



Breaking Boundaries

Radical Innovation in Education

*2 - 5 January 2005
Barcelona, Spain*

Boundary breaking leadership:

Rethinking time, space and curriculum, to develop our future leaders

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A keynote presentation at the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) Conference, Barcelona, 2-5 January 2005

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Kia ora from Aotearoa New Zealand.

*E nga waka, e nga reo, e nga mana
Karangataha maha,
Kua tae mai ki tenei hui
karanga mai, mihi mai
, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa*

*To all the canoes that brought you to this land
To all of the languages you bring with you
To all of the power and influence and importance you hold as educational leaders
Who have come together at this Conference to discuss important issues
A special greeting to you all -*

In preparing for this presentation I began thinking about space and time and curriculum. I started with something I could relate to well – looking back over the space of time of three generations within my own family. I thought about the lives of three 16 year old girls across a seventy year period last century, and reflected on how different their lives and worlds were.... This is a transition through the 20th century - my mother, my self, my daughter. Compare the technology of the three girls...the families...the communities...the travel...the amount of information available.

When you compare the lives, the friends and the communities of these three young girls (narrative in accompanying slide), one thing becomes quickly apparent. The technological advancement has impacted on our civilisation at an exponential rate. One girl's world is vastly different from the other two. The whole world is open to the girl

who is 16 in the year 2000. She is a global child with the world community literally at her fingertips. When she travels, she has already “met” a friend in every city. She selects information and constructs her own knowledge at will, on any topic, on the internet. She debates current issues with people of all ages, colour, ethnicity, culture, nations on the internet. It can rightly be argued that all children do not have these opportunities - but the technology provides these opportunities and it is up to schools and world communities to work together to bring these opportunities to all children...

We are experiencing the Digital Divide – the gap between the haves and have nots widens - the gap between the digital immigrants of my generation and the digital natives of Bronwen’s generation widens – and we have a new form of generation gap. This is a huge challenge for us as teachers, who belong to a different generation to the young people in schools and Universities, to overcome the digital divide that separates these worlds and embrace technology for the possibilities it affords? Many teachers have never accessed the internet or used it as a medium for their own learning let alone as a medium for their teaching. Perhaps this is the first time in our educational history when young people, really do know far more about a lot of things than either their teachers or their parents (not that we would ever tell them that, of course!). How often do we turn to this generation for advice/ assistance? Now, perhaps more than at any other time in history, teachers and books are not the main sources of information for young people.

Have our schools changed sufficiently to reflect this global world and to assist our young people to critique and understand and contribute to the world they are venturing into? Perhaps the only thing familiar in the world today to a 19th Century traveller, would be a school and classroom? My mother could have certainly walked into my daughter’s highschool English class and felt very much at home. We still divide students into levels mostly according to age and expect them to work at the same pace on the same subjects, school years are a certain number of days, schools are at particular sites, knowledge is divided into subjects taught between set times, teachers work with set groups of students for set lengths of time – an hour, a year. I would challenge that VERY little has changed in schools. That for many of us, if we sat in our child's primary or more particularly,

secondary school classroom, the experience would be fairly similar to our own. I critique the teaching of many of our developing teachers and the feeling of déjà vu is, at times, quite frightening.

So what is the role of public education within this globalisation of knowledge? In the first millennium oral communication and storytelling were the mode in which people learned about their culture and world; in the next millennium, books held the key to learning and the future and brought a world wider than the immediate family circle to learn from; in the 21st Century the internet will be the way of the future. It has the possibility to bring the world into each person's household. In the newspapers last week was the headline "leading libraries ease into google world" as five of the world's top libraries agree to put their holdings online – Bodleian at Oxford University Harvard, Michigan and Stanford University libraries and new York public libraries. The Head librarian at Stanford said "Within two decades most of the world's knowledge will be digitized and available, one hopes, for free reading on the internet, just as there is free reading in libraries today.. The librarian at the University of Michigan said "This is the day the world changes. It is beyond what we believed would be possible in our lifetime."

