



National College for
School Leadership

Innovation in Headteacher Induction

Case Study 1: First-Time Principals Programme, New Zealand

by David Eddy and Brian Bennison

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by

Dick Weindling, CREATE Consultants, London

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Background information

Why was the program set up?

In the May 2001 Government Budget, the Minister of Education announced a series of initiatives to support principal development in New Zealand schools, with a proposed budget of \$NZ 27.4 million over the following four years. For the Ministry of Education there were two central aspects to this principal development initiative; the induction of first-time principals and the need to coordinate and encourage the continued professional development of experienced principals. As a result, a significant proportion of the budgeted money was earmarked for the First-time Principals Programme (for newly appointed principals) and a development centre proposal (for longer established principals).

Approximately 200 first-time principals are appointed to principal positions in New Zealand each year. They are appointed to a range of schools, from large secondary schools (rolls of up to 2000 students) where considerable prior experience in middle and senior management positions is the norm, to small rural primary schools (rolls of less than 30 students) where principals usually continue as a classroom teacher and may have had no significant prior management or leadership experience. Their positions may be in state-funded schools, integrated schools (special character schools), independent (private) schools and kura (Maori language) schools. The induction programme was intended to be flexible enough to meet the needs of these individual principals and their widely varying school contexts.

Who designed and delivered the programme?

In early 2001, the Ministry of Education contracted the Hay Group, an international agency specializing in executive level consultancy, to provide a report on the core competencies of effective school leadership. The report, *Identifying the Skills, Knowledge, Attributes and Competencies for First-time Principals: Shaping the Next Generation of Principals*, was formally presented to the Ministry of Education in August 2001. The University of Waikato and Massey University were then contracted by the Ministry of Education to write the first-time principals professional development curriculum, which would be mostly a sequence of modules designed to address the

needs and criteria identified by the Hay Report, as well as a mentoring and online learning programme. The subsequent curriculum drafts were shared for comment with a reference group, and policy and curriculum representatives of the Ministry of Education during late 2001.

In December 2001, The University of Auckland Principals Centre was contracted by the Ministry of Education to deliver nationally the First-time Principals Programme commencing in 2002. The Ministry of Education did not make the one-year programme mandatory for the first-time principals, each of whom decided if they wished to participate. All of the first-time principals received a laptop computer by April 2002 as the first stage of the Government's Electronic Network initiative for all New Zealand school principals to enable them to engage in the online learning component of the programme. For those first-time principals who completed the full induction programme there was no formal qualification planned by the Ministry of Education to recognize their accomplishment. Currently in New Zealand there is no requirement for a school principal to be trained, qualified or certified in school leadership to be appointed to a principal's position or to remain a principal.

How many new principals have taken part?

The programme first ran in 2002 with an initial cohort of 206 first-time principals. The enrolments for 2003 currently stand at 190 with this figure expected to rise to around 200 by the time of the first residential course in mid April.

Strategic aims

The induction programme for first-time principals was proposed by the Ministry of Education in September 2001 with the aim of developing the knowledge, skills and other competencies required by first-time principals to be effective in their roles and to provide them with support during the first year of their appointments.

For the Ministry of Education, 'the establishment of a consistent, comprehensive and nationally available induction programme for all first-time principals acknowledges that the first substantive principal position held represents a significant transition point for a principal, whether they have prior experience in school leadership and management or not.' (Principals Induction Proposal Specification).

For the University of Waikato and Massey University who developed the formal curriculum, the philosophy underlying the programme stressed the importance of 'educative leadership by enlightened principals whose performance of the many everyday duties required of them is an expression of a vision and goals shared with their professional staff and school community.' (First-time Principals Induction Programme – Information for Participants). The writers saw the role of the curriculum as helping principals to become more critically reflective about their role in relation to the school and community that they served.

Finally, for The University of Auckland Principals Centre, who were contracted to deliver the curriculum, the induction programme is designed to meet both the overall and individual needs of new principals, and to help them to develop professionally and personally. In meeting these needs, it is envisioned that the principals become active role models for colleagues in their schools to improve and strengthen the core activities of the school – teaching and learning.

Programme structure and design

The First-time Principals Programme is a one-year induction programme comprising four related parts – residential courses, mentoring, online learning and research (see Figure 1). The formal curriculum is taught at the residential courses, while mentoring and online learning support the teaching of the curriculum through related and focused learning activities and selected resources. Research provides an on-going evaluation of the induction programme during the year, to discover how the recipients are experiencing the programme so that the project team at The University of Auckland can continuously improve the design and delivery of the induction programme.



Figure 1: Four Related Parts of the Induction Programme

The three residential courses are held in school holiday periods during the year and this year each course is of four days duration, making a total of twelve residential course days. Two of the residential courses are held in Auckland and the other in Wellington. Residential course costs are resourced by the Ministry of Education through The University of Auckland Principals Centre, including the payment of presenters, and the travel and accommodation expenses of the participants.

