

SABBATICAL REPORT

Janet Exon

Remuera Intermediate School

Term 2 2010

I wish to thank the Ministry of Education and NZEI for granting me this sabbatical which allowed me time for reflection and learning.

Having been 'at school' since I was five years old, I found the concept of not going to school a little difficult to adjust to, and at times even felt that I was 'wagging!' However, I truly appreciated the time to read, research, reflect and plan for the future.

Thank you to the Remuera Intermediate School Board of Trustees for supporting my application, and for showing an understanding for the importance of ongoing learning.

A special thank you to Matthew, Robin and Robert, who so ably managed and led the school, and to all staff who 'just got on with their jobs, doing what they do so well'.

Leadership isn't and shouldn't be easy. It is hard to be a successful leader. It is harder still to be a sustainable one. Sustainable educational leaders promote and practise sustaining learning. Sustainable leaders sustain others as they pursue this cause together. Sustainable leaders also sustain themselves, attending to their own renewal and not sacrificing themselves too much as they serve their community. Sustainable leaders stay on course, stay together, stay around and stay alive.

Professor Andy Hargreaves and Dr Dean Fink 2006

Purpose: To examine and reflect on senior management teams, with a particular focus on how principals are preparing deputies and others for principalship. To examine what aspects of external leadership development programmes could be included in in-school development programmes, and how this could be done.

Background Information:

As a Deputy Principal I acquired my perceptions of principalship mainly from the Principal that I worked with. I believe that for those teachers making a decision as to whether to become a principal, to a large extent, it is going to depend on the image that is presented to them on a daily basis, and the ability of their principal to provide the appropriate professional development. As professionals we must ensure that 'rising stars' (those who are aspiring to be principals) are encouraged to become principals. If we are to assume that deputy principalship is the pathway to principalship, then we must ensure that these people are given the leadership opportunities and the support that will enable them to successfully fulfil the role of principal.

Career Paths in the New Zealand Primary school sector (NZCER- 2006) research shows that: 84% of principals considered that they offered mentoring to newly appointed DPs/APs, while only 33% of those teachers indicated that they thought adequate support was being given. Following on from that, we can assume that principals are not always offering appropriate professional development to Deputy Principals and others aspiring to become principals.

Professional development can be provided through external courses and qualifications and through in-school opportunities. Both of these provide valuable knowledge and skill development for aspiring principals.

To endeavour to find the main contributors to successfully preparing Deputy Principals for principalship, we need to understand what contributes to effective leadership and what provides the best opportunities to 'grow' in these areas. *The Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration – School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why*, MOE 2009, produced in New Zealand recently, has reports on up-to-date research and information regarding this. This report states that there is now a widespread belief that school leaders make a critical difference to the quality of schools and the education of young people. The dimensions of effective leadership identified in the research are:

1. Establishing goals and expectations
2. Resourcing strategically
3. Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum
4. Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development
5. Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment
6. Creating educationally powerful connections
7. Engaging in constructive problem talk
8. Selecting, developing and using smart tools

The dimension having the most impact on student outcomes is "Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development."

The research also links some key aspects of leadership knowledge, skills and dispositions that are required to be able to engage successfully in the stated dimensions:

- ensuring that administrative decisions are informed by knowledge about effective pedagogy
- analysing and solving complex problems
- building emotional trust
- engaging in open-to-learning conversations

With this information in mind, we can think about how to incorporate the development of these dimensions and skills into the daily work of Deputy Principals. Allowing them to be involved in decision making will assist in developing these skills.

What's happening around the world?

In the past decade there has been a global trend towards more systematic provision of leadership and management development. In many countries leadership preparation is no longer an optional activity. Aspiring principals are required to gain certification to practice before they can take on a principal's position.

Research carried out by Penny Verdich (NSW Leadership Fellowship 2007) revealed the following – Mandated, accredited professional learning is an important component of a well structured and accountable public education system. However, such programmes are related to accountability. They do not, in themselves, guarantee excellent school leadership. Successful school leaders develop from passionate, committed classroom teachers who have access to planned, purposeful and personalised professional learning at all stages of their career. In addition, inspired leadership within schools plays a crucial role in developing future leaders. In turn, successful school leaders are sustained by professional learning which supports their fundamental role, that is, as a leading learner, to improve student learning outcomes.

This research shows clearly that in-school training and mentoring is important, and that principals need to continue to show willingness to 'learn'.

