



LEADERSHIP STRATEGY: SYNTHESIS OF VIEWS FROM THE SECOND ACADEMIC FORUM

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INTRODUCTION

The Academic forum in February drew on participants' understandings of the international and local evidence base about what constitutes effective leadership and how best to support the strengthening of leadership capacity and capability across the New Zealand education system. The first forum set the parameters for the strategy and the paper was taken to the Minister's Cross Sector Forum in March. Since this time the Council has held three other leadership hui: with the agencies; the profession; and Māori.

The purpose of the second Academic forum was to give advice to the writers of the leadership strategy. The idea was to review and refine the six elements identified in the first meeting, to identify emerging ideas of importance, and to provide advice about the nature of the investment the Council should make to support the development of leadership within the profession.

In setting the scene for the second Academic forum the Chair suggested that everyone involved in the various hui has agreed that the leadership agenda needs to promote a strong bicultural society and more adequately address the Treaty of Waitangi. It is evident that leadership needs to be considered in the context of society and that any strategy will need to involve partnerships and collaborative work. There is a call for a transformative focus, one that takes account of an uncertain future and that requires a learning society. To meet these demands leaders will need a new set of leadership capabilities. At the forum the CEO of the Council said he was seeking advice about the strategy, the investment framework, and a results measurement framework.

This report is a synthesis of the ideas discussed at the forum. It highlights four significant themes that it was agreed need to inform and influence that leadership strategy. This thinking led to a reframing of the six elements of the leadership strategy that were identified in the first meeting. The report also provides initial ideas for the Council's investment in leadership. While a results measurement framework has not explicitly discussed the significance given to the Council investing in a programme of Research and Development would provide a potentially promising approach.

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FOUR SIGNIFICANT THEMES

The leadership strategy requires a vision that is bigger than education, one that captures our hopes for New Zealand society

There is a desire for a learning system where the fundamental goal is to address power imbalance and equity. This is a challenge for society not just for education. To capture this enlarged task the leadership strategy requires a meta-frame that considers our aspirations for the future of New Zealand society and that takes account of dynamic national and international environments. While education needs to make a significant contribution to this ambition it can not achieve it alone.

In terms of biculturalism and the Treaty of Waitangi this means that Mana Orite is upheld. That is, Māori ways of knowing and doing are not subsumed but recognised and included alongside the interests of the Crown and in ways that are valued, participatory and enable agency. There is a need to take responsibility for each other so both parties have mana, not just enact a partnership. It was suggested that these ways of working are also necessary to engage effectively with our most recent immigrants, students who have no other country. Working in ways that acknowledge the world views of each party is needed for these new New Zealanders to learn and live successfully in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Education Council as Rangatira

The education system is currently fragmented, with a great deal of responsive activity but too few opportunities to work in ways that draw on the collective wisdom across the sector to take a planned approach to shifting practices and improving learning. The Education Council is well placed to act as a ‘steady beacon’, modelling powerful leadership and providing the mechanism for building and sustaining the relationships which will be fundamental to achieving our ambitions for education. Providing a well-connected network will also be key to the effectiveness of the leadership strategy. In the emerging leadership landscape the Council has a key role as broker, enabler, connector and partner.

The process of development and consultation that the Council has been using for its work—such as the development of the Code of Professional Responsibility, Standards for the Teaching Profession, and the Leadership Strategy—models the style of leadership and ways of working it advocates for the profession. This process was endorsed by the Forum.

The Council is well placed to take on a stewardship role that is proving so challenging for many agencies.¹ The constitution of the Council enables it to set up new ways of working and strong relationships built through direct engagement. This involves acting as a connector of people and ideas, enabling teachers and leaders to think and work together. It involves engaging directly with iwi and working together to determine how best to achieve mutual goals. It also involves influencing the government and the governance of education so that roles and responsibilities are enacted in ways that contribute to the intent of the Leadership Strategy, not wash it away.

Within the Council the Leadership Strategy needs to align with the Council’s vision and strategic priorities and be coherent with other aspects of the work programme, such as the Code of Professional Responsibility and the Standards for the Teaching Profession.

¹ The 2012 State Sector Amendment Act introduced the concept of stewardship into the legislation, defining it as the “active planning and management of medium and long term interests, along with associated advice”.