The mentoring programme this year consists of three half day school-based visits by the mentor to the principal's school. There is a national team of twenty-two mentors who are regionally distributed and are either current or recently retired school principals. They are selected as mentors on the basis of their school leadership expertise. Those mentors who are current principals each mentor up to six first-time principals and the recently retired principals each mentor up to twenty first-time principals. The mentors attend three separate training days during the year at The University of Auckland, to prepare them for each school-based visit and to develop their mentoring skills. The mentors also attend two days of the first residential course so that they have the opportunity to observe sessions, attend the keynote addresses connected to their work in school-based mentoring, and build relationships with the new principals. Regular email and telephone mentoring occurs outside of the school-based visits, allowing a flow of information and feedback between mentors and new principals. The mentors are paid for their professional services, including attendance at their training days and residential course days.

A dedicated website called New Principals Online (NPO) has been established to support the induction programme through online learning opportunities. The site is password protected so that only the principals participating in the induction programme and the two site managers have access. This allows for discussions and the sharing of experiences in a confidential online community setting. NPO exists as a part of the Ministry of Education's Leadspace website for all school leaders within the 'think.com' environment. The NPO site provides programme information for participants, selected resources, references related to the induction curriculum, discussion forums, and dialogue opportunities with some keynote presenters following the residential courses. While the site is developed and managed by the project team, it is funded and supported by the Ministry of Education.

The fourth component of the induction programme provides evaluative data for continued development. A part-time Research Assistant is engaged by the project to develop questionnaires, to analyse the responses of the participants to the questionnaires, and report to the project team on the research findings. The questionnaires include an initial self evaluation completed by each participant, their detailed responses at the conclusion of each residential course, and feedback about the

mentoring programme. The questionnaires provide a steady flow of evaluative data for the project team about how the first-time principals perceive and experience the induction programme. This allows the team to make improvement decisions based on quality information. The results of the questionnaires and the responses of the project team are shared with the participants and the Ministry of Education, thereby ensuring and encouraging a transparent research process.

Programme process

At the residential courses there are several kinds of learning experiences offered which are appropriate for adult professional learners. Keynote addresses are given in a plenary lecture setting by educators known for their expertise on the topic and the addresses are usually theory driven. These addresses are mostly given by university faculty who are national and international leaders in their field of educational research. Case studies of good practice to illustrate the keynote addresses are presented to the participants in their school sector group by selected experienced principals, who share the process of developing, implementing and evaluating a relevant practice in their school. The case studies also provide opportunities for discussion and reflection in relation to the participant's own school context. Skills workshops in schools sector groups of approximately twenty participants are led by facilitators (most are experienced school principals) who are trained at The University of Auckland prior to each residential course. These action learning skills workshops provide opportunities for the participants to apply their new learning from the keynote addresses and the case studies to their own school context and to design preliminary action plans about a desired change or improvement for their school.

This year a 'Learning from Each Other' session will be held at each residential course for the participants to share their knowledge and experience about work-based issues and problems in a small group setting with the guidance of a facilitator. This experience should promote collaborative learning, reflective discussion, respect for prior knowledge and experience, and encourages the receiving and giving of constructive critical feedback. Another activity is the Compliance, Practice and Research session, in which a participant selects the topic of their choice. Compliance sessions focus on the management requirements for schools set by external agencies and are mostly presented by staff of those agencies. Practice sessions focus on how to implement a

specific improvement and are led by experienced principals. The Research sessions are presented by leading academics who share their research findings and discuss their implications for the improvement of teaching and learning in schools. There are also schools sector groups networking sessions for building supportive peer relationships, as well as informal social occasions for relationship building and relaxation at each residential course.

Prior to the first school-based visit by the mentor, the principal completes a self evaluation questionnaire to help identify their strengths and development needs. With their mentor, the principal's responses to the questionnaire are discussed and a learning plan is negotiated and agreed. The focus of the learning plan is the leading of teaching and learning. An action plan is developed by the mentor and the principal to help reduce the disparity between the current position of the school and the teaching and learning vision of the school. The learning plan and the action plan are the basis of the professional portfolio the principal will develop during the year, which tracks the progress and the dilemmas of the principal in designing, implementing and evaluating the teaching and learning improvement goal.

The portfolio is also the subject of a keynote address and skills workshop at the first residential course. During the two further school-based visits by the mentor later in the year, the portfolio provides an evidence-based approach for the principal and the mentor to review progress on the goal and for the mentor to offer both support and constructive critical feedback. In addition, the mentor listens and responds to the more immediate needs of the principal and informs the principal of referral sources and agencies available for further support. The mentoring relationship is sustained by telephone and email contact outside of the school-based visits and can be initiated by either the principal or the mentor.