Each enquiry through Google has the ability to search about 8 billion internet pages. Technological change brings with it a whole new language, both written and oral, has emerged to challenge the book culture – blogs, spamming, Bots, botherd, botnet, firewall, phishing scams, malware,,MP3s, cyber, hacker, Ipods. A whole new way of interacting with the world - with more interaction; shorter sentences; new ways of displaying language *LOL* a/s/l? handles? Downloading? A whole new raft of jobs have arrived which were hitherto unthought of: programming, spambusters....The e-World has arrived!! Try putting e- (E-dash) into google and see how many hits you get! 1840 million hits on google for e-DASH.

E-bay, e-Online, e-Trade, e-Books, e-How, e-Week, e-Commerce, e-Business, e-Pals, e-Nature, e-Marketer... try it sometime! E-Skills, e-GOLD e-gold... gold itself, circulated electronically.

I was recently trying to think of a title for my forthcoming book on leadership coaching and a friend suggested any title starting with E-dash ...so I would get hits from the internet and have a 21st Century book!

I thought "E-Coaching...NOT!" might work!

The internet available on television sets and increasingly affordable in homes across the western and eastern world;

The internet where the big music companies have just announced they will release the latest music – it was goodbye to 33's, 45's, cassettes and perhaps now the end of cd's as MP3s and IPODs take their place on centre stage??

The announcement of the end of the production of Videos last month as DVD takes over. Struggling now to find equipment that will play cassette tapes, videos, LP records...

The internet which offers University courses and qualifications - we teachers in tertiary education... were told "If you are not teaching on the Internet now you will be out of a job within 5 years." The tertiary mergers and alliances that are changing the face of universities. Students from all parts of the world now study together in our courses with a variety of course instructors, nationalities studying together, from the comfort of their homes.

The internet where recently in NZ the warning to businesses was... "It's time for an e-strategy" - If NZ businesses are not already trading in cyberspace they are either dead or soon will be,

The Internet on which Paul McCartney set a world record with 50 million "hits" with a concert four years ago at Liverpool's tiny Cavern Club. A whole new meaning to the word SMASH "hits" - times people have logged onto that site. "Audience figures have

climbed steeply in just one year for the new "music on click" phenomenon (Herald, 26/01/00, p.5). Other concerts have since toppled this record.

More headlines in the newspaper: - 'A noisy decade awaits us as media giants reshape society through the internet'... Anything that can be broken down into bits and bytes will be delivered to us, in any way we want. Think about the virtual travelling we can do before we arrive in a place – google gave me over 35 million hits for Barcelona...!! I can book my plane tickets, my accommodation, my sightseeing, my theatre tickets – check the temperatures, money exchange value, do my banking while I am here, teach my classes from my hotel room.

Already there are changes to our economy, our social structure, our access to the world. Will we see the end of shops as we know them in our time? Anything that can be sold could be delivered by the internet.

Will it change the way we communicate? There are debates in NZ at the moment about whether we should adopt and accept the Americanised spelling of words in Secondary examinations because of the influence of the information technology on these young ones where computers change English spelling to the American spelling.

What are the boundaries regarding nation laws, cultures and identities? There are often debates about the power of name suppression where the local media have had to suppress the names but they are freely available on the internet. Information technology is already changing the way in which we view society and community.

What is it doing to the workplace and relationships? Only one of my colleagues still physically goes to talk face and talk to his colleagues rather than use e-mail to communicate with someone sitting in the office next door. What impact does this have for the intensification of work, and impact on leisure, where we are available 24/7/365 through email and cellphone and cellphones that can send and receive email?

I wonder how living in this "virtual world" and "global world" that my daughter has access to, will affect her sense of self and community? These virtual communities cross geographical boundaries, cultural boundaries, and are groups of like-minded people coming together - Bronwen communicates in the Classical Chatroom with Anne in Toronto, who plays viola in the Philharmonic Orchestra and she then took Bronwen out to music stores while I was visiting OISE. She has her favourite rock star "Jeff Buckley" friends and photos and voice clips, as she meets online with people who all adore the rock star in the same way. If she wants an answer to something like a particular composer for her music theory, she has it in minutes from the Classical Chatroom. Five years on from when she made that slide, she is now 21 and has just applied to the Melbourne College of the Arts for her Masters study this year and been accepted. Her reach did not exceed her grasp.

The science fiction world of my mother's time is old hat today... For her science fiction was man landing and walking on the moon. In my childhood man did walk on the moon. Today there is talk of the first civilian holidays in space by women even! Nobody even knows or cares now when yet another space craft leaves NASA., unless something goes wrong. The Brave New World of Huxley's imagination is mostly with us now - As the aforementioned librarian said: "It is beyond what we believed would be possible in our lifetime."

