

Fellowship Report

2017

**Impact of CPPA Middle
Leaders Programme on
Practices in Christchurch
Schools**

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Executive Summary

Evidence shows that the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme impacted positively on the instructional leadership of those middle leaders who have participated in the programme. Due to the influence middle leaders have on the practices of the teachers in their teams, the programme has impacted positively on outcomes for students.

The evidence for this was revealed by surveys of teachers, middle leaders, and principals. The research showed that schools can improve these outcomes even further when principals provide ongoing professional learning in instructional leadership skills and the time for middle leaders to observe teaching and give feedback. If middle leaders are also given time to work together towards school and team goals, consistent practices will reduce variance.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to investigate the effect of the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme on middle leaders' practices, the impact of their leadership practices on those they lead, and the impact those practices have on student outcomes. More specifically it planned to investigate the effectiveness of the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme and ascertain whether the practices of the middle leaders who participated in the programme have changed to be in line with the leadership dimensions as outlined in the Best Evidence Synthesis, (BES). Further, it sought to identify whether the leadership practices of the middle

leaders in schools were consistent across the school and whether these practices impacted positively on student outcomes within a school.

Background

In 2011 I carried out my sabbatical on middle leadership and with two colleagues designed a programme based on the work I had undertaken with the middle leaders at my school, and the sabbatical findings for Middle Leaders in Canterbury. The Canterbury Primary Principals' Association financially supports this programme. Since its inception, the programme has been delivered to 70 schools and 252 middle leaders over the past six years.

The work of middle-level leaders is heavily dependent on how their roles are constructed and the capacities, abilities, and attitudes of the leaders. Some are expected to be leaders that influence teaching and learning, and they may be developed and supported to do so. Too often however, teachers in these key roles have few expectations or opportunities to exercise leadership. Whilst many have the capacity to be leaders of teaching and learning, others lack confidence in their ability to influence classroom practice.

We know that a key purpose of middle and senior leaders is to improve outcomes for all students – outcomes that embrace their education, welfare, and development, (Leading from the Middle, 2011).

Also, as reported by the National College UK (2010), middle leaders can have the greatest impact in reducing school variation when they are focused on addressing student and teacher performance, operating in effect as monitors of standards across the school. To do this they'll need the opportunity and skills to effectively analyse, observe, and share, offering their best, and learning from the best.

As John Hattie (2009) states; "best practice, comes not from handing resources to people. It comes from teachers thinking differently about teaching and learning, having professional conversations about their practice, and carefully interpreting what they do."

The CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme, (CMLP), currently being delivered was designed to ensure those who participated in the programme would be more than just organisers of their team's activities. Rather their key role was to influence teaching and learning. Ultimately, helping middle leaders develop as effective leaders will build leadership capacity and improve outcomes for Canterbury students.

The 2000 results of the PISA report showed New Zealand has a long tail of under achievement as well as high levels of variation of student achievement within the same school. The report noted variation in student outcomes to be greater between classrooms than between schools. This could be attributed to what the teacher does in the classroom.

The report goes on to identify that to reduce variance schools need high quality teacher instruction across the school.

As Hattie's (2003) study shows, teachers account for about 30% of the variance within schools. According to Hattie, "It is what teachers know and do that directly impacts on student achievement." He identified that the leadership group that can have a direct impact on teacher practice are middle leaders

The Ministry of Education document, *Leading from the Middle* (2011) highlights that middle and senior leaders are a diverse group with diverse roles but all have the same purpose, to support and enhance student learning. It further identifies this group as having leadership roles that are pedagogical as well as administrative. Middle and senior leaders are well placed to achieve change in practice, as the majority of them are also classroom teachers who are interacting with students.

To achieve better outcomes for students, middle leaders also need to ensure consistency in the planning, delivery and assessment of learning. One way this can be achieved is through coaching, allowing time to plan, and carrying out professional observations of each other.

Defining middle leaders can be problematic depending on the context. Who is this group? Our work in the programme has shown huge variation over the roles and responsibilities that are expected of middle leaders but we have very clearly focussed our programme on those leaders who have influence over teachers' practice as opposed to a curriculum area.

The CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme is based on the need for consistency and uses BES as its basis. There is significant literature on leadership but few articles focus on its impact, directly or indirectly, on student outcomes. The BES has reviewed all research and found dimensions that show a relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme is based on these dimensions and the practices within each dimension. These take into account a leader's knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and how this role impacts on student outcomes, whether they be achievement or psychosocial. The focus of this research was to see if these practices were implemented in a consistent and effective way.

Features of the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme

Since 2012 the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme has been delivered to 252 participants from 70 different Canterbury schools. The programme was developed after initial work carried out in my own school and research on middle leadership. The programme is based on the Best Evidence Synthesis (2009) Dimensions for Leadership. Features of the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme are

- A requirement that all the middle leaders from the school, (including deputy principals, in the case of big schools), will attend the five day programme. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, it is expected that the middle leaders will build consistency across their school therefore reducing variance, and secondly, to ensure that senior leadership understand what the middle leaders are learning so they can support them in their work
- The middle leaders are those who influence a team of teachers and their classroom practice as opposed to curriculum leaders who tend to influence programmes of work
- The programme consists of four face to face days and an inquiry presentation day on the fifth day. Principals are invited to this presentation
- Each middle leader and (or team) carries out a leadership inquiry using the “Effective Evaluation” structure, (ERO 2016), and the BES dimensions as they pertain to their inquiry. These inquiries are personalised to the participant’s team and school goals
- The programme is run *by* middle leaders *for* middle leaders. The facilitators are chosen from previous middle leader programme cohorts and are mentored into the role
- Facilitators visit the middle leaders in their school to support them in their inquiry
- Principals are required to attend a briefing session with the directors where they get an outline of the programme, and training in “Effective Evaluation” (ERO 2016)
- Schools are required to give the middle leaders some release time to work together on their inquiries
- The programme acknowledges that middle leaders’ leadership is a collaborative process, and that their role is to work with, and develop others

From our observation and experience over the last six years, those who are curriculum leaders are not best placed to influence changes in teaching practice. This group of leaders tends to focus on writing programmes and assessment schedules. We have made it very clear to schools that those that participate in the programme are most likely to be deputy/assistant/associate principals and team leaders, as this group is directly responsible for a group of teachers and their practice.

Scope of Research

The fellowship report has five parts.

The first part was an examination of the CPPA Middle Leaders’ Programme within the context of literature on leadership and middle leadership impact on student outcomes. Secondly, it outlines the findings of evaluation of the CPPA Middle Leaders’ Programme by reviewing the results of participant and principal surveys over the five years, including in-depth interviews with two schools who participated in the programme. Thirdly, the CPPA programme was

measured against ten criteria for determining quality leadership learning programmes, (Dempster, Lovett, and Fluckiger 2011), and the skills and knowledge taught in the programme matched against the leadership dimensions of BES. Fourthly, we investigated other jurisdictions' programmes for middle leadership against what is offered in the New Zealand context. Finally, it explored the implications for the design and development of the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme in light of the investigation.

Part 1: Distributed leadership, instructional leadership and the school improvement agenda

In the research carried out by Fluckiger, Lovell, Dempster, and Brown (2015), it was found that there are two different sorts of professional development programmes for middle leaders. The first offers preparation for higher positional roles, and the other focuses on the skills and knowledge needed to mentor and coach teachers in their practice. CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme falls in the latter category. The unintended consequence of this programme has been several participants' promotion to higher positional leadership roles as schools seek the skills provided by these leaders. A finding from the QELi Middle Leaders' Programme Evaluation in 2014 found that two thirds of middle leaders see themselves as leaders of teaching and learning as opposed to being prepared for principalship.

Middle leadership is challenging for a number of reasons, (Bendikson 2017). Job descriptions are often focussed on administration and organisational tasks and middle leaders can feel powerless as they don't get to make decisions that directly affect them. This group usually carries full class teaching loads and the tension created by the shortage of time to carry out their leadership role has been borne out year after year in the CMLP surveys of participants. Time is necessary for professional learning as leaders to carry their administration and to have quality coaching conversations with team members.

The role of middle leaders is becoming increasingly complex and there is little research of how the roles and responsibilities are evolving, (Odhiambo 2014). It is clear that as instructional leaders, middle leaders will influence teaching and learning in their school and impact on student outcomes. It is therefore important that if a group of leaders have such a significant role to play in schools that they be given quality professional learning.

