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Effective Communities of Learning That Develop Learning Pathways and Leadership Opportunities



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Fellowship Report

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Abstract

Communities of Learning, Networks, Federations, Academies, Clusters – these are all just other names for collaboration and have been part of education systems throughout New Zealand and around the world for many years.

Collaboration is not a new concept for schools. We have been collaborating with the classroom next door, the team, the whole school, with other schools, across districts, and with schools with similar needs forever. It is assumed that if we collaborate, effective teaching and learning will disseminate across our learners and that they will achieve more success.

So if we have been collaborating for so long, has this improved student achievement, and if not, how can we make this collaboration more effective?

It is the formalising of this strategy in New Zealand that brought me to choose this as my research topic for this fellowship. I was particularly interested in looking at different structures of these, the significance of pathways, and the leadership of them and within them.

I spent a significant amount of time before finalising my itinerary, researching countries that have formalised a collaborative model and then I made several contacts with professionals in those countries until I found key people who were able to coordinate visits that would be useful for my research. As a result of this, I visited Victoria in Australia, Singapore, England, and Wales and I attended a three day conference in Philadelphia that was related to the concept of collaboration.

Everywhere I went, the challenges and frustrations for members of these groups of schools were similar. The leadership structures differed in each of the countries I visited and all professionals I spoke with were surprised at how the current model in New Zealand was structured, particularly the leadership tier. They questioned how this could work – particularly for Lead Principals.

I will discuss some of the differences I found in leadership models in the countries I visited, and I will also share the significance or insignificance of learning pathways.

Research shows that quality teaching has the biggest influence on learners' achievement. In collaborative cultures, responsibility for the success of all students is shared among all members of the community.

I believe the quality of leadership within these collaborative groups is also extremely important. It takes a different type of leadership to facilitate collaborate practice within a community of learning, one which must consider all children within the community, not just those of the home school.

I hope that information from this research will be of interest to those involved in CoLs in the New Zealand context, and that the complexities of the leadership roles required to fit the current model of Communities of Learning in New Zealand can be clarified.

Acknowledgements

What a privilege this fellowship has been. My growth both professionally and personally is something I will never be able to measure. I feel honoured to have been given this opportunity of a lifetime.

The fellowship gave me time to read, research, reflect, discuss and experience so many different aspects of education throughout the world. The opportunity to travel to other countries to get those international perspectives on educational theory, policy and practice is something that I am most grateful for and I was welcomed with open arms wherever I went.

Firstly I would like to thank the ASB, APPA, and the Ministry of Education for creating and continuing to support this prestigious award and most of all, for opening up opportunities for principals to participate in the most amazing professional development.

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During my time away, I was so fortunate to have the opportunity to visit so many amazing schools and to talk to some dedicated, inspiring educationists around the world. Every one of them that I spoke to had the same desire to do the very best for every child in their school and there was not one of these leaders who was not facing similar challenges to those that we, as leaders, face here in New Zealand.

In particular I would like to thank:

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Marlborough COL
- Shane Campbell – principal, Bohally Intermediate School
- Tania Pringle – Principal Seddon School
- Michelle Spencer – Principal, Rapaura School
- Gaylene Beattie – Principal, Springlands School

- Denyse Healy – Principal, Blenheim School

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- Wayne Perkins – Network Facilitator, The Paradigm Shifters: Entrepreneurial Learning in Schools, Victoria Network
- Meenah Marchbank – Victoria Principals Association Advisor
- Jane Warren – Principal, Ballaire Primary School
- Teresa Stone – Institute of Leadership – Bastow, Network Chair
- Fred Clarke – CEO, Northern Bay College campus
- Michael Divine – Principal, Westernport College, part of Paradigm Shifters Network
- Bill Reid – Principal, Altona Meadows Primary School, Hobsons Bay network, South West Melbourne.
- Yong Zhao - Yong Zhao is a Foundation Distinguished Professor in the School of Education at the University of Kansas. He is also a professorial fellow at the Mitchell Institute for Health and Education Policy, Victoria University in Australia. He previously served as the Presidential Chair and Director of the Institute for Global and Online Education in the College of Education, University of Oregon, where he was also a Professor in the Department of Educational Measurement, Policy, and Leadership. His works focus on the implications of globalization and technology on education.

Singapore

- Adrian Smith – Principal, Chatsworth International School, East Campus
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- Simon Cowley – Primary Director, The White Horse Federation
- Tammy Van Der Meulen – Principal, Nyland Campus
- Helen Swanson – Principal, Drove Primary School
- Sue Kershaw – Principal, Gorse Hill School
- Rachel Skates – Principal, Mountford Manor Primary School
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Background

In January 2014 the Prime Minister announced that the Government was investing an extra \$359m in funding over the next 4 years, and \$155 million a year after that, to help raise student achievement.

This “Investing in Educational Success” initiative was designed to help further lift student achievement in New Zealand. It focused on raising teaching quality and enabling education providers (early childhood education services, me ngā kōhanga reo, school, kura and post-secondary) to work together to share teaching and leadership resources.

A Community of Learning was designed to be made up of approximately eight to twelve schools but as this initiative has been introduced throughout many areas of New Zealand, this has varied markedly. The schools within the community are expected to form a pathway which reflects students’ journey through the education system. It was also designed to provide opportunities to build knowledge and expertise, and to stimulate improvement and innovation. Another major purpose of forming CoLs | Kāhui Ako, was to provide the opportunity to improve teaching and learning through collaboration.

Many areas of New Zealand are finding that this is an unrealistic expectation and other criteria for collaboration have been considered.

At this time, participation in a Community of Learning is voluntary in New Zealand but with the change of government, this may change.

So where is the current situation? At the time of starting my research at the end of 2016, at least 117 CoLs were already running across the country.

I believe they have the potential to be great for NZ education.

Prior to applying for this fellowship, I had been part of a small group of local principals who, on behalf of the Whangarei Primary Principals’ Association, were investigating the possibility of establishing a Community of Learning in the Whangarei area. We were struggling to come up with a model that would fit within Ministry guidelines and the genuine needs of a unique area like Whangarei where there are huge secondary schools, small secondary schools, area schools - through to very small primary schools, a Special School, kura and schools with bilingual opportunities. We were also very keen to include pre-school education centres early in the process, and eventually tertiary.

Natural pathways just do not exist in some areas and Whangarei was one of these with many children following different pathways than those within their geographical area.

There was strong resistance from some members and real enthusiasm to get started by others. I wanted to find out more about how other communities of schools/networks functioned successfully in other countries so that I was able to share my knowledge with those who were reluctant to be part of these communities of learning in New Zealand due to lack of understanding about how they work to improve student achievement.

I went into this research with an open mind, hoping to see both the positives and negatives of these collaborative settings.

Methodology

I began my research by first of all finding out which countries around the world had education systems that worked as communities or networks.

I knew that leadership was a significantly important part of the success of any community of schools and this was the basis of my research.

I started by developing a set of questions which were by no means exhaustive or definitive. (*Appendix 1*) While these were an important part of my research and a starting point for discussions, the information I collected went far deeper than what these questions could possibly do. The discussions that brought about subsequent questions, the observations, the walks around the schools, and the many readings I have done have all played an important part of my research.

What really inspired me to choose this topic in the beginning was a seminar I attended in Auckland which was organised by the NZEI Principal's group. The guest speaker was Professor Yong Zhao and his presentation was about "The Purpose of Education." I had a conversation with Yong at the end of the seminar, about a network of schools he was working with in Victoria Australia which was not about pathways, but about schools with a similar interest. And there my journey began. I was onto something that really interested me!

It was an absolute privilege to speak with Yong and I met up with him again at a special event in Melbourne which showcased the final outcomes of the network we spoke about in Auckland.

I was also privileged to meet with researchers, representatives from ESTYN (Welsh Inspectorate), and educational leaders from Victoria, Singapore, England and Wales.

I specifically chose to visit networks with a wide variety of different compositions and also those that were formed for different reasons and purposes.

One of the first things I did when putting together my itinerary was to register for the first ever USA National Principal's conference where Elementary and Secondary school principal associations combined. The title of the conference was "Connecting Great Leaders Across All Levels" and it was held in Philadelphia. The topic was very relevant to my study.

I also spoke to the leaders of a Teaching School which was attached to a secondary school and involved coaching and leadership development programmes.

I intend this paper to be used to inform educators in New Zealand about the structure of different networks of schools in the countries I visited, what consideration pathways are given when forming these networks, and how the leadership of them and within them is managed.

I have included in this report the background to my study, summaries of the schools I visited, the discussions I had with researchers, findings and reflections, conclusions, recommendations, and future directions with my inquiry. I will include literary reviews throughout the report and will also recommend some of the most useful readings I used for my research. I found many websites also very informative.

School visits/Countries

BLenheim – NEW ZEALAND

Springlands School

The first school I visited in Blenheim was Springlands School lead by the principal, Gaylene Beattie. Gaylene was one of the original Strategic Group of the Blenheim Community of Learning.

There are currently 440 students at this school with 20% of them identifying as Maori. Springlands School is in an unusual situation because in this school there are 3 of the 7 Across-School teachers (the DP and 2 APs) for the COL from here. There are also 2 in-school teachers appointed at Springlands School.

One of the biggest issues with this is the lack of relievers. The structure of the school has had to be changed to allow these staff to take up the positions of Across-School teachers or In-School teachers. In some situations it has meant that these teachers have taken leave from their current responsibilities to allow them to take up the new role. The result of this is that it has allowed other staff to step up into leadership roles within the home school and the existing positions have become shared.

In the beginning, some parents were not happy that their child's teacher was going to be out of the classroom for 2 days a week to take up the position of Across School teacher because they were concerned about the effect this could have on their child's learning with 2 different teachers in the room.

There were also challenges around collaborative spaces if one of the teachers was an Across-School teacher or an In-School teacher as the changes of teacher can affect the collaborative model of teaching and learning.

Blenheim School

This is a very small, long-established school situated adjacent to the central business district in Blenheim. It caters for students in Years 1 to 6. One third of students identify as Māori. The school hosts nine Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour, a Social Worker in Schools, a Resource Teacher Māori and the Southern Regional Health School.

When I visited the school the roll was around 25 students and many of these were children with high needs.

The introduction of the COL organisation is challenging for smaller schools as even if they generate some in-school teacher time, finding relievers is not easy and the role of the teaching principal is made even more challenging as it is very difficult to get away from the school for meetings as well as to keep up with all the other responsibilities the principal carries in a small school. For these reasons, it can be very isolating for smaller schools as the Achievement Challenges for the COL are not always what a very small school can achieve.

Bohally Intermediate

This intermediate school is very near Marlborough Girls High School. The principal, Shane Campbell, was previously from the Northland area so it was good to catch up.

Transitions from the intermediate to the local high schools was just one of the things I discussed with Shane. Once a term, the Year 8 teachers from Bohally Intermediate meet with their secondary colleagues to plan and review programmes and progress of the students moving on to the high schools the following year. This was a very valuable exercise for both parties.

Bohally Intermediate works closely with its contributing schools where Year 5 and 6 teachers meet with Year 7 and 8 teachers. Their focus is on priority learners and they use the Spiral of Inquiry Model, (Timperley, Kaser & Halbert, 2014). This model includes observations of each other's practice, plus lots of discussion before and after the observation. The teachers also moderate together so there is a clear understanding of where the children are coming from and where they need to progress to.

Marlborough Girls High School

I met with Karen Stewart, principal of this large secondary school and also one of the lead principals of New Zealand's first CoL which was approved in 2015. Unfortunately, Simon Heath, the other lead principal, was unable to attend due to another commitment.

The Blenheim Community of Learning was in the first tranche of CoLs approved by the Ministry which meant there was lots involved to ensure that processes were correct moving forward and other CoLs following after this would be watching progress of the Blenheim Community of Learning with interest.

Karen acknowledged just how challenging this lead principal role was and even though the two year contract was a great challenge, it was exhausting, particularly as everything was new.

Karen acknowledged the work by John Hattie – "What Doesn't Work in Education: The Politics of Distraction," (Hattie, 2015) which emphasises how important it is, as the leader of a CoL, not to take your eye off the ball.

Rather than decision-making being data-based only, Hattie is an advocate of data-informed decision-making in the education sector.

He believes policy makers, school leaders and educators should be looking at the differences within schools rather than between schools as it is within schools that the greater variance in student achievement occurs.

Hattie finds it ironic that governments see the solution to the variance in student achievement is to create new forms of schools such as charter schools, for-profit schools, public-private schools, academies – anything other than public schools.

As educational leaders, if Communities of Learning are to be the government's next solution to raising student achievement, we need to look closely at what is happening in each of our schools within that community for these communities to succeed.

Hattie lists the world's top five distractions in education as being:

- **Distraction 1: Appease to parents** – “If only there were more choice of schools and smaller class sizes”
- **Distraction 2: Fix the infrastructure** – “If only we had more effective curricula, more rigorous standards, more tests and more alternative-shaped buildings”
- **Distraction 3: Fix the student** – “If only we had better, well-prepared students”
- **Distraction 4: Fix the schools** – “If only schools had more money and autonomy, they would be better schools”
- **Distraction 5: Fix the teachers** – “If only teachers had better initial training, were paid for performance and adopted new technology”

Hattie argues that by over emphasising one or all of these things, it distracts from other, more critical, more effective ways to improve education. They may have some impact but only minimal.

Summary

- The Blenheim Community of Learning was set up in 2015, the first of its kind in New Zealand.
- The COL consists of 21 schools; 18 primary schools, 1 intermediate and 2 high schools (boys and girls).
- The first year of the COL was all about getting the community up and running.
- The school's principals were all part of the Marlborough Principals Association (primary and secondary) and had worked together on a variety of teaching and learning projects over a long period of time, to raise student achievement.
- All schools entered into this community of schools or there was a risk it may not happen. They did not want this decision to be divisive.
- There are only two secondary options in this area: Marlborough Girls and Marlborough boys so the natural pathway for the majority of students in these 21 schools is to one of these two colleges.
- The total roll at establishment was 5,570 students made up of 71.9% European, 18.3% Maori, 4.5% Pasifica, 3.1% Asian and the rest MELAA and other.
- Although there were actually 2 COLs, they basically work as one.
- Because of the size of the group, a Strategic Group was set up to do the initial planning. This group involved representatives from all sectors in the COL - Primary, Secondary, Intermediate and Rural schools.
- Once approval was given for the 2 COLs, members of the Strategic group who were not applying for the Lead Principals positions, helped to appoint the 2 lead principals, the Stewardship Group and the Across-School teachers with a representative off the National Panel.