England – until recently advancement to principalship often depended on the encouragement and mentoring of the school principal. In 2000 the National College for School Leadership was established 'to improve the lives and life chances of all children and young people throughout the country by developing world-class leaders' - (NCSL). The National Professional Qualification for Headship is now a pre-requisite to gaining a first principals position. The course is partly or fully funded by the National College of School Leadership and takes between 6 and 15 months to complete, depending on the experience of the applicant.

Verdich (NSW Leadership Fellow 2007) found when visiting schools in England, that where there was a strong culture of professional learning for all staff, from beginning teachers to principals, and where professional learning appropriate to school context and individual learning needs was planned and when all members of staff were seen as leaders, the best conditions existed in which to develop future leaders. The role of the inspirational headteacher/principal, encouraging peers and access to appropriate professional learning cannot be underestimated in the development of school leaders.

From NCSL (National College for School Leadership) in England, a study called 'Rising stars and sitting tenants', looks at preparing deputies for headship. New principals interviewed identified finances and personnel issues as the hardest things to deal with, while many felt comfortable managing the curriculum as they had already done this on a smaller scale.

The English model provides a strong career pathway for aspiring principals, but may well lack individuality. There are some aspects of leadership that vary depending on the school circumstances and community.

Ontario, Canada – the pathway for teachers towards school leadership positions, vice principal and principal, is clearly stated by the Education Department.

Aspirants for school leadership positions must:

- * have an undergraduate degree
- * five years teaching experience
- * certification in 3 of 4 divisions (primary, junior, intermediate, senior)
- *two specialist additional qualifications or a Masters degree
- * successful completion of the Principal's Qualification programme

The Principal's Qualification Programme takes two years part-time to complete. There are two sections – Practical Management and Leadership Functions. The facilitators are always current principals. Once qualified, aspirants apply to a school board for a vice principals position. Following interviews, applicants may be appointed to a school. In the future, vice principals may be appointed to principals positions. Principals are transferred after 3 to 6 years. There is no differentiation in pay between large and small schools so leaders are appointed to the school where their skills and experience are best suited.

The importance of establishing a culture of professional learning for teachers at all stages of their career was considered crucial. Additional qualifications allow teachers to move up the salary scale quicker, thus there is a system-wide culture of individual professional learning. At a school and individual level, the encouragement and support of inspiring school leaders could not be underestimated in the development of leadership skills. All teachers understood the pathway to leadership.

New York – applicants for principals' positions must hold a 'supervisory licence'. This is gained through further study but until recently there was no set programme and some of the additional qualifications may have been unrelated to educational leadership. In 2003 the New York City Leadership Academy was established to provide programmes for aspiring principals, principals in their first 3 years of principalship and principals new to New York. Successful applicants to the Aspiring Principal's Programme participate in a 14 month programme – 6 weeks summer school, followed by a 10 month school-based residency under an experienced principal, then a summer planning session. Participants are paid a salary during the training and must commit to serving in New York schools for 5 years.

Professional learning at all levels throughout the school was seen as important. The new programme is bringing some consistency to a situation which previously saw qualifications that related more to do with the development of administrative skills than to educational leadership. If principals are to build and maintain a rich culture of professional learning within their schools, to be a role model for their school community and to guide teachers on their leadership journey, their own professional learning must be sustained.

New South Wales – Aspiring Principals in New South Wales can take part in a professional learning and leadership development programme. It is based around their School Leadership Capability Framework which states that leadership capability is a combination of knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills and personal qualities that enable a person to perform to a high standard in a leadership role.

The programme looks at five domains:

1. Educational Domain
2. Personal Domain
3. Strategic Domain
4. Organisational Domain
5. Interpersonal Domain

The possession of capabilities in the five domains is necessary but not sufficient for effective professional performance. Equally important are:

Stance: Emotional Intelligence - school leaders need a sense of 'self' and know where they are coming from. They need highly developed personal and interpersonal skills based on their ability to empathise with the perspective of others. They need the capacity to interact with people and work constructively as a team. They should enthuse others and take informed risks.

Way of Thinking: school leaders need to be able to 'read' what is going on in a situation, then to 'match' this with an appropriate course of action. They need the ability to see the core issues and anticipate difficulties in complex technical and human situations. They need the capacity to predict and assess the consequences of alternative courses of action.