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Overall, the Leadership strategy needs to signal the importance of investing in building a collective position on significant issues.

The Leadership strategy needs to provide opportunities to examine important ideas in more depth

The Leadership strategy needs to present the profession's ambitions for leadership and emphasise the importance of hard conversations and true collaborative work. It is all too evident that we are getting too little traction on the complex challenges facing New Zealand education. This will require greater collective understanding of key issues and the establishment of new ways of working together.

One idea that needs more collective thought and agreement is our collective *understanding of leadership* and the capabilities we are seeking to value and develop for: teachers; for those seeking positional leadership positions; for those who are principals; and for leaders of Kāhui Ako. Our understanding needs to be underpinned by research and practice evidence, build on earlier collaborative work such as Tū Rangatira and the Kiwi Leadership Framework, and reflect our values as New Zealanders.

Another issue is the need for more a sophisticated understanding of what is required for truly *collaborative work*. That is work, where the expertise of all involved contributes to a solution that could not have been achieved by any one individual. Working in this way is hard and it often challenges long-held beliefs. It is also complex, requiring different capabilities from those valued in the past.²

Linked to the idea of collaborative work is the need for thought leadership around the interplay of *research-practice-policy* and ways different professionals need to work together. This too is very challenging as there are three different work cultures and languages. There have been successful initiatives in this area such as the development of the Kiwi Leadership Framework and He Kākano. The latter was an example of Research-Practice-Policy (RP&P) in action and, although the Ministry considered the programme PLD, the team involved viewed it as Research and Development.

The success of the Leadership strategy requires all involved to be active participants, to be able to contribute their expertise and to learn. This requires negotiating the *rights and responsibilities* of people working in the various parts of the sector. This includes the Education Council. There needs to be a compelling story so each group can see how their contribution adds to the overall task while feeling their rights are respected.

Inquiry is another area that needs deeper examination. It is strongly promoted as a vehicle for shifting practice and strengthening learning but the impact of such activity is under-realised due to the multitude of understandings about the purpose of inquiry. For example, using evidence from collaborative inquiry for individual performance appraisal. Using evidence of inquiry can, of course, be appropriate for appraisal if an individual inquiry but evidence from collaborative inquiry, which is team-based and where innovation is central and failure integral to the learning, is problematic.

Overall, the Leadership strategy needs to signal the importance of investing in building a collective position on significant issues. This will provide a stronger platform for enabling action where the evidence is compelling that all is not well or where there is an opportunity to strengthen practice. It will also provide greater clarity about what to invest in. That is, the activities that should be supported.

² Refer to Discussion Paper: *Leadership for Communities of Learning*, Leading in complexity (p.4). Education Council, November 2015.

It was agreed that the Leadership strategy needs to enable a transformative agenda. The fundamental shift required is to reset the agenda in ways that capture the thinking of today, takes account of dynamic national and international environments, and that enables ongoing review and knowledge building.

The Leadership Strategy needs to be future orientated, signalling that leadership capabilities need to be responsive to a dynamic environment and that our understanding of leadership continues to evolve

It was agreed that the Leadership strategy needs to enable a transformative agenda. The fundamental shift required is to reset the agenda in ways that capture the thinking of today, takes account of dynamic national and international environments, and that enables ongoing review and knowledge building. In an environment of uncertainty it is critical that problems are accurately diagnosed and to invest accordingly.

There was agreement that such an agenda required purposeful investment in research and development (R&D). The forum thought that we would not be able to shift the quality of the education system without research informed practice that is enabled by policy. While we will continue to draw on international research and thinking, if we are to make traction in education in Aotearoa New Zealand we need to be building knowledge and practice in our unique context.

Currently so much educational research is individually driven and, given the drivers in tertiary education, the outputs are designed for an academic audience. In addition, the government is investing less in educational research. It continues to use evaluation as one way it examines the effectiveness of its policies but the funders of such work commonly use it for internal purposes, not for purposes of knowledge and capability building.