The role of the principal in NZ schools is becoming increasingly complex and demanding and schools have adopted a variety of distributed leadership models to more effectively focus on the needs of students. There is significant evidence that effective leadership impacts on student outcomes (BES). The success of distributed leadership depends on the shared vision and work of individuals, and the alignment of agendas, networks, and resources in support of shared goals. When this happens, it impacts positively on students.

Although principal leadership is a necessary prerequisite for curriculum reform, distributed leadership is essential for sustained change, (Harris 2015).

In some of the schools of our cohorts, the senior leadership team had an explicit focus on developing leadership capacity in the hope that sharing leadership responsibilities with middle leaders and other staff would allow more opportunity to play to their strengths. They also wanted to ensure that teachers from different levels and interest areas had the opportunity to work together. This has been increasingly important in the more collaborative environments. Where this approach had been adopted, staff valued the new challenges and professional growth this entailed and appreciated the way their interests and professional knowledge had been acknowledged. In the feedback, it is clear that both principals and participants acknowledge that participation in the course helped contribute to a shift.

There has been much written about the different types of leadership styles – transformational, transactional, emotional, servant leadership, pedagogical leadership and instructional leadership.

Recent studies have shown that instructional leadership is more effective in improving student outcomes, (Hattie 2015). The CPPA Middle Leader Programme is an instructional leadership based programme. This leadership type is characterised by being focussed on the learning of both the students and the adults, having trusting relationships, and seeking evidence in action, (Timperley 2011). The meta-analysis carried out by Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd, (2009) identified leadership dimensions that impact on student outcomes in their BES study. These leadership dimensions fall into two categories, (Robinson Bendikson, Hattie, 2012). The first is direct instructional leadership; which includes the dimensions of quality teaching, quality of the curriculum, and teaching and assessment practices. It also includes quality teacher inquiry and teacher learning. These are areas that middle leaders can influence if given training, support, and opportunity.

The second category describes the indirect practices that ensure a safe and orderly environment; resourcing strategically, and solving complex problems. Those in most contexts, are carried out by the principal and senior leadership team although our analysis of the programme and practices against BES found many of the middle leaders were working in these dimensions.

Middle leaders can be effective in enhancing a school's improvement strategy to help improve outcomes for students. Effective leadership teams are those that are cohesive and goal-orientated, (Bendikson). When middle leaders participate at this level they impact on the overall school strategy as they influence decisions that impact on them and their teams.

School improvement is usually characterised by creating a vision, collecting data and information, analysing it, creating a plan, and implementing it, before gathering further

information to test the effectiveness of the plan. Leadership practices that contribute to this, (ERO 2016), are leaders leading learning, and senior leaders mentoring teachers. This requires engaging in challenging conversations and providing structure to support teacher reflection, leaders keeping up to date with educational research, and using it to help prioritise actions within schools.

In the case studies, the middle leaders' areas of influence were investigated to confirm whether their influence is consistent across the school to enable a reduction in variance, and whether they have an opportunity to contribute to their school's strategic goals.

The CPPA Middle Leader's Programme is designed to complement the distributed model of leadership as it requires all middle leaders from a school to participate. The skills of instructional leadership that the programme offers allied to the opportunity for middle leaders to be part of and contribute to their school's improvement journey ensures there is greater consistency and cohesion therefore reducing variance.

Part 2: Surveys and Case Studies.

The results from the surveys were of particular interest to this research. The middle leaders, their principals, and in the case study schools, the middle leaders' team members, were all surveyed to see how effective the middle leaders' leadership practices were, whether these practices were consistent across the school, and whether these practices impacted on teacher practices and student outcomes.

The Surveys (Appendix 1)

The CMLP has been running since 2012 with 252 middle leaders and 70 schools participating. The survey covered the first five years with 182 participants from 52 schools. In the middle leader survey 66 participants (36%) responded from 22 schools (42%). 98% of those who participated identified that they had responsibility for a team of teachers and their practice.

They identified several things that helped their leadership practice. The first was that having attended the CMLP together with others from their school it had built consistency and in some cases collegiality. Other factors that helped included senior leadership knowing and supporting their work, using evidence to inform their work, and having time allocated to do the work.

