



LEADERSHIP STRATEGY: SYNTHESIS OF VIEWS FROM THE SECOND PROFESSIONAL FORUM

AUGUST 2017

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the second professional forum was to give advice to the Council about the leadership strategy and the nature of the investment the Council should make to support the development of leadership within the profession. The idea was to review the synthesis of the six themes that had emerged from the four leadership hui,¹ comment on the proposed six draft elements of a successful strategy,² identify priorities for leadership learning and to suggest ways the Council might determine the success of its strategy.

This report is a synthesis of the ideas discussed at the forum. It begins by highlighting what the profession expects to be captured in the strategy document and the role the Education Council should play as the rangatira—the leader and weaver—of the strategy. As in the first professional forum there was considerable discussion about the capabilities required of educational leaders and key ideas are highlighted. Finally, advice is given about productive ways to support leadership learning and initial ideas outlined about possible measures of success for the overall strategy.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY DOCUMENT

The Code and Professional Standards have been well received and the sector wants a Leadership Strategy that resonates in the same way. The Strategy needs to signal a bold vision for Aotearoa New Zealand education and the importance of strong leadership in realising this vision.³

The draft themes and elements⁴ were generally supported and the need for them to ‘capture the hearts and minds of all in the sector’ was endorsed. The elements and the overall Strategy need to: be expressed in ‘plain language’, language that is not passive but dynamic; capture the need for action; and be more practical.

There was strong support for the Treaty of Waitangi being the foundation for the Strategy and that it should permeate all the elements (*see* Element 1). Similarly, the moral purpose of educational leadership—its contribution to the lives of young people and to a more equitable society—needed to be intertwined throughout the strategy (*see* Element 2). The value in connecting Research-Policy-Practice was seen to be important. It was thought that these are currently unconnected and there are no clear pathways between the individuals/groups/organisations undertaking these different activities. The lack of connection limits the potential for collaborative leadership knowledge-building and professional learning and development (PLD).

1 Refer: Synthesis of themes from the four leadership hui.

2 Refer: Synthesis Academic Forum, August 2017.

3 Refer: Appendix One: draft vision statements from Professional conference.

4 Refer: Appendix Two: draft elements identified as essential to the strategy (Academic Forum, February 2017).

Consistent with the perspective that the Strategy needed to be active it is important to emphasise that the Council will ‘create’ an ecosystem that supports leadership learning not just take the role of the promoter of such an ecosystem.

The success of the Council’s leadership work will rely on ‘carriers’ of the message; people who will be key links between the Council and those they represent and they need to be carrying informed, shared and current knowledge to their constituents.

The idea of being future focused resonated as a concept (*see* Element 5) but there was no shared view of what this means and why it might be important to the profession. The Strategy will need to make this clear. It was agreed that change had to be integral to the Strategy and taking a future-orientated approach would be enabling. One example was the need to better understand the new generation of teachers who will become the next leaders. Another was that it emphasised the importance of keeping in touch with changing learner needs and not continuing with practices that ‘work now’ but may not be so useful into the future.

Consistent with the perspective that the Strategy needed to be active it is important to emphasise that the Council will ‘create’ an ecosystem that supports leadership learning not just take the role of the promoter of such an ecosystem (*see* Element 6).

The strategy also needs to:

- demonstrate connected and coherent leadership pathways that apply across educational settings. The contexts are different but the leadership requirements are the same.
- be underpinned by a robust evidence base and any measures of effectiveness need to make assumptions transparent and align with educational goals.
- be dynamic, using processes of continual review to modify and change priorities in light of emerging evidence.
- be rolled out across the profession at the same time or the potential for it to provide the platform for building shared professional knowledge of leadership and leadership learning will not be realised.

The Education Council as Rangatira

The sector is looking for a strong and compelling ‘story’ about leadership and leadership learning; a story that enables people to see the immediate priorities and the rationale for these and the medium and long term priorities. The feedback suggested, however, that there is not a shared understanding of what is currently happening in the leadership space—especially in terms of PLD—nor what is planned for 2018 and beyond. In addition, while there were many ideas in common about important leadership capabilities there is not yet an agreed perspective about what was most important to value and develop across the leadership pathway. The success of the Council’s leadership work will rely on ‘carriers’ of the message; people who will be key links between the Council and those they represent and they need to be carrying informed, shared and current knowledge to their constituents. More importantly, the members of the profession want to be the ‘owners’ of the knowledge and so need to be partners in its construction.

