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Brian Annan

- 1 New Zealand (NZ), also known as Aotearoa,¹ is a small island nation in the South Pacific with 4.8 million people and 2,500 schools. New Zealanders, or “Kiwis”, are proud of their bicultural heritage, which is guided by the Treaty of Waitangi between the indigenous Māori people and the Crown. Also, we have the best sports team in the world called the All Blacks!

Re-imagining a new success

- 2 Education leaders are currently trying to re-imagine success for New Zealand’s education system. This is a considerably challenging task when global leaders are posing the question: “What do children and young adults need to learn in an age of artificial intelligence?” Bialik and Fadel (2018) are suggesting a broad set of competencies relevant to future learning and living for our children and young people. Our youth will be navigating both opportunities and dangers in a complex array of cognitive, practical, social and emotional situations. No easy task. In further global news, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently published a 2030 vision of a learning framework for education (OECD, 2018). The framework promotes a balanced curriculum and lateral connections among agentic learners within and beyond school, with wellbeing for individuals and society as the end goal for success. This vision is a quantum leap from assessment regimes in New Zealand (currently under review) that typically focus entirely on academic achievement tasks, some of which have little relevance for the future.

What do we do?

- 3 New Zealand’s current Minister of Education, Hon Chris Hipkins, as part of a newly formed government, set in play widespread dialogue across the country called the

Education Conversation – Kōrero Mātauranga (<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/>). The idea is founded on the notion that applicable policy is generated first and foremost by listening to the people's views about success for the future. If children, young people, parents, teachers, employers, families, *whānau* (extended family) and *iwi* (tribes) contribute to the conversation and can see their identities in the design, they are more likely to commit to building a better education system.

- 4 Leaders in New Zealand are constantly reminded that it is better to do things *with* people rather than *to* them. Two systems-change strategies in particular have embedded the need for community-friendly policies.
- 5 The first was a radical *Self-Managing Schools* policy introduced in the early 1980s. The policy devolved decision-making to local communities, thereby creating a cultural norm of local ownership. Communities and teaching professionals embraced community-based governance and school management and felt relieved that top-heavy central bureaucracy was eliminated. From that point, any chance of reclaiming authority at the top end of the system was lost. That said, the collaborative teams of policy analysts, researchers and school leaders who developed schooling improvement strategies agreed that it was too hard to develop effective schooling alone (Annan, 2009).
- 6 The second was the considerable consultation that took place to introduce the *NZ Curriculum Framework* policy in the early 1990s and a subsequent revision in 2007 (<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>). Lengthy conversations with teaching professionals and communities paid off as the entire country fell in love with the visionary curriculum. The curriculum is a guiding light to support our children and young people to become, “confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners” (p. 8, *NZ Curriculum Framework*).
- 7 Mandates from the top end of the New Zealand system to create a new education vision are highly unlikely. Mandates in education have been tried but they are typically short-lived. National officials have tried to close small schools, to sort out the structural and social/emotional damage of the schools in Christchurch due to earthquakes, and to introduce National Standards for improved academic achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. In so doing, teaching professionals have fought to reject such policies and political votes have typically been lost at the following election.

Success factors

- 8 The question now is whether the current government can advance from widespread conversations to actions that build a relevant education system for the future. Part of the answer lies in local communities appreciating the intent of its government and taking principled actions in line with the overarching vision shaped by the people. This way, responsibility for improvement is distributed down through the system and horizontally out to all corners of every community. Defining and creating new notions of success for education, therefore, does not solely rest on the shoulders of leaders at the top end of the system. Responsibility also lies with middle leaders in the system and teacher-leaders interacting directly with students, families and *whānau*. Students also have an important part to play in shaping what new success looks like in education. All these groups need to work together to grow their capability to fulfil their responsibilities.