Lack of time was identified as the main hindrance to embedding leadership practices. Time is required to do the work, to reflect, to complete other duties, to attend courses, and to attend an ever increasing number of meetings.

Sixty five percent believe their school had a consistent approach across the school and those that identified with this noted that there were several factors that helped with this. Meeting regularly as a team allowed them to have consistent formats for systems, time to discuss what on top, and what is happening in the school. Clear guidelines were identified as important.

The survey focussed on leadership practices, (pg. 264 – 269 BES), and participants were asked to rate themselves against these practices. The top six practices identified as consistent and effective were working collaboratively with team members, establishing and modelling respectful relationships with whanau, listening carefully to team members, listening to different perspectives, developing and reflecting on practice together, and using collective wisdom to change practice.

Participants didn't rate themselves highly on engaging in issues of competence, probably because in many schools the middle leaders are identified as peer support as opposed to being responsible for accountability. This also impacted on their ability to have challenging conversations which was another area identified as not being done, or not being done consistently. Many did not carry on with a leadership inquiry beyond the CMLP course.

The majority of participants (90.63%) believed their leadership impacted on the practices of teachers in their teams. The leadership practices that they identified as having an impact on teacher practices were those we include in the programme, namely; setting norms, inquiring into practice, convening data meetings, and using data boards and evidence. This was reiterated in the case study schools.

The participants believed in many cases they now understood more about leadership and were more professional in their role. This included having clear expectations, having reflective, robust conversations about best practice, and being a role model at using evidence to influence change. They identified that the focus of meetings had shifted in many cases to be less about administration and more about teaching and learning and problem solving as a team. In some cases, where they had time available, they were able to give feedback to staff on their teaching practice.

It was clear that as the majority of participants felt they influenced teacher practice, they therefore influenced students' outcomes, (93.85%). They evidenced this by linking back to the team skills and attitudes. They reported they were focussed on the whole child, the use of hard and soft data and data-boards to track student outcomes, and on practices that needed to change to help students. It was clear that the participants were much more evidence based and so were their teams and this helped them make decisions on what needed to be next for students.

The principals who participated in the survey, (52%), highly rated the middle leaders' impact on both teacher practice, (96.3%), and student outcomes, (96.3%). There was some commonality between the two groups. The principals felt that the middle leaders were able to influence teacher practice and inquire into teaching practice, model effective best practice, and use information to inform practice and make changes. They also acknowledged the collaborative focus on improving outcomes for students. They believed the middle leaders impacted on student outcomes by tracking and monitoring student achievement, by its increased focus at meetings, using achievement data to guide teaching, the consistent practices across the school, and the modelling by the middle leaders of school expectations.

Case Studies

Two schools were studied in greater depth to ascertain in more detail how practices look inside the school. The schools were quite different with School A having had a roll decrease, which impacted on the size of the leadership team. The other school was in an area of growth and had a senior leadership team of three and eight team leaders.

The distributed forms of leadership that emerged in each school were quite different. In School A, the leadership team comprised of the principal, deputy principal, and the team of middle leaders. They usually assumed collective responsibility for orchestrating high-level discussion to develop a shared understanding of vision, values, and effective pedagogy. Team leaders used their relevant expertise and led curriculum implementation at the classroom level. This group felt they had a considerable influence on what happened in the school and in particular what happened in the classrooms. They met weekly with the principal and DP, and fortnightly before school as team leaders. They saw the value in this meeting as it gave them an opportunity to discuss concerns and help problem solve issues that affected them as middle leaders and that also impacted on their teams. They used this time to work on across school projects to ensure consistency as well as sharing resources and ideas. The discussions with senior leadership and time spent together was helping to build cohesion across the school after several leadership changes.

In the school with the larger leadership team the middle leaders felt they had a huge amount of influence on their particular area of the school. They felt that they impacted on the programmes and were trusted and supported by senior leaders who responded to requests to ensure teams had the resources they needed to carry out their work. They had regular data meetings with their teams and discussed practice with teachers. This school had a senior leadership team who met and drove the decision making for the school. The team members were to meet fortnightly with the senior leadership team but due to building projects and staff changes this had become less regular. These factors therefore impacted on the cohesion across the school. Team leaders impacted on their own teaching team, but often didn't know what other team leaders were doing with their teams. Although resources and ideas might have been shared with the team leader closest to them there weren't always opportunities

to do this across teams. They would have liked the opportunity to meet regularly to help build the cohesion and influence the strategic goals and share their leadership practices. They saw the value in doing this when they were released to participate in the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme.