- There was little competition for the lead principal roles as most were not interested.
- Simon Heath (principal of Renwick Primary School) and Karen Stewart (principal of Marlborough Girls High School) were appointed as Lead Principals on 2 year contracts.
- Initially they both found this role very challenging as it was a new and an evolving role and did take them out of their own schools frequently.
- It is unsure whether these contracts can be or will be rolled over at the end of this 2 year period.
- Currently, all 21 principals in the COL meet once a term.
- The Stewardship Group/governance group was kept simple – 2 principals, elected representatives from BOTs, one intermediate, one secondary, and 1 primary. This is done like a BOT election.
- Elections are held once a year for 1 of the Board of Trustees candidates. Members have agreed who will stand down each year so there is a cycle and it is sustainable.
- It is really important to have strong leaders as DPs.
- The Strategic group set up the Achievement Challenges.
- Culturally responsive pedagogy is a huge part of these challenges and Science and authentic learning opportunities are an emphasis.
- Well-being also important eg – consistency of truancy practices.
- Pre-schools are involved now, although they receive no funding or staffing allocation. To cover this, the Kindergarten Association fund one Across-School teacher and one of the kindergarten managers is currently in this position.
- Eventually, the principals involved in the COS felt that the Strategic Group was no longer needed and it was disbanded. It was felt that while this group existed, others involved did not have ownership.
- This COL works on a Theory of Improvement which has been developed in teams which included principals, in-school lead teachers, and across-school teachers using Google Docs.
- The Spirals of Inquiry model is used across the COL to improve teaching practice.
- There was initial resistance to join the COL by schools who were concerned about losing their unique school culture.
- Organising meetings has been a real challenge with other commitments and it is difficult finding relievers to release staff. The calendar has had to be set a year out using a Google doc.
- The whole COL focusses on priority learners and teaching and learning programmes and progress is monitored closely by the in-school leaders. These leaders also lead the 'spiral of inquiry.'
- At one school, the across-school teachers from that school are also used to support writing programmes for the priority learners.
- It was felt that for this COL to be sustainable, the groups of schools involved need to be smaller with at least one more lead principal to make the job more manageable.
- Another concern was around the amount of compliance involved which needs to be reduced.
- The 2 lead principals initially planned to meet 2 days a week - Wednesday and Thursday - with there being a shared Google calendar that was shared with in-school and across-school teachers.

- This became unmanageable and so now the 2 lead principals meet after school on a Wednesday and all day on Thursdays.
- Other common issues were around effective communication so that everyone is aware of what is happening; the amount of time needed for this COL to succeed; the 'resistors' amongst the members of the COL; Across-School teachers needed the time to be able to work in classrooms more often – rather than just being coaches.
- Because it was so difficult to release the Across School teachers and In-School teachers to meet regularly during school time, the meetings have now been moved to after school hours once a week for one and a half hours.
- The PACT tool is used across the COL as one of the assessment tools and moderation is also done across all schools.
- To keep the parents and Boards of Trustees informed about the processes and progress being made towards meeting the achievement goals, once a year the Stewardship group runs a meeting for all trustees of the schools in the COL.
- As well as meeting with the Boards of trustees, three meetings are held each year in term 3 in three different schools for parents to attend.
- It was felt that it is extremely important to have all stakeholders in the community involved.
- The first achievement challenge for the Blenheim COL is around improving writing skills among children, from pre-schoolers to school leavers. This includes digital writing.
- The community was particularly trying to lift the achievement of boys, and Maori and Pasifika learners.
- The focus was expected to last two years, depending on how progress goes.
- The COL is about raising standards and creating educational equity within the region, rather than trying to meet a particular standard.
- The focus is also on how to progress and accelerate achievement.

Positives

- Schools are still able to have their own 'flavour'.
- The establishment of the COL has lifted leadership capability significantly, especially for Across School teachers. They now have a better understanding of what principals do – both the positives and the negatives.
- Some leadership roles are shared which has created strong partnerships in the leadership team.
- It has broken down the stigma between principals and middle management with a strong third tier of leadership coming through.
- It has encouraged leaders to re-evaluate their thinking.
- There has been an improvement in robust self-review
- The structure of the COL provides excellent professional development for Across-School leaders and in-school leaders.
- The role of Across-School teacher and In-School teacher provides a great career opportunity.
- The COL has strengthened the relationships between sectors – secondary, primary, pre-school.

Negatives

- If there are too many Across-School teachers and In-School teachers appointed from one school, this can cause problems within the structure of the school and may mean that the staffing structure of the school will need to change to accommodate this. This can be particularly when the Across-School teacher is already part of senior management within the school.
- Some parents were not happy to have their child's teacher taken out of their child's class for two days a week.
- Collaborative teaching spaces can be effected with changes of staff due to Across-School or In-school teachers being released.
- It was initially very challenging for lead principals.
- Schools that are already struggling with their culture can become resisters.
- Organising meetings is an ongoing challenge and so a google calendar is made up a year ahead.
- Meetings often need to be held after school hours or over breakfast.
- It was felt that for a CoL this size to be sustainable, the groups of schools working together needed to be smaller and there also needed to be more Lead Principals.
- There are real difficulties finding relievers and schools need to be creative with staffing.
- Communication can be an issue.
- Across-School teachers need to be available to spend more time in classrooms.
- Across-School teachers can pick up many ideas from other schools and want to adopt them in their home schools so need to be reminded about whether or not it fits the strategic plan of their home school.

VICTORIA – AUSTRALIA

- There are 4 local government areas in Victoria – North Eastern, North Western, South Eastern and South Western.
- In each of these government areas there are 8 -10 networks of schools.
- One of the networks in the North Eastern area is the Maroondah Network of Schools which is made up of 5 secondary schools and 16 primary schools.
- Each of the principals and other school leaders within this network meet twice a term to discuss educational and organisational issues.
- This network is further grouped into four clusters of schools, one of which includes all of the secondary schools.
- The principal and the teachers of each of the schools in these cluster groups enjoy close collegial relationships, meeting together each term to share experiences and professional knowledge.
- At this stage, preschools are not part of these networks.
- Networks are made up geographically, but not necessarily as pathways.
- "Communities of Practice" have been formed where larger groups of principals get together from various networks - every principal is expected to attend – they may meet up to twice a term.

- An Executive Group is elected from this group of principals who work together to determine the needs of the network.
- “Communities of Practice” are not formed from data – principals opt into which one they want to be part of – eg Writing, Reading, Maths, and can be part of more than one.
- A “Senior Education Improvement Leader” (SEIL) supports the implementation of the Communities of Practice approach in each network. Most SEILs had originally held principal roles.
- EILS – “Education Improvement Leaders” – are the lead teachers who support curriculum in regional offices and are coaches in their own school.
- Learning Specialists are classroom based and are used as an example of good practice.
- The whole leadership team of most schools went to the network meetings.
- Some schools have 2 expert teachers sharing a class and the role of expert teacher.
- Each school within the network still has their own BOT.
- Network Chairs (Lead Principals) need to know:
 - How to lead and manage change
 - How to challenge peers
 - How to build professional practice.
 - What is “small data”? What is the cause or link to the bigger problem? Eg attendance
- The Network Chair is out of school at least one day per week.
- It is important that as the network leader, you have to give this role “brain space” to be successful.
- It is also important for all stake-holders to have a clear understanding of what collaboration is right from the start.

In Victoria I visited Bastow -The Institute of Leadership, and met with Teresa Stone. Teresa is currently the Bastow Leadership Advisor, having been seconded to the Institute from her position as Principal of Derrimut Primary, a large school in Melbourne’s west. Teresa is an experienced educational leader who has worked in a wide range of large and small schools in the metropolitan, outer west and northern suburbs. She is passionate about creating learning environments that are innovative and collaboratively developed to support all learners to be the best they can be.

The Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership offers transformative leadership professional development and learning opportunities for Victorian primary, secondary and early childhood education professionals. The Institute plays a keen role in implementing the Victorian Government’s Education State agenda to build the capacity of educational leaders and to identify and develop high quality leaders for the future.

Building the Education Revolution

I also visited several schools that have benefited from the Building the Education Revolution initiative.

Building the Education Revolution (BER) was a Federal Government initiative – and the resultant workflow associated with the Victorian State Government Economic Stimulus Package (ESP) which resulted in \$1.5 billion worth of capital works for government schools.

Hayball (in association with Gray Puksand) was commissioned to produce 21 building templates, comprising the core of the BER rollout. The building designs included 21st century models for primary schools, libraries, learning neighbourhoods and science and language centres.

The templates were designed, developed, peer reviewed and documented to pre-tender ready packages within a very short timeframe to meet federal government objectives. With the incorporation of an exhaustive design guide, this initiative was developed with a philosophy of flexibility, variety and opportunity for the delivery of education in Victoria.

The schools that I visited that had been part of this initiative, all planned their buildings differently. Some kept all of the walls in, creating several small classrooms, while others had some interior walls and then others removed all interior walls from the design. Without walls, spaces were created using furniture and moveable screens which resulted in much more flexibility in the use of the space.

Ballaire School, Victoria

- This school was part of a network which was changed by the department to even up numbers of schools in local networks. They were not happy as the original network had been working very well and fitted better with Ballaire's philosophy.
- Once the network was set up, protocols were set together for how the network would operate.
- Principals were surveyed about what their needs were.
- Key questions were posed and then these were prioritised.
- These questions were around curriculum, building leadership and middle management.
- There were 24 schools in this network.
- Jane Warren from Ballaire was the regional network leader and she supports principals, looks at the data and finds out the common threads.
- Communities of Practice were formed according to need and were based on common priorities.
- Principals can be part of many Communities of Practice.
- They are linked to Strategic and Annual Plans where commonalities are found.
- They also try to have an overall focus for the network which came down to transitions.

Northern Bay College

I was fortunate to meet with the CEO/Executive Officer of Northern Bay College, Fred Clarke. Northern Bay College was formed in 2011 as a result of a merger of nine schools into one multi-campus College. The aim of this merger was to provide a supportive, coordinated and consistent approach to the education and wellbeing of children and young people living in the Corio/Norlane area. The process of regeneration of the Corio and Norlane

government schools began in 2006 and was driven by the nine school communities to ensure young people and their families in the northern suburbs of Geelong had access to high quality education in world class facilities. Northern Bay College is one of Victoria's largest schools and faces significant challenges to improve education and work outcomes of students now and into the future. Corio and Norlane are among Victoria's six most disadvantaged suburbs and while much has been done to lift education and health outcomes, success in academic areas to date has been limited.

- Originally in this area there were 9 schools and 4 of them were closed down which included 2 colleges which were under-performing.
- All School Councils were disbanded and one School Council was formed for all schools.
- The campus is now made up of four Y1-8 schools and 1 senior school Y9-12.
- This campus is in an area of extreme disadvantage with much unemployment.
- 75% of students are in the bottom quartile.
- 9 principal's contracts were not renewed when the school reopened in its new format.
- There are now 5 principals plus Fred Clarke who is the CEO/Executive officer.
- There is a total of 6 Assistant principals in this campus, plus 240 teachers with 2100 students.
- Communities of Practice have been set up which have been formed from schools within the network with similar needs but Fred felt that this did not always work well.
- They are using the Instruction Model by John Hattie to combine the group together. *(see Appendix 2)*
- The School Council/governance group is made up of 4 elected staff, 8 elected parents, and co-opted members who can't be from the Department of Education, and the CEO – Fred.
- Fred is the Strategic Leader and spends 1/3 of his time in meetings.
- There are 11 non-teaching senior staff.
- Fred posed the question – “The time and costs of belonging to a network – is it worth it?”
- When he took over as CEO there were many beginning teachers who completed their training on campus then left because it was a difficult place to teach, plus there were many older teachers who couldn't find jobs anywhere else.
- When Fred took over as principal of one of the original 9 schools, there was very little commitment from staff – now this is much improved as staff who want to be there are the ones that stayed on.

Altona Meadows School

I was fortunate to visit the school of my great niece and great nephew in Melbourne. Altona Meadows School is part of the Hobson Bay Network which is made up of 20 schools. Bill Reid is the current principal and said they have chosen not to be part of a Community of

Practice as it was not compulsory. He already works closely with a group of principals so didn't see the need for it.

Altona Meadows is showing growth and improvement ahead of other schools. His school is a "partnership" school which he said works really well. The school uses the buildings during the day and the business partners use them after school hours. The business partner pays for the buildings and the maintenance of them.

The Hobson Bay Network has one lead principal who comes from a large school with strong middle management to allow him to lead the network but he still finds it extremely challenging.

Westernport College

Michael Divine has been the principal of Westernport for three years. Westernport College is in a coastal, rural area called Hastings in the south eastern area of Victoria. I was fortunate to be driven down the coast to this lovely area of Victoria by Wayne Perkinson.

Hastings is a low socio-economic area and with this there are some very challenging children. There are many primary schools close to Westernport College many of which have inexperienced principals who often feel isolated and find it difficult to get away from their schools due to not having an assistant principal. Most of these schools have a roll of between 100 and 200 students and all have similar demographics. Michael meets regularly with the principals of six of the primary schools close to his school over lunch. They are very informal meetings with no agenda as it just a time to offload and share the issues they are dealing with. These principals have found that by meeting informally, relationships are strengthened.

Michael is the Lead Principal of the Southern Peninsula Network which includes four secondary schools, one P-12 special school and fifteen primary schools. He is one of the principals on the executive committee of the network which is made up of four Lead principals and the SEIL (Senior Education Improvement Leader). The Chairman of the Executive Committee is a principal from the network and they are paid an allowance each year to cover costs while in this role.

This Executive Committee meets a fortnight ahead of the network meeting to decide on the focus for the meeting which is for half a day, twice a term. These meetings cover things like protocols of the group, how the data will be analysed, and members review plans with another school.

Formal network meetings are all about teaching and learning and about effective transitions from one sector to the next.

Once a term a regional meeting is held with 200 – 300 principals from South East Victoria where the Regional Director, the Area Director and the nine SEILs present to the principals. This year this is going to take place at a two day conference.

The Victoria region is also part of the “Social Ventures Australia” project which is one of the most comprehensive data studies undertaken into Australia’s education and training system.

“Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out.” (2105) was prepared by the Centre for International Research on Education Systems (CIRES) for the Mitchell Institute. From this study, information on the opportunities being provided to young Australians as they navigate their way through various stages of education and training, is drawn together to illustrate how they establish themselves in the workforce as they transition into adulthood.

