together – learning by heart.

Allied to developing core values and beliefs for a school is the notion of whole school professional development. This provides the opportunity for staff to learn with a common theme or development focus. Schools are most likely to improve their practices when they adopt ways of working that are consistent with their own aspirations, as well as the current reform agenda. Teachers need to talk about their teaching practice and philosophies and how best to meet the needs of today’s children. This enables professional development to be planned strategically, budgeted for and implemented in ways that best meet the needs of individual teachers. Another powerful aspect of professional development is when schools cluster or network together and visit each other. We have some incredible things happening in our schools and one of our strengths has been to share ideas and expertise with each other.

According to Timperley (Teacher Professional Learning and Development; Education Practices Series 18; 2008), research confirms that teacher professional learning and development has a positive impact on student outcomes. She further stated that professional learning is strongly shaped by the context in which the teacher practices. For the educators who participated in this project, their professional learning was happening in conjunction with their current roles within schools. Their daily experiences in their practice context were helping to shape their understandings linked to their online learning. Much

is determined by the extent to which the desired outcomes form the rationale for continued teacher engagement. This requires the educator to understand the links between particular teaching activities, the way different groups of students respond and what the students actually learn. Therefore impact is not only determined by teachers using new strategies, but by evidence of improved student learning and achievement. However, a teacher's work is so varied, that it is difficult to guarantee and find evidence of how effective any specific professional learning, such as using the online environment, has been in terms of improved outcomes for students. It is therefore important to keep progress towards desired outcomes in view and to recognise that professional learning by teachers has been a valuable part of this.

Timperley ((Teacher Professional Learning and Development; Education Practices Series 18; 2008) concluded that the following interrelated conditions were vital for professional learning and development that positively impact on student learning and achievement:

1. Focus on valued student outcomes – professional learning experiences that focus on the links between particular teaching activities and valued student outcomes are associated with positive impacts on those outcomes.
2. Worthwhile content – the knowledge and skills developed are those that have been established as effective in achieving valued student outcomes.
3. Integration of knowledge and skills – the integration of essential teacher knowledge and skills promotes deep teacher learning and effective changes in practice.
4. Assessment for professional inquiry – information about what students need to know and do is used to identify what teachers need to know and do.
5. Multiple opportunities to learn and apply information – to make significant changes to their practice teachers need multiple opportunities to learn new information and understand its implications for practice. Furthermore they need to encounter these opportunities in environments that offer both trust and challenge.
6. Approaches responsive to learning processes – the promotion of professional learning requires different approaches depending on whether or not new ideas are consistent with the assumptions that currently underpin practice.
7. Opportunities to process new learning with others – collegial interaction that is focused on student outcomes can help teachers integrate new learning into existing practice.
8. Knowledgeable expertise – expertise external to the group of participating teachers is necessary to challenge assumptions and develop the kinds of new knowledge and skills associated with positive outcomes for students.
9. Active leadership – designated educational leaders have a key role in developing expectations for improved student outcomes and organising and promoting engagement in professional learning opportunities.
10. Maintaining momentum - sustained improvement in student outcomes requires that teachers have sound theoretical knowledge, evidence informed inquiry skills and supportive organisational conditions.

Recent Research Project Professional Development in the NZ Context

My Masters level research project completed recently highlighted the following key points in relation to teachers' feedback about their best and worst experiences of professional learning and development. This data was gathered from respondents through written surveys, together with focus group discussions used to determine staff perceptions of effective and ineffective professional learning and development experiences. Respondents were asked to identify their best and worst experiences and to

provide reasons related to their choices. Over 40 responses were received. Surveys were analysed using the Guskey (2000), Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation Model.