Both groups of team leaders highlighted that the lack of time impacted on their work as leaders. Time to meet together was deemed as important both for cohesion and to contribute the school's strategic goals. More importantly there was a lack of time in both schools to allow them to observe their teams teach. Both schools felt that collaborative environments gave them an indication of what was happening. They also walked through and informally observed but most team leaders didn't get an opportunity to do any in-depth observations to give teacher feedback against practices highlighted in data meetings or to discuss next steps.

Staff members were surveyed at each school to give feedback on the effectiveness of their team leader's practices. There was some variation depending on the team leaders but the practices identified as being consistent and effective across both schools were:

- Setting team norms
- Delegating responsibilities within the team
- Developing timetables in such a way that they reflect the pedagogical priorities of the team
- Confidence in initiating informal conversations about teaching and learning with team members
- Engaging in challenging conversations with those who want to blame others, e.g. parents or students
- Establishing and modelling respectful relationships with whanau
- Listening to different perspectives
- Developing a culture where teams reflect on practice together
- Using digital tools effectively

The QELi Middle Leadership Programme Evaluation conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research, (Anderson & Curtin, 2014), found that middle leaders were interested in developing and leading teams. The study found that it was important that teachers had buy-in to projects undertaken by middle leaders.

It was evident in both case study schools that the majority of team members surveyed felt their team leaders' practices impacted on their teaching practices, the implication being that there was on the whole, buy-in. The collaborative environments in both schools were identified as a contributing factor. Teams worked together to plan, assess, and some cases implement the curriculum in a collaborative way. The team leaders' focus on student

outcomes, and the sharing and modelling by the team leaders were also identified as major contributing factors.

Most team members believed that the team leaders' practices had impacted positively on student outcomes. Key to their responses was the use of data and information. Teachers were looking at their teaching practices, modifying then adopting new strategies when necessary to improve student outcomes.

The surveys and case studies show the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme has impacted on the leadership skills of the participants and therefore impacted on teacher practice and student outcomes. The programme built confidence in the participants and built an understanding of what it is to be a leader.

Part 3: Comparison to BES and other criteria for quality professional learning for leadership programmes

Dempster, Lovett and Flückiger (2011) reviewed the international research literature on leadership learning and distilled ten criteria for determining the quality of leadership learning programmes. The criteria being: philosophically and theoretically attuned, goal orientated, informed by the weight of research, time rich, practice-centred, purpose designed, context sensitive, partnership orientated, – powered by support and external agencies and effects, where participants commit to evaluating the impact of their work. When the directors and current facilitators analysed the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme against the ten criteria they found:

Criterion 1: Philosophically and theoretically attuned and Criterion 3: Informed by the weight of research evidence

- The CMLP based on BES, and the work of Joan Dalton, Vivianne Robinson, and John Hattie

Criterion 2: Goal-oriented

- CMLP Leadership inquiry was part of the programme. These inquiries are based on school goals

Criterion 4: Time-rich

- The CMLP is across three terms, includes face to face workshops, professional learning groups and digital engagement such as MOOCs

Criterion 5: Practice-centred

- The programme is all about leaders leading others to look at their own and their team's practices to improve outcomes for students

Criterion 6: Purpose-designed

- The programme is reviewed after each workshop day to ensure it is meeting the needs of the participants. They and their principals also evaluate after the programme has been completed, and adjustments are made. This year we included “Effective School Evaluation” for inquiry, a training session for principals, and a story hui for presentation. This was all in response to the latest knowledge, feedback, and our own observations.

Criterion 7: Peer-supported

- Principals take an active role in supporting the participants, facilitators are drawn from previous cohorts, facilitators have ongoing professional development, and all the middle leaders in the school must attend the programme. This is a key feature, and helps ensure consistency of practice.