Another role for the Council is working to build trust within the profession—across all settings—as well as with the media and the wider community. The Leadership Strategy is a powerful vehicle for the profession—as represented by the Council—to take an authoritative and influential stance on significant educational issues as well as related policy initiatives that impact on students and their learning.

There was a call to create an Aotearoa New Zealand ‘model’ of leadership. One that draws on international evidence and valued documents—such as Tū Rangatira, is unique to Aotearoa, and provides clarity about the implications for practice.

Leadership

The Strategy needs to capture a variety of leadership pathways as well as the specific leadership capabilities required for positional roles. One activity that the Strategy should enable is the opportunity to collaboratively develop a shared understanding of what is meant by leadership and the essential capabilities for educational leaders in different roles and settings. For example, a priority for middle leaders is to develop capabilities associated with supporting and leading other adults, individually and in teams. On the other hand, a priority for principals is an understanding of the education ecosystem and knowledge of relevant legislation, finance, budgeting, property, and HR. If educational leadership is to contribute to the goals the country has for education it is important too for educational leaders to work with leaders outside education.

There was a call to create an Aotearoa New Zealand ‘model’ of leadership. One that draws on international evidence and valued documents—such as Tū Rangatira, is unique to Aotearoa, and provides clarity about the implications for practice. The ‘model’ would:

- provide a coherent leadership development structure that has the potential to motivate teachers to take on new roles, where they can see these roles as part of the bigger picture of self-development and professional growth.⁵
- focus on building capacity and capability for diverse leaders, so reflecting our changing demographics.
- show that progressing as a leader is not aligned with moving to a bigger and bigger school.
- make explicit the underpinning theory of action.

The profession is ambitious in its expectations of its leaders. While participants described the areas of knowledge in many different ways they require leaders who are able to demonstrate pedagogical leadership, organisational leadership and people leadership. In practice, leaders need to be able to give meaning to the particular context—such as early childhood, primary, intermediate or secondary, have strong culturally-infused professional practices, and be mindful of personal well-being.

The expectations also include:

- courage to advocate for quality public New Zealand education, promoting inclusion and equity, and taking a position on important educational issues.
- being innovators, generators of ideas and empowering of others.
- having expertise in strategic thinking, strategic planning and change management.
- the ability to be users, generators and critics of research.
- being a leader of learning and a leader of adults. One group thought that what is often missed is the responsibility leaders have for the safety and well-being of teachers. Another emphasised the importance of identifying and nurturing talent. The leadership of adults also requires leaders to be team-builders and to enable collaboration and risk-taking. To do this well requires careful listening and relational trust.
- a focus on building and sustaining strong relationships; within the setting, across the sector and with the wider community.
- leadership becoming a way of ‘being’ where action is driven by taking responsibility and not from reacting to perceived accountabilities.
- being adaptable, resilient, welcoming feedback and being open to learning.

⁵ Note: any pathway would need to be consistent with NZEI and PPTA contracts.

Supporting teachers in their early years of teaching is critical to the health of the profession and, while additional tasks should not be given to beginning teachers, leadership pathways should be evident.

It was evident that coaching/mentoring/professional supervision opportunities were valued by many. The more systematic provision of such opportunities would be valued as would supporting the development of capacity and capability of mentors.

It was thought that the current focus of the Council on leadership for registered teachers was too limiting in scope. The idea of leadership should be integral to the way teachers learn about teaching and learning in Initial Teacher Education. Supporting teachers in their early years of teaching is critical to the health of the profession and, while additional tasks should not be given to beginning teachers, leadership pathways should be evident. Also, all teachers are leaders of learners and learning, and while many teachers may not have responsibility for leading adults and managing budgets, they should be sharing views of leadership with learners and supporting leadership for learners.

Learning leadership

Leadership learning opportunities need to be systemic, available across all settings, and promoting continual learning at all stages of a professional career. The greatest priority is to support the next generation of leaders, particularly middle leaders, Māori, and Pasifika. The initial priority also needs to support those new to principal roles or who are working in settings where there is significant change.