Guskey's Five Level Model (Guskey 2000)

- 1 Participant's Reactions (*Did participants like it, was it time well spent, was it useful, what was the venue like, were the refreshments fresh, were participants comfortable?*)
- 2 Participant's Learning (*Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills?*)
- 3 Organisational Support and Change (*How well did the school advocate for the course, support with resources, was success recognised, was release time provided?*)
- 4 Participant's Use of New Knowledge and Skills (*Effective application of new knowledge and skills*)
- 5 Student Learning Outcomes (*What was the impact on student outcomes, did it affect student performance or achievement?*)

The highest percentage of teachers' responses about their best and worst experiences of professional development were at Level 1 (Guskey's Participant Reactions) and the lowest percentages were provided at Level Five (Guskey's Student Learning Outcomes). Guskey's research supports this finding by saying that with each succeeding level, the process of gathering information becomes more difficult and complex because each level builds on the previous level, success at lower levels is usually necessary for success at higher levels which is ultimately the purpose for professional learning. There is further support of this notion found in the work of John West-Burnham (2006). He believes that there is a considerable range of factors that can be measured against quantitative criteria, but the overall impact will be subject to a wide range of complex, interacting variables which gives rise to subjective, often emotional response. West-Burnham goes further to say that such responses are valid, but need to be viewed in a much broader context. He stated that demonstrating impact is essential to justify the investment of time, effort and funds, demonstrate the relevance and credibility, meet the requirements of funding agencies, demonstrate reliability, validity and so reliability, identify the extent to which participants achieved intended outcomes. He proposed a number of ways to measure impact including inputs, events, activities, engagement of people, emotional responses, changes in knowledge, qualities and skills, changes in practice and improvement in performance. He acknowledged that the further down this list, the more difficult it becomes to provide directly attributable evidence of impact on learning outcomes.

Key Research Project Findings:

- The need for those with responsibility for school professional learning and development programmes, to first consider structural aspects such as the where, when, why, who and what. Choose venues that are appropriate - well-resourced, comfortable and conducive to learning and include the provision of refreshments. Engage facilitators who are able to motivate and inspire learners, who are professionally creditable and who can present in interesting and charismatic ways. When these aspects are not considered, the whole value of the programme can be undermined. When these aspects are addressed, the focus can then move forward to participant learning, the provision of on-going support from the school and high quality facilitators or lead teachers, and teachers implementing changes in their classrooms that will hopefully and ultimately lead to improved outcomes for students.
- Schools need to move professional learning and development from the lower levels of satisfaction, sense of privilege, recognition and the "X" factor towards the identification of a

range of strategies that will help them focus on impact, rather than cosmetic satisfaction. These strategies could include personal history and motivation, contextual data, clarification of purpose, focus, rationale, outcomes, success criteria, needs analysis and appraisals. This is about knowing your adult learners by working collaboratively with them to find out where they are at, what their professional needs are, identifying what it is that they need to know, how they are going to get there and what it will look like when they have reached the desired outcome.

- Professional learning and development programmes need to be developed from a theoretical perspective. Literature should underpin all teachers' work and it is vital that teachers are exposed to the theory behind any desired changes in teaching practice when they engage with new professional learning programmes.
- Professional learning and development should take place during school time with teachers being released from classrooms to attend. This shows teachers that the school places a high value on this professional learning.
- Professional learning models need to be varied to include whole staff seminar days, active learning through classroom based impact or inquiry cycles based around real aspects of teachers' and children's learning, provision of opportunities to observe experts and colleagues modelling best practice, time for reflection and discussion of challenges and successes, observation followed by feedback and establishing next steps, use of coaching and mentoring approaches to help teachers integrate new practices, use of collaboration not only between teachers in home schools, but across cluster schools as well.
- Teacher feedback emphasised the huge value of learning opportunities to examine student work in collaboration with colleagues. This process leads to deeper understanding of student learning outcomes and greater discrimination about what is important learning linked to these.
- Professional learning and development programmes need time – at least one school year with a recommended three to five years required to embed and sustain change.
- Whole school approaches where everyone is expected to attend leads to greater overall impact. It is important for facilitators to acknowledge differing entry levels and to structure individual, in-class support accordingly. Follow-up support during the implementation phase of change is necessary and highly valued by teachers. This needs to be deliberately planned for.
- Feedback from teachers confirmed that professional learning will never have its intended impact when it is grafted onto schools in the form of unconnected projects. The cornerstones of effective professional development should be learning by doing, linking prior knowledge to new information, time for reflection, problem-solving and collaboration. Participants concluded that one-off, off-site professional development is ineffective and they could see little point in attending these unless they supported current areas of school-wide focus and were relevant to their daily work as teachers.
- Programmes being delivered need to be designed using effective professional learning and development models and the theory of action underpinning these identified and analysed.