Criterion 8: Context-sensitive

- The programme provides opportunities to be mentored in problem solving, and provides coaching in processes to deal with real life school based problems

Criterion 9: Partnership-powered

- Participants work across schools in their PLG, with facilitators who themselves are middle leaders, and are exposed to blogs and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) to give outside perspectives of their work

Criterion 10: Effects-oriented

- Participants carry out an inquiry to gauge the impact of their work within their own setting. These are presented to the whole group and in most cases boards of trustees.

The CPPA Middle Leaders’ Programme shows clear links to the ten criteria for quality professional learning for leadership programmes.

CPPA Middle Leader Programme and BES

The key question asked in the BES is: “What is the impact of various types of leadership on student outcomes?” A details analysis showed there were eight main leadership dimensions that impact on student outcomes. Of these eight, five had more impact than others. These were:

- promoting and participating in teacher learning and development
- establishing goals and expectations

- planning
- co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum
- resourcing strategically and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment

The other three are creating educationally powerful connection, engaging in constructive problem talk and selecting, developing, and using smart tools.

Robinson, Bendikson, and Hattie, (2012) identify the dimensions of quality teaching, quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment practices, and the quality of teacher inquiry and teacher learning as the key to instructional leadership. CMLP covers all of these dimensions but with the focus being on instructional dimensions.

Dimension 1: Establishing Goals and Expectations

- The participant's leadership inquiry is goal orientated to improve learning outcomes for students in their teams by ensuring teaching practices meet the needs of students. These inquiries are set against the school's strategic goals

Dimension 2: Resourcing Strategically

Participants align their teachers' time to ensure that discussion is based on learning and teaching. Many have undertaken digital methods to ensure administration. Middle leaders often don't have control of the money resources but can impact on time resources

Dimension 3. Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum

- The focus of the CMLP is on effective teaching. The programme doesn't analyse this and assumes that as the participants are middle leaders they have some expertise in this area. In most cases the middle leaders can impact on the teaching but as time is an issue they often need to rely on senior leaders to complete this evaluation

Dimension 4. Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development

- The focus of the programme is on using information or data to see what is happening for students then discussing the best strategies, systems, and processes to meet the needs of the students and improve the outcomes. This requires ongoing professional learning with team members

Dimension 5. Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment

- The programme give practical strategies on timetabling, dealing with meetings, and administration. These systems allow teachers to engage in important talk about learning and teaching

Dimension 6. Creating Educationally Powerful Connections

- CMLP doesn't focus on this dimension in any depth.

Dimension 7. Engaging in constructive problem talk

- Constructive problems solving strategies are the basis of the programme. Advocacy and inquiry talk skills, learning conversations, and using the "Effective School Evaluation" model all require the participants to build skills to solve problems

Dimension 8. Selecting, developing, and using smart tools

- The programme gives opportunities for the participants to use different Smart tools, MOOCs, websites, Google Docs, story hui, and data boards which can be physical or digital

The CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme is effective when measured against these tools. Participants as instructional leaders are being introduced to skills that are practical and that are theory based.

Part 4: Other jurisdictions

Other than Singapore most jurisdictions reviewed provide in-service for middle leaders but the training is ad hoc and optional, and this includes New Zealand.

There are some similarities in other programmes to CMLP, particularly Auckland University's, Bastow Institute, QELi Aspiring to Lead, and to some extent the University of Canterbury's Emerging Leaders Development Programme although it is not personalised to the participant's context.

Key similarities are the programmes are:

- Based on evidence and a framework
- Focussed on student outcomes
- Focussed on instructional leadership
- Focussed on authentic learning

Of the different jurisdictions studied, Singapore is the only one that runs a national programme for middle leaders. The island has approximately 340 primary and secondary schools and the National Institute of Education runs a compulsory, full-time 17-week programme for middle leaders. The programme has several components delivered both through face to face interaction and the virtual medium. The programme is focused on

developing and leading collaborative teams to improve teaching and learning, and continual improvement in the curriculum. The programme includes a component where participants can further develop their leadership by studying alternative perspectives and challenges from other jurisdictions.