In deciding on the best options for professional learning it is important to build on current successful practices. This might involve a review of current leadership PLD provision, identifying current strengths and options for different ways to support learning. For example, investigating options for supporting and credentialing learning in ways that are integral to the day-to-day role.

It was acknowledged that there is considerable PLD leadership expertise across New Zealand and drawing on this expert knowledge as well as the knowledge of people within the profession would be advantageous. The need for the collaborative development of leadership learning was emphasised with the suggestion that sector knowledge should be used to develop bespoke models of PLD. For example, consulting with regions and sectors and then creating an infrastructure for each region. This would enable current leaders to contribute to developing PLD models and processes and it would provide visibility for leadership and potentially greater accessibility for leadership PLD.

The idea of developing a 'leadership curriculum' was raised. If the principles of a leadership curriculum were agreed it might assist PLD to be more coherent. One example given was starting with a principle that captured the foundation nature of the Treaty of Waitangi and thinking about and agreeing: what this means as a foundation principle for being a leader in Aotearoa New Zealand; what this might look like in practice; and how to build the leadership capacity that is underpinned by an understanding of identity, culture and language.

It was evident that coaching/mentoring/professional supervision opportunities were valued by many. The more systematic provision of such opportunities would be valued as would supporting the development of capacity and capability of mentors. One-to-one support was identified as particularly important for leaders in positional roles where holistic support helped them cope not only with the knowledge needed for such a complex job but also with the physical and emotional abrasiveness of the role.

It was agreed the opportunities for continual learning needed to be provided in more accessible and coherent ways. One way to do this would be to have meaningful contact with every principal every year. This could be achieved through: leadership hui such as those organised in 2016; provision of readings along with an organised network for professional dialogue; and the Council providing a leadership newsletter with links to on-line resources that could be used to build leadership capability.

Other suggestions for leadership learning included:

- strengthening the links between university-based leadership programmes and the profession
- re-instating the First-time Principal and Aspiring Principal programmes
- the development of a leadership centre
- the use of an attestation framework
- credentialing of PLD.

Success measures

The success measures need to reflect the ambition of the Strategy and include practical compelling data. The latter would include measures such as: interventions going down; applications for leadership roles going up; greater retention of leaders; and increased demand for professional learning.⁶ The higher level measures would take account of: the overall health of the education system; the profession's perception of coherence and consistency of leadership development across the country; the ability of leaders to talk about leadership with those working in other settings and outside education; and all leaders being able to identify their leadership development pathway.

⁶ There was a strong call for professional leadership and associated learning to be available across all settings. This will require PLD funding for leadership in early childhood settings.

APPENDIX ONE

Ideas to inform a vision for the Leadership strategy

- To support and inspire leadership development in New Zealand education by building a coherent, connected leadership ecosystem.
- The success of every learner through effective/excellent/quality leadership.
- Enabling success for every learner through excellent leadership.
- Providing coherent pathways for leadership learning for everyone in the teaching profession.
- To develop, support and recognise culturally competent, capable, confident leaders across the whole education sector.
- A strategy that prepares, excites and inspires leaders of today and the future in Aotearoa.
- Standing on one unique cultural foundation, empowering, creative, innovative leaders of learning with a strong moral purpose and commitment to social justice.
- He ahuru mōwai mō ngā rangatire o āpōpō: a thriving Aotearoa/New Zealand education community led by culturally-grounded, well equipped, inspired individuals and teams.
- Leadership, unique to Aotearoa and world class. Authentic, promoting equity and excellence.
- We will inspire and prepare teachers for leadership, and enhance their leadership capabilities so their team members will know and grow their learners.
- Shared, empowered, community of leadership. One Tribe, One kaupapa, One direction.

APPENDIX TWO

The first Academic Forum identified six elements as essential to the strategy:

1. Guided by a clear vision that places the Treaty of Waitangi as the foundation for the strategy.
2. Being mindful of the wider education system while planning to influence and reshape the leadership ecosystem.
3. Connecting research, policy and practice and drawing on the opportunities offered by the interplay of the three areas.
4. Drawing on the evidence of effective leadership activities and being open to new evidence.
5. Clarity about key leadership capabilities needed for a future orientated profession.
6. Providing an ecosystem that promotes and supports leadership learning.