

REPORTING ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Principal's Sabbatical Report
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INTRODUCTION

When submitting my application for sabbatical, I had originally intended to explore the modern ways of satisfying the reporting requirements of NAG¹ 2 (Ministry of Education 2017). I wanted to explore the digital solutions that would allow for real time, up to date achievement and progress reporting. Further to that, I pay attention using the survey tool detailed below, to the gathering and reporting of 'softer skills' information (essentially the key competencies²) that schools may gather over time.

The plan was to use the information gleaned from this piece of research to help feed into the process of change being undertaken by our school. Ideally ensuring that the stakeholders in the reporting process (students, caregivers and teachers) all have access to the information they need, in a manner that is timely and easily comprehended.

This report is essentially compiled by using a data set gained via face to face interview, surveys, telephone conversations, experience from existing students and of the process we are undertaking at our own school.

¹ NAG – National Administration Guidelines

² The New Zealand Curriculum 2007

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

RESEARCH APPROACH

My research approach came from a position of pragmatism and concurs with Creswell (2002) where he writes that “knowledge claims arise from the actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent conditions” and that there is a concern with what works in seeking a solution to a problem. Creswell (2002) also states that researchers are afforded access to multiple methods, varied data collection methods and analysis tools when a research problem is approached pragmatically.

I adopted an interpretative approach to my research and analysed a set of social interactions as well as pieces of feedback from participants and stakeholders.

RESEARCH METHODS

My research methods for this report included the following tools;

- Survey
- Interview/visits
- Observation

These tools were applied using a range of digital media (email and internet) as well as personal contact, either face to face or using the telephone.

Survey

I administered the self-completion questionnaire using the survey design and distribution website called www.surveymonkey.com.

Compared to face to face interviews as a means of data collection, self-completion questionnaires are less expensive to administer, can be distributed

quickly and cheaply and can be far more convenient for respondents to engage with (Bryman 2008).

The practical use of the www.surveymonkey.com web tool provided me with the ability to make the questionnaire widely and conveniently available to potential respondents very quickly. A copy of the survey tool administered is contained within appendix 1, below.

Interviews/Visits

For the purposes of this research study, I used semi-structured interviews to allow a degree of flexibility when discussing independent learning with each of the interview participants. This allowed for exploration of further ideas that resulted from significant replies (Bryman 2008). This approach was far more appropriate than a structured interview, since I intended to explore the experiences of participants and was not willing to limit responses by not allowing for unexpected and useful conversational direction. This ability to benefit from developments within the interview situation is supported by Hinds (2000) as a useful mixture of the structured interview and unstructured interview. Hinds makes several statements around the construction of the interview environment and use of heat, light, furniture and body language to make participants feel comfortable and at ease. These aspects were all considered when the interviews were held.

Other Data Gathered

During my research I have also used the following digital tools to gather information;

- KAMAR portal
- LINC-ed
- MUSAC – EDGE
- Schoology

Table 1 below also gives information about the demography of the schools that took part in providing feedback into this report.

School #	Roll (circa)	Decile	Area
1	2200	7	Auckland
2	1000	3	Auckland
3	1500	8	Nelson
4	1200	8	Manawatu
5	1400	6	Bay of Plenty
6	1500	9	Auckland
7	1400	5	Northland
8	2100	1	Auckland
9	1000	6	Nelson
10	1100	3	Auckland
11	1100	2	Auckland
12	350	2	Bay of Plenty
13	1400	3	Auckland
14	1000	3	Auckland
15	200	7	Southland
16	850	4	Manawatu
17	300	3	Manawatu
18	500	3	Waikato
19	1700	7	Waikato
20	1300	3	Auckland

Table 1 – Breakdown of school demography

LITERATURE REVIEW (BRIEF)

During my research I undertook a brief literature review to get a better understanding of the work that has been done in this area to date.

The pieces of research that I found to be relevant about this work can be viewed in the references section of this report. I do not intend to undertake a full literature review for this sabbatical report as I do not believe it is warranted for a research project of this size and intent.

Having said that, there are a few points that are of interest and warrant a bit of attention before we move to the next section.

Of course the heart of plain language reporting is found in the NAGS (Ministry of Education 2017) and the key competencies are contained within *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education 2007).