An interstate meeting is held once a term to discuss the study and the impact each state, and regions within each state, are having on young Australians.

Westernport College is also one of the schools involved in the Paradigm Shifters Network.

Selective Entry Schools

Another type of school operating in Victoria are the “Selective Entry” schools.

Selective Entry high schools provide an educationally enriched environment for academically high-achieving students. There are currently four Selective Entry schools in Victoria for students in Years 9-12. These schools are Melbourne High School, Mac Robertson Girls High School, Nossal High School and Suzanne Cory High School.

A centralised selection process is used to admit students to the four Selective Entry schools. Each year students need to sit a common entrance exam in order to be considered for the following school year.

Wyndham Network Meeting

While I was in Victoria, I was fortunate to be invited to attend a Principal’s network meeting. I was extremely impressed by the professional way the meeting was planned and facilitated. It started right on time with all members on time and there was a very full agenda. Every minute of the day was around professional development and there were clear goals outlined for the meeting. All members were given professional readings to report back on and another to have ready for the next meeting.

There were 25 schools represented at this meeting and it was around communities of practice. For these communities of practice to work members need to interact socially, with children at the centre, with the aim being to make a difference across the state of Victoria.

This group had a critical friend working with them whose role is to focus on the development of collegial relationships, to encourage reflective practice, and to rethink leadership. It is a process based on cooperative adult learning and also addresses the situation in which many leaders find themselves:

- trained to work as individual units;
- certified as knowing all that is needed to know;

- feeling like the continuation of professional learning is not essential to the creation of an exciting, rich, learning environment;
- and that they are simply supervisors in the leadership role.

The Critical Friends process provides an opportunity both to solicit and provide feedback in a manner that promotes reflective learning.

This group met earlier in the year and looked at the principles of Communities of Practice. At the meeting I attended, they were looking at ways forward in Maths, Writing, Reading and Oral Language.

The Writing group were investigating how to build the capacity of their teachers around Writing. They had a guest speaker talk to the group – David Hornsby, who is a consultant for Writing. He talked about a 4-phase approach – vocabulary, grammar, text structures, and comprehension. He also suggested that every child needs to have a Writers Notebook and each child should spend three hours per week practicing what they have learnt in Writing.

These Communities of Practice are set up for schools who are part of a network and are organised according to needs and data. Between meetings each member takes responsibility for different roles before the next meeting.

There were some obvious discrepancies between primary and secondary members as some felt that discussions were not relevant to their sector.

Special school principals meet together but are also part of the wider networks.

All members of this network group are expected to review a book between meetings and then they meet as part of the meeting to discuss their findings. Many read the same book and are allocated certain chapters to report back on.

Readings included were from work by Bill Lucas, “How to Thrive in Crazy Times”; Ron Ritchhart, “Creating Cultures of Thinking: The 8 Forces We Must Master to Truly Transform Our Schools”; and Guy Claxton around modelling excellence.

Paradigm Shifters: Entrepreneurial Learning in Schools.

A visit to Auckland in July 2016, hugely influenced the direction of my research around networks of schools. I attended a conversation about the purpose of education by Professor Yong Zhao, who is a Foundation Distinguished Professor in the School of Education at the University of Kansas. He is also a professorial fellow at the Mitchell Institute for Health and Education Policy, Victoria University in Australia. He previously served as the Presidential Chair and Director of the Institute for Global and Online Education in the College of Education, University of Oregon, where he was also a Professor in the Department of Educational Measurement, Policy, and Leadership. His works focuses on the implications of globalization and technology on education.

Yong shared the work he was currently doing with a network of secondary schools in Victoria, Australia. This network is not one geographically formed, but rather formed because of an explicit reason.

This initiative began in April 2016, where twenty-one secondary schools from across Victoria and New South Wales each committed to undertake actions in their schools to:

- cultivate young people who are more entrepreneurial-minded.
- increase student's participation as valued contributors and decision makers in their education; and their engagement.

This network became the Paradigm Shifters and by pursuing three guiding principles below:

- Develop more personalised education experiences, so each person can pursue passions and talents to excel in unique ways
- Engage in creative and entrepreneurial product oriented learning experiences that can, in authentic ways, benefit local and global communities
- Cultivate and prototype new approaches, processes and or products;

Through cultivating in the schools and across the networks the:

- dispositions (a person's inclination to think and act in particular ways);
- capabilities (learning, development of knowledge and skills); and
- opportunities (time and circumstances making it possible to do or produce something for a personal and collective benefit).

So:

They can better understand how young people's self-efficacy and agency to be entrepreneurial-minded can be at the forefront in the design and outcomes of education at the school level and system level.

Wayne Perkins, the Victoria Network Coordinator, was a huge support for me when organising visits to schools while in Victoria. As a result of this I was privileged to be invited to the final event of this project in Melbourne.

As the Network Coordinator, Wayne met with school action teams, and Professor Yong Zhao held individual Skype sessions with the students and schools. Gatherings were held for all network members throughout the project.

Ideas and actions undertaken across the network varied and included: personalised 'passion' projects for particular year levels; students designing new indoor and outdoor spaces in partnership with their community; and students scoping and pitching business ideas to mentors.

One of the schools Traralgon College, formed a Victorian student media team called VIC CreatIF which was around planning digital communications. CreatIF met several times with Yong and Wayne throughout the project. As the schools are geographically dispersed, the role of CreatIF was in the process of being reframed so that the students could document and share stories for their respective schools, rather than for the whole network.

The Western Sydney network included eleven government secondary schools who were participating in the NSW Network. These schools are located in the Western Sydney region and each school had a specific reason for opting into the initiative. For some, it was the way

the initiative's guiding principles aligned with their school's strategic direction. All schools wanted to expand personalised and entrepreneurial opportunities more for students. As a result of this, the Western Sydney Network's student media team was named 'WOO' – World Of Opportunities.

Three workshop days were held throughout the year where school action teams gathered at Rooty Hill High School. Dianne Hennessy, the Network Coordinator and former principal in the region, worked with the action team co-ordinators, the WOO students and the initiative's partners. Yong was also available to offer commentary and questions throughout the workshops.

Different ideas and products emerged across the network which included students redesigning their school's library, as a prototype for redesigning other learning spaces; students developing a social entrepreneurial initiative as part of a Year 10 Young Entrepreneurs Programme; and students working towards developing an app to better customise their education.

The development activities of the schools involved in this pilot project were accompanied by an initiative-wide research project which aimed to answer:

- What do students notice that enables, limits or prevents them from being entrepreneurial-minded?
- What do the adults and students do in the networks to develop students' participation in entrepreneurial learning experiences, and what constraints do they encounter?
- What, if any, are the perceived benefits and shifts resulting from this experience for participants? Do the participants think these will be long lasting?

Yong Zhao was a special guest at the Paradigm Shifters final event and shared why this network of schools was so important to him. He was interviewed by some of the students from the schools involved.

Some of his comments were;

- He had seen too many kids ruined by schools.
- Today's kids and adults suffer from mental health issues, and many of these start in schools.
- Every teacher should become a student for a day.
- Personalisation of learning is very important.
- We need to create value in what we are doing.
- How do we become happy? When you can do something for someone else, help others.
- Always be thinking – can we try something new, a new approach, try to change, do something differently.

Yong also believed that the students loved:

- Being involved in student-based learning

- Being able to work in a team on a project to work towards a final outcome
- Being able to have the opportunity to work on what they loved most eg. Gaming

This project created opportunities to make high school relevant as Yong believes schools can lag behind social beliefs. Student voice was hugely important and the students were able to create a project by students, for students.

When schools were offered the opportunity to be part of this project, many said “Why not?”

Yong was excited about working with students in this project as the project was not being filtered by bureaucracy.

Highlights of the project for participants were:

- Attending network meetings where they got to know students from other schools and could see how other schools operated.
- The progression and development both personally and as a group.
- The film making day which was great for the team and for individuals.
- The focus groups which were held with leadership teams throughout the schools.
- Seeing ideas played out.

Yong held onto the hope that when given the opportunity, people will rise to the occasion. He hoped that this project would change someone’s life.

The advice he gave to the students was:

- If you have an idea/solution – do something about it, talk to someone – don’t waste the idea.
- Take into consideration that it will not be as easy as you may think
- It is always going to be lengthy, trial and error – but don’t be afraid to get involved because there will always be more than one person wanting it
- Don’t be afraid to step out of your normal roles, step up, take up leadership
- Your project will only work if everyone is part of the drive
- Teachers need to not be afraid to step back
- Both students and teachers need a common goal of wanting to make the school a better place
- Find other students to support your mutual goal

Yong believes:

- That trust is a critical aspect of a network.
- You only have learning when you are growing and developing.
- Ideas matter – he never thinks his ideas will effect anyone – he just throws them out there.
- That if you throw your ideas out there, someone will catch them.
- Invite people to share your ideas – don’t impose them on them.
- Crazy people may try your idea.
- If you are ‘stuck’, talk, read, talk to anyone, reflect, believe everyone loves you, diversity is essential.

- Creativity is about being passionate, being good at it, and creating magic for others.

As far as engaging the community and parents, Yong commented:

- That parents can be an obstacle and they can be used as an excuse not to change
- Parents are not specialists – they only know what they did
- There is revolutionary change happening
- Parents need to “get a life” rather than using their children to earn their own dream
- Children come ‘through their parents’, not belong to them
- Student voice is very important throughout this whole process

Guest Speaker – Bevan Slattery

Bevan Slattery is one of Australia’s greatest technology entrepreneurs, founding some of the most successful ICT companies including telecommunications infrastructure provider, PIPE Networks and independent data centre provider, NextDC, Subpartners, Superloop, Megaport and most recently Cloudscene.

He is renowned for building businesses that handle data and telecommunications in an innovative way.

As the guest speaker at the Paradigm Shifters event, he shared some of the knowledge he has gained along the way with the students from the 21 secondary schools around entrepreneurialism. He gave them five pieces of advice:

- Be curious – feed your hunger!
- To succeed is to try your best and learn. To fail is to not succeed.
- Don’t waste this opportunity, “Thirty is not the new Twenty,” (Meg Jay, 2013)
- Persist – have faith – “The darkest night is followed by the brightest dawn,” (Global Financial Crisis, 2008)
- Make a difference – “To be successful in life you don’t have to change the world, you just have to change someone’s world,” (Steve Jobs, Google, izquotes.com)

SINGAPORE

Chatsworth East School

I was fortunate to visit a colleague of mine in Singapore, Adrian Smith, who was the Principal of One Tree Point School for several years and who I worked closely with during this time. He is currently Principal of Chatsworth East School. The East Campus is part of the Chatsworth Group of Schools, which also includes the Orchard Campus that meets the educational needs of students from Kindergarten through to High School. Chatsworth Kindergarten at Piccadilly Circus and Bedok locations deliver the local Ministry of Education curriculum.

While I was visiting Adrian, I also met with Tyler Sherwood who is the Head of Schools and also the Principal of Chatsworth International School – Orchard Campus.

Chatsworth Group of Schools has a Board of Directors, Board of Management and a Board of Governors. The Board of Governors (made up of Board of Director representative, Head of Schools, Director of Administration, Vice Principal, parents, teacher, and a High School student representative) promote good relations between the school, parents and the wider community as well as support the school leadership in all matters.

At Chatsworth Orchard, the governance structure is made up of the Board of Directors, the Board of Management, an Academic Board, an Examinations Board and the school leadership team.

Each group has specific roles and responsibilities:

- The Principal and school leadership team, as well as other school teachers and staff, manage the day-to-day operations of the school and implement school policy
- The Board of Management is very similar to New Zealand's Board of Trustees. They have the ultimate responsibility for all aspects of Chatsworth International School. They formulate short and long term strategic plans, develop policies and any other matters related to the effective operation of Chatsworth and the welfare of students and staff
- The Board of Directors establishes the direction of the school, ensures that organisational planning is effective, assesses the performance of the school and ensures accountability to shareholders.
- The Academic Board is responsible for overseeing the curriculum development and its implementation
- The role of the Examination Board is to oversee the validity and integrity of all assessments

Chatsworth East School is a K1-6 school (3-10 year olds), with 200 students spread across 14 classrooms. In K1, 2, 3 and 4 classes there are around 20 students – in other classes this increases to around 22.

Staff are picked on "right fit" not on the cost of their employment.

The children come from 24 different countries and they cannot get into a local school unless they have residency. This works both ways as local students cannot get into international schools, just Catholic schools.

Local primary schools in Singapore run two schools a day – one from 7.00am – 1.00pm and the other 1.30pm – 6.30pm.

All of the International Schools work closely together and the heads meet regularly. They discuss government changes, problems within the schools, other changes that need to be

made, and the needs of the children. The parents of most of these children have very busy lives and the children are frequently left with domestic helpers.

The International Heads Group are tied together by the International Baccalaureate curriculum. Each of the schools is reviewed on this curriculum every four years. These reviews are done by peers in International Schools from all around the world. This review is more than just a review – it is professional development. The Baccalaureate curriculum is a play-based curriculum. There are constant emails between these heads asking for help and support.

The International Baccalaureate schools (IB) have nothing to do with local schools due to the fact that they have extremely different philosophies. At IB schools, they work with the whole child, promote global thinkers who are always looking for a course of action, asking, ‘What are you going to do about it?’

In international schools, children come and go often as parents’ employment contracts finish or they lose their jobs very quickly and have to leave Singapore within weeks. Because of this, transiency can be a real issue. Children struggle to have lasting friendships.

The Singapore school year is made up of only 2 semesters – over 15 weeks long. The new year starts in August each year and it is common for at least a third of the students not to return.

ENGLAND

In England I was fortunate once again to have one main contact person and that was Simon Cowley. He coordinated all of my school visits and the researchers I needed to talk to, for which I was truly grateful.

When planning my research, I wanted to visit a network/federation/community of schools/academy that included not only a range of sectors, but also a range of different types of schools – including Special schools. I also wanted to understand more about the difference between all of the ways schools in England are grouped, lead, and governed.

That was why I chose the Whitehorse Federation (TWHF) in Swindon, England which has come together over the past four years. Simon has a number of responsibilities in the TWHF.

We stayed in London to get that London experience and caught a bus out to Swindon each day which was around one and a half hours travel each way but it was well worth it.

Overview of Schools in England

There are three different types of schools in England:

Academies – These are schools that are funded directly by the Department For Education.

Maintained Schools – These schools are funded by local authorities.