The Ministry of Education provides each school with a laptop computer for the principal's use. The first-time principals are therefore able to access the New Principals Online (NPO) website and are encouraged to do so at least weekly. The NPO plan informs them in advance of the events and resources which will be made available online. The plan directly relates to the curriculum content of the residential courses, so that the principals can preview content prior to the course and after the course they can

participate in related follow-up activities. The NPO site hosts online discussions which encourage and enable the participants to share their ideas, practices and problems, as well as to receive feedback from an educational expert from the 'hotseat' on a specific issue. NPO also serves to support and strengthen the face-to-face networks developed and encouraged at the residential courses by creating specific online communities within the overall participant cohort. This allows and promotes, for example, the rural principals of small schools to engage in online discussions facilitated by the site manager about unique issues related to their particular schools.

Programme content

The curriculum is structured and organized around competency clusters and strands, with these providing the framework for the teaching at the residential courses (see Figure 2). There are four clusters which group the key competencies of the principal's role – Vision and Leading, Striving for Excellence, Building Community Relationships, and Self Efficacy. The first cluster centres upon what it means to lead an organization committed to learning and what it means to lead other people in a school. The second focuses on building systems to promote and achieve excellence. The third centres on the nature of desirable school-community relationships, and the fourth considers how school leaders can manage the demands of the job while also promoting their own professional development.

The four competency clusters are organized into learning strands and modules which are taught at the residential courses. The teaching of the modules is organized sequentially, so that the learning experience for the participants is both a coherent and an integrated one. The sequence of the residential courses is thematically developed, beginning at Residential Course One with the alignment of school management and leadership to the school's core activity of teaching and learning (The Learning School). The second residential course explores how a learning school can be a continuously improving organization with improved teaching and learning outcomes (The Improving School). The final residential course focuses on what it means to be an effective school, in both the classroom and the organizational context (The Effective School).

The keynote addresses at the residential courses are predominantly evidence-based enquiries into a topic, grounded in research data and theory-driven, yet connected in

explanation and use of examples to the school-based teaching and learning leadership of the principal. The curriculum taught at the residential courses recognizes the importance of the principals' being clear about the characteristics of quality teaching and learning from a research perspective. There is also a focus on the implementation of these ideas in collaboration with their teachers and school community. With this in mind, the teaching of the course content centres around the pivotal question: *How will this module increase the knowledge, understanding and skilful leadership of the principal to enhance the educational outcomes for the students in their school?*

Through the case studies and the skills workshops at the residential courses, as well as the mentoring programme, the new principals learn how to engage their teachers, students and the community in the teaching and learning improvement strategies so that the intended achievement improvements will be well managed in their schools.

The project team's mission is to highlight the role of principals in monitoring and increasing the quality of the teacher-learning relationship. The vision statement that shapes the curriculum delivery is: *Leaders of learning schools continually pose the question: How can we increase our contribution to the achievement of our students? They provide both challenge and support to ensure their teachers do the same.* The induction curriculum and the various teaching approaches provide multiple opportunities for the principals to be exposed to current educational research and good practice. The leadership and management of teaching and learning is the predominant focus of all parts of the induction programme, with the participants developing an improved understanding of what this means in relation to their work. In these ways the induction programme teaches the principals that their strategic leadership is about improved learning opportunities and educational outcomes for students. This leadership needs to be shared with others, to engage the teachers and the community so that they have opportunities to contribute to the improvement and the desired outcomes.

The First-time Principals Programme Outline 2003 is shown in the table overleaf:

Competency Clusters	Strands	Residential Course ONE The Learning School <i>Te kura wananga</i>	Residential Course TWO The Improving School <i>Te kura whakapakari</i>	Residential Course THREE The Effective School <i>Te kura whakaea</i>
Vision and Leading	Principal as a Leader <i>Hei Kaiarahi</i>	Principal as educational leader Vision and change leadership Governance and management	Leadership types and effects Leadership and school culture	Professionalism and ethics Transformational leadership Sustaining leadership
	Leading Learning <i>He Kaiarataki akoranga</i>	Leading the learning school Learning from research	Principal and curriculum leadership Learning conversations Collecting data about teaching effectiveness Learning from research	Indicators of quality teaching Maori student achievement Leading and managing needs and abilities ICT leadership, teaching and learning Learning from research
	Leading People <i>He Kaiarataki tangata</i>	Aligning school culture to learning Managing challenging issues	Performance appraisal Professional development of staff Collaborative practice Team dynamics	Creating a safe physical and emotional environment Appointing staff and teacher induction
Striving for Excellence	Building Systems <i>He hanga kaupapa</i>	Financial planning and management Education Review Office reviews Principal's appraisal Staffing risk management	Strategic planning Planning and reporting requirements Property management Staff recruitment and contracts	Budget planning Annual reporting Code of conduct (staff) Managing competency and disciplinary procedures Code of practice for international students
Building Community Relationships	Building Partnerships <i>Te Whakahoahoa</i>	Principal-Board relationship Reporting to Board and community Principal in the community Shared vision process	Involving stakeholders in strategic planning Involving the community in learning Principal-Counsellor relationship	Engaging the Maori community Treaty of Waitangi
Self Efficacy	Personal and Professional Development <i>Te Whakangungu</i>	Reflective practice Professional portfolio Managing time and stress New Principals Online (NPO) Support networks	Action research and action planning Personal-professional balance Professional portfolio Support networks	Prioritising multiple demands Reflective practice Professional portfolio Future professional development opportunities Future advice and support agencies