Diagnostic Maps: school leaders need to develop a set of diagnostic maps through evaluating and reflecting on previous practice. They need to be able to accurately read the signs and figure out what is going on in a situation. They need to draw on collective intelligence to gain insights into possible ways of resolving dilemmas.

Ref – NSW Education Department

What does New Zealand's National Aspiring Principals Programme offer?

A limited number of aspiring principals have an opportunity to take part in this programme – 230 in 2011. Aspiring principals can apply to be part of the programme and are selected using the following criteria :

- successful teaching practice
- recent professional learning
- respectful relationships with students, colleagues and community
- leading others
- a personal commitment to learning
- a current involvement in or commitment to leading hard-to-staff schools

The core programme has five strands:

Developing Self

1. Self awareness and personal effectiveness (personal beliefs and values)
2. Emotional, spiritual and social intelligence (understanding own strengths and weaknesses)
3. Personal goal setting and a professional development plan

Leading Learning

1. The nature of pedagogy and learning (what does successful classroom learning look like)
2. The nature of pedagogical (instructional) leadership
3. The principle leadership practices that best enhance student achievement
4. Developing, clarifying and communicating a moral purpose
5. Application to individual leadership inquiry

Leading Change

1. Understanding the culture of the school
2. Understanding diversity within the school
3. Distributing leadership
4. Developing the school as a learning community
5. Working with responses to change
6. Application to individual leadership inquiry
7. Understanding change processes

Future-focused Schooling

1. Preparing students for a future that is uncertain
2. An awareness of future-focused themes that will impact on schools (sustainability, citizenship, enterprise, globalisation)
3. Involvement of all stakeholders in the future focus of the school

Understanding the Role of the Principal

1. Strategic direction and self review
2. Leading in a bi-cultural society
3. The principal as a leader of systems (finance, personnel, property, legal)
4. The principal as a manager of resources for learning
5. Understanding the NZ context – diversity and self-management – and its impact on the principal's role
6. The principal as a member of the Board
7. Understanding the variety of NZ contexts for principalship

The programme also includes a two-day national hui, a residential component based on the five strands and involves key-note speakers, critical reflection, workshops and regional components.

Each aspirant also undertakes a leadership inquiry, in a curriculum-related field, which involves leadership of other staff, demonstrates theory to practice, and is part of the school's strategic direction. As part of this, aspirants are encouraged to shadow principals in other schools to focus on the role of leading learning, establishing relationships and leading the process of change.

Reflective journals, professional learning groups and on-line resources all add support to the programme.

As an outcome of the programme, aspirants receive a transcript of the course that they have undertaken including notification of the core programme, and a brief description of the leadership inquiry. This transcript could be used as part of an application for a principal's position. Ref – National Aspiring Principals' Programme

For those aspiring principals who are not able to be part of the National programme, there are opportunities within the school setting to carry out much of the core programme within a coaching and mentoring programme with their principal or outside consultant. If principals are aware of what the programme is offering (and we will assume that what is being offered is what aspiring principals need to be successful in principalship) then this can be included in in-school development.

What aspects of leadership development should an aspiring principal be developing?

What type of leadership is going to 'make the difference'?

The NZ Ministry of Education recent publication 'School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works Best' looks at identifying and illustrating the leadership practices that have the greatest impact on student learning.

The study looks at transformational leadership and instructional / pedagogical leadership. Given transformational leadership's emphasis on relationships and pedagogical leadership's emphasis on educational purposes, then most probably both are needed.

Transformational leaders, according to James McGregor Burns 1978, are thought to employ four influential processes:

- Individualised consideration – giving personal attention to individual staff so that they feel uniquely valued
- Intellectual stimulation – encouraging creativity and new ways of thinking about old issues
- Inspirational motivation – communicating optimism and high expectations
- Idealised influence – providing a vision and a sense of purpose that elicit trust and respect from followers

Transformational leaders are able to inspire their people with a vision that energises them and encourages them to work collaboratively towards a common goal.

Transformational leadership is a theory of leadership, not a theory of educational leadership. It pays homage to theories of adult motivation, loyalty, commitment, teamwork and relationships. The power of transformational leadership lies in the creation of a collaborative staff culture, which, when successful, makes the elements 'ripe' for teaching and learning to take place.

Instructional / pedagogical leadership emphasises the importance of establishing clear goals, planning the curriculum, evaluating teachers and teaching. The more leaders focus their influence, their learning, and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence will be on student outcomes.