Independent Schools – These are what we refer to in New Zealand as Private Schools.

A multi-academy trust is a single legal structure that is responsible for maintaining, managing and operating multiple academies within it. It has a single funding agreement with the trust holding the funds and allocating these funds to the schools within the multi-academy based on needs. Because of the number of schools involved in these multi-academy trusts, this creates bargaining power which can be used to get the best deal by buying in bulk for goods and services.

In 2016, the National Governance Association (NGA), developed a campaign in England called Federation First. The NGA is an independent charity which represents and supports governors, trustees and clerks in maintained schools and academies in England. Their goal is to improve student wellbeing by promoting high standards and by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards. This is done by providing information, advice, guidance, research and training. Part of their role is also to work closely with and lobby the UK government and educational bodies. It has a similar role to New Zealand's School Trustees Association.

The English government promotes multi-academy trusts as being the best way for schools to work together but for maintained schools this can involve huge changes. The government is wanting all schools in England to be academies by 2020 and many of these will become part of a multi-academy. At this stage, schools still have autonomy over this decision and are more likely to take the option of becoming a federation.

When a number of maintained schools come together under one governing body, this is known as a federation. As a federation, the schools' individual governing bodies are disbanded and a new single over-arching governing body is formed. This governing body sets the strategic direction for the group of schools.

This type of organisation can sometimes be referred to as a 'hard' federation. A 'soft' federation is more a collaboration which is a less formal arrangement where the governing bodies remain separate but a joint committee is established for a specific purpose.

In some circumstances, federations are formed to fast track school improvement or to improve capacity for small schools.

The advantages of forming a federation are:

- It provides maintained schools the opportunity to form a group without incurring any legal costs in order to improve pupil education.
- It enables governors and school leaders to focus on forming relationships between schools first, and then joint leadership, governance and business management.

Once a federation is formed they also have the following advantages:

- Better, broader curricular and extra-curricular activities can be offered
- There is more opportunity to employ specialist staff
- There is more professional development offered for staff
- Recruitment, succession planning and retention of staff improve

- All members use the same assessments, there is regular moderation and benchmarking, and finances and data are shared
- All members learn from each other
- The capacity for innovation increases
- The sharing of joint services means more efficiency
- If structures are well federated, there is stronger governance

From these advantages come improved outcomes for students.

All of this can still be done while still remaining as a maintained school. This allows more focus to go on building relationships and establishing outcomes for students rather than the process being dominated by legal changes in charity/company status and land ownership.

Multi-academy trusts and federations are not competing models; a federation can be seen as a 'stepping stone' to a MAT because:

- They create an opportunity for smaller schools with limited resources to form a MAT in stages by first forming a federation and then building the capacity to become a MAT.
- They allow schools who are weary of formal collaboration with joint accountability to experience the benefits of this model while developing confidence in the system, whilst still operating within structures they are familiar with alongside the continued support of the local authority.
- With only one governing body, decisions for the academies can be made without having to convince many other governing bodies.
- There are two parts to the process of becoming a MAT – firstly, convincing all of the schools to commit to coming together into one organisation, and secondly, the legal processes involved. Federating only involves the first step but this can be time - consuming and communication between parties needs to be very clear and careful. It is a simpler process to form a federation first before attempting a MAT.

The White Horse Federation - Swindon

TWHF is a Multi Academy Trust based in Swindon in the south of England that was founded in 2012. This trust sponsors twelve primary schools, one primary special school, three secondary schools, one secondary special school and one Infants School.

Governance of the TWHF falls within the responsibility of Members and Member Appointed Directors of the Board. Their primary function is to protect the interests and assets of all of the establishments within the Multi Academy Trust.

In particular they have the responsibility for:

- ensuring the reputation of the Multi Academy Trust is continually strengthened and is not compromised.
- setting the vision and values, ethos and strategic direction of the MAT.

- deciding and developing policy for the MAT and delegate appropriate and proportional delegated powers to sub committees and Local Governing Bodies.
- identifying terms of reference for the committees and the Local Governing Bodies and ensuring these are reviewed every 4 years.

The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is made up of a range of TWHF employees and external board members who bring additional and complementary skills sets and expertise to those of TWHF directors and members. The Board of Directors meet 6 times per year. The membership of the Board of directors consists of the Chair and Vice Chair, the CEO and Managing Director, all of whom are permanent board members. However according to need or situation the Primary Director, Secondary Director, HR Director, Finance Director, Commercial Director, Estates Manager and IT Manager, may also be asked to attend as required.

The Board is responsible for

- The formulation and implementation of the TWHF strategy and future growth and development.
- The effective management of the Academies, Teaching Schools and Children's Centres and other associated settings within the MAT.
- The financial performance and monitoring of all settings within the MAT
- The educational and academic performance and monitoring of all settings within the MAT

Local Boards of Governors

Each school within the academy has its own Local Board of Governors (LBG). The Chair of each of these boards also sits on a collective group of Chairs from which one representative is elected and then co-opted onto the Board. This process is repeated every two years so that other Chairs have the opportunity to be elected to represent the group of Chairs.

There are clear delegations made to the LBGs by the TWHF Board. Although not legally responsible, nor accountable for statutory functions, the LBG has an important role to play in assisting the school to operate effectively in accordance with the directions made by the TWHF.

There are situations when the range and extent of the delegated responsibilities may need to be adjusted according to the needs of the academy and the requirement of the board to discharge their duties. Those LBGs of Academies who demonstrate that they are performing consistently and who are consistently outstanding, may be able to take on additional responsibilities in the context of increasing autonomy. On the other hand, those LBGs of schools still needing support in order to improve the quality of their overall performance within the OFSTED guidelines, may be required to reduce the extent of their delegated responsibilities. In some circumstances, if a school is seen to be underperforming, the Board

will suspend the delegated powers and duties of the LFG for a pre-determined period of time.

For some LBGs, there may be the belief that their role has less influence and drive within a Multi Academy trust, but at TWHF they believe that by taking away the statutory responsibilities, it allows LBGs to become more effective in their focus of providing challenge and support in the delivery of educational excellence and the drive for outstanding outcomes for all students.

The schools within TWHF are all able to keep their own culture. Originally there were 3 federations made up of 3 schools each. These federations then amalgamated into one academy.

The Federation principals meet together once a term and there are six terms a year. The meetings are held at a different school each time and both Simon Cowley (School Improvement Officer) and Nicolas Capstick (CEO), are involved in these meetings.

TWHF has five specialist teams employed to oversee ICT, Finance/Human Resources, School Improvement, Estate, and Marketing.

The Estate team oversees all property within the Federation. Each school has a site manager who is also the caretaker and is responsible for all the painting as well as general caretaking duties. They do not do lawns as this is contracted out and done centrally through the federation. All property money from each school goes to the Federation and the Estate team manages this. Funds are allocated by the Estate team according to need. If something urgently needs doing, funds can be allocated from another school's allocation – it is swings and roundabouts. The estate team does a walk around all schools to decide priorities for what needs doing.

The Estate team also take responsibility for all Health and Safety within the Federation.

Each school contributes funds to pay for these teams and this funding is based on the number of students in each school.

There is one bank account for all schools that are part of the Federation.

Each school within the Federation identifies the students with special needs and the Federation applies to the borough (ministry) for funding. The funding comes directly into the Federation bank account. The Federation then allocates the necessary funding back to the schools according to need.

Simon Cowley's role in the TWHF is mainly centred on school improvement within the academy. As well as being the Executive Principal for Haydon Wick and Zouch Academy, Simon has a school improvement and performance management role in several schools within the group. He delivers training, leadership support and challenge to principals as well as developing whole TWHF systems for assessment and portfolios of evidence. He takes the lead for ensuring the TWHF is a values-based organisation. Simon is also a registered Ofsted Inspector. Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.

Dr Nicholas Capstick is the CEO of the White Horse Federation and has the overall responsibility for its performance and delivery. He is directly accountable to the Executive Board of Directors and the Chair.

As well as overseeing the educational section of the organisation, his portfolio directly involves leading and managing the teaching schools within the academy and the Central Support Infrastructure. He also has a school improvement role with two TWHF schools and he works regularly for the Regional School's Commissioner to support the programmes of the academy and also vulnerable schools across the South West of England.

Simon recommended to me a very useful resource that could be used for any academy trust/community of schools/network/federation. This is a tool showing the characteristics of successful multi-academy trusts that has been developed by the Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West for multi-academy trusts, their boards and senior leaders. (See appendix 2)

The Whitehorse Federation schools share 8 promises which form the foundation for the values of the trust. These have been put into the Green Book, "Our Little Green Book," (2014) which is in every school. These promises are:

- We will all talk straight and ensure information is communicated effectively.
- We will be clear about everything we do, right wrongs and show loyalty
- We will take responsibility for our part in the success of the WHF by respecting and understanding the vision and values and knowing how we have made a difference.
- We will make sure everyone feels included in the decision making of our organisation and is accountable for their actions and contribution
- We will listen to all members of our WHF community, keep our promises and earn each other's trust.
- We will have a relentless focus on being the best that we can be and in all that we do.
- We understand that we are all learners and that continuous learning helps us all grow as individuals and strengthens our organisation.
- We will work together collaboratively at all times to solve our problems, address our issues, improve our communications, share our ideas and develop a culture of learning within the WHF.

There are standardised assessments that all schools in TWHF must do. The leadership group from all schools meet regularly and to ensure this happens, and the calendar is set for the year.

One week of each term, individual schools do not hold a staff meeting, but instead the staff from all schools attend a federation meeting which is used for moderation, professional development, and general communication. This means there is some consistency around assessments and there can be some assurance that standards are being maintained and improved. Data is analysed as a federation and targeted support is put into vulnerable schools.

Schools can be asked to leave a federation and they are re-brokered. This is a term used by the Department for Education where the Regional School's Commissioner asks one academy trust to transfer one, some or all of its academies to another trust. The typical underlying

reason for this will be that there are concerns about the performance at one or more of the trust's academies. These concerns may be as a result of geographical difficulties, a breakdown in the relationship between the academy's local governing body and the main trust board, or as a method of school intervention. The reasons for re-brokering are all unique depending on the circumstances and context of each situation. Sometimes, rather than an academy feeling compelled to transfer to another academy trust, they may decide to do this voluntarily. This is referred to as an 'academy transfer' rather than a 'rebrokerage'.

Coordinators, or what are referred to as 'system leaders' are used where the needs are most in the TWHF. In the New Zealand model, these are our 'across-school' teachers. The coordinators still have classroom responsibilities just as our across-school teachers do. Within the right school improvement model, system leaders can:

- Empower real leaders so that they can make change happen
- Make time to create space for innovation
- Keep the work close to the front line where it needs to be
- Create a climate for improvement and sustain the constant drive to reach the goals
- Influence the education system at all levels within the MAT.

The future plans for TWHF is to grow from 19 schools to 40 schools which will be divided into four counties of ten schools. Each county will have a Regional Director, a Chief Operating Officer, Human Resources manager, and a manager of finances and services.

There are two Teaching Schools in the Swindon area and one of these is part of TWHF. The teaching schools have to set targets and implement strategies to successfully achieve Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are set nationally in the following 6 areas:

- Initial teacher training
- Continuous professional development
- School to school support
- Specialist Leaders of Education
- Leadership Development and Succession Planning
- Research and Development

The Teaching School, governed by the TWHF, provides recruitments for the federation and beyond. Participants can come in with any degree then spend one year in the school undertaking teacher training. While doing this, they build up to 80% of their training time in a classroom – it is an apprenticeship into teaching.

Gorse Hill School

Gorse Hill Primary is an academy for 2-11 year olds situated in Gorse Hill Swindon. The principal at this time was Sue Kershaw.

Comments from Sue were:

- There is a site manager (caretaker) who looks after all security and general caretaking duties.
- Tendering for services is much easier as a federation.
- There is a graduated response for children with special needs – a child who comes without a diagnosis gets less money.
- Schools who remain as stand-alone academies become very vulnerable and are strongly advised to join a multi academy trust.
- The enforcement of child protection policies is huge and some teachers have needed to be eased out due to non-compliance of these policies.
- There are safety checks done on all staff.
- It is important to have a group of people with like-minded values

Sue felt that the positives of being part of a multi-academy trust were:

- There was a strong focus on teaching and learning
- Human Resources and finance were taken care of by the MAT
- No formal planning was required now as this was part of the academy
- Being given the chance to take risks
- Lots of mini projects
- They meet once a term in year groups to discuss how things are going
- Collaboration with other teachers in particular curriculum areas is great
- Sports days and festivals are held across the MAT
- Being part of the MAT creates great buying power
- Someone is employed across the MAT to take care of ICT needs
- Everyone within the academy is treated as part of the family
- Having a values base and agreeing on a set of 'promises' is very important.

The negatives were:

- The MAT manages the office so schools cannot employ their own office staff
- Frustrations over all money going 'into the pot'.

Nyland Campus

Nyland Campus is a school for children with social, emotional and mental health needs.

The principal of this school is Tammy van der Meulen.

The social and emotional needs are the focus for this school – not the behaviour. The Federation 'Promises' are hugely important for Nyland Campus and the programme is based on these.

Originally this school was funded by the local authority then they became part of the federation. They are also partly funded by the Local Authority Commission Services.

By being part of the White Horse federation, Nyland Campus is able to keep valuable links with local schools, work collaboratively with WHF colleagues to provide high standards of teaching and learning, and provide a range of mainstream experiences for the children.

Nyland Campus is a Pupil Referral Unit. Pupil Referral Units can be seen as the last hope for students who can no longer go to school but it is more a school which teaches students who are having problems in other schools such as:

- students who have been excluded for anti-social behaviour and emotional and behavioural difficulties
- students with special educational needs
- students with school refusal: a type of anxiety which stops them going to school
- pregnant students and teenage mothers

PRUs are usually run by local authorities, and students are sent there by mainstream schools who feel they need extra care and support and that no other school will take. They have up to 50 students on their roll.

Some students might attend all their lessons at the PRU, while others might split their time between there and a mainstream school. Most students do not stay in PRUs, and the aim is to get as many as possible back into mainstream education.

At Nyland Campus there is a 'statutory' class of up to eight students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools and which Nyland Campus are required to take.

Tammy, as a first-time principal, made these comments:

- There are no good role models in a PRU school
- Nyland Campus is seen as a 'Therapy Centre' for mainstream schools
- They used to do things the same as mainstream schools but this doesn't work
- Their measurement of achievement is based on quality rather than quantity.
- They take a therapeutic approach to learning
- If there is no emotional intelligence the students cannot learn
- Play therapy is a big part of the programme
- Many of these students are up to five years delayed in social/emotional mental health
- The curriculum is based the social/emotional mental health needs of the students
- They have created a Core Curriculum and an Extension Curriculum to cater for the needs of all students.