- Components linked to the worst professional learning and development experiences included inadequate theory of implementation, including too little time to plan and learn new skills and practices, quick fix solutions or based on fads, lack of sustained support and follow-up by central agencies and lack of funding or trying to do too much, with not enough financial resources, central agencies trying to manage change, instead of developing school leadership and capability, lack of technical assistance and other forms of intensive staff development, lack of knowledge about the change process and implementation of change, staff turnover, too many competing demands or overload, failure to address incompatibility between project requirements and school policies and structures, individual differences between schools and failure to clarify and negotiate the role of relationships and partnerships.
- The impact of professional learning and development programmes should not only be linked to the provider's objectives, but strongly connected to changes in teacher practice and ultimately improved student outcomes.

Summary of 2014 Teacher Case Studies (refer Appendix 1)

One of the most striking changes seen in the area of Professional Learning and Development for teachers has included the growth of e-learning use and mobile technology to transmit information and engage learners of all ages and backgrounds. The project participants confirm that using the online learning environment ensures that their learning is timely and flexible, they receive information when they need it, and it is in a format that suits them. Online learning provides the opportunity for a greater focus on in-depth, longer term, context specific learning that aims to build sustainability and ultimately improve outcomes for students. Online learning ticks many boxes for a wide variety of educators and despite those interviewed acknowledging there were many challenges when engaged with online learning, the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages. All participants confirmed that their online learning had resulted in a significant, positive difference to their practice. This is clarified by Timperley (Teacher professional learning and development: Educational Practices Series – 18;2008) who said “an important factor influencing whether professional learning activities have a positive impact on outcomes for students is the extent to which those outcomes form the rationale for, and ongoing focus of teacher engagement”. Participants confirmed it enhanced reflective practice, accepting different points of view, the building of a relevant body of knowledge, thus confirming the academic and pedagogical benefits. They concluded that online learning blended well with the work of a teacher – practitioner, researcher, implementer of impact cycles, being ethical and overall by adding the academic layer required for work undertaken by professionals. Those involved in this research project concluded that future professional learning and development needs to provide for building both strong theoretical or pedagogical knowledge, together with the skills and knowledge of teacher inquiry to enable teachers to engage in effective classroom inquiry. The online environment effectively provides access to the theoretical and pedagogical knowledge base and this can be used to support the practical, classroom based inquiry and the development of school based communities of learners.

Summary of International Snapshot – New York City Schools (refer Appendix 2)

The opportunity to visit two inner city schools in New York, organised by Chief Academic Officer Sheena Hervey of “Generation Ready” (one of the largest providers of professional development and school improvement services in the country), provided me with valuable insights into what is happening in education in a different part of the world. Whilst my sabbatical inquiry question was based around finding out how effective the current trend of online professional learning for teachers is, in relation to improving teacher practice and making a difference for students’ learning and achievement, I quickly

concluded that in the schools I visited, there were much greater challenges demanding the immediate attention of their teachers. The teachers I spoke to were working with consultants from Generation Ready to improve their teaching practice and were not undertaking any other personal professional development using the online environment. They spoke of the heavy demands aligned to reporting against the Common Core Standards and the higher levels of teacher accountability linked to the new appraisal framework. Calvin Hastings, New York Department of Education, also confirmed during our education forum, that whilst the department offered schools a varied menu of opportunities for professional learning, the current trend was for the majority of schools to opt into those support programmes that aligned directly to improving student performance in the Common Core Standards. I believe that this compliance based professional learning and development reflects what is currently happening in New Zealand primary schools as well. Their Department of Education is pushing digital learning and connected education for both teachers and their students, but with the introduction of the standards and a contestable funding model being used to access state funded professional learning and development contracts, the rich learning opportunities teachers would like to provide for their students, both in the United States and New Zealand, will continue to be placed at risk.