- 9 A recently introduced collaborative policy called Communities-of-Learning – Kāhui Ako² provides an opportunity for that widespread capability-building to occur. This lateral-learning policy is an attempt to approach learning through community. Visionary interpretations of the policy conjure up an ecological conceptualization of learning, which will create relevant learning for unique contexts within a complex and changing world. A picture emerges of schools weaving into the fabric of community to explore learning opportunities and address real-life social, cultural, business and environmental opportunities and challenges in New Zealand society. Meaningful projects focused on pushing the boundaries of digital animation, improving water quality in our rivers and beaches and reducing family violence and youth suicide would be good starting points.
- 10 The practical reality of the policy, however, is a school-centric starting point. Attempts are being made to improve teaching practice, to enable collaboration among teachers and for students to experience seamless pathways. Those start-up activities may seem underwhelming, but considerable value can come from small steps at the outset of policy implementation. Small steps provide teachers with the opportunity to believe that they, alongside their communities, can craft relevant learning frameworks for better futures (<http://bit.ly/AchievementChallengetoLearningFramework>). Teacher confidence will help grow practice-based evidence (evidence emerging from practice) to sit alongside evidence-based practice (what researchers have found helpful in previous times and other settings). Currently, research evidence tends to dominate but the balance may shift in education systems that build the capability of teachers as facilitators of learning (Annan, Annan, Wootton & Burton, 2014).
- 11 Early school-centric developments in the Communities-of-Learning – Kāhui Ako policy also provide school leaders with an opportunity to learn about the value of collective advantage as a more powerful lever for improvement than competing with one another. Leaders are creating new teams of across-school and within-school teacher-leaders to find practice “gems” in the melee of teaching and learning across groups of schools and communities (<http://bit.ly/blog2collectiveadvantage>). A new strategic leadership task is to take the practice gems and diffuse them across the community-of-schools so that teachers, students, families and *whānau* quickly latch on to effective practices and useful new ideas.

Next steps

- 12 As these new collaborative infrastructures are being built, school leaders and teachers are starting to see value in gathering data that tracks learning trends: students moving from passive to active learning, from avoiding learning to taking risks, from being conscientiously compliant to becoming respectfully and openly critical. Tracking and monitoring these types of learning trends requires sound knowledge of qualitative data analysis (<http://bit.ly/blog3evaluatingeffectiveness>). It also helps maintain sight of student wellbeing as well as achievement results. Growing this form of evaluative capability will be a healthy step forward from the number-crunching achievement trend-tracking of the past few decades.

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NOTES

1. Significant terms in this article are stated in English and in the indigenous Māori language.
2. *Kāhui Ako* is the indigenous Māori term for people coming together to learn from one another; *Kāhui* represents people flocking, and *Ako* represents reciprocal teaching and learning.

ABSTRACTS

New Zealand education system’s leaders have learned to dialogue with the people to get things done. This policy-to-practice success factor has contributed to improved local governance and management, a world-class curriculum and a strong commitment to appreciating identity and dual heritage through the Treaty of Waitangi. Now New Zealand leaders are in dialogue with the people to re-imagine success in education. A new policy called Communities-of-Learning – *Kāhui Ako* – is an avenue to activate the new success. The New Zealand presentation at Workshop 2 will reveal some of the early collaborative successes, such as the value of community-designed learning frameworks, collective advantage across schools and tracking learning trends.

Les responsables du système éducatif néo-zélandais ont appris à dialoguer avec les gens pour obtenir des résultats. Ce facteur de réussite de la mise en œuvre de la politique éducative a contribué à améliorer la gouvernance et la gestion à l’échelon local, à faire du curriculum néo-zélandais l’un des meilleurs au monde et à promouvoir un engagement fort pour la reconnaissance de l’identité et du double héritage issus du Traité de Waitangi. Désormais les responsables néo-zélandais discutent avec les gens pour imaginer de nouveau la réussite en

éducation. Une nouvelle politique intitulée « Communautés d'apprentissage » – Kāhui Ako en maori – constitue un levier pour renouer avec la réussite. Cette présentation mettra en lumière une partie de ces premiers succès collaboratifs, tels que l'intérêt de cadres d'apprentissage conçus par les communautés elles-mêmes, les bénéfices collectifs pour les établissements ainsi que le suivi des tendances en matière d'apprentissage.

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Mots-clés: résultats de l'éducation, politique éducative, réussite scolaire, communauté d'apprentissage

Palabras claves: resultados de la educación, política educacional, éxito escolar, comunidad de aprendizaje

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In his early career as a teacher and school principal, Brian Annan passionately supported children in complex cognitive, social and emotional situations. He then partnered with policy, research, school and community leaders to implement effective schooling improvement across New Zealand. As the twenty-first century unfolded, Brian visited and worked in many countries and participated in multiple global networks to move education systems on from industrial-era thinking. Brian is now diffusing useful ideas learned along the way into New Zealand communities. He is also contributing to philanthropic efforts in alternative education in the United States with an innovative learning-how-to-learn tool called Infinity Learning Maps (<http://infinitylearn.org/>). brianannan57@gmail.com