Reports on research stated in *Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration – School Leadership and Student Outcomes : Identifying What Works and Why* shows that in schools, pedagogical leadership has a far greater influence on student achievement and is an essential aspect for school leaders.

Aspiring principals need to have a sound knowledge of educational theory. They then can identify areas for development. Knowledge of the pedagogical leadership, and the development of the associated skills, is important in school leadership.

Within the school setting there is opportunity to look at leadership theory as part of professional development programmes.

Visiting Schools – Talking to Teachers and Principals

During my visit to schools in NZ and Australia I found the following:

- there was a strong interest among teachers and middle managers to gain further leadership development in NZ schools
- a number of schools had programmes in place for the development of leadership skills at middle-management level, facilitated either by the principal or by educational consultants
- professional development for DPs and APs was more piece-meal, relating mainly to management (rather than leadership)
- many deputy principals were 'satisfied' with where they were and were not aspiring to be principals
 - they didn't want to be involved in finances, property
 - they got enough money as DP, so why take on that extra responsibility
 - they didn't want the stress, long hours etc
 - they wanted to stay more involved with kids
 - they thought it would be a lonely job
 - they didn't think they could do the job
- a large number of the Australian AP equivalents saw their present level as 'as far up' as they wanted to go, and were generally very experienced teachers
- the few DPs who were aspiring to be principals were eager to learn the 'jobs' that principals did, but none were involved in any programmes outside the school about leadership
- the perceived lack of a clear career pathway in NZ schools now does not always make it easy for teachers to know what their next step should be

From these visits I became aware that there are not a lot of Deputy Principals who want to be a principal. This brings about two problems:

- 1. Who is going to lead our schools when the present principals retire or leave teaching?***
- 2. With 'sitting tenants' in DP's positions, there are no positions in schools for aspiring principals from the middle-management ranks to take.***

Conclusions:

- Deputy Principals and others aspiring to principalship can learn the 'jobs' necessary in school management through first-hand experience, reading, asking. Principals who I spoke to were ensuring that their senior managers were learning these skills as part of the day-to-day running of the school. However, opportunities to learn about leadership (theory and practice) are not as evident in schools.
- The Principal is the role model for professional learning – the principal should exhibit willingness to continue to learn and further develop leadership skills.
- Deputy Principals may well fit into two groups – the ambitious deputy who intends to become a principal, and the career deputy who is happy with the job of deputy and does not want to become a principal. The career deputy will have management and leadership tasks that help the school to run smoothly and assist in providing a good education for the students. These are capable, effective teachers who have chosen not to become a principal. The ambitious deputy needs experiences and learning opportunities that will prepare him/her for principalship.
- A strong culture of planned learning is needed in schools to develop good leaders – not only do we need to distribute leadership, but we need to develop it.
- Those aspiring to lead need a sound knowledge of the theory of leadership.
- Recent reports on research are showing that being involved in teaching and learning is critical to being a successful school leader – aspiring principals need to be involved in curriculum, teaching and learning development
- Professional development programmes for aspiring principals are now accepted practice in many countries – if we are to maintain the high standard of professional leadership in our schools, we may need to adopt this practice
- When Principals are aware of the content of successful professional development programmes for aspiring principals, they can then incorporate those dimensions into in-school professional development for aspiring leaders
- Professional development and preparation for principalship is not a 'one size fits all' situation, nor can it all be learnt from a book – recognition that communities are different, schools are different, and therefore leadership styles need to vary, is an important point.

References:

- Successful School Principals – factors that impact on their success (paper by Dr Ross Norman, Director, Centre for Professional Development and Educational Leadership, University of Otago)
- Leadership Matters – Listening to First Time Principals (Marg Lees, Leadership and Management Advisor, University of Canterbury)
- Future Leaders – fostering and developing emerging and aspiring leaders at the workplace level (Kathryn Drummond, NSW Leadership Fellowship 2007)
- School Leadership Study – developing successful principals (Stanford Educational Leadership Institute – a review of current research)
- Kiwi Leadership for Principals – MOE
- National Aspiring Principals' Programme - MOE
- School Leadership and Student Outcomes – Identifying what works (BES) (Vivianne Robinson, University of Auckland)
- Rising Stars and Sitting Tenants (Tony Hayes, National College of School Leadership, Britain)
- Accredited and Mandated Professional Learning in NSW – The Way Forward (Penny Verdich – NSW Leadership Fellowship)