To achieve our ambitions we need a system approach to research and development, something the Education Council could co-ordinate and possibly lead. A system approach would mean groups of people with complementary expertise undertaking research, synthesising informing, and sharing findings. The big data collected by government will be informative about some things but this is insufficient. Overall, it was thought that we would not be able to claim to be a 'good' system until research was put back into the equation. Currently the impact of policy is not rigorously examined and the research to practice links are not sufficiently robust. There is, for example, a great deal of rhetoric about the teaching profession needing to engage in inquiry—and currently there is a big investment in this activity—but many important questions are not being addressed such as: is the profession up for inquiry; what capabilities are actually required to do this work; what working conditions enable inquiry; and what is the actual impact on practices and learning? There is also no coordinated way of making sense of this work. It was agreed that there is an opportunity here for the Leadership strategy to value R&D in ways that enable teachers and researchers to undertake productive collaborative work.

The Leadership strategy: proposed elements

In light of the desire to privilege leadership that will seriously take on the challenge of the successful manifestation of the Treaty, adopt a future orientated approach, and enable adaptive and agile leadership in a dynamic and complex Aotearoa New Zealand environment the Academic forum was asked in both meetings 'what will the critical leadership capabilities be and how might the Council best support the valuing, learning and developing of these capabilities?' This led people in the first forum to identify six elements that should drive the Leadership strategy. The reflections of the second forum suggested a recasting of these six elements into four and a rethinking of the scope and focus of each element.³

³ Note: I have not attempted to redraft the elements, just identify what the forum thought was important to capture in each element.

<p><i>Element One: Being guided by a clear vision that places the Treaty of Waitangi as the foundation for the strategy</i></p>	<p>The forum endorsed the intention of Element One but called for a recasting of the leadership strategy within a more expansive purpose—beyond education—and that captures our hopes for our society as a whole and for the learning and well-being of all young people (<i>refer above</i>).</p>
<p><i>Element Two: Taking account of the wider education system while planning to influence and reshape the leadership ecosystem</i></p> <p><i>Element Six: Providing an ecosystem that promotes and supports leadership learning</i></p>	<p>This element needs to capture the role the Education Council will play as rangatira—leader and weaver—in the leadership ecosystem where relationships are foregrounded and there is a focus on the development of shared perspectives on important issues related to leadership, leadership learning and the overall quality of our education system (<i>refer above</i>).</p>
<p><i>Element Three: Connecting research, policy and practice and drawing on the opportunities offered by the interplay of the three areas</i></p> <p><i>Element Four: Drawing on the evidence of effective leadership activities and being open to new evidence</i></p>	<p>This element needs to capture the importance of evidence-based practices in the context of a strong Aotearoa-based research and development programme that enables: productive collaborative work in and between research, practice and policy; and the ongoing building of knowledge about leadership and leadership learning (<i>refer above</i>).</p>
<p><i>Element Five: Clarity about key leadership capabilities needed for a future oriented profession</i></p>	<p>The element needs to capture the intent to be dynamic and innovative, using an R&D approach to keep a line of sight on the capabilities required for a future orientated profession. That is one that learns from the past, and taking account of the present, prepares the profession for the anticipated future.</p>

Investment and Impact

The proposed revised four elements of the Leadership strategy should guide the Council's leadership work programme, its investment and results measurement framework.

Element One: The Council engaging with the profession and with society more widely about our ambitions for education in New Zealand, modelling the style of leadership advocated within the strategy. The work being to establish and promote a compelling vision for New Zealand as a learning society.

Element Two: The Council building and sustaining strong relationships. The work being for the Council to provide the context for hard conversations and working collaboratively to achieve shared positions on issues of significance.

Element Three: The Council's investment in leadership learning to be guided by promoting, sharing and building a strong evidence base for leadership and leadership learning, taking a well-planned Aotearoa New Zealand based R&D approach. The work being to develop and share this evidence base and use it to inform the development of leadership learning programmes.

Element Four: The Council enabling innovation and shaping the future of leadership and leadership learning. The work being to draw on the emerging knowledge of leaders, the expertise of researchers and key community thinkers to inform and foster future-orientated discussions about leadership, leadership capabilities and the conditions required to enable new ways of exercising leadership in an increasingly complex environment.

The R&D approach would include the systematic review of all initiatives to determine impact. Evaluation may be part of the approach but this will not be sufficient for a profession committed to knowledge building and the development of leadership capabilities required for the current environment and for the anticipated future.



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