Singapore has possibly the greatest opportunity to impact on student outcomes as a system as the programme is compulsory. However, Singapore has its own challenges. Although scoring highly in international league tables there are those in Singapore who are asking if Singapore is preparing its students properly for the complex demands of the 21st century knowledge environment. In general, classroom instruction is highly scripted and generally a transmission of factual and procedural knowledge. It was evident at the recent INTASE conference in Singapore, where Ken Robinson presented, that teachers and leaders are wanting to challenge the current instructional model which is based on students getting things 'right' as opposed to understanding what they have learnt. Educationalists from Singapore who attended the conference were keen to know about how to develop a more creative and responsive system.

Many jurisdictions have professional development programmes targeted at principals, including New Zealand. Some of these programmes when they focus on instructional leadership may be relevant to the role of middle leaders. Due to the uniqueness of their role it is important that the middle leaders are given professional learning specific to their instructional leadership role, as the majority are in classrooms working alongside other teachers.

Part 5: Recommendations

After reviewing the literature, investigating other jurisdictions, surveying and interviewing participants, and interviewing current facilitators, there are several recommendations for the current programme to strengthen it to ensure it has even greater impact on schools and their students, including:

- Developing an overview of programme for participants to give clearer links to NZ leadership – Kiwi Leadership, BES, and ERO – school leadership that works
- Clearer guidelines about the programme and the expectations of them as participants
- A set of guidelines to principals prior, during, and after the programme to get the best for their students – regular meetings of middle leaders, and with middle leaders, leadership inquiry, on-going professional learning in leadership
- Surveying participants and principals before and after course regarding leadership practices
- Clearer guidelines for data meetings – using the Dalton Protocol as its basis

- Strengthening the norms protocols
- Providing a section on effective teacher practice (BES pg269- 272)

I recommend to principals that middle leaders are given time to work together to ensure variance is reduced through consistent practices and that they are included and take an active part in the improvement agenda. Middle leaders can have significant impact as they are closest to classroom practice. Schools will need to be creative to ensure time is given and that middle leaders are also provided with ongoing professional development in leadership.

As the Education Council develops its leadership framework I would like to recommend that they consider developing a nationwide programme for middle leaders in NZ based on what we know works for leaders. As time is the most pressing issue schools need to think creatively as to how they can capture time to allow this important group to carry out their work.

Conclusions

The role of the middle leaders has become increasingly complex and demanding, (Odhiambo 2014), but there is little evidence of different jurisdictions other than Singapore ensuring that there is systematic professional learning for this group. Programmes run were often reliant on university education departments, where participants elect to engage in the programme and usually at a cost, or local and national principal associations who see the need.

There is evidence that effective leadership can play a highly significant role in improving student learning. Middle leaders are the closest to the work and have direct influence over the classroom. As instructional leaders they can achieve this, if given quality professional development and the time to do their work.

There are clear indications though the research, the review of other programmes, the feedback from the fellowship surveys, case studies, and the analysis of the programme against BES and other tools, that the CPPA Middle Leaders' Programme offers professional learning that can directly influence student outcomes by influencing teacher practice. When middle leaders work cohesively with each other across the school as well as with senior leadership, this cohesion ensures consistency of practice and reduces variance. This aspect of the CMLP programme's requirements shows benefits when principals ensure time is allocated to their ongoing development, and opportunity to contribute to the school improvement agenda.

The programme gives opportunities for middle leaders to develop an understanding of educational leadership and develop themselves as leaders. It encourages them to develop

their team leadership skills, and the leadership inquiry allows them to lead strategically while focussing on improvement and innovation. The programme allows the middle leaders to focus on instructional leadership, putting theory into practice.

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Appendix

Appendix 1:

Features of professional development programs for middle leaders

The literature (Dempster, 2001; Hopkins, 2008) suggests that programs for aspiring or emerging leaders need to be philosophically and theoretically attuned to both system and individual needs in leadership learning.

Criterion 1: Philosophically and theoretically attuned

Criterion 2: Goal-oriented

There are frequent claims in the literature that professional learning programs need to be goal oriented with primacy given to the dual aims of school improvement and improvement in student learning and achievement (Bishop, 2011; Day et al., 2010; Hallinger, 2011; Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009).

Criterion 3: Informed by the weight of research evidence

There is consensus in the literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003) that professional learning programs should be informed by the weight of research evidence on substantive school and pedagogical matters. The thinking is that when school leaders find research informed knowledge credible they are more likely to transfer it to their own practice (Huber, 2011).