- There are five days a year of professional development based on building emotional need – EQ (Emotional Quotient), LS (Learning Skills), IQ (Intelligence Quotient).
- 3rd person activities are included as often as possible
- They use many puzzles like jigsaws
- Language is a priority
- There are EQ posters displayed throughout the school and staff acknowledge these as often as possible
- Visual, visual, visual
- The British Values are an important part of the school culture. These values are Democracy, The Rule of Law, Mutual Respect, Individual Liberty, and Tolerance of Those of Different Faith and Beliefs.
- Each student works their way back into the mainstream when they are ready by starting off by transitioning for one hour, increasing up to three days, and finally up to five days.
- Throughout this transition process, the students remain enrolled at Nyland.
- Transport to Nyland is provided by the local authority for all students who live over 1.5 miles from the school.

Tammy felt that the positives of being part of an academy trust for Nyland were:

- Finance and HR and taken care of by the Academy and Tammy just signs letters.
- There are experts on hand whenever needed
- Less administration to do
- Sharing of resources, training, information and professional development

And the negatives were:

- As a 'special school' they sometimes feel 'on the edge' – like they don't fit.
- Days for assessment can be isolating as students at Nyland often struggle with this
- Lack of understanding between members of the federation.
- OFSTED reviews - but Tammy feels she gets a lot of support from members of the federation at this time.
- The schools whose children have come to Nyland feel they have failed because they see them progressing when they attend Nyland.

Tammy concluded by saying that the children who made the biggest changes, came from homes where there have been big changes made.

Mountford Manor Primary School

Rachel Skates is the principal of this school. Although middle leaders are trained to take on principal roles, it was difficult to find a principal for Mountford Manor and there were originally no applicants. Rachel was invited to apply and was subsequently appointed. Rachel acknowledged the support she receives from Simon Cowley and other members of the federation. Many of the other principals in the federation are also lacking experience.

Mountford Manor has a roll of 240 children from two year olds to eleven year olds. The eight two year olds are funded by the government.

Mountford Manor Primary School has a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE), working in their school as part of the school-to-school support system operating in schools in England.

Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs), have superseded advanced skills teachers (ASTs), which offered an alternative career path for skilled teachers who did not want to go into management. The brief has changed somewhat, however, with SLEs specifically charged with working with other schools.

Those teachers who take the SLE pathway, are typically heads of department or assistant head teachers who want to get experience in school-to-school support. Unlike ASTs, SLEs do not get any extra salary to do this job.

When schools are looking for help in a particular area, they contact the teaching school alliance attached to their academy which acts as a broker in arranging support from relevant SLEs. After an initial meeting to identify the school's needs, a plan is set up to establish what will be involved.

Although applicants do not have to be from within the Teaching School alliance attached to their academy, as long as their school is willing to release them to work elsewhere, it is able to happen. The school requiring support is responsible for paying for the relief teacher. The SLE support is limited to ten days a year.

Some principals are reluctant to release staff, particularly in Primary schools where there is less flexibility of timetabling, and with budget restraints it was felt that SLEs may end up being mainly used in multi-academy trusts.

Progress across the TWHF is measured from Year 2 – 6.

All schools' demographics are different which presents challenges in itself when measuring progress and achievement across the federation.

There is a performance pay system in place where a realistic target is set with Simon. If the target is not met, the staff member may not be entitled to a pay rise.

The principal's pay rise depends on whether or not the majority of their staff achieve the target set.

As a result of this system, some schools are hard to staff and retention of staff can be an issue.

Rachel felt that the positives for being part of an academy trust for Mountford Manor were:

- Support from within the Federation
- Finance support / HR support
- Sharing ideas and expertise with others in the Federation.
- The Federation provides a mini-van for each school
- Resources can be shared
- Because of numbers, the Federation has greater bargaining power for goods and services.

And the negatives were:

- Some schools are not situated in Swindon
- The current make-up of the federation and the geographical spread of the schools can be difficult to manage but with the proposed changes where the number of schools will be increased to 40 and the federation divided into 4 geographical areas should make it easier to manage.
- Travel to meetings has been an issue.

Drove Primary School

Drove Primary School is one of the largest primary schools in the Swindon area and is also part of TWHF. The number of students is around 650 – 700 with ages ranging from 3-11 years old. The Principal is Helen Swanson.

On the 1st of July, 2012, Drove Primary School became a converter academy school. These are schools that the Department for Education (DfE) deems as performing sufficiently well which gives them the option of opting out of Local Authority oversight and of becoming an academy – either on their own or as part of a multi-academy trust.

Schools can apply to the Secretary of State to convert to academy status. The conversion to academy status means that the existing school closes and reopens as a new school.

Although little changes, the academy converter becomes a new legal entity. It takes seven years for a school to be able to get out of a federation, and even longer to get out of an academy.

Prior to Drove Primary becoming part of TWHF, Helen was the Head Teacher of a 'stand-alone' school. Once the school became part of the federation, Helen's job changed and she became the Principal, or Head of School at Drove Primary School. In this new role, she does not have any statutory responsibilities. These responsibilities are now those of the CEO – Nick Capstick. This change of role has meant a reduced salary for Helen.

Lee Edmonds is also part of the leadership team at Drove Primary School and he ensures that teaching and learning in the school is at the highest level. He has an overview of the whole school. There are also Phase Leaders who provide day-to-day leadership and management of teachers and support staff in a phase of the school, i.e. KS1, Y3/4 or Y5/6. Team leaders are employed to lead teams throughout the school.

It is Lee's job to justify how money is spent throughout the school and to prove that it is having an impact on student achievement. He also collates all assessment data which has now gone away from levels – it is now 'on track', 'not on track' or 'extension.'

The area of Swindon in which Drove Primary School is situated is high in refugee numbers. A third of all children have a hearing deficiency.

Ridgeway Secondary School

There are two Teaching Schools associated with TWHF and one of them is situated at Ridgeway Secondary School and the other at Drove Primary School and they offer School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT). I was fortunate to meet with Ron Piper who runs the Secondary Teacher's School at Ridgeway and Sarah Jerman who runs the Primary School Teacher's School at Drove.

There are around 30 trainees in the Secondary course and there is a Masters and a Bachelor option available. There is also a 2nd class honours degree course available.

Trainees can come in with any degree and then they complete a 36 week teaching course – which gives them Qualified Teachers Status (QTS). The Bachelor of Education (BeD) course is for 4 years. There is also a Schools Direct course which is one in which the student is in a school most of the time while in training.

In 2017, more teachers were training through SCITTs than universities.

In the White Paper put out by the UK government around the future direction for education in England, the aim is to get schools to recruit their own teachers, train them in schools and accredit them over 3 years. Their plan is that by 2020, schools will be doing all teacher training. SCITT will then need to redefine itself.

WALES

At least 12 months before travelling to Wales, I was in constant contact with Mamta Arnott who is an International Lead Officer for Her Majesty's Inspectorate For Education and Training in Wales. Mamta was my main contact in Wales and she organised all the contacts she could who could help with my research. Part of Mamta's role is to make links with

international organisations within ESTYN. The name ESTYN comes from the Welsh word **estyn** which means "to reach (out), stretch or extend". Its function is to provide an independent inspection and advice service on quality and standards in education and training provided in Wales.

While in Wales, I was extremely privileged to have the opportunity to meet with 2 of the authors of the paper, "School-to School Support and Collaboration 2015", Sue Halliwell and Catherine Evans. Also at this meeting was Meilyr Rowlands, the Chief Inspector for Her Majesty's Inspectorate For Education and Training in Wales and Mamta.

This report gives examples of school-to-school support which includes informal self-generated or brokered arrangements, collaborations and federations. There is a case study to illustrate each arrangement. The report considers the impact of school-to-school initiatives, what the successes and the obstacles are, and also the level of support needed to sustain the arrangement.

Discussion notes:

- Mamta came to the inspectorate from middle management but most inspectors have come from being a principal.
- There is a legal requirement to inspect schools individually but there is a move to try to get it done federation-wide.
- A federation is a formal legal agreement which is run by a single governing body.
- It is not compulsory to be part of a federation in Wales.
- A soft federation is not formally binding and they share a single head teacher who oversees all schools in the federation.
- These soft federations tend to be formed when the head teacher leaves, there are concerns about falling numbers or the school there is a possibility that the school may close.
- Schools are still funded individually and are inspected separately so that there is accountability.
- The Welsh government want schools to work together to improve student learning.
- In 2013 a report was published by ESTYN titled "Twelve Secondary School Improvement Journeys" which tells the story of 12 different secondary schools as they worked their way through improving learning outcomes for the students in their schools. They all started in different places along the journey but it was all about moving forward.
- In 2013, a Leading Practitioner initiative was introduced which involved matching a strongly performing primary or secondary principal (the Lead practitioner school) with a weaker performing school that had already started its improvement journey (the Emerging practitioner school). The intention was that both the Leading and the Emerging schools would benefit from this arrangement. There was a clear intention that those involved in this project would be 'pathfinders' and so when the project was evaluated, key messages would evolve about what works and what doesn't with this arrangement.

- In January 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned the Organisation For Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to evaluate aspects of the Welsh education system and to make recommendations. One of the recommendations was: *develop and implement a Welsh strategy for school-to-school collaboration, creating an architecture which encourages schools to select appropriate partners, in an atmosphere of transparency, awareness and support. (OECD, 2014, p.8)*
- In February 2014, the National Model for Regional Working was launched by the Welsh Government which had an expectation that all schools would follow an annual cycle of school improvement planning. As well as this, a national system of categorisation of schools was implemented where regional consortia challenged and brokered support appropriate to the needs of a school. 4 regional consortiums were set up.
- The Central South Consortium is one of these and was the area I concentrated my visit on as it was highly recommended by Mamta.
- Legal authority and responsibility for these consortiums is still with Local Authorities which has caused some confusion and tension.
- In Wales there are 22 local authorities and each one has a chief executive. Local authorities are democratically elected every 4 years.
- The chief executive works with other senior officers on day-to-day business and decision making.
- Some local authorities share resources but this is not consistent across Wales.
- A new school improvement strategy called Schools Challenge Cymru was set up in February 2014. This was a package intended to provide support to improve performance of 40 secondary schools that were both in challenging situations and challenged in terms of delivery. These 40 'Pathway to Success' schools had £20 million allocated to this initiative to improve learning.
- The support was tailored to meet the needs of individual schools. It was funded until April 2017.
- Strong leadership is needed for this to work.
- Schools can choose to work together themselves.
- Good succession planning works well with secondary and primary schools.
- 'Tentacles' go out to partner up poorer performing schools with high performing schools.
- For collaboration between Pathway to Success schools to be effective, it was felt that there needs to be: a shared understanding about aims and objectives; the relationships needed to be based on trust and confidence; and there needed to be a shared language.
- In October 2014, the Welsh Government published an education plan for 3 – 19 year olds called "Qualified for Life." The strategy was to have leaders of education at all levels working together in a self-improving system in which there was mutual support and challenge to raise student achievement. The priority for Qualify for Life is to promote school-to-school collaboration.

- In February 2015, a report by Professor Graham Donaldson was published titled “Successful Futures.” As a result of the findings in this report, in November 2015 the Welsh Government established a Pioneer schools Network. The plan for these schools was to: design and develop ‘A Curriculum for Wales, a curriculum for life’, the new curriculum for Wales; support schools in preparing for its implementation, and; provide practitioners with professional learning opportunities to support the development of the new curriculum.
- This new curriculum is being developed for schools in Wales and other settings through collaboration between the Welsh Government, regional consortia and school based practitioners.
- Schools applied to become curriculum pioneers and are working in one of the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) groups that are proposed in the new curriculum.
- A Pioneer Schools Network works in partnership and collaborates with Higher Education Institutes and key partners including Qualifications Wales and Estyn.
- As part of the process, Pioneer Schools are working to engage with their own networks of schools so that as many schools as possible can be part of creating this new curriculum.
- Federations are made up of Primary, Secondary and Primary/Secondary schools.
- In some cases Primary and Secondary schools are combining to become one school.
- School Improvement groups (SIGs) of schools were put together in the Central South Consortium. They are required to have a Development Plan which is regularly reviewed. Progress has been gradual but some changes are now happening.

Central South Wales Consortium

The ‘Central South Wales Consortium Challenge’ is the key strategy being used for school improvement. This provides a wide range of professional learning opportunities for schools across the region, at all levels of support, which reflect the vision for a self-improving school system. The Consortium’s vision is:

“To build a ‘self-improving school system’ and to do this we want to shift school improvement from a model that is dependent on central support, to one that is ‘led by schools, for schools’.”

The strategy has four main activities; School Improvement Groups (SIGs), ‘Pathfinders’, ‘Hubs’ and ‘Peer Enquiry,’ which together form a coherent and well-designed approach to school-to-school-working.

SIGs are school improvement groups which are composed of schools from different local authorities, in different places on their learning journey and with different socio-economic intakes. Their purpose is to work together to identify best practice, develop and share it across all schools in a way that benefits all schools in the SIG.

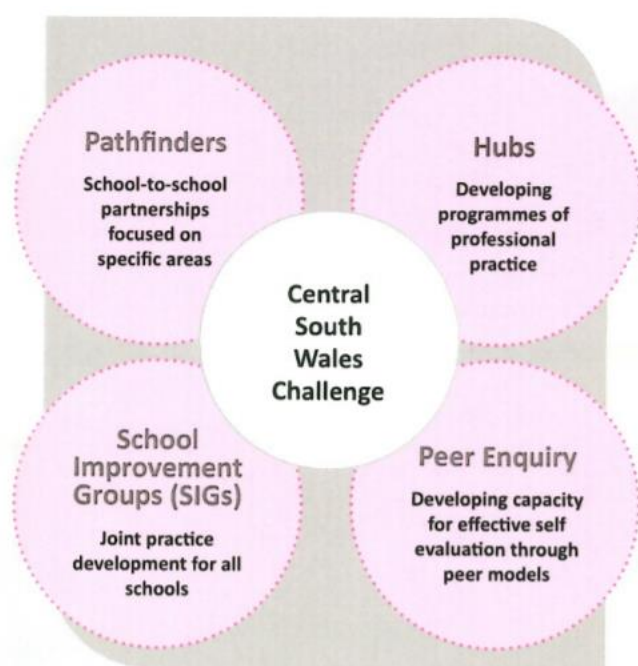
A head-teacher in each group acts as the Convenor and their role is to facilitate collaborative practice across the schools in the SIG. They are also responsible for the submission of improvement plans and evaluations on behalf of the SIG.