Learning culture and programme principles

The learning culture of the First-time Principals Programme is shaped by the now emerging research-based consensus¹ about the qualities of effective professional development. By effective the project team mean that the professional development has an impact on the way the participants do their jobs. The induction programme is delivered in accordance with the following principles and processes:

- a. Negotiated with learners – the learning agenda is negotiated with the participants rather than imposed upon them, and the curriculum is taught in a way that meets their professional needs and is respectful of their prior experience.
- b. Job-embedded – the induction programme is designed to make strong and continuous connections with the jobs of the participants through opportunities for reflection, analysis and action on their own and colleagues' real job situations. This is achieved through the professional portfolio, action research, discussion of on-the-job situations with their mentor and online with colleagues, and follow-up activities at the residential courses.
- c. Continuous inquiry – effective professional development is presented as part of a career-long learning journey which is serious, sustained and part of one's professional obligations.
- d. Critical and collaborative – effective professional development is a collaborative process where colleagues combine support and challenge so that unthinking affirmation and unhelpful criticism are replaced by thoughtful and constructive feedback and assistance. Such group norms are established in the mentoring relationship, as well as in the skills workshops at the residential courses.
- e. Evidence-based – quality reflection on own and others' practice is informed by reliable information about the situation so that learning is grounded in a common understanding. The induction programme assists the participants to become accurate observers and reporters of the situations that are the focus of their learning.
- f. Focused on core activities – effective professional development for new school leaders means helping them to attain their educational vision. This requires an intensive focus throughout the induction programme on the core educational

activities of researching, monitoring, developing and reporting on programmes of teaching and learning.

- g. Promote deep rather than surface learning – an effective professional development programme recognizes that deep learning requires multiple opportunities to learn key objectives. This requires the negotiation of clear priorities with the participants and avoidance of an overcrowded learning agenda.

Training for mentors and facilitators

The mentors have three separate training days each year at The University of Auckland, with the training focussing on increasing the mentors' awareness and understanding of the curriculum, the role of the mentor, the purposes of mentoring, mentoring skills, the principal's portfolio, and their preparation for each of the three school-based visits. The mentors are introduced to a theory of mentoring largely based on the work of Chris Argyris², a social psychologist who has written extensively about interpersonal and organizational effectiveness. The introduction to the theory is followed by discussion of its relevance to mentoring, as well as practice of the skills associated with Argyris's theory and related to actual first-time principal mentoring scenarios. Outside of the three training days the mentors are supported by telephone and email by the project team at The University of Auckland, as well as being provided with articles about mentoring to promote their knowledge and understanding.

The facilitators of the three residential courses skills workshops come together at The University of Auckland for a training day prior to each residential course. At the training day, the facilitators review the curriculum to be taught at the residential course, understand the role of the facilitator and the purposes of the skills workshops, and discuss each of the skills workshops which are designed for the residential course by specific keynote presenters. Each skills workshop activity is practised, so that the facilitators feel confident, informed and sufficiently skilful to facilitate those activities at the residential course. Their feedback about the design of the skills workshops and the likely learning experiences for the principals contributes to finalizing the design of the workshop activities. At the next training day, the facilitators discuss with the project team the adequacy of the skills workshops that they facilitated at the residential course, how these could be further improved, and the facilitating skills they need to further develop their leadership of the workshops.

Learning outcomes and impact

Each of the three residential courses and the mentoring programme were evaluated internally during 2002 by the project team at The University of Auckland. The Ministry of Education is currently determining a methodology to conduct an external evaluation.

A. The residential course programme

A summary of the evaluation results gathered from the three residential courses conducted during 2002 is presented in Table One.

TABLE ONE: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EVALUATIONS OF THE THREE RESIDENTIAL COURSES

Responses ranked on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high)

QUESTION	MEAN RATING and STD DEV		
	1	2	3
Residential Course			
1. <i>Now that you have completed Residential Course X, how well do you think the team responded to your feedback from the last Residential Course?</i>		6.79 0.64	4.47 1.38
2. <i>There was a good mix of theory and practical work.</i>	2.56 1.24	6.38 0.85	4.09 1.53
3. <i>The components of the residential course fitted together well.</i>	3.28 1.46	6.49 0.69	4.49 1.42
4. <i>There were enough opportunities for participation.</i>	2.92 1.47	6.38 0.82	4.36 1.59
5. <i>There was sufficient choice in the programme to meet my needs.</i>		6.60 0.66	4.46 1.66
6. <i>Now that you have completed Residential Course X, how much more prepared do you feel for your position as Principal?</i>	4.92 0.93	5.51 1.02	4.85 1.44
7. <i>How successful was Residential Course X in helping you to improve the quality of teaching and learning in your school?</i>	4.00 1.26	5.65 1.01	4.75 1.42
8. <i>Overall, how satisfied were you with Residential Course X?</i>	3.56 1.13	6.54 0.69	4.43 1.42