Huber (2011) suggests that professional learning programs for aspiring leaders need to be paced, providing ample time for learning sequences to be spaced and interspersed with collegial support, in-school applications and reflective encounters.

Criterion 5: Practice-centred

There is a strong focus on the importance of leaders taking knowledge gained in professional learning programs back into their schools in ways that maximise the effects of leadership capability on practice (Bush, 2009; OECD, 2008).

Criterion 6: Purpose-designed

The literature is clear that professional learning programs need to be purpose-designed for the participants and their specific career stages (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; McKinsey & Company, 2010; OECD, 2008).

Criterion 7: Peer-supported

Leaders need to reach out and support colleagues in leadership roles, as feedback from within or beyond the school is seen as helping to transfer theory and knowledge into improved

practice (MacBeath, 2006; Robertson, 2008; Swaffield, 2004). This kind of support is not seen as by Bev Flückiger, Susan Lovett, Neil Dempster & Stephen Brown providing answers but rather as using a repertoire of tools to help those being mentored to reach new understandings.

Criterion 8: Context-sensitive

Incorporating real-life school-based problem-solving activities from the context of individual participants' schools is a good way for professional learning programs to make relevant use of school leaders' knowledge of their circumstances (Hallinger, 2011; Huber, 2011). It is also seen as a way of ensuring that knowledge and theory connect with practice and action (Huber, 2011).

Criterion 9: Partnership-powered

Professional learning programs are enriched by the support and engagement of external agencies (Brundrett & Crawford, 2008). When professional learning providers form partnerships with associations, universities and the broader professional world in the development and delivery of programs, participants are seen to gain from the partnership's collective knowledge and experience.

Criterion 10: Effects-oriented

The providers of professional learning need to commit to the evaluation of the effects of their programs on leaders and the associated school practices to which the learning applies. Bush (2009) maintains that both immediate and long-term measures are needed to determine the lasting effects of programs.

* 1. Name of School

* 2. Position

- AP
- DP
- Team Leader

* 3. If we asked your team what you have implemented since the beginning of the course what would they say?

Click on as many as applicable.

- Team norms
- Delegate team responsibilities
- Has expectations that team members will follow through on tasks delegated
- Use digital tools to streamline team communication
- Discuss student data/ information
- Support and challenge teaching practice
- Engage in critical talk
- Use research on a regular basis at meetings to link current practice to best practice
- Explore differentiated teaching
- Using strategies to facilitate meetings(dialogue/discussion)

Other (please specify)

* 4. What do you believe has been the biggest areas of growth for you as a leader?

- Improved listening skills
- Carrying out tough conversations when I needed to
- Developing improved meeting procedures
- Apply the leadership qualities essential for a middle leader, into practice e.g problem solving, looking at data, making connection
- Being more challenging
- Using student data/information more effectively
- Using research
- Implementing ideas shared in PLG
- Greater confidence in leading adult learners

Other (please specify)

* 5. This course was designed for a group of middle leaders from the same school to participate together so there was consistency of practice across the school.

What are the advantages of this strategy?

6. Disadvantages?

* 7. Comment on the effectiveness of your PLG group? Consider the skills of the group, your sharing of leadership inquiries, timing, composition.

Bullet point

* 8. How effective was your leadership inquiry on teacher practice and student outcomes?

Bullet point

* 9. If you could select one aspect of the course that you found most valuable, what would it be?

* 10. If you could change one aspect of the course, what would that be?

* 11. How useful were the different aspects of the course design?

	Extremely useful	Very useful	Moderately useful	Slightly useful	Not at all useful
Day workshops	<input type="radio"/>				
Self directed PLG	<input type="radio"/>				
Working in school teams	<input type="radio"/>				
Working with others at workshops other than own school	<input type="radio"/>				
Leadership Inquiry presentations	<input type="radio"/>				

Comments

12. How useful were the following resources in helping increase your professional knowledge?

	Extremely useful	Very useful	Moderately useful	Slightly useful	Not at all useful
BES	<input type="radio"/>				
Leading from the Middle	<input type="radio"/>				
Student Centred leadership	<input type="radio"/>				
Website (comment below on our next steps for this resource)	<input type="radio"/>				

Next steps for website

13. Any other comments about the impact of the programme on your practice?