Will the science fiction of today...be the reality in 2020. Will the year 2525 announce its arrival very much sooner?

Look what is happening in the newspapers every day...

Schools and the teachers in them have a responsibility to debate the changes they should make if they are to meet the needs of young people moving into this future which is unbounded by the power and influence of information communication technology. We have a responsibility to the young people who enter our places of education to think about the most worthy skills, attitudes, knowledge and practices that they will need.

The young ones being born today are unique – there is only one of them – and they get one chance in life. Every one of them deserves the right chances in life. This advertisement touched the hearts of all NZers over the past year and has some very important messages (even though it is only advertising our TV One network). When expectant parents are asked “What do you want...a boy or a girl?” the most common answer is a version of “as long as the baby has ten fingers and ten toes...”

What will the future be like for this young man in 2020 (in accompanying slide)? We are now in a new Century with three new generations ahead of us. For this 2-year old in 2005 – what will the world be like when he enters the workforce at 18, into a world that we cannot even imagine?

But we do know some things:

Firstly, as he said himself “what’s the world only got one of? Me, yeah!”

We know that this little person has only got one schooling chance, if he gets to a school.

He told us he is unique – with unique hopes, dreams and abilities and needs.

He’ll need to be able to cope with change.

He needs to be prepared for jobs that we don’t even know about at this time.

He’ll need to be a lifelong learner.

He’ll need to be creative and a problem solver.

He’ll probably change jobs three or four times in his lifetime.

His world will be full of turbulence, complexity, change, and information,

He will live in a world that has the knowledge and the power to do just about anything scientifically that we could imagine and in a world in which we will have the power and energy to do many things that we *cannot* imagine.

He will need to make choices.

Will schools be ready for him when he enters in three year’s time!!

Is it time for e-schools... The types of schools which are preparing young people for the e-world that they will live in.

Schools that Webber (1999) has previously called the "could-be" schools - schools that are more flexible, more creative, more inclusive and more responsive than the schools we currently know. By harnessing ICT capabilities, a range of pedagogical practices become possible.

Schools and the leaders in them, need to be boundary breaking...

If today's leaders are developing tomorrow's leaders we may continue to get more of the same in educational leadership and therefore educational institutions. What will always be needed are leadership programmes that challenge leaders into new ways of thinking and being. School reform begins at the individual level with each and everyone of us. Our research over the past decade (Webber & Robertson, 1998; Robertson & Webber, 2002, 2004) has focused on the importance of developing Boundary Breaking leaders, by providing boundary breaking leadership development experiences – boundary breaking learning.

One of the most important starting points for leadership development, that Charles Webber and I have found from our research, is identifying and highlighting the pedagogical conceptual framework on which the leader's work rests – whether this be the leader in the classroom or the leader in a senior management position. Educational leaders need to be able to articulate this framework of principles and beliefs about learning – their own and that of others.

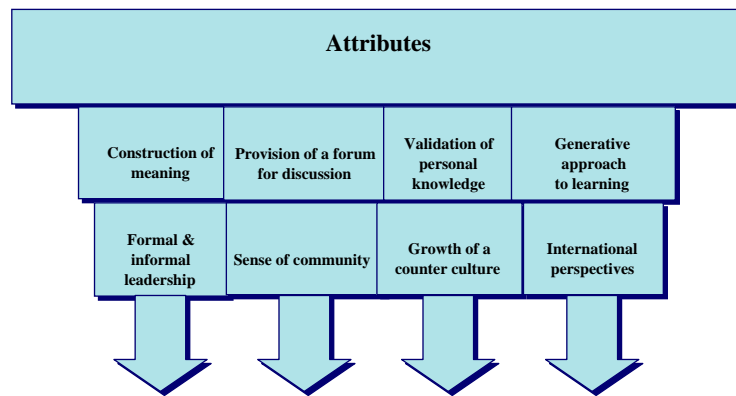
In our challenge to leaders to identify their platform, Charlie and I researched our own pedagogical and leadership framework and ask our students to critique whether we are true to what we say we believe. The Boundary Breaking model, reported fully elsewhere (Robertson & Webber, 2002) rests on the following eight principles for effective learning about leadership to occur: You could argue that they are important principles for learning – anywhere, for anyone.