Residential Course One had ratings at the lower end of the scale. These results can be partially attributed to the newness of the programme, the very limited amount of time

available to organize the inaugural residential course, and the challenge of delivering an unfamiliar curriculum developed by another institution. Further feedback from the new principals revealed that some of the presentations by experienced principals lacked depth and overly focused on the non-teaching and non-learning management and leadership of the school.

This feedback from Residential Course One was used by the project team in the design and presentation of Residential Course Two. This time the curriculum modules were mostly conducted by academic experts whose presentations were predominantly evidence-based inquiries into a topic, grounded in research data and theory-driven, yet connected in explanation and use of examples to the school-based teaching and learning leadership of the principal. Participants, who perceived that their concerns from Residential Course One and their comments had been acted upon, rated Residential Course Two very highly in all aspects.

The results from Residential Course Three dropped back somewhat. This can partly be attributed to the fact that the structure and presentation of Residential Course Three was strongly influenced by the considerable amount of course content which needed to be taught to complete the curriculum delivery.

An overall evaluation of the three residential courses that participants attended during 2002 was also undertaken. The results are summarised in Table Two.

TABLE TWO: SUMMARY OF OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE RESIDENTIAL COURSE PROGRAMME (N = 143)

Responses ranked on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high)

QUESTION	MEAN RATING	STD DEV
1. <i>Did you find the Residential Courses relevant to your needs as a newly appointed Principal?</i>	5.65	1.22
2. <i>To what extent did the Residential Courses help you achieve the objectives you had in mind when you decided to attend Residential Course One?</i>	5.13	1.16
3. <i>To what extent did the Residential Courses help you to identify strategies that will enable you to improve the quality of teaching and learning in your school?</i>	5.57	1.03
4. <i>To what extent did the Residential Courses encourage you to exchange lessons and experiences with others?</i>	5.89	1.00
5. <i>Now that you have completed the First-time Principals programme, please indicate your feeling of preparedness for the role of principal compared with how you felt before attending the first residential course.</i>	5.51	1.14

All questions received responses above 5 on a scale from 1 – 7, indicating a high level of satisfaction with the overall residential courses structure and presentation.

B. The mentoring process - mentors

The questionnaire administered to mentors sought to obtain feedback on their experience as a mentor during 2002, so that this process could be developed as a more effective component of the induction programme in 2003. Four questions were asked:

Q1. Describe TWO specific examples that illustrate how a Principal or Principals developed professionally as a result of your work with them.

The top three areas given reflected the broad areas of responsibility for contemporary principals: providing leadership and direction for the school; leading people and dealing with the relationships between them; and complying with legislation. The wide range of

other areas cited in the responses was a reflection of the varied and individual needs of such a diverse group of principals.

Q2. Describe ONE specific example where you wished to make progress with a Principal but you feel that you were relatively unsuccessful in doing so.

The results suggested that some principals did not make progress as a result of the mentoring programme. A wide range of examples was given. These included:

- Insufficient time available to successfully progress issues
- Mismatch of personality between mentor and first-time principal
- Mismatch between the experience of the mentor and the school or situation of the first-time principal
- Unclear expectations by the principal of the mentoring programme
- Unsuitability of the first-time principal for the leadership position
- Defensiveness on the part of some principals which was reflected in their unwillingness to engage meaningfully in the mentoring process

Q3. From your experience as a mentor list those areas in which you think that first-time principals require most assistance.

The responses to this question reflected the wide-ranging responsibilities of the contemporary principal. For this reason, the most often cited area seen as 'requiring assistance' is appropriate – 'time management and prioritisation'. This was most closely followed by 'personal support systems'. These two areas are intimately related. They concern knowing what tasks have to be done and when, and then knowing where to look for support to ensure that they are done effectively and efficiently. The next two areas cited – 'relationships with the community' and 'relationships with the Board of Trustees' suggest that it is from these two groups that pressure for a new principal is most commonly felt.

Q4. Please list any suggestions for improving the mentoring process.

Mentors generally felt that to be effective, there must be more face-to-face contact with their principals. This could be achieved by more in-school visits, meetings at residential courses or group meetings at other times. However, there was also the indication that

these meetings must be more structured. Mentors also expressed a concern for an improved match between the principal and the mentor.

C. The mentoring process - the first-time principals

During 2002 a mentor visited each participant in his or her school on two occasions. Some principals also met with their mentors at the residential courses. After Residential Course Three each new principal completed a mentoring evaluation form that asked six open-ended questions concerning the mentoring process.

