

NASDAP Educators Tour Report March 2017

Inquiry: To what extent does my understanding of & collaborative leadership practice inform effective change management?

What importance does context, understanding the 'why' (informed by pedagogy) and of a respectful timeframe and dialogue play in all of this (if any)?

The following summary is a reflection of my thoughts within the context upon which I applied for this Scholarship. I highly recommend to any leader to take the opportunity to visit other schools regardless of whether 'change' was in the horizons of their schools or not. This however, could well be the catalyst for what I believe to be inevitable and necessary educational change. As David Perkins (Future Wise) asks; do we know "What's worth learning in schools?"

Schools visited:

Hauraki Plains College

A school that understands community and utilises its context to its communities advantage. Powerful community partnerships exist and are being developed to provide students with contextually relevant learning opportunities. Unique in its approach with its Collaborative Hubs and inspired by academic research conducted by Professor Jane Gilbert. The school focuses on student centered decision making and both student input and outputs are evident, valued and celebrated. Effective leadership was evident from both staff and students. Change has taken place over a number of years and has 'buy in'.

Papamoa College

A 'new' build school now 6 years old with a number of its original foundation staff including Principal Steve Lindsey. Innovative learning spaces and organisational structures that challenge the notions of education of the past to present a responsive and flexible learning context for its community. Several iterations of the timetable have taken place during their journey. As Steve says "Learning is a social construct, so we need to put people into effective learning communities in which we plan, teach, celebrate and cry together". A strong emphasis is placed on the importance that language and the disposition of that language - an example of this included the move away from cohort to a focus on learners and a focus on providing a curriculum that was "living and learning as one". Subsequently, an integrated curriculum from the junior school allowed a philosophy of learning to expand into the senior school where "inquiry" was not a subject but the method of learning.

Context as described by Steven meant "knowing and then being responsive to the needs" of the community. It was critical to maintain the notion of 'why' in order to prevent a default back to old ways. Sustaining this required an ongoing commitment and regular communication with the community, PLD of staff and a thorough induction of new staff and students.

Te Puke High School

Lead by Principal Alan Liddle, this School has transformed itself from its former self. In part forced by 'leaky buildings' the school took this opportunity to review its curriculum and undertake a significant redevelopment of its buildings with a pedagogical vision. The Principal is focussed and driven and has empowered his staff to task responsibility for decision making. Traditional structures and areas of responsibility such as HoD's etc do not exist with 'teams' taking responsibility for this. Restructuring has occurred over a period of time using a PPTA model for change. The shared Senior Leadership Team space emphasised the modelling of ILE's top down. They have been courageous with their timetabling and not been afraid to trial innovation. Population growth in the surrounding district has impacted negatively on the school roll over recent years. Massey High Schools model of academic mentoring provided a model to imitate as did the Te Kotahitanga programme which had established a culture of reflection and provided an opportunity to bring about change.

Paeroa College

Significant changes to Paeroa College have resulted in extraordinary NCEA pass rates from the recent past. A major upheaval in curriculum design and organisation has taken place leaving significant battle wounds, many still healing. A fast tracked time frame lead by Principal Doug Black was felt necessary for a school whose reputation was in decline. With ILE and a re-organisation of teaching teams working collaboratively, the school with its small role has been able to make rapid change which larger schools may not be able to. The College has been community minded and the sharing of physical spaces were well received and utilised. A streamlining and realignment of structures resulted in 'semester' schooling to occur. Students appeared to be confident in their learning and staff were developing their learning and teaching practices to match. The SLT were onboard, realistic about the difficulty and challenges change bring but confident and resolute with the direction.

Ponderings

If we keep students at the centre of our decision making then it would be difficult to keep doing all that we do in the traditional sense - although this is not to be confused with simply adopting a 21st c pedagogy. Being responsive and flexible to meet the learning (context) is key to the ongoing development of associated dispositions that build resilience and the ability to 'flounder intelligently' in a forever changing world. In the words of Alvin Tofler, "The illiterate of the 21st c are not those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn". As educators, what is our response to this? Is change easier when you are the only school within reach? Should this matter? There is a tipping point, a willingness to bring about change. Model it.

Next Steps for me

Establish the framework for a curriculum change. Pedagogy at the fore. Use external experts to support this. Create transparent and realistic time frames. Establish parameters for collaboration, for listening and for innovation blue skies thinking to begin. Be sure to engage all stakeholders (including SLT), stop for coffee and breath, as tomorrow will be another day!

"The things we fear most in organisations - fluctuations, disturbance and imbalances, are

the primary sources of creativity” - Margaret Wheatley

T Kanji - Sacred Heart Girls' College (Ham)