

Principal Development Centre (PDC) Pilot New Zealand Principals' Federation Position Paper



Team Advantage: The Group Mind

*“In today’s workplace, this is a fundamental fact. Each of us has only a part of the information or expertise we need to get our job done. Robert Kelly, of Carnegie – Mellon University, has been asking people working at a wide variety of companies the same question for many years: **What percentage of the knowledge you need to do your job is stored in your own mind?**”*

In 1986 the answer was typically about 75%. But by 1997 the percentage had slid to between 15 and 20 percent. This no doubt reflects the explosive growth of information. More knowledge has been generated in the twentieth century, it is said, than in all of history before, and the rate of increase continues to accelerate as we enter the twenty-first.”

*Given this fact, the network or team of people to whom we can reach out for information and expertise is increasingly vital. **We’ve come to depend on the group mind as never before.**” Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, p. 203*

*Howard Gardner, well known Harvard theorist, says **“My intelligence does not stop at my skin.”***

*John Seely Brown, chief Scientist at Xerox Corporation and well known cognitive theorist explains **“Many theorists think of learning from a purely cognitive viewpoint, but if you asked people to reflect on how they learned what they currently know they’ll tell you: We learned most of all we know from and with each other.”** Goleman, “Working with Emotional Intelligence,” p.202*

The NZPF requires a principal development process that has at its core:

- **Reflection;** and
- **Congeniality and Collegiality;** and
- **A developmental focus.**

In 1997 the NZPF committed significant funding to a partnership with Massey University to develop the NZPLC. This partnership was based on **reflection, congeniality, collegiality and personal professional development** for school leaders. This at a time when there was no significant government provision for leadership.

We agree with the Mercer Development Design Centre Team submission to the Reference Group of the 14 March where the following underpinning principles were shared. The Principles we concur with are:

Confidential

- Principals need to be secure in the knowledge that participation takes place in a safe, secure environment to facilitate and encourage an experiential and reflective process. They also need to be assured of the personal discretion they can exercise over the information and the assurance it will not be misused.

Voluntary

- It is important that the process is one that principals willingly take part in to maximise personal commitment. It is not “done to” principals: they are not compelled to attend nor are they sent to be assessed for other purposes.

Self managed and driven

- The design process must be such that the principals become energised to attend and act upon the things learned about themselves. There should be a degree of choice within the process itself to suit individual needs, along with core elements common to all.

Choice – Re: Pathway / Responsibility

- While principals should have some choice over the process itself where possible, such choice should be exercised as early as possible in their participation in the process. For example, choice should start with an evidential basis of self assessment, including the material brought to the process and will extend to the projects / processes involved afterwards.

Ownership (i.e. of information)

- The ownership of the information / report from the process rests with the individual principal. While peers and facilitators will help generate development information, their involvement will only extend to facilitating understanding of this information by the principal.
- The working documents generated during the conduct and finalisation of the process will be retained on a temporary basis by the observer / facilitator before being destroyed. A watchcopy of the “report” would be retained by the observer / facilitator for a specified period of time. This copy will not be passed to other parties.

Meets the needs of all

- As required in the contract the process is for experienced principals and takes account of level, experience and circumstances.

Affirms proficiency

- The process should be affirming as well as providing an opportunity to identify development needs.

Challenging and rigorous

- The process should challenge principals and be based on rigorous methodologies. Participants will not gain maximum benefit unless the process includes these features.

Produces Professional Development Plan

- The focus must be on production of a Professional Development Plan, whether this be based on building on strengths or improving on needs.

Assessment may be part of the process but only as it relates to the PDP.

Collaborative

- Participants are not to be placed in competition with each other nor should they have this perception. Opportunities for collaborative learning are to be maximised.

Reflective / philosophically based

- The process must allow ample opportunity for personal reflection on philosophy and practice.

“Research” based exercise

- There should be a number but at least one “research” based activity. While minimum pre-process preparation is to be used, principals should be encouraged to gather appropriate school based data and bring it with them.

Sustainable

- The object of the process is to create an atmosphere in which the professional development objective is carried beyond the initial contact with the process. It should engender the motivation to persist and follow their plan through.

Emphasis on Leadership (with a strategic operational balance)

- The process should be about developing / affirming those skills related to a principals’ influence on teaching and learning and other matters that significantly impact on the effective operation of schools. These outcomes are more likely to be affected by personal growth and leadership skill development.

Enjoyable

- This is a must

The New Zealand Principals Federation has serious concerns and questions about aspects of the pilot model.

1. The pilot has an assessment rather than developmental focus. Principals are already “assessed” every year through the PMS process in their schools and cyclically through the ERO Review process.
2. There is a focus on individual rather than a collaborative, collegial model.
3. Concerns about the additional workload carried out by the observers.
4. That the model appears to be based around deficits rather than building on strengths.
5. That we have no knowledge of the budget for this project?
6. That we cannot see how this professional development project sits alongside other principal development programmes? e.g. Principal Professional Learning Communities. (PPLC)
7. That the pilot model takes no cognisance of the principal in their school.
8. We see little evidence of a developmental pathway for principal participant – no collegial follow-up.

Summary

We have philosophical problems with this pilot. Given the assessment focus of the pilot, and the feedback via both participants and observers, which has been equivocal at best, we are unable to support the continuance of the programme in its current form.

NZPF strongly recommends that the design team principals be recalled to redesign a pilot that is:

- Residential
- Developmental
- Reflective
- Collegial
- Optional
- Confidential to the individual participant

Following our executive meeting of the 28 November 2003 where Geoff Lane shared PDC's Stage 2 the NZPF Executive resolved the following. That our position stated in the above paper remains in place subject to Ministry of Education reassurance that:

1. The Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education take over the running of PDC's.
2. That the NZPF could support a second pilot reflective of the Stage 2 design paper as delivered to the NZPF Executive on the 28 November by Geoff Lane from the MoE – see attached.
3. That the second pilot includes key sector people, including NZPF.
4. That the Reference Group sight, and approve the tasks that are linked to the capabilities, before trialing.
5. That the NZPF are a part of the panel appointing a provider.

In the spirit of partnership, it is the belief of the NZPF that as a way forward that a **Memorandum of Understanding be developed** clearly setting out the aim of PDC's, what they are and what they are not!

Inclusive in this memorandum would be statements that clearly define, among other things:

- What an “experienced” principal was
- That the process has no linkage to future industrial negotiations
- What the criteria for selection of observers, their training and resourcing.
- How the PDC's were to be resourced.
- How the process fits with appraisal and the ERO school review process.

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