All schools in the region belong to a SIG and most schools have engaged very positively with this activity. The SIGs provide well-structured opportunities for schools to work together on improvement priorities that are specific to their context, and to share best practice. Engagement in the work has promoted productive school-to-school working across the region.

Where more targeted school-to-school working is required, the consortium has paired a number of schools in 'Pathfinder' partnerships through which effective schools support those schools in need of improvement. This strategy has brought about improvements in many of the schools.

'Hub' schools are funded to provide professional development for priority areas. This PD may not be led by a principal – it may be led by a specialist teacher.

The 'Peer Enquiry' is a strategy where 2 head-teachers plus a Deputy Principal visit another school to look at improvement planning, appraisal systems and other workings at the school. They undertake observations and peer discussions which are all about improvement – not accountability.



More comments by Mamta

- There are 5 special schools in Cardiff and these schools meet together regularly.
- Some schools have 'satellite' special needs classes.
- Collaboration works best when you have a special reason for doing this.

- There are no specific 'across-school' teachers in Wales.
- Each consortium is given a grant to address their needs and this can be used however they wish.
- The 'Advanced Skill Teachers' was a strategy that was not successful.
- Capacity to release staff to be part of this school-to-school strategy can be a real issue.
- A 'Virtual' Leadership College is currently being set up.
- The national policy direction is to get schools to be working collaboratively together but many schools are located too far apart to make this easy.
- There are very few applications for principals' positions at the moment.
- There are many more federations of primary schools happening in recent times.
- The Education Advice Service (EAS) is one of the 4 consortiums and they have set themselves up as a company. They work together in a cluster with both primary and secondary schools involved. The funding is held by the cluster and the principals decide how the money is spent. It is all about supporting each other and there is shared accountability.

When schools are inspected, they are categorised by colours - Green (top performing), Yellow, Amber and Red. Green is Excellent – Very strong, sustained performance and practice; Yellow is good – Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement; Amber is Adequate and needs improvement – Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement; and Red is unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement.

- The categorisation is based on performance and the capacity of leadership. The degree of support is based on what colour the school comes out with after inspection.
- Families of Schools in Wales are formed based on data – not geographically. The families are set by the Welsh government and take into account the percentage of pupils at each school who: are eligible for Free School Meals; live in areas classed in the most 20% deprived areas in Wales; have special educational needs; whose first language is not English or Welsh.

Pathways to Success Schools

As part of the Welsh Government's plan of action for the next five years, the Schools Challenge Cymru programme has been launched.

This programme is focussed on 40 secondary schools that have been chosen because they serve communities where there are high levels of economic disadvantage. These schools are seen as 'Pathways to Success' and have been invited to be innovative to find ways of working that can achieve accelerated progress. It is hoped that their work will stimulate wider reforms across the Welsh education system.

The Strategy

- Each Pathways to Success School is supported by a member of a team of twelve expert Advisors. These experts have been selected because of their proven records as school leaders.
- These advisors work alongside school staff to embed proven improvement strategies and to experiment with new, more effective ways of improving student outcomes. They are accountable to the Minister.
- The Schools Challenge Cymru is focussed on three sets of factors that, if worked together, can move schools forward according to international research. These three factors are:
 - **Within-school factors.** The Schools Challenge Cymru Advisors work within schools to support the analysis of each schools context to help identify and address barriers to student learning. The aim is to capture the energy, expertise and creativity which already exists in the school. The main focus is on strengthening classroom and leadership practices. Teachers learn from one another in the classroom situation. There already seems to be positive feedback from teachers and there has been a noticeable improvement in the quality of teaching and collaboration between staff has strengthened.
 - **Schools working together.** There is strong research evidence that collaboration between schools that are performing differently can reduce polarisation within education systems, and in particular, this benefits students who are performing poorly. This collaboration between schools transfers existing knowledge and generates context specific knowledge.
Each Pathway to Success school is encouraged to build partnerships with other schools that may have the expertise to support their improvement strategies. Partnerships with Primary Schools are strongly encouraged as well as other secondary schools from a different local authority.
 - **Beyond the school gate.** To close the gap in outcomes between those from more and less advantaged backgrounds can only happen if the work of schools is aligned with the efforts of other stakeholders – families, employers, community groups, local and national organisations, universities and public services. Pathways to Success schools focus on raising expectations, aspirations and ambitions for their students so they are able to succeed in future learning and in later life.

Although this programme is still in the development stage, staff are very enthusiastic about being part of it and are enjoying working together to move their schools forward.

Ysgol Bae Baglan School

The principal of this school is Mike Tate. Prior to being the principal of Bae Baglan School, Mike was the head of a federation for 5 years which was made up of 4 primary schools and 1 secondary school. Mike was the only principal and went out to every site every day. There was a total of 850 students. All children in the secondary school came from one of the primary schools so there was a definite pathway.

- Bae Baglan School is situated in the Neath/Talbot area - a very deprived area of Wales.
- It is open 24 hours a day for the community to use.
- The school caters for 3-16 year olds.
- 85% of the students are eligible for school meals.
- 4 schools were brought together to form Bae Baglan School.
- Originally, Bae Baglan was responsible for 45% of the exclusions in the Neath/Talbot area but this has now reduced to 14%.
- Originally, the plan was for Bae Baglan to be only secondary, but one of the secondary schools which was brought into this new school, had a primary school already on site and it was one of only 7 all-through schools in Wales at the time.
- Out of the 1600 students at Bae Baglan School, 700 have special needs.
- Having the little children attend the school really helps them to settle into learning.
- The school offers more subjects than any other school and not all subjects are academic.
- Bae Baglan is an Amber School after its last inspection.
- The school spends £600-700 a year on exclusion services.
- Bae Baglan has become the first All-through global showcase school because of their approach to learning through technology.
- Teachers at the school teach all levels from 3 year olds to 16 year olds.
- The school is divided into 3 areas – Lower School which is Nursery - Year 4; Middle School - Year 5 – 8 with mixed-aged forms, mentoring and a buddy

system; Upper School – Year 9-11 – students are placed in classes according to their achievement stage.

- The technology present in the school is engaging difficult students.
- The Lower School uses Apple technology and the rest of the school uses Microsoft.
- The school works closely with businesses in the community and 2 students had been guaranteed an engineering apprenticeship.
- Bae Baglan School hosts a youth club 3 nights a week.
- It costs £60 an hour for local community groups to use the school facilities and this money is used to offset costs.
- This school was started from scratch.
- Staff employed were mostly from other secondary schools.
- There were 80 applications for the 3 Deputy Principal positions.
- There are 8 smaller primary schools that feed into Bae Baglan School and it is expected that all schools involved will eventually federate.
- There is a Chief Executive who is appointed to ensure that conditions at the school are right, to set the direction and to be the figure head. This person deals with the big issues and 'the buck stops here.'
- The Principal is the strategic leader.
- The Deputy Principals are responsible for teaching and learning at the school.

Cwmtawe Community School

The principal of this school is Lee Hitchings and he was appointed in January 2003.

This school was created in 1968 to serve the Swansea Valley by combining all the secondary schools in the area. Originally it occupied the buildings of 3 of the schools on site at the edge of Pontardawe.

In July 1996 the school moved into a new purpose-built premises at Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe. The school's name was changed to Cwmtawe Community School in September 2008 to reflect the school ethos more.

In 2017 Cwmtawe Community School had 1270 students enrolled. The school is co-education and caters for 11-16 year olds. There is significant demand from parents with children from outside the designated catchment area to enrol their children at this school

and as a result, over half of the school are preferred placement students. There is a limit of 256 preferred placement enrolments allowed in a school year. Students with special needs get first priority as well as 'looked after children' (LACs) who are children who are in public care. Living in the school's catchment area does not guarantee a place at Cwmtawe and parents are encouraged to enrol their children early in the year prior to their child starting.

There are 6 primary schools that contribute to Cwmtawe and these schools are reluctant to federate as this would mean that 6 principals' jobs are at risk of being disestablished. The Deputy Principal, Paul Rogers, visits the primary schools regularly to work with the teachers around transition.

Craig Yr Hesg

This school is situated within Glyncoch, Pontypridd. Craig Yr Hesg is part of the Fern Federation with Cefn Primary School.

- It has a roll of around 150 students which includes a full-time Nursery class.
- Currently Craig Yr Hesg is categorised as a Green school which has significantly improved over recent years.
- They are also a Hub School which means that they provide training to schools and colleagues across the Central South Consortium.
- As a Pioneer School which was selected by the Welsh Government, they work closely with the Welsh Government, the Consortia and schools across Wales to design, try out and reflect on the New Successful Futures Curriculum as it is rolled out across Wales.
- The school is situated in an area that is economically disadvantaged.
- Craig Yr Hesg caters for 3-11 year olds.
- The curriculum is taught through the medium of English and Welsh is taught as a second language.
- A large percentage of the students are on the Additional Learning Needs roll (ALN).

The principal of Craig Yr Hesg is Andrew Manley. He has introduced the idea of a classroom with a one way mirror. This journey started with teacher behaviour. They wanted to become reflective practitioners. The use of the one way mirror plus video has been very useful in improving teacher practice.

They have looked more into theory, they plan together, reflect regularly on their practice – it is theory that underpins everything they do. As a result of this, conversation has become richer.

Andrew is the executive principal and there are 2 heads-of school across the federation.

Each staff member belongs to a network. A professional learning group (PLG) is formed with staff from other schools; from this group a group of strategic leaders is formed; a group of lead teachers is selected to research pedagogy – these teachers are then able to lead professional development in their own schools.

Some comments by Andrew

We need to:

- Improve the system of leadership of teaching in schools – this is now process driven.
- Change our knowledge base.
- Enable teachers to change their practice.

As a result of these many innovative ideas:

- Teachers have stopped 'talking at' children.
- The children are now engaged in active understanding.
- Reading ages have greatly improved and now 85% of the children are reading at or above their age.
- All of these children have a higher comprehension age than reading age.
- Everything is collaborative, hands-on, and interdependent.
- There have been no exclusions for 3 years.

I also spoke with one of the Heads-of-School, Sarah, who is the leader of teaching and learning. Some of her comments were:

- Having a feedback system to staff is very important.
- The theory base is very important.
- Co-coaching is involved between staff.
- They hold 3 teacher only days plus they run 8 one hour professional development sessions a year.
- All staff are expected to take part in research project based on teaching and learning. These can be individual or in groups and they are required to provide the heads-of-school with their progress.
- It is now about sharing and not competition between staff. Collaboration has addressed competition.
- Every school has a School Improvement Officer who is employed by the Local Authority.

- Staff are coached on a particular skill set for leadership. This is internal training.
- Classes at Craig Yr Hesg are made up according to the students' stage of development. They have seen significant shifts in boys by using this model. They have found that differentiation can limit expectations.
- The students do meet together in class groups for music, physical education, the arts, and other extra curricula studies.
- The students plan and organise the School Fair and much of their curriculum is based around this leading up to the event.

Ysgol Y Deri Special School

As part of my research, I was very keen to see how special schools work in collaboration with mainstream schools – particularly as part of a federation.

Ysgol Y Deri was certainly one of the most impressive schools I visited. I met with Josie McAllister who is the Deputy Principal. Chris Britten is the principal but was unavailable when I visited.

When Ysgol Y Deri opened in October 2014, it brought together 240 pupils from Ashgrove School and Ysgol Erw'r Delyn in Penarth, and Maes Dyfan School in Barry.

Before the merger, Chris Britten took over the role of principal at Ashgrove School which specialised in Autism. The other 2 principals retired and the deputy principals of each school stepped into the role of principal. The three schools federated for a period of time and shared one governing body.

The merger was incredibly well planned. Previously the three special schools never spoke to each other because it was felt that they all had extremely different needs.

They spent 2 years developing relationships and planning for the merger. People were scared and anxious and one school was a long way away and was situated in a very close community so moving to an unknown area for their schooling was particularly difficult.

A decision was made to build just one Special Needs school. One of the huge challenges was bringing together a multi-disciplinary team that had previously worked in three separate special schools.

Half the site that Ysgol Y Deri is built on is taken up by St Cyres Comprehensive School and together they make up the Penarth Learning Community which caters for children from three to 19 years old with a wide range of special learning needs, including autistic spectrum disorders, as well as mental and physical disabilities and complex health needs.

In England and Wales, a comprehensive school is a type of secondary school that does not select its intake on the basis of academic achievement or aptitude or the wealth of the parents of the children it accepts.

Ysgol Y Deri and St Cyres do not work together apart from the integration of some students to the secondary school for some activities.

Classes at Ysgol Y Deri are mixed with 3-19 year olds put together by ability. There are 4 bands (A-D) used for student placement which are made up according to the students' needs. All children enrolled in the school must have a 'statement of educational needs' diagnosis which means that the child has had a statutory assessment done which can be requested by either the parent or the school. Some children with a statement of educational needs may still attend mainstream schools if that is what the parents request and if the school is able to cater for the needs of that child. A child with a statement of education cannot be refused enrolment in a mainstream school unless the school is not adequately able to provide for the needs of the child.

Ysgol Y deri School has 4 departments. Primary (3-11 year olds), Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds), Key Stage 4 (14 –16 year olds), Key Stage 5 (16-19 year olds). Class groups can have a range of 3-4 years of age. There are also specialist autistic classes.

Class sizes usually start the year with 7-8 students and are often up to 10 by the end of the year.

A phenomenal amount of staff training was necessary at Ysgol Y Deri. This involved micro training, speed training, physical handling of students, feeding, and use of equipment training.

There are a variety of health staff on site – physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, nurses, 2 music therapists, a play therapist and a behaviour support team.

One day a week is 'options day' for the 14-19 year olds which is held on site. All options are related to qualifications. These options are offered by staff at the school. This was started before the merger so that students got to know each other.

The curriculum was also brought together before the merger.

Philadelphia Principals Conference

One of the first things I did when I received this fellowship was to book myself into a conference in Philadelphia. The theme of it seemed to really suit my research topic. The conference was the first ever conference run jointly by National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and was titled "Connecting Great Leaders Across All Levels."