Conclusion

This research project has confirmed for me that the solution for the delivery of effective professional learning and development in the future will most definitely include opportunities for teachers to use the online learning environment to extend their knowledge. This has been well-supported by evidence gathered during this research project that confirms that it does make a difference to teacher practice and ultimately outcomes for students. It is also important to recognise that teachers want to learn in, from and for practice. Therefore the design and support tools that they use, need to acknowledge their diverse experiences and personal learning needs. As school leaders we need to aim for a balanced approach that supports our teachers by providing multiple options for professional learning. Alongside this will be schools developing the capacity, belief systems and culture for rigorous self review. It is my belief that the most effective schools moving forward will be the schools who do this well, by using robust self review processes to highlight what they need to work on within their own school's context, who they want to support this work and why they want it. Schools must have the confidence and capability to determine their own needs, based on analysis of their student achievement data and knowledge of the professional learning needs of their teachers. The challenge for professional learning and development providers in the future will be to provide the right kind of support, when it is needed. To meet a changing curriculum and society, the future must provide continuous access to government funded professional learning in a range of ways for school leaders and teachers. It will be a challenge to achieve the right balance of teachers benefitting from the support of experienced facilitators and researchers who can add value to their work, within the constraints in which they work. There still remains an element of confusion and isolation for teachers and school leaders who find it difficult to access the support they require. Future professional learning for teachers will benefit from being qualification based to ensure they are well prepared for the challenges they will face in an ever changing education environment. The online learning environment provides many opportunities for this to happen. Those at the forefront of changes have responded to the need for more aspirational opportunities for professional learning, as opposed to reactive or "ambulance at the bottom of the cliff" initiatives, and are seeking innovative ways to provide for effective online professional learning that will ensure impact in the classroom context. They recognise that they need to seek ways to accelerate the learning successes of educators. There will always be a general direction for professional learning and development opportunities provided by the government, but schools must be capable of making their own way, by engaging with those providers that meet their individual requirements and using delivery

models that will support a variety of learners. The research undertaken in this project confirms that the online learning environment is a model for teacher professional learning, that has a positive impact on student achievement.

Teacher Case Studies 2014 Appendix 1

Case Study Profiles: Individual interviews with Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour, Resource Teacher of Literacy, Beginning Teacher, two experienced classroom teachers and a Special Education Needs Coordinator/Specialist Teacher. Those interviewed were all females, ranging in age from 35-50 and all are currently employed in rural towns. Five out of the six teachers had used the online environment more than once for their own professional learning. This learning had included Psychology and Masters Papers, Post Graduate Training (Resource Teacher Literacy, Speld Davis Training, Teacher Training and National Certificate in Sports Training and Development).

Questions	Response Summary
What kind of online learning are you currently engaged in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master of Education - Special Education • Post Graduate Diploma Teaching • Master of Education • Post Graduate Diploma Specialist Teaching Learning & Behaviour • Bachelor of Teaching & Learning Primary • Te Reo Maori Language MOE Paper
How would you rate your technical competency in relation to using the online environment for learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very low (3) • Excellent – click and play and work it out • Good computer skills, but found new vocabulary linked to online learning environment challenging • Competent
Do you believe that your level of confidence and competence in the use of the computer and technology would impact on whether people chose to engage in this way of learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly – it depends on their personality type and having the right mindset. There is no spoon feeding, so need to have the academic capability, right ICT tools, confidence and motivation to do it. • It would be a barrier to engaging in this kind of learning if you were not technically skilled. If you are motivated enough you would find a way. • Sometimes it is the only option you have if you live far away from a university city. • Absolutely, you can feel quite vulnerable at times. The actual reading is fine, but it is how to get into the online learning area and respond, discuss, share ideas. The challenges of posting your ideas online can put you off, especially if you receive no validation of the ideas you have out there. • Yes definitely. It can be frightening to use the online language or Moodle, the value of having your ideas going out there into the cloud. • Yes, having the technical competence is necessary. • Challenging when you don't really enjoy social networking. • Yes, it is okay for fast learners, but if you need step by step instructions, then you would struggle. People who dropped out of our course represented the full spectrum of ages because they could not manage the technical side of the learning.
What kinds of activities have you completed online?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logging in to whanau families, student hub, uploading documents, portals • Chatrooms – participate by seeing who is online and chatting to them, discussion forums • Facebook, Skype, blogging, posts, links, wikis, share photos, videos, YouTube, TED Talks • Virtual Learning Network, e-books, e-TV, e-tasks • Google Documents, Adobe Lectures