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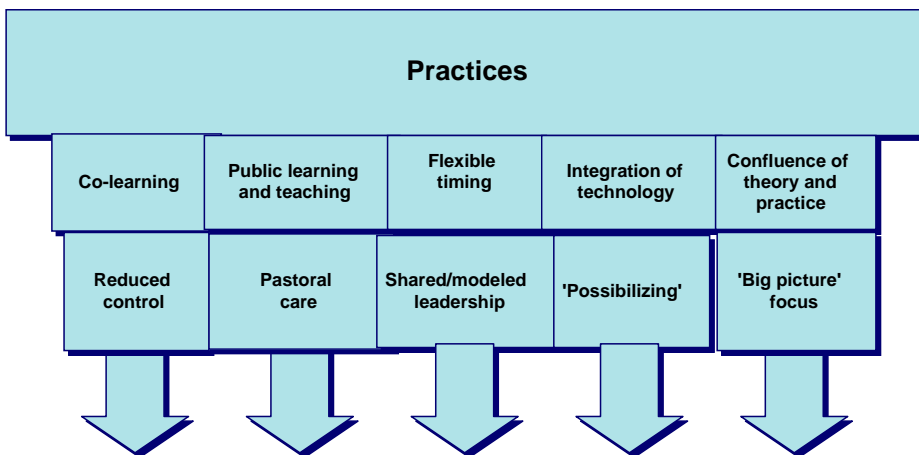
Developing a sense of community – the pastoral care and personal well-being of leaders is important – educational leaders are generous with their leadership;

- **Including international perspectives** – studying other education systems, policies and practices – comparative studies aid critical reflection on issues (Webber & Robertson, 2004);
- **Using generative approaches** – rather than prescribed curriculum, guided professional study of issues encountered in theory and practice;
- **Validating personal knowledge** – each leader (student or adult leader-learner) brings valuable leadership theory and practice to the community from which all can learn;
- **Encouraging formal and informal leadership** – every leader has a responsibility and right to take up the leadership within the group, and for creating the opportunities and spaces for others to do so;
- **Providing a forum for discussion** – critique, debate and active participation are essential in the leadership learning process;
- **Shared construction of meaning** – developing understanding of concepts is a social process;
- **Encouraging the growth of a counter culture** – putting forward possibilities and alternatives that are “deliberately at variance with the social norm” (Collins Concise Dictionary, 1999) challenges leaders to justify and articulate and consider alternative ways of being and knowing.

(Originally published in Robertson & Webber, 2000)



Our research with hundreds of school leaders over the past decade has shown that these pedagogical principles lead to the following learning practices:



(Originally published in Robertson & Webber, 2000)

Co-learning – a belief that people can learn more (and achieve more) with others than they can learn alone;

Public learning and teaching – leadership *as* learning in the public arena provides powerful learning experiences;

Flexible timing – learning can take place at any time - 365/7/24;

Integration of technology – provides the space and access to learning at any time and anywhere, from home, through a learning space in another country, from different sources – NASA, World Congress Library, Barcelona Arts...

The confluence of theory and practice – theory should inform practice as much as practice should inform theory;

Reduced control – leadership develops in contexts where it is encouraged to emerge – leadership has to be given away before others can take it up and fly;

Shared/Modelled leadership – Validation of personal knowledge and generative learning approaches encourage the sharing of leadership, which should be modeled by those initiating learning opportunities; We learn what we live;

Pastoral care – the personal part of the professional engages with learning; caring for the learner – professional love for people, as Charlie mentioned.

“Possibilising” – creating “what-if?” moments to explore alternatives and ideas – perhaps utopian idealism? (Halpin, 2003, p. 60) where “ultimate hopes for the future are translated into action plans that seek to push out the boundaries of what is possible...”
“Big Picture” focus – leaders lift their heads up long enough to climb the tallest tree to see what jungle they are in (Covey, 1997). They see the system as a whole and the part they can play in it, and not just their own small corner of the world or school. We need to

work with each and every person in our institutions to help them see that they are part of the whole – so that the total is greater than the sum of the individual parts.