The responses indicated that planning issues were by far the major concerns for first-time principals. During the year reporting issues also assumed prominence. In these areas, the emphasis was on management concerns rather than on specifically improving the quality of teaching and learning. The other areas in which assistance was sought from the mentors were also largely management focussed.

Many first-time principals valued having another person from whom they could seek reassurance that they were 'on the right track', or from whom they received encouragement and praise. This result reflected the fact that many participants had moved from the collegial environment inhabited by teachers into the often isolated and lonely role of principal - a transition for which many were unprepared.

There was a widespread feeling that the mentoring programme was too short in 2002 - both in the number of visits and in the duration of the process.

The evaluation of the mentoring process resulted in three major changes for 2003: a stringent effort to match mentors and first-time principals more closely; the building of more structure into the mentoring process with an emphasis on issues directly related to the leadership of teaching and learning; and an increase from two to three school-based visits during the year. The amount of time spent on mentoring was significantly increased, and the expectations of both mentor and new principals were clarified in a special brochure and during the training.

D. Online learning

Participants in the First-time Principals programme have access to Leadspace (a Ministry of Education support website for school leaders), PEN (Principals Electronic Network – a Ministry of Education closed site for all principals to engage in online discussion and sharing), and NPO (New Principals Online – a closed site only accessible to principals participating in the induction programme which is managed by the project team).

Evaluation of this component of the programme indicated that first-time principals use NPO, PEN or Leadspace between once a month and once a fortnight and rate them as moderately useful. They also indicated that they need to learn more about NPO, PEN and Leadspace and the potential of online learning.

As a result of this evaluation, conducted towards the end of 2002, more of an emphasis is now given to the content of the First-time Principals Programme on the NPO site.

The application, or impact of the programme on individual principals and their schools.

At the time of writing, no study had been conducted concerning the impact of the First-time Principals Programme on individual principals and their schools. The project team acknowledge that what needs to be known is whether the induction programme is making a difference to the quality of teaching and learning in the schools the new principals lead. However, the link between the induction programme and the work the principals do in their schools to improve student achievement is difficult to identify. For a new and inexperienced principal to redirect both their own work and that of their teachers to systematically increase student achievement will need a period of years rather than months or weeks. This is enormously complex, demanding work – work which many experienced principals currently find too difficult to tackle.

If there is one certainty now, it is that being a first-time principal and the educational leader of a school is an onerous responsibility. To lead a learning school and know that this leadership is in fact increasing the quality of the teacher-learning relationship is the most important focus of the principal's work. The induction programme has promoted and instilled this premise in the thinking of the first-time principals. Whether this means that they will become truly educational leaders in their own schools is yet to be established.

www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/firstprincipals

Authors and references

David Eddy is the Project Director, First-time Principals Programme, School of Education, The University of Auckland.

Brian Bennison is the Research Associate, First-time Principals Programme, School of Education, The University of Auckland.

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¹The relevant research includes: Deborah Ball and David Cohen (1999). Developing practice, developing practitioners: Toward a practice-based theory of professional education. In L. Darling-Hammond and G. Sykes, *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 3-32) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

² See Argyris, C, and Schon, D, 1974, *Theory and Practice: Increasing Leadership Effectiveness*. San Francisco Jossey-Bass, and Argyris, C, 1983, *Reasoning, Learning and Action*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass

Commentary

by Bruce Barnett

The New Zealand First-Time Principals Programme (NZFTPP), offered through the University of Auckland Principals Centre, was established in 2002 and serves new principals throughout the country. In a relatively short time period, the organizers have implemented a multi-faceted programme, which incorporates numerous effective instructional design features. These features and areas of improvement are described below.

Key features

Despite its infancy, the NZFTPP has already established itself by: (1) being accessible to all first-time principals, (2) offering a comprehensive array of professional development activities, (3) providing support for mentors and facilitators, and (4) using evaluation data for programme improvements.

Access

First-time principals are not forced to enroll in the program, but participate voluntarily. The programme does not cater to one type of school setting, but is available to principals from public, private, integrated, and kura schools. The programme is well resourced by the Ministry of Education, as evidenced by covering costs to attend residential sessions, providing laptop computers, and paying mentors a stipend. Most novice principals are taking advantage of this professional induction programme, suggesting there is a high need for initial support for new principals. The use of online learning (available to all participants) is particularly helpful for principals in rural areas of New Zealand to engage in professional learning.

