

New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) Position Paper Principal Professional Growth



The NZPF is committed to supporting a continuum of personal professional growth within a collegial environment for New Zealand Principals. There is a synergy between *Professional Development* and *Professional Growth* but one does not necessarily lead on to the other. Growth is personalised and therefore any attempt to link one with the other can be problematic. e.g. Centrally imposed legislation requiring development will not necessarily equate to growth. When there is connection, “hearts” and “minds” are in harmony.

NZPF holds a holistic view of principal leadership. West–Burnham (in Dempster2001) suggests that:

“The current emphasis on competencies might be seen as creating a technology of leadership with the balance of opinion moving towards specific components of the role which can be defined, assessed or measured...technical competency may help us to stay afloat but it will not necessarily give us the will to struggle through. There is no doubt that leaders need knowledge (or access to knowledge) and a range of skills in order to be effective. However, these have to be contextualised in terms of personal values, self-awareness, emotional and moral capability. This is not to produce another set of formulations but rather to argue for leaders who have self-knowledge and are able to learn and so grow personally.”¹

“The view above suggests developing leadership capability around competency profiles is more likely to concentrate on role definitions acceptable to employers than on professional self-development in fields of interest to individuals working in atypical contexts – contexts which generic standards frameworks are unable to include.”²

This view, quoted by Dempster (2001) is further reinforced by Wildy and Louden (1997). They are of the view that conventional competency-based standards frameworks display three **significant** problems.

1. Long hierarchical lists tend to fragment professional performance. e.g. Principals demonstrate a range of competencies, dispositions, skills when exercising people management skills at the same time as they exercise curriculum development skills at the same time as they exercise educational leadership.
2. Competency – based frameworks separate (a principal’s) performance from the circumstances within which it occurs.
3. Standards based on long lists of knowledge, skills or dispositions imply a degree of precision, which is often difficult to realise in professional settings.

Historically, New Zealand principals have been left to manage their own professional growth. Access to resourcing, opportunity, time, externally driven requirements (generally with a organisational or managerial focus) and circumstance have all been factors in that growth.

¹ West-Burnham, J (1997) “Reflections on Leadership in Self-Managing School” in Davies, B and Ellison. L. (Eds), *School Leadership for the 21st Century*, Routledge, London

² Dempster, N Professor “ *The Professional Development of School Principals: a fine balance*”. Professorial Lecture 24 May 2001, Griffith University Public Lecture Series

This growth has taken a variety of pathways for individual principals, both formal and informal. Relatively recent principal development initiatives are to be applauded. Examples include the First Time Principals' courses and Mentoring programmes that have developed into Principals' Professional Learning Communities.

It is the view of the NZPF that principal professional growth has four components and we believe that the emphasis should move towards (3) and (4) as a principal's experience develops:³

1. **System maintenance** – i.e. principals are equipped to carry out their organisational functions. A System Maintenance approach to professional growth should be:
 - Competency-based, in terms of leadership and management skills;
 - Linked to enduring educational policies and priorities set by the central authority;
 - Focused on the authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities of school leadership.
2. **System Restructuring** – i.e. to learn about system change. This approach to Professional Development requires that principals pursue efficiency and effectiveness in implementing government policies. Participation in System Restructuring would see principals learning:
 - How to develop values and attitudes consistent with those of the parent system
 - How to make changes in the structure and function of their schools in system-determined directions;
 - How to work towards system-nominated change outcomes within set budgets; and
 - How to gather and use system-stipulated performance data related to the above.
3. **Professional Sustenance.** This approach emphasises learning derived from principals' everyday educational practice. This developmental perspective seeks to meet both personal and collective professional needs as they are encountered in leading communities of learners (students, teachers, parents). Self-determination is essential for this approach. This process grows from self-engagement and the support of colleagues within and outside the school. This approach emphasises learning that is:
 - Based on contextually “on the job” related issues;
 - In harmony with ethical professional independence
 - Linked to principals' personal definitions of professional identity.
4. **Professional Transformation.** This process encourages principals to reflect on what might be done differently in the interests of both themselves and the learning community of which they are a part. At its centre is an emphasis on collaboration. It seeks to empower learning communities to bring about socially constructive, people focused change. This approach enables principals to work with others to:
 - Undertake constructive social, system and organisational review;
 - Question cultural artefacts of leadership, management and schooling;
 - Analyse and reshape personal and collective professional knowledge;
 - Reconstruct schooling and administration in alternative ways.