We believe that perhaps leaders who have had these experiences themselves can then work with the people they work with in different ways to create these same experiences and practices. That teachers who have experienced these ways of learning – where the learning space and time has no boundaries – may also be able to work with their students in these ways. It is a vicious circle of reproduction that we are conservatively in as school leaders - we were once students, we were told what to do, we were encouraged not to challenge, we went to University for teacher education from teachers who were once those children in schools, we became teachers, we did as we were asked, we conformed, we were socialised, we delivered the curriculum unthinkingly, we became principals ...it is easy to perpetuate the same system and a disruption needs to occur.

We can maximise the disruptive power and influence of ICT to enable this disruption (Webber, 2000). Schools will not be able to provide quality learning experiences UNLESS the educational leaders in them have experienced new ways of learning themselves.

If we want students to be responsible citizens, critical and creative thinkers, self-directed learners, collaborative team players and effective communicators – and all the other things our national and school policies ask for - then their teachers must be given these opportunities in their learning. How can a teacher teach creativity if they are not creative themselves? How can a teacher develop critical thinking skills if they do not know how to think critically? Can secondary teachers prepare young people adequately for organisations in the corporate world, when all they themselves have experienced are educational institutions?

If we want teachers to be able to teach in new ways, in ways in which they have not taught before or experienced themselves, we have to give them those opportunities in their professional development. If we want teachers to be able to re-conceptualise and transform their practices and pedagogies, they themselves need opportunities to

experience new ways of working, if they want to create environments where all children will learn and be prepared for the information age. They need to acquire and model the skills, practices and interpersonal relationships that young people will need if teachers are going to be leaders of authentic learning.

Only by being involved in such learning themselves can teachers recognise the possibilities for the young people they work with. They have to become learners again.

Principals and teachers – as leaders in schools - need to be personally involved in professional development that requires them to break boundaries of various stakeholder groups, nations, education contexts. They will have to struggle with the uncertainties that these changes and challenges will bring. They need to develop new knowledge about students and learning, about teaching and about the curriculum they teach.

Our research has shown four major outcomes for learners who experience learning through the boundary breaking model:

An emotional engagement with learning – deep learning moves leaders out of comfort zones and established habits and ideas; Anger, frustration, excitement, passion – some sort of emotion will connect them to their learning and make them want to know more.

Movement beyond self – vicarious learning and outside perspectives move the leader to a study of leadership practices rather than simply an examination of self; it is a recognition that one is part of a whole -

Development of a critical perspective – other ways of *knowing* assist analytical assessment of leadership practices; hearing other perspectives, others' stories, other ways of seeing the world.

The development of agency - the self-efficacy and confidence required to move towards other ways of *being* - believing that you *are* an educational leader and an agent of change who can make things happen.

Outcomes	
Emotional engagement with learning	Development of a critical perspective
Movement beyond self	Development of agency

(Originally published in Robertson & Webber, 2000)

How might we change our thinking around schools? What would happen if we changed the language that we currently use? If we had the “coaching organization” with “learning facilitators” how might the work of education be different? What if the words associated with ‘schooling’ were changed?

Would our practices change?

Perhaps a new vocabulary is needed to talk about new kinds of education. If we change words, then perhaps practices around learning may change. For example, what if, in educational institutions instead of words such as: teachers, students, classrooms, timetables, curriculum, answers, schools we used...

Coaches,

Innovators,

Teams and co-leaders,
Learning spaces,
Shared goals,
Focused, personalised learning,
Flexible learning (learning anytime, anywhere)
Community learning hubs