Comprehensive activities

The major strength of the NZFTPP is the variety of instructional delivery structures available to new principals. Participants engage in three residential sessions, work with a mentor, and access information and support via computer technology. Residential learning has been recognized as a powerful learning environment for professionals. Not

only are principals able to immerse themselves in the programme content and activities, but they also are able to expand their collegial networks. The three residential sessions are spread out during the school year, allowing participants to engage in follow-up learning activities between sessions with the assistance of a mentor. Other thoughtful instructional design features shaping these residential sessions include: (a) a curriculum that reflects the learning competencies of effective school leaders in New Zealand, (b) a variety of learning activities--lectures, case studies, skill workshops, portfolio construction, and (c) a focus on ways that principals can impact the core technology of schools--teaching and learning.

Throughout the program, principals work with an assigned mentor and have access to online learning opportunities. Mentors assist new principals in establishing goals and priorities using a portfolio as an evidence-based approach to learning, visit their schools to review progress and determine future actions, and are available for ongoing consultation via the telephone and computer. Providing participants with a laptop computer allows access to various online support services, such as the New Principals Online (NPO), where principals can review curriculum content from the residential sessions and participate in online discussions with other new principals and experts. These follow-up activities are closely aligned with the principles of professional development guiding the programme, particularly the importance of embedding learning in the workplace, using an evidence-based approach to learning, facilitating continuous learning, providing collaborative learning opportunities, and encouraging deep learning through reflection on actual workplace practices.

Training for mentors and facilitators

Rather than assuming that mentors and facilitators know how to enact their roles, programme developers provide them with ongoing training and assistance. Mentors attend training sessions throughout the year to help them better understand their role, develop mentoring skills, learn how to use portfolios, and conduct effective site visits. Telephone and electronic communication is encouraged between programme staff and mentors. Facilitators meet prior to each residential session to review the curriculum content and clarify their role in assisting principals and other presenters. Hands-on activities are used to allow facilitators to practice their role in the skills workshops.

Facilitators' ideas and suggestions are sought during and after the sessions to make programme improvements.

Formative evaluation

Despite being such a new programme, the staff has made a conscious effort to obtain data from facilitators, principals, and mentors to determine where programme improvements may be necessary. This strategy exemplifies one of the driving forces of the programme--continuous learning and improvement. Following each residential session, principals are asked a series of questions, some of which focus on how well the staff has responded to their earlier suggestions. They also have been surveyed following the completion of the programme. Mentors' opinions have been sought regarding the growth of principals, where they are least effective, assistance first-time principals need, and ways to improve the mentoring process. Staff already has begun to alter the programme by creating a "learning from each other" activity where principals share their knowledge and experience, revising presentations to focus on school-based teaching and learning processes, changing the curriculum on the NPO website, and increasing contact between mentors and new principals.

Suggested improvements

Any new programme will have growing pains as it is launched. What is encouraging about the culture of the NZFTPP is the willingness of staff to collect and use data for programme revisions. As the programme continues to develop, the pacing of the curriculum and the mentoring process may need closer examination.

Pacing

Involvement in this program requires a substantial time commitment, especially for first-time principals. Principals attend 12 days of residential training, work with a mentor on an action plan, develop a portfolio, and have access to online learning opportunities. Some of the evaluation data indicate the content may have been covered too rapidly and new principals may not be able to digest the complexity of material given their unfamiliarity with their new schools and roles. For instance, ratings from principals for residential course three are substantially lower than the previous session, which staff believes is due to the amount of curriculum material that had to be covered in this final session. New principals may not have been ready to understand and integrate this content dealing with effective schools.

In addition, mentor reactions reveal that new principals require assistance with managing and prioritizing their duties and establishing a personal support system. Because of their unfamiliarity with the job, novices may need more time to learn about their surroundings before tackling the complexities of creating visions and ensuring that teaching and learning outcomes are being promoted throughout the organization. Research on new principals suggests they experience a series of socialization phases. During the first year, many novices are learning the ropes of the organization and do not feel capable or comfortable taking substantive action. One option is to spread the residential sessions and mentoring experiences out over a two years when novices may be ready to engage in substantive organizational change activities.

Mentoring processes

The ratio of mentors to first-time principals is extremely high--practicing principals are assigned up to six principals while retired principals work with as many as 20 principals.

Attempting to mentor this many novices spreads mentors too thin and does not allow strong collegial relationships to develop. Mentors indicate there was insufficient time available for face-to-face contact for processing information and some new principals were unclear about what to expect from the relationship. (Both these points were addressed in the following year). Reducing the mentor-principal ratio will require identifying more qualified mentors and training a larger cadre of current and former principals to fill this critical role.

Commentary

by Kent Peterson

The New Zealand First-Time Principal Programme is structured around four integrated components with a focus on developing leaders to improve teaching and learning. These four components are a useful combination of formal learning experiences (the residential courses), mentoring on-site and at-a-distance, web-based learning and interaction, and, finally, program evaluation and adaptation. These four components seem well integrated through a clear mission statement, a detailed curriculum map, integrated training for mentors, and an overlapping web of communication (face-to-face, on-site, web, telephone, mail) processes.