Key competencies and the measurement/reporting of them has become increasingly more of interest across many educational jurisdictions and some notable works that have been useful in constructing this report include;

- Deep Learning: Engage The World Change The World (Fullan, Quinn et al. 2018)
- Key Skills for the 21st Century: an evidenced based review (Lamb, Maire et al. 2017)
- Assessing Soft Skills: Are We Preparing Students for Successful Futures? (Minnich 2018)
- Assessment for key competencies: Literature Review (Pepper 2018)
- Is it the school's responsibility to hone soft skills? (Ravindranathan 2018)
- Key competencies: a new way forward or more of the same? (Reid 2006)

- Assessment of key competencies, literacy and numeracy: can these be combined? (Smith, Davis et al. 2012)
- Finnish Lessons 2.0. (Sahlberg 2015)

Whilst key competencies and the gathering of information about 'soft skills' is certainly becoming en vogue internationally, the ways in which this information is being reporting to families (and students) is very much in its infancy. The focus is certainly on the pedagogy, teaching and acquisition at present, and not really on the measurement and reporting of skill development in key competencies.

The literature also appears to support the move from paper based half yearly reporting to families to a more iterative, real time, evaluative commentary approach to reporting. The timelier and up to date information is for families, the more likely they are going to be able to support the learning needs of the young people in their charge.

FINDINGS

Firstly, significant quantities of support material appear to be available for those in the primary schooling sector, in order to assist them in reporting to parents and whanau (Ministry of Education 2017). Interestingly, this does not appear to be systemically provided across the secondary schooling sector.

Tools to support the secondary schools in meeting NAG 2 appear to have been created by the SMS providers, based on school feedback and consultation, rather than any apparent centralised advice and guidance. The quality of reporting appears to be high, and consistent across the schools involved in this piece of research.

KEY COMPETENCIES

Most schools contacted in this small research project do not actively collect, nor report key competency data to stakeholders. Figure 1 below shows the proportions.

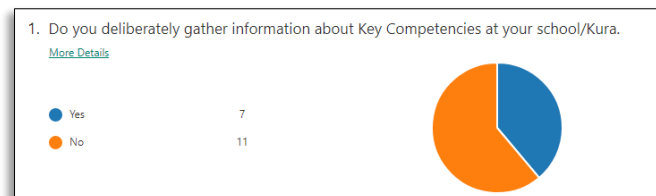


Figure 1

Of the schools that responded positively to gathering the data, it was surprising to discover that not all use the capacity to store this information contained within their student management systems (refer Figure 2).

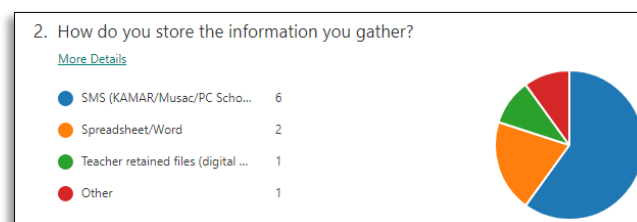


Figure 2

It was comforting to discover that in almost every case where key competency data was being gathered and stored, this data was then used to provide stakeholders (caregivers/students) with feedback/feedforward (Figure 3).

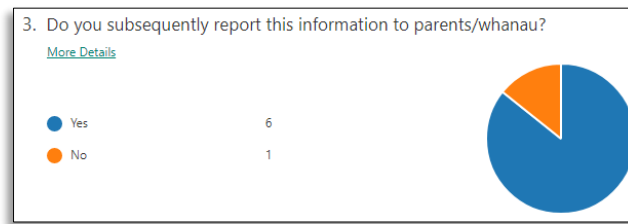


Figure 3

Unpacking the reporting of key competencies, a little further, the question was asked “How do you moderate the judgements made on key competency progress”. Feedback suggest that it is left up to the classroom teacher to make an overall judgement in most cases (Figure 4).

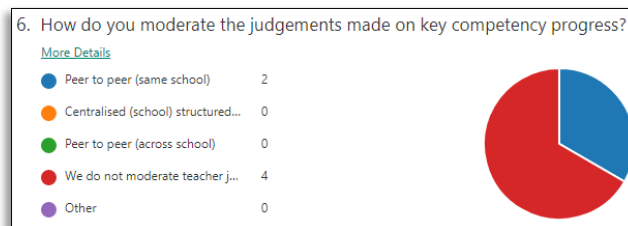


Figure 4

In order to align with the plain language reporting requirement of NAG 2, respondents were asked to detail how the data appears when reported to parents. Whilst comments were made around reporting via position on a rubric and learning stories, figure 5 shows the ways in which key competency data is being reported.