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library research, full use of ERIC, referencing, content surveys, bookmarking • Moodle, Blackboard
<p>What do you see as being the advantages of using an online learning environment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal time frame for working, you can work 24/7 or when it suits. You can work whenever or where ever. • It allows you to shine in your own space. • Eliminates cultural barriers and first impressions, as with face to face learning. • Anonymity and privacy maintained. The safety of working behind a screen as a mature student especially if the course was mostly young people. • You have choices about everything, you can use and access everything that is available to you. Examples of this are access to libraries all round the world and the latest research being released. You have unlimited information and sources of information. • Suits your personal learning style. For example if you are a crammer you can work in a way that suits you. You can do as much or as little as you choose. It is self-paced and tailored to you as the learner. • Great to have a learning buddy, so you can have those conversations face to face instead of doing this online. Online you don't have to sit through things that are a waste of time, but you have the option of collaboration if this is required. • You can't assume anything. It doesn't matter what job you do or whether you are working in another field. You can come from any social strata. • It allows choice for how you learn, as there is no perception of one model fits all. • It allows you to connect with people and have empowering and relevant conversations. You are exposed to a diverse calibre of ideas, material and people. You are connecting with an international community of learners. • Flexibility - it is cheap and convenient being able to work from home. You have access to things not available where you actually live. You can work from any location provided you have reliable access to the internet. It eliminates the need to travel long distances to study. • It blends well with a full work load of a teacher or someone who is working full time. • It blends well with your family circumstances. For example if you have young children you can study while you are at home as a caregiver. It enabled me to be a good parent and a learner. • The voice coming through isn't the lecturers. Online you are able to form your own opinions without the bias of the lecturer. You are the one who must differentiate between what is and is not valuable in terms of outcomes for your learning. You are exposing your thinking to a much wider community. • You have 100% access to information as there is no danger of missing anything like you may do in lectures. • It grew my technical knowledge hugely and helped me to become a competent user of the online learning environment.

What are the disadvantages of working in an online environment?

- Skill base in terms of using ICT was low, so needed to upskill myself in this area before I could successfully engage in online learning. Low ICT competency meant two huge chunks of learning needed to happen which increased the workload significantly.
- Broadband access was an issue as it was slow and often unreliable. Technological glitches were frustrating at times.
- Needed to purchase a decent computer.
- You did not receive the emotional support you sometimes required if you sought affirmation as a learner. Things can fall over very quickly and you need to recognise the signs and take the appropriate action.
- Time management. You need to be organised and self-motivated as you have to commit to regular reading and contributing online.
- Motivation at times as you did not have to show up to lectures or tutorials.
- Amount of time spent responding to other posts which was not really the core business.
- The disproportionate amount of time you could spend online following links and searching for information for little value sometimes.
- Vulnerability in terms of posting your ideas and exposing yourself as a learner online.
- Not having a relationship with the members of your learning hub initially made you feel more vulnerable and sometimes unwilling to post your ideas online.
- Finding relevant online papers can be difficult if you have a very specific role e.g Resource Teacher of Literacy.
- Too much information. Need to be disciplined as you can't follow an innate learning style which often comes with being technically savvy. The amount of information can be quite overwhelming.
- Enormity of the resources available means you need to work with so much discretion.
- Too much social media emphasis today and you are penalised if you don't post or comment.
- Too much to follow, too many threads. You need to be very disciplined and stay true to your goals or it can be a great time waster.
- No face to face – not being able to see people's expressions or understand a written response when you can't physically see the respondent.
- Teacher Trainee – difficulty finding a home/base school, as I was a caregiver with a young family and few connections in the community. On campus this is done for you.
- Cost of printing any course reading material you required. It was sent digitally, but if you wanted a hard copy you had to print it yourself.
- Wait time – you often didn't get an immediate response from your tutor when you were working on an assignment and wanted feedback about your ideas. This happens in face to face situations much more spontaneously.
- The online environment can be distracting which can be both a positive and negative. It offers opportunities to expand on ideas you have read about, but this can also lead to a disproportionate