The Conference was held at the Pennsylvania Convention Centre and we managed to find accommodation only a 10 minute walk up the road. The programme started on the Sunday and ran through until Tuesday. I must say, I was overwhelmed by the number of delegates – over 1000 – and the size of the convention centre. It was a real challenge to find your way

around to get to each workshop on time as there were over 300 rooms. I didn't know a soul there which is certainly a change from the New Zealand conferences I have attended. I was also surprised to find out that the cost of the conference did not include any food which again was different for me. We had to go across the road to the local markets to purchase food. Of course, due to the number of delegates, this would have been very difficult.

My reason for choosing this conference was because the title suggested to me that it may be all about collaboration across all levels but upon looking through the final programme, there was not as many workshops around this theme as I was hoping but the ones I attended were very interesting.

The other frustration I had was that once the conference was over, access to workshop notes on the conference website was stopped very soon after and so many delegates, like myself, took limited notes as we were told the notes would be on the app.

Some of the workshops I attended were:

1. ***Aligning For Success: How to Bridge the Gaps From Elementary to High School*** – Presenters were Eric Worcester and Meghan Krause.

Eric is the principal of Nokesville School and Meghan is teacher there. Nokesville is the only K-8 school in the Prince William County Public Schools District. The school is situated very close the Brentsville District High School and Renaissance Montessori School.

Classes at Nokesville are vertically aligned. Teachers are expected to be able to prepare for more than their current grade/class. It is important that they understand how all children learn and what strategies work best for each level.

Teachers are encouraged to talk to each other, to not blame. They need to understand that there is life after their usual grade level.

There are vertical curriculum teams in both numeracy and literacy. There are regular vertical alignment meetings where teachers are asked: "What are you already doing?" NOT "What aren't you doing?" The principal does not attend these meetings but the leaders report back to him.

2. ***Connecting Climate and Culture Learning Community*** – Presenter was Charlotte Anderson who is the Director of School Community Services, Tucson Unified School District.

Charlotte's most important messages were:

- Leadership is for everyone – students and staff
- Instructional transformation – this is about transforming teaching and learning by making education more personal, relevant, and engaging for students through the use of technology.

- Developing individual talents is so important.
- Self-efficacy is the foundation for learning

3. ***Reimagining Principal Leadership*** – Presenters were Dr.Todd Bess and Jason Leahy

Dr. Todd Bess is the Executive Director for the Indiana Association of School Principals and has served in both building and central office administrator roles.

Jason Leahy is the Executive Director of the Illinois Principals Association.

The main points they made during their presentation about reimagining principal leadership around different intelligences were:

- Personal intelligence
- Social intelligence
- Systems intelligence

Plus being constantly aware of the importance of:

Wellness – regular exercise, gardening

Self-management

Innovation

Growth mindset

4. ***Start Right Now – Teach and Learn For Excellence*** – Presenters were Jimmy Casar and Jeffrey Zoul

This presentation was an introduction to a new book that the above two authors had been part of writing with a third writer – Todd Whitaker who was not at the conference.

The main points made in this presentation were:

- A good leader (teacher) inspires others with confidence in him; a great leader (teacher) inspires them with confidence in themselves.
- Leadership (teaching) is practised not so much in words but in actions.
- The core behaviours of excellence are:
 - Know the way
 - Show the way
 - Go the way
 - Grow each day

We need to ask ourselves – What is my core? Why do I exist?

- I want the best for every child regardless of their background.
- I care about all people.
- I am a learner, a motivator.
- I am empathetic.
- I am strong.
- I believe in myself.

Know the way:

- Know thyself
- People first
- No what is non-negotiables

Show the way:

- 20/20 vision
- Sharing our story
- Radio station (WIIFM) – What’s in it for me?

Go the way:

- Be that one moment
- The way we respond
- Expect their best

5. *The Rural Community Partnership Starts With an Open Door* – Presenter Wendy French-Healea (PhD)

Wendy is currently an Assistant Professor in the Education Department at Heritage University in Toppenish, Washington (USA). As an educator and Director of Special Education for over 30 years, she spoke to us about her research which involves rural education and the impact of community partnerships on student learning.

Findings, reflections and discussions

It is extremely interesting for me when I go back to the original questions principals posed regarding the Investing in Educational Success (IES) initiative that the New Zealand Government launched in 2014.

Some of these concerns from principals were:

- Who wants to lead these COLs while also leading their own school?
- Do we have strong enough leaders within our schools to delegate responsibility to?
- Who is going to be prepared to release their “expert” teachers to work out of their own school?
- Where are we going to find enough relievers from?

- How will we feel about one of our colleagues telling us what to do?
- Are we going to lose our autonomy as a school?
- Will this lead to us having to share property funding and special needs funding?

When I put together my application for this fellowship, these were some of the questions I posed and so I would like to comment on my findings from the countries I visited in regards to these concerns first.

Who wants to lead these COLs while also leading their own school?

Initially in New Zealand there was a real reluctance for principals to apply for the Lead Principal position of a Community of Learning (COL) as they were very much going into the unknown and the task just looked far too big.

The main concern was around how we could possibly keep our own schools well-managed with only 3 days a week actually working in them, and also do justice to this other huge role of making a difference for so many more students in a number of schools.

As Linda Bendikson said in her article “Community of Schools’ (CoSs) Leadership – Throwing Money and hoping for success?” (August 2015)

“Leading a network of schools is incredibly skilful and hard work. It is hard enough to carry out this improvement process at the single school level; the difficulties of collaboration are easily skipped over.”

It was obvious when I visited Karen Stewart, one of the lead principals of one of the Blenheim COL, that this was truly a very challenging role. There was not a rush of applicants for the two lead principal roles going in the area – nobody else wanted to do it.

Being one of the first COLs to be approved in New Zealand the pressure had certainly been on the leaders to make it work. Karen Stewart described her position as ‘exhausting’ and stressed how important it was not to take your eye off the ball.

In Victoria, Australia the Lead Principal (Network Chair) is out of their own school at least one day a week. Northern Bay College has a principal for all 5 schools who make up the campus – plus they have a CEO who oversees the campus in a similar role to our Lead Principal in New Zealand – but he does not have his own school to lead as well. He spends at least a third of his time in meetings.

They also have a Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL) who oversees a network of schools and this is usually a principal who is not does not have the responsibility of leading their own school. This allows them to focus on improvement across the network.

Singapore has a Head of Schools who oversees the whole campus of International schools as well as he is principal of his own school.

In England, Simon Cowley, from the Whitehorse Federation is not only an Executive Principal for 2 schools, he is also a school improvement officer within the Whitehorse Federation, and has a performance management role in several schools. He has to deliver

training, leadership support, challenge principals as well as develop systems for assessment and portfolios of evidence for the whole academy. He is also a registered Ofsted Inspector.

Working above Simon is a CEO who has the overall responsibility for the academy's performance and delivery.

In Wales, federation is starting in some areas but the Welsh Government has divided the country into 4 regional consortia and these consortia are working more as clusters, often involving primary and secondary schools.

As part of this strategy all schools in Wales are part of a School Improvement Group (SIG). A principal from the group acts as a convenor and they facilitate collaborative practice across the SIG. They still lead their own school.

Where schools have federated in Wales, the schools are led by a head-of-school and then they have an Executive Principal to oversee the whole federation who does not lead their own school.

So as it stands at the moment, the Lead Principal role in New Zealand is the only one out of the countries that I visited where the person in this role also has the responsibility of their own school. There is no CEO or Executive Principal roles in New Zealand schools.

Do we have strong enough leaders within our schools to delegate responsibility to?

In the **Blenheim** CoL, in order to appoint the strongest practitioners to take up the Across-School and In-School teacher roles, some senior staff were forced to step out of their management role to do this or to share their current role with another staff member. This can provide opportunities for other potential leaders to step up but can also be unsettling for the organisation of the school. There are restrictions in New Zealand around the number of management units applicants for Across-School positions can receive to be eligible to apply which can make it challenging to find the most suitable candidate for the job.

In **Victoria** there is a real drive to upskill all leaders in their schools. Bastow, The Institute of Leadership, is set up to build the capacity of educational leaders. All members of senior management teams are expected to attend network meetings and regular professional development so they are very up-to-date with the strategic direction of both their own school and the network. Northern Bay College is made up of 5 schools and they have 6 assistant principals plus 5 other positions which are non-teaching positions so delegated responsibilities can be shared amongst all leaders.

In the area of Hastings in Victoria, there are many small schools which do not have assistant principals so it is difficult for these leaders to leave their schools to attend network meetings and professional development.

In **England**, more and more responsibility is being handed over to federations to provide training through dedicated teaching schools which are part of schools within the federation. There is a particular emphasis on leadership development at all levels and as a result, principals are able to be released to work on the strategic direction of their school knowing

that there is strong leadership present to carry out the day-to-day management responsibilities.

The **Welsh Government** have recognised that in order for their big movement towards school improvement to be successful, strong leadership throughout the education system is essential and so as part of their strategy, in 2017 a proposal to open a National Academy for Educational Leadership was announced. The academy will involve schools, local authorities, regional consortia and universities working together to strengthen leadership and consistency across all schools so that leaders have the right skills and knowledge to lead in the changing world we live in.

Who is going to be prepared to release their “expert” teachers to work out of their own school and where are we going to find enough relievers from to do this?

As principals, we all know who we would describe as our ‘expert’ teachers. The fear for New Zealand principals was that without the leadership of these teachers in our school full time, our schools would be disadvantaged in some way.

In New Zealand, these Across-School teachers are released from their classroom duties for 2 days a week to work with the in-school teachers in a coaching role, and the Lead Principal around the agreed achievement challenges. In schools like Springlands School in Blenheim, out of the 7 Across-School teacher positions, 3 were from there - the Deputy Principal and the 2 Assistant Principals. As a result of this, they needed to take leave from their current management position and another staff member stepped up and some roles were shared.

Finding relievers has been one of the biggest challenges for the Blenheim COL and there was initially some concerns expressed by parents about their child’s ‘expert’ teacher being taken away from the classroom for 2 days a week. The lack of relievers has meant that meetings with the Across-School teachers, In-School teachers and the Lead Principals now have to be held out of school hours – either over breakfast or after school. It was also felt that Across-School teachers needed to spend more time working with teachers in classrooms but time restraints make this difficult.

In Victoria the Education Improvement Leaders (EILs) support curriculum in regional offices and are coaches in their own school – not across schools. The Learning Specialist teachers (expert teachers) are based in a classroom and are used to share good practice. In some schools, to overcome the problem of finding relievers, 2 expert teachers share a class and the expert teacher role.

In England, the equivalent of our Across-School teacher is the ‘system leader.’ These teachers still have classroom responsibilities and are used across the federation where the most needs are. They work with leaders to strengthen leadership across the school, to create innovative space, and to work with leaders to sustain the drive to reach goals.

They also have Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) who often come from senior management positions and who want to get experience in school-to-school support. This role has taken place of the Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs).

There are no specific Across-School teachers in Wales. The Advanced Skill Teacher initiative was found to be unsuccessful – one of the reasons being that schools' capacity to release staff was a real issue.

How will we feel about one of our colleagues telling us what to do?

Below is the statement from the Ministry of Education publication “Community of Learning Role Selection and Appointment Information”, (July 2016) describing the role of the Lead Principal.

“This role is established to offer leadership in building productive collaboration within Communities of Learning (Community of Learning). This is a critical role that helps Community of Learning develop and meet its shared ākonga/student achievement challenges. As well as modelling highly effective practice in their own school, the person in the Community of Learning leadership role will facilitate collaborative, professional activities across their Community of Learning. They will play a lead role in planning, coordinating and facilitating the work of the Community of Learning as a whole and the other Community kaiako/teacher roles.”

The main message in this role description is collaboration, collaboration, collaboration. It is now about the ‘we’ and ‘us’ working together for all learners in our COL. Being able to communicate effectively while facilitating collaborative practices across the COL is going to be essential. This leader needs to have tunnel vision and have the ability to guide others towards the common goal for the good of all concerned. I believe the fear of being ‘told what to do’ will disappear if the leader is supported in the role and other members of the team feel they have ownership of the agreed goals.

In Victoria the networks are owned and driven by the principals and the network chair is the change manager, challenges his/her peers, and builds professional practice. The SEIL is there to support the network chair with the implementation of the Communities of Practice approach. Most principals are part of a Community of Practice which is also based on collaboration.

Many of the time-consuming parts of being a principal in New Zealand are taken care of in England as federations appoint specialist teams to take over the responsibility for ICT, Finance/Human Resources, School Improvement, Estate, and Marketing. The principals I spoke to find this works very well for them although there was some resistance in the beginning. They still feel like that have a say in the decisions made in all of these areas but the final decisions are made by the specialist groups. The lead principal supports and challenges his colleagues and keeps everyone on the path to success.

Are we going to lose our autonomy as a school?

In every school that I visited while on my fellowship, the initial fears of each school losing their individual culture or autonomy had disappeared. Although there were often common values across the different forms of clusters of schools, and achievement goals in common, all schools still had their own ‘flavour’. Their curriculums were tailored to the needs of the students in each school and were used as the vehicle to achieve common cluster goals.

Will this lead to us having to share property funding and special needs funding?

This was one of the biggest fears for New Zealand principals as we have always enjoyed the autonomy of how we allocate property funding and also we all feel we know our special needs children better than anyone else. We already struggle to get the support for these children and we are very reluctant to have that support eroded even further by this being allocated from a common pool of hours.

When 9 schools came together as Northern Bay College in Victoria, Australia in 2011, 5 new schools were formed. All original school councils were disbanded and one council is now responsible for the whole campus. This therefore also resulted in property money and special needs funding all going into one pool and being distributed from this school council according to need.

In England it depends on what type of organisation a school is part of. The Whitehorse Federation is a multi-academy trust and so they have a single legal structure and a single funding structure. They hold all funds for the multi-academy trust and allocate funds according to needs. Each of their appointed specialist groups take responsibility for meeting with principals and visiting their schools to discuss perceived needs. This information goes back to the trust and it is here that decisions are made about where funding will be spent. Because of the number of schools and the amount of funding, bulk bargaining makes the money go further and schools don't just spend the money because it has come into their bank.

It is the same for special needs funding in a multi-academy trust.

In Wales, maintained (ie state funded rather than independent/private) schools are funded by local authorities rather than directly by government. This means that general funding for schools comes from the Welsh Government's local government budget, rather than its education budget. The local authority is able to decide how much they will spend on Special Education Needs as long as they meet any statutory requirements.

The Government also provides capital funding for schools including school building improvement grant (SBIG), disabled access to schools, school premises issues and school playing fields.