The residential courses possess a well-designed curriculum and a sufficient time period (12 days) to address the topics in depth. The residential courses provide keynote addresses followed by case studies in “sector groups” where practitioners lead discussions and reflection on “developing, implementing, and evaluating” practices in schools. This combination of research, theory, and context-based case studies will provide both broad understandings of ideas, but also the complexities of implementing practices in unique school contexts. Additionally, the blending of researchers and practitioners may overcome the separation of these groups. Furthermore, specific skills are developed during “action learning skills workshops” in sector groups. Adding the session “Learning from Each Other” where participants can share and discuss work related issues and problems will be a valuable new topic as will work on practical management requirements. Participants are also expected to develop personal learning plans as well as school-focused action plans related to a specific change in their own settings. Finally, the new principals organize the plans and descriptions of the implementation into a professional portfolio which can either be developed in electronic form on the web, or as hard copy. These provide a broad and deep set of activities that are overlapping, integrated, and sequential.

This first component links in a coherent fashion research and theory, skill building and case study, university faculty and practitioners, reflection and action planning. By offering these in a residential, multi-day context, the learning and the relationship building should be significant.

Programs for new principals should always take into consideration the importance of building professional networks among new principals. The New Zealand program specifically notes that informal social occasions and times to relax are part of the residential course. Most new principals find time to interact informally even when a program does not offer such times, but acknowledging and incorporating time for informal interactions is important.

This program also uses a well-planned mentoring process. Mentors are selected based on their leadership expertise and then attend three days of training to prepare them for site-visits and to develop mentoring skills. Additionally, they attend two days of the residential courses to acquaint themselves with the same content and ideas as their mentees. This is a useful coordinating approach, but it also enhances the knowledge base of the mentors and provides more interaction time with their mentees. Three visits to the new principals' schools and regular communication throughout the year provide support and feedback on school issues and the implementation of the action plan.

One of the strengths of the program is embedded in its conceptualization of the principal's role and the needs for new principals. For example, the program encourages personal reflection and learning about the formal role; offers a wealth of information from both research and best practices; provides skill building in management demands as well as leadership possibilities; and helps new principals understand internal organizational and external community relationships.

The use of a dedicated website is an innovative way of extending the learning process and communication efforts of the program. Principals often find it difficult to allocate time to interacting on the Internet, but the New Zealand program has a useful set of online learning and networking opportunities. The mix of program information, selected resources, discussion forums, and web-based dialogue with keynote presenters makes it possible to extend learning and interaction anytime the new principals want to. The

website matches the structure and topics of the residential programs, and this greatly increases the accessibility of research and best practice models for principals working on their learning plans, action plans, and portfolios.

The fourth component, evaluative data on the program, is an interesting way to gather data on effectiveness, to symbolize the importance of using data for improvement, and to collect information that can be used in redesigning the program. Importantly, this approach serves to enhance the quality of the program continuously, but it also models the importance of evaluation and improvement.

This program uses multiple learning approaches, multiple communication media (face-to-face; Internet, phone, email, etc.), and addresses a complex set of ideas, topics, and skills. In spite of the complexity of the design, the program has paid attention to making the various components sequential, integrated, and comprehensive. These efforts provide coherence to the experiences and can increase learning of complex ideas and skills.

Similarly, the seven program principles and processes represent much of what is known about quality adult learning experiences. The list is no doubt shared with participants, thus acting as an additional opportunity to learn about how they might foster improved adult learning in their schools. It also acts as a symbolic set of expectations for the new principals during the program.

Some other observations: The mentor training is well conceptualized. The planning, collaboration, and practicing of the skills workshops are a useful set of approaches to improve the sessions.

The New Zealand program involves collaborating across multiple institutions serving and supporting new principals. Working with local education agencies, universities, and a Principals' Centre connects the new principals to groups who later may provide knowledge and collegueship. Additionally, the initial intensive training in the program is extended through these ties.

In summary, this is a complex, well-designed program with multiple ways for new principals to learn, to grow personally, and to build a professional community of practice.

Recommendations

These recommendations are provided to suggest ways to refine, fine-tune and enhance existing qualities of the program.

The program might consider developing a notebook that describes all the components, requirements, and underlying principles. If it were a three ring binder, new materials or readings from the website or others could be added as further sessions extended the learning.

The action plans and projects are no doubt quite interesting. The program might consider putting examples of the projects online for others to learn from.

There seem to be many implicit events that shape the culture of the groups. The program might consider developing more culture-building elements into the program, adding ways for alumni to return and reconnect, and supporting symbolically the sense of identification with the program. For example, there might be an end of program convocation, which celebrates completion of the program, but includes past graduates. (Note by David Eddy: Such an occasion was held in 2002. The Minister of Education gave an address, certificates were presented, and there was music and celebration. This was very successful and now will be repeated at the end of each programme.)

Finally, as mentioned in the evaluation, there is a great deal of course content. The content could be introduced for the new principals during the program, with more in-depth skill development occurring in following years.