“In terms of pedagogy, **System Maintenance** and **System Restructuring** approaches favour didactic teaching based on the primacy of the system in the lives of learners, while **Professional Sustenance** and **Professional Transformation** approaches favour co-operative

³ *A theoretical Framework for Professional Development* - Dempster, N Professor

learning adopting a people focus that emphasises individual and collective power and action.”⁴

NZPF supports the components (1-4 above) identified by Dempster (2001), as we believe these reflect the needs of NZ principals and schools.⁵

It is the view of the NZPF that Professional Sustenance and Professional Transformation are much more suited to the work of the principal in the Information Age.

Sabbatical leave

The NZPF is strongly of the view that sabbatical leave should be available to all principals once they have met qualifying criteria. These criteria would be established in negotiation with all parties concerned with the employment of the principal. Once agreement has been reached it would become a part of the principal’s employment conditions. It should not be related to decile.

This period of renewal would have both positive personal and professional benefits for all. Sabbatical leave is one important indicator that sends the message to the principal that we value you and your well-being.

Summary

The NZPF believes that Professional Growth (development) can take many different pathways among which include:

- Continuing formal study to enhance formal qualifications
- Active Involvement in MoE funded courses such as the First Time Principals Courses and the attached Mentor support
- Involvement with Principal Development Centres
- Active involvement with local and national principals networks
- Active involvement in school wide professional growth initiatives. e.g. Literacy, Numeracy, ITPD Clusters etc
- School wide action research
- Partnerships with tertiary institutions
- Partnerships and relationships with the private sector
- Active involvement with the Principals Electronic Network (PEN)

The above growth pathways founded on:

- Personal principal ownership
- Adequate centrally provided “ring fenced” resourcing
- Accessibility
- Peer recognition

How should we measure personal professional growth

⁴ Logan & Dempster, 1992; Dempster & Beere 1996

⁵ Professor Dempster has been developing a framework for analysing professional development in education. This framework is based on Burrell’s and Morgan’s (1979) paradigms of social theory. Burrell G. and Morgan G. “Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis, Aldershot, Gower.

- Through the annual appraisal process
- Through the maintenance of personal portfolios
- Through self reflection
- Through the cycle of school review
- Peer recognition

Personal professional growth should be part of the process of developing the principal's professional effectiveness. As principalship is a people-centred role, it will of necessity include aspects to enhance the principals' personal qualities especially in the realms of communication and self-management.

The individual principal should own Professional Growth at all stages of the process. It should **not be rewarded by recognition in the manner of performance pay**. The principal is appointed to a job and brings a set of skills, dispositions, attitudes and values to that position. The further development of those skills, dispositions attitudes and values should not be seen as an end in itself, rather as a continuum.

“The knowledge society finds it difficult to make teaching a true learning profession. It craves higher standards of learning and teaching. Yet it has also subjected teachers to public attacks; eroded their autonomy of judgment and conditions of work; created epidemics of standardisation and over-regulation; and provoked tidal waves of resignation and early retirement, crises of recruitment, and shortages of eager and able educational leaders. The very profession that is so often said to be of vital importance for the knowledge economy is the one that too many groups have devalued, more and more people want to leave, less and less want to join, and very few are interested in leading. This is more than a paradox. It is a crisis of disturbing proportions.”⁶

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President
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⁶ Hargreaves, A.. *Teaching in the Knowledge Society*. P.10 ISBN 0-8077-4359-3