CONCLUSION

Part of my research was to look at the significance of pathways when forming clusters/communities/federations/academies. This is a very strong part of the New Zealand Governments' 'Communities of Learning' strategy.

During my research, I experienced many different ways of setting up these 'communities. In Victoria, the Paradigm Shifters Network was definitely not a network that came together because of their geographical location, but because of a common interest. This definitely had some challenges when coming together as a group but they made it work because of their common philosophy.

In other places that I visited, schools were grouped together geographically, but were not necessarily pathways for students. Others were definitely grouped together because there were clear pathways for students with little deviation from this because of the size of the local community or often because of the number of secondary schools in the area.

Wherever I went, changes were taking place. I don't believe the ultimate collaborative model has yet been found and every country I visited differed in some way in their approach. Most participants in 'communities of learning' settings felt that there were definite advantages for student learning but there was a significant increase in workload, particularly in the set up stage.

We could debate the optimum model and approach to pathways focussing on size or cultural diversity - however the success of the model is dependent on skilled leadership.

We are seeing a paradigm shift in educational leadership in New Zealand. Conventionally leaders in education have led a single school without too much concern about what happens to our learners once they leave us and move to the next education setting.

What we are now seeing are leaders for learning who are seeing the big picture and visualising a vision for a whole community. It is not only about schools – we need to work with whanau, children, local businesses who are our community employers, older members of our community, teachers from all community settings, other professionals, Iwi and other community leaders.

We need to be strategic and go beyond our own school gate to address community approaches to change as well as look at the impact change is likely to have on our local community and wider. It is all about building networks and collaboration. We are going to be much more obligated to our wider community.

One of the non-negotiables as the leader of a community of schools is that of trust and confidence of both other leaders and staff as well as the community. This trust can only grow when the leader shows competence in what they are doing and when people feel they are respected and really listened to. The ability to inspire others and the strength to be a strong leader are also non-negotiable.

Different skills are needed to lead a COL rather than a school. COL leaders need to be even more strategic, transformational, able to coach others, distributive and above all – system leaders. They need to have tunnel vision plus be able to see the big picture, rather than simply their own school.

There has been little consideration about where these skilful leaders will come from.

We cannot assume that if you can lead your own school well, you can lead a COL well.

The challenge is, how we can increase the capabilities of our leaders to ensure successful COLs.

Equipping leaders with these new capabilities is currently the missing link.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nearly every school in New Zealand is involved in some sort of partnership with other schools but there has not been enough evaluation of the impact on pupils of this joint work.

- We all know the value of collaboration but we need to define and refine the way we do this more in New Zealand schools and across schools.
- Successful school-to-school collaboration works best when there is a clear need identified, a genuine commitment from school leaders, and a partnership that is designed to be mutually beneficial.
- There needs to be openness, trust and transparency between school leaders.
- Staff need time for research, development and collaboration.
- We need to tackle the concerns about teacher workload.
- We need to seriously look at the expectations of Lead Principals in the New Zealand model.
- Specific leadership training for Across-School, In-School and Lead Principals needs to be a priority in New Zealand as this sort of leadership is different to current roles in educational leadership.
- There needs to be flexibility for schools to collaborate together as a CoL for reasons other than expected geographical pathways for students as in many areas there are no natural pathways as students.

Appendix 1 - MY ORIGINAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What commonalities do Communities of Learning, both in New Zealand and in other countries around the world have, and what philosophies do they share?
2. What conclusions and directions have been drawn from the research in relation to the establishment of different models of school-to- school collaborative practices?
3. What factors are non-negotiable when establishing a Community of Learning and what are some of the key principles that will help to increase the likelihood of success?
4. What degrees of success in terms of impact and sustainability do Communities of Learning have?
5. How do we develop leadership skills in lead principals, Across - School teachers, and In-School teachers that can not only transform their own school's outcomes, but also transform the outcomes of "communities of learning?"
6. What are some of the common barriers to the initiation, effectiveness and sustainability of Communities of Learning?
7. What strategies are used for creating pathways between schools, setting expectations about how these groupings of schools will operate and how will good practice be disseminated?

Appendix 2 – The 10 Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Trusts

The 10 Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Trusts

The ten characteristics below establish a definition that categorises the development of each characteristic against four possible stages of maturity.

- **Beginning**-this could as the definition suggests, just be an indicator that the trust is new and that whilst the characteristic has been identified as being important, the progress is embryonic and developmental
- **Developing**-this moves beyond the recognition that the Trust has to develop this area and that it has made a strong start. It also suggests that this stage of development is starting to embed stronger and better practice in the schools to sustain their improvement
- **Embedding**-This is the stage of development that would suggest that the characteristic is moving from being developed and embedded to producing sustained quality
- **Leading**-As the definition implies, a MAT that was leading in all characteristics we would be confident that the organisation was strong, sustainable and ready to expand or support other MATS if that was desirable. One of the most effective organisations in its region and a leading player nationally.

The 10 Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Trusts

MAT Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
OVERALL PERFORMANCE SELF ASSESSMENT There is clear evidence that the outcomes for young people who are educated within the MAT are exceeding previous performance and national expectations	<i>The Trust outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4 are not yet at national averages in more than half of the academies in the trust.</i>	<i>The Trust outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4 are in line with national averages in more than half of the academies in the trust.</i>	<i>The Trust outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4 are above national averages in more than half of the academies in the trust.</i>	<i>The Trust outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4 are significantly above national averages in all of the academies in the trust.</i>
Step 1-There is a well communicated strategic vision & plan that moves seamlessly from implementation into impact. The school improvement plan can only be delivered through support from the trust and the trust priorities can only be delivered through the schools	<i>The Trust has identified their key priorities & there is a strategic plan but it is too soon to see evidence of impact. The academies are not yet using the plan to inform their own improvement planning</i>	<i>Each Academy has links in their improvement plan to the Trust strategic plan showing the contribution they make to the trust and the academy priorities</i>	<i>The academies can provide some evidence that through their delivery of their school based plan at least 2-3 of the trust priorities are also being delivered</i>	<i>The Trust has a strategic plan that seamlessly sits within the school plans. There is clear evidence that all of the trust priorities are being delivered by the school. It is impossible to tell who takes the credit as the delivery and QA is united and done by both</i>

The 10 Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Trusts

MAT Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Step 2-There is a clearly set out accountability framework that everyone understands including what happens when key staff under-perform	<i>The accountability is linked to line management where local academy board members hold the Principals to account. The CEO and Board are not directly involved in these discussions. The CEO is not fully held to account. Performance Management is embryonic at trust level</i>	<i>The CEO holds the Principals to account and is held to account by the Board for the performance of the trust. The CEO is accountable for standards in the academies. Performance Management of the CEO is emerging as a strength</i>	<i>The Chair of Board and the CEO hold the Principals and the chairs of academy boards to account. There is a collective responsibility for standards across the trust. Performance across the academies is not as strong as it is at senior level where it is excellent</i>	<i>There is a clear path of accountability that enables discussions to take place from the Board Chair to the CEO, the Board Chair to the Academy Board Chair, the CEO to Principals and Principals to their team members that improves standards. Performance Management is excellent trust wide</i>

The 10 Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Trusts

Step 3-There are clear quality assurance systems in place to improve consistency and performance	<i>The trust has started to explore the elements of common practice that it believes will lead to greater consistency across the trust. Examples include shared CPD and agreed data collection points and common educational policies across the trust</i>	<i>The trust has moved towards a stronger commitment to shared approaches that are improving practice. Shared CPD & data collection points are extended by peer reviews with frequent element of external challenge</i>	<i>The trust has ensured that there is a pattern of consistent practice that is now recognised as more efficient than each Academy working independently. Academies are suggesting new areas of common working practice of their own for the Trust</i>	<i>The Trust has a common understanding of what outstanding performance is. All of the chief operating systems are consistently applied by the academies who welcome this level of effective practice development</i>
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MAT Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Step 4- There is a clear delegated framework for Governance at Trust Board and Local Academy level that makes explicit the accountabilities of both boards	<i>The governance structure lacks clarity and there is a single governing board for the whole trust. The role of members and directors is unclear in the structure and to the people involved. No academy boards are in place. All decisions for all schools are taken at board level</i>	<i>There is a MAT board where the distinction between the role of members and directors is clear. A skills audit has enabled the board to recruit skilled professionals capable of fulfilling their roles. There is clarity in terms of the roles of both boards but the structure is at an early stage of development. The values of the organisation are driven by the uniqueness of the schools not the Trust</i>	<i>The MAT board is a strength of the organisation and has been developed over time following review into a stronger unit that reflects the scale and development of the trust. The delegated authority is clear and both boards are clear in their responsibilities. The MAT board protects and extends the values of the organisation</i>	<i>The board has a clear plan for delegated authority and regularly checks that it is fit for purpose. Local Academy boards are effective at quality assuring standards at their school and the CEO and central team are subject to the same scrutiny. The trust is successful as a result of the school's performance and the schools are good because of the trust. There is top-down and bottom-up accountability</i>

The 10 Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Trusts

MAT Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Step 5- There are clear and transparent models of financial and resource management accountability across the trust	<i>The internal systems of financial control give too much authority to the schools in the trust. The senior financial employee is not a qualified accountant. The consequence is that the board cannot hold the schools fully to account as the systems are not set up to enable this. HR policies are inconsistent across the trust and staff could be treated differently as a result. External audit has identified a number of areas for improvement</i>	<i>The internal systems of financial control are in place and there is a clear management responsibility being enacted by the board. The schools are clear about the processes they must comply with. A Qualified accountant oversees the trust financial strategy. HR policies are common to all schools but are not being consistently implemented yet. External audit is positive but has identified a small number of areas for improvement</i>	<i>There are strong internal systems of audit that have improved over time and are now highly effective. A well-qualified central team ensures that the trust operates well as a single business. External audit has identified no significant areas of improvement</i>	<i>There are strong internal systems of audit that are exemplary in the eyes of external auditors and the EFA. The non-educational oversight of the trust is robust and underpins excellent educational delivery. The trust is the local employer of choice</i>

The 10 Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Trusts

MAT Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Step 6-There is a trustwide school improvement strategy that recognises the different interventions needed at different stages of the improvement journey that a school undertakes.	<i>There is an embryonic trust wide school improvement strategy that is focused on the performance improvement in schools in significant difficulties. The trust has embedded effective attendance, behaviour and performance tracking systems to rapidly improve the schools in the early years of membership</i>	<i>The trust has a school improvement strategy that is becoming embedded and has progressed beyond the day to day core improvement needs. Systems to track data, the collection of regular KPI and a stronger performance management system are sustaining improvement in the schools.</i>	<i>The school improvement strategy is sustaining improved performance and standards are rising and improvement is rapid. The self-evaluation of the academies is maturing so that they have greater ownership of their own requirements and make more bespoke support demands of the Trust</i>	<i>The trust has improved the majority of its schools to the point at which those that were once weak now have capacity and strength to support new schools joining the MAT or schools beyond the trust. They can also peer review with confidence other schools in the trust. MAT leaders can articulate their school improvement repertoire</i>

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Step 7-There is a systematic programme of school to school support that is focused on the need of individual academies	<i>The trust is starting to develop a school to school support strategy. Support is delivered by talented teachers and leaders in their own schools and is framed around core improvement themes and the skills of the staff</i>	<i>The trust ensures that more teachers and leaders are making a contribution to school to school support beyond their own schools. The practice is good but needs to be more impact driven classroom support.</i>	<i>The trust's school improvement strategy balances the generic needs of the schools with the facilitation of smaller learning communities of teaching leaders who develop coaching groups with colleagues needing help</i>	<i>The trust's school improvement strategy is built around an emerging pool of talented teachers and leaders who know the impact of their work and can name it and describe it</i>
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MAT Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Step 8-There is evidence of skilled management of Trust Risk indicators	<i>There is little or no evidence that risk management is structured in the Trust. Risks are managed on an individual basis and whilst successfully mitigated, do not enable the board to prevent them re-occurring</i>	<i>The Trust has a risk register in place and it is used to monitor risks that the Trust has identified as possible threats to the organisation. There is some but as yet unstructured relationships between the Trust Risk plan and those in the academies</i>	<i>The Board risk register is used to drive all improvement priorities and is the framework for agenda setting across the Trust. Each Academy has its own Register which indicates the risks that are linked to their academy as well as the ways in which board risks are mitigated</i>	<i>The Board risk is managed well and there is a clear relationship between risk and mitigation. The board has a structure in place that ensures that not only current risks are managed well but that there is a 3-5 year risk anticipation plan in place that is under regular review</i>

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Step 9-There is a clear succession plan for the key posts within the MAT (CEO, FD, HR, Chair of Board, members and directors, Principals and Vice Principals)	<i>The Trust knows that there are posts in the organisation that require a succession plan. It has not yet been able to grow capacity from within the organisation to address this. The Trust would rely on external recruitment or some internal secondments to resolve succession issues</i>	<i>The Trust has a talent management programme that supports and develops talented teachers and leaders and equips them to work effectively across the trust in different schools and roles. These blend CPD opportunities with wider leadership experience</i>	<i>The Trust has a talent management plan for emerging and senior leaders in the organisation that means the trust can deploy its most talented staff to work in more than one school on secondments or permanent transfers, creating career development and succession solutions</i>	<i>The Trust has a talent management plan that has matured and now includes staff at all levels across the trust. Senior leaders have worked in more than one trust school and middle leaders and the best teachers are deployed across the trust to sustain and deepen impact</i>
MAT Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading

The 10 Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Trusts

Step 10-There is a trust wide commitment to making a contribution to local, regional and national educational networks beyond the MAT	<i>The schools in the Trust continue to participate in local and national networks but these are the continuation of previous practice and there is little evidence that these relationships contribute to Trust improvement or support for other schools</i>	<i>The Trust has developed partnerships with external groups beyond those that the schools have sustained. These partnerships enable the Trust to be better connected to regional and national networks that benefit children and staff</i>	<i>The Trust and the Academies play a key role in wider system leadership through membership of Teaching School Alliances, supporting other schools, leading and participating in local partnerships and sharing expertise widely. The Trust learns from and contributes to the practice of other MATs in their region</i>	<i>The Trust has a teaching school alliance, NLE, NLG and SLE who provide support across the Trust but also to schools beyond the trust. The Trust is a key part of the regional System leadership capacity to improve standards for all and works to support and challenges new and experienced MATs</i>
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Appendix 3 – The Northern Bay Instructional Model

The Northern Bay Instructional Model



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