	<p>amount of time being spent on searching through material that is not totally relevant to your work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course content didn't totally meet my expectations because I am already an experienced teacher and some of the course content was for beginners. This delivery method doesn't always meet the needs of a variety of learners and it was frustrating having to complete basic course material aimed at the inexperienced learners.
<p>How much impact do you believe the online learning has had on your practice/work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100%, very high. Evidence of this is modelling, inclusive practice, reflective practice heightened. Have made massive changes to the way I work moving away from the traditional model to one where disability is seen as humanness and by being a reflective practitioner seeking evidence of how effective we are being. The model being used has changed from a medical model to a social and inclusive model. Ethically you can't learn it and not use it. • Free choice literature review and chose an area of passion relevant to the classroom. Changes relate to general practices – formal reflection where I can take another person's point of view and represent this through agreement with them and how it could be used in the classroom. Change has not been instant as it has meant going outside my comfort zone in terms of my thinking. There have been huge academic advantages towards a pedagogical base now. Practitioner research woven through teacher practice – impact cycles, teacher inquiry, Visible Learning – an academic layer has been added. This has been a “just add water and stir approach”. • Over the years it has been significant by promoting reflection and reflective practice. In a real way I have undertaken public speaking engagements. I have built a body of knowledge around working memory, assessment tools and analysing the information we get from these along with best practice in terms of teaching. I have also built on my knowledge of neuroscience and how the brain works. • The impact has been wide spread. Loved the technical aspects. New learning and knowledge gained through research has been valuable. I like the Teacher Study Awards where you can study for a year and then return to teaching to apply what you have learnt. This suited my learning style and I really enjoyed doing the readings. • It opened up my mind to different ways of thinking and new ideas. I learnt lots about different kinds of learners. • I learnt most through the modelling I have seen on my postings. The online learning was not my real learning and I found it difficult to relate my learning online to the realities of the classroom. The course requirements did not always set up the need or purpose to be in your home school. I tended to work backwards from an assignment by working out what was required for the test or success criteria and then worked to this. There was no reason to fail in this environment. You could take short cuts and if you were less experienced or younger in terms of life experiences you could miss out on so much valuable learning.
<p>Can you compare this type of learning to other learning experiences you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My first experience was using very old technology and I had to work much harder at this than the younger students who had grown up using this technology. It wasn't a level playing field with

have had involving face to face, experts modelling, observation, feedback, goal setting etc? What stands out for you? How do they compare?

other students, although the rubric for assessment were useful. College of Education papers were more sophisticated with links to hubs, forums discussions where anyone doing education papers collaborated. This compared with an autism paper completed online with one person trying to deliver the paper, was clearly overloaded and was not always ready with material and slow to respond to questions. Implications for tutors working online: they need to be available to respond 24/7 because learners need their information at anytime. Tutors get a reputation linked to their ability to respond or not to respond! For those undertaking a Doctrate you require tutors with a much higher level of knowledge and ability to work effectively with students at this level.

- There is merit in all models on offer with different things for different purposes. It is good to be providing a range of models. You can buy a book but it is better when this is supported by a seminar with the author. Need to cater for different learning styles – the introvert, the extrovert. A honeycomb approach is strong – know the learner, know the subject and make a plan.
- Speld face to face was practical, online Speld provided a stronger pedagogical base. It would eliminate the variation that exists within a school if all professional learning was based in the school.
- Online learning makes professional development and learning accessible and is value for money in terms of investment when the school pay the associated fees.
- There is high value in face to face learning, the calibre of speakers is vital – they need to be passionate, exceptional, different ways of providing professional learning caters for a range of learning styles. Intrinsic to this is how you respond and your desire to succeed. There is greater accountability with face to face learning and also greater opportunities for incidental learning from face to face interactions.
- Have completed one day courses linked to my jobs but know that my preferred style of learning is “apprenticeship style” with practical and hands-on learning, on the job. Placements in schools were crucial to my learning and development. However I know that on reflection, I would still choose the online learning environment if both models were available to me because it suits my role as a parent better.

International Snapshot – New York City Schools Appendix 2

This international snapshot of schools and education in the New York District was made possible by Sheena Hervey, Chief Academic Officer, Generation Ready. Generation Ready formed late in 2012, combining the expertise of two long renowned education organisations – Editure/Aussie Professional Development and JBHM Education Group. Today they are one of the largest providers of professional development and school improvement services in the United States of America, partnering with districts, schools and state departments of education. Their uniquely integrated approach combines highly customized job-embedded professional development based on their evidence-based Six Essential Practices of Effective Schools Framework, with their proprietary ReadyPath technology platform. This blended delivery model ensures they can improve teacher and leader practices directly tied to accelerating student achievement, closing student achievement gaps and creating a culture of continuous improvement.