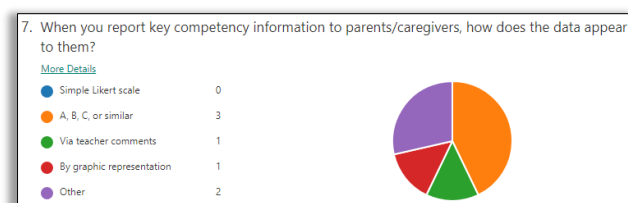


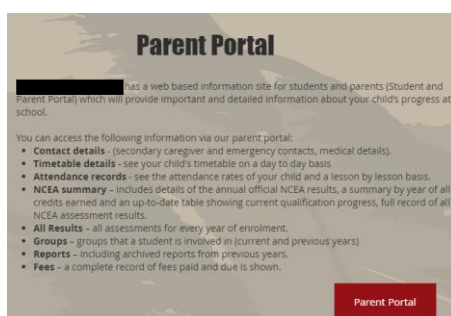
Figure 5

EVALUATIVE COMMENTARY

Whilst conducting interviews, conversation was led towards investigating how traditional reporting to families is being conducted currently. I was interested in finding out whether schools are maintaining traditional practice of printing material en masse on a particular cycle (for example, each term or half year) and sending these printing documents home with students.

The student management system providers³ all have existing capacity to provide live data to interested stakeholders. For the purposes of the conversation that follows, I will focus my commentary around the online, real time tool that is provided by the KAMAR student management system, as this product has the largest market share in the secondary sector.

There is increasing use of the 'parent portal' facility that student management system providers have developed to add value to their products. Caregivers no longer need to wait for progress, achievement, attendance, engagement and other relevant information, as it can be accessed by caregivers at any time they choose. An example of a parent portal login page is illustrated below.



Once logged in families and students can access all of the information listed above, in real time. These portals are becoming increasingly common and the paper material generated in a significant number of secondary schools is now

³ Examples include KAMAR, MUSAC, Edge, PC School, eTAP, Linc-Ed.

becoming more of a summary, designed to stimulate further conversation with families and students. In most cases, along side this real time evaluative commentary, teachers are communicating frequently via email, informing caregivers of the learning journey coming up. Information includes content on pending work and assessment date information that allows families to help support the learning, as they have better information available to them on a regular basis.

The 'real time not paper' approach seems to be gaining a great deal of momentum with schools and is gradually becoming the primary means of reporting achievement and progress in a secondary school.

There is still great support for the traditional 'end of year' school report, but again this is more of a year in summary style document, with fewer, more comprehensive teacher comments. This document has value with the student population as it is a tangible record that can help them to acquire employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having conducted this piece of research, it may be useful for future researchers to explore how relevant NAG2 has become in a modern, real time reporting environment. Perhaps it is time to look at changes to this NAG to reflect the evolved reporting practice on the ground.

The other recommendation for further research would be to explore how we can do better in gathering and reporting information around the softer skills contained within our vibrant and flexible curriculum document (key competencies). As the global movement away from standardized testing and toward a more holistic learner continues to gain momentum, perhaps stimulating further debate on whether we want to report on key competency progress as a jurisdiction and subsequently debating how would we go about doing that in a meaningful way?

APPENDIX 1

Survey Tool – Reporting Key Competency Progress to Parents/Caregivers

1. Do you deliberately gather information about Key Competencies at your school/Kura.

- Yes
- No

2. How do you store the information you gather?

- SMS (KAMAR/Musac/PC School/etc)
- Spreadsheet/Word
- Teacher retained files (digital or paper)
-

3. Do you subsequently report this information to parents/whanau?

- Yes
- No

4. If you do not overtly report key competency information, what do you do with the information you gather?

5. How are teacher judgements on progress against key competencies made?

6. How do you moderate the judgements made on key competency progress?

- Peer to peer (same school)
- Centralised (school) structured approach
- Peer to peer (across school)

We do not moderate teacher judgements

7. When you report key competency information to parents/caregivers, how does the data appear to them?

Simple Likert scale

A, B, C, or similar

Via teacher comments

By graphic representation

8. Do you have any other information you would like to share about how you report key competency progress to parents/caregivers?



9. Would you be willing to send me a screen shot or two of what the reporting output looks like at your school? If so, hit yes below and I will get in touch with you so that you can point me to the correct person at your school.

Yes

No

Request a callback

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