Education Forum New York District Education District

Participants: Sheena Hervey (Chief Academic Officer Generation Ready), Calvin Hastings (Department of Education New York City District – Middle School Quality Initiative) and Meesha Brown (Generation Ready Consultant), working with Department of Education in New York Common Core Pilot 2010). The forum provided an opportunity for those involved to discuss education in general, district specific initiatives and challenges they faced.

Summary of Key Points

- Common Core Standards (similar to National Standards) were introduced in 2010 with over 40 states adopting these since then. These were developed after conversations about what they value in education and everyone having the same expectations.
- Common Core Standards are in place for K -12. The Education Department is using an advanced evaluation system that measures effect size in school selected areas.
- There is a significant lack of consistency across schools in the district.
- Teachers are academically well qualified with Masters and Doctrate level qualifications. However, teacher training is variable with some teachers in the New York City District trained in six week courses and then placed in schools.
- Teachers are being offered incentive packages and Teacher Ambassador roles, to help improve teacher practice within their own schools.
- Average principalship in Middle Schools in New York City District is 3.6 years. Frequent changes in leadership have resulted in lots of issues in their schools.
- Gates Foundation Strategy – breaking up huge failing schools and establishing a series of smaller schools to better meet the needs of the hugely diverse student population. There has been a deliberate strategy used to close down failing schools. Some Charter Schools have been opened in the buildings left vacant by state school closures.
- New York Leadership Academy provides training and professional learning and development for new principals (similar to FPPP in NZ).
- Huge tension between demands of classroom management and next steps in teaching for teachers. High turn-over of teaching staff very common.
- Linda Darling Hammond has been providing a series of workshops throughout the district. Her “Theory of Action” series is focussed on bringing teachers together, as a community of practice, and to support teachers work in their classrooms.
- Class sizes quite large- average range 28-33

- Model used by Generation Ready for their in-school support includes – delivery customised to individual schools, targeted learning for teachers to improve practice and outcomes for students, involves completing a needs analysis of the school, building relational trust particularly with leadership, involves working with clusters of teachers. Important aspects of this work includes use of school student achievement data, knowledge of effective teacher practice, introduction of explicit teaching tools, building academic vocabulary, specific interventions used to address problem areas.
- Newer initiatives are based on face to face learning, building capacity and collective growth.
- Common Core Standards are driving professional learning and development currently. The roll out of the standards has meant high stakes reporting which has led to a narrowing of school development focus areas. Schools are requesting very specific support that aligns with reporting requirements.

New York City District School Visits

1. Innovation Diploma Plus High School 404 84th Broadway Principal Casey Jones (16-21 year old students)
2. Primary School 209 Bronx Principal Anne Keegan (5-8 year olds)
3. Generation Ready Consultant – Kristin Gripp

Summary of Key Points

- Higher use of ICT in secondary environment, readings being posted online, courses available online for students to access.
- Aligned with the introduction of Common Core Standards has been a new rubric developed by Charlotte Danielson for Effective Teaching. This is now being used as a prescriptive tool for appraising teachers: planning and preparation, classroom environment, professional responsibilities, instruction. There are twenty-two indicators. There have been serious concerns voiced about this from within the profession and teachers shared that they were feeling under huge pressure with the recent changes.
- Common Core Standards are assessed using common tasks. The standards are seen as a tool for preparing students for higher education purposes.
- The business sector is in favour of the Common Core Standards.
- There is no unified pay scale for teachers across the country, teachers are paid different rates in different states. Teachers spoke of significant differences within and between states. This has resulted in some districts struggling to staff their schools adequately.
- Generation Ready Consultants are using a delivery model similar to that used for the Numeracy Project and Reading Recovery Training and more recently the Maths Support Teachers. This involves building an understanding of the theory behind the practice and building a shared language of learning, modelling, observing and giving specific feedback and setting new development goals, as a result of feedback provided.
- Classrooms visited looked similar to New Zealand classrooms with lots of literacy and numeracy evident on the walls, to support student learning. There was some technology available for the students, but this was not as widely used and integrated as it is in New Zealand schools. There was lots of group teaching and cooperative learning evident.

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