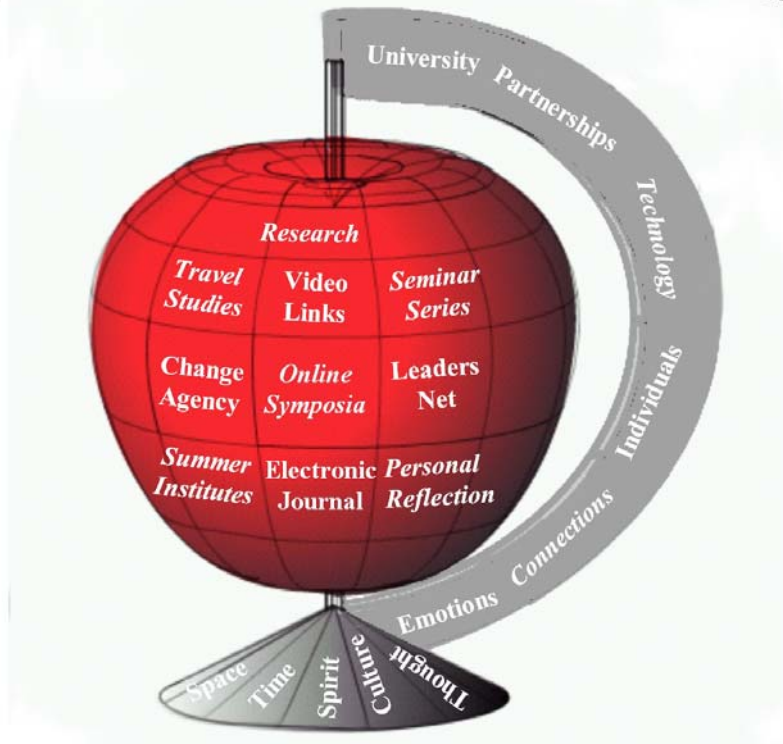
Let's consider schools as community learning hubs (Halpin, 2003) where schools have stopped thinking about themselves as the sole places of learning but linked across space and time within a local and global community? Students could still be registered at one particular learning space, but have access to so many more. Why is it that so many wonderful innovations around education and learning are labeled "alternative education" or "extra-curricula" or they happen in the community "outside of school hours"? Why can't they BE "school".

Would this new vocabulary and change in thinking about the provision of education change schooling practices from hierarchies of a multitude of differentiated power positions to distributed leadership and innovation teams? Would the ethic of care and authentic learning (Starratt, 2004) be at the forefront? Could leadership then be rotated according to strength and need? (West-Burnham, 1997). Effective working relationships would be paramount in such a place of learning.. We need "learning spaces"(not 'schools' where a certain type of hierarchy and mentality about power exists) but "learning coaches" and "interdependence" and rich accountability, where reflective practice predominates and shared responsibility and leadership around learning abounds.

We want leaders who are proactive, and who move from perpetuating the status quo to proactive transformative leadership in education, to where they feel they contribute to and develop the system rather than being an unthinking, reactive cog in the system's wheel.

This is the type of leadership and learning that is required to meet the challenges of 21st century education - to provide the type of education that our future leaders will demand. We have found that learning through space and across time, through boundary breaking leadership practice, requires a certain level of infrastructure and support.

Learning Through Space & Across Time



Previously published in: Webber, C.F. & Robertson, J.M. (2004). Internationalization and Educators' Understanding of Issues in Educational Leadership. *The Educational Forum* , 68(3), 264-275.

So what curriculum do we want for our young people as we break the boundaries and change the rules?

Students in this age of chaos, uncertainty, complexity – need to know *how to learn* more than anything else.

They need to know *how to love* and respect, honour and celebrate diversity.

They need to be able to think creatively, need moral values, need more naivete and more questions versus more knowing and more right answers;

They need a firm platform of confidence and efficacy and belief they can take their place in the world and make a positive difference. They need to study ethics -

Was it the maker of hydrogen bomb's teacher who said "I wish I'd taught my students ethics as well as physics!" We need scientists who will ask "What are the moral consequences of this? Our future leaders will need the human dimension, the philosophical dimension as well as imagination – and being able to possibilise about what might be?

Imagine how Einstein or Socrates would fare in many classrooms and University lecture rooms today. Our future world leaders *are* sitting in our classrooms now. So we do need to do things differently – we need to be boundary breaking, starting with ourselves, learning to break the rules, breaking boundaries...

David Halpin (2003) asks us to consider these questions:

What would the school curriculum look like if its subject matter were chosen largely in terms of its contribution to helping children to live a full life rather than in relation to the short term needs of the economy?

What kind of society should schools be helping pupils to live a "full life" within?

What dispositions and ways of knowing will enable them to live successfully and contribute fully to such a life?

The most important thing is that leaders at all levels in schools – together - debate and articulate what it is they believe is important for young people to learn. More than ever

before it is important that leaders do the *right* things, rather than just doing things right (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 21).

We need to review the function of schools in this new millennium - and let them not just be places for socialisation, credentialling and for keeping young people off the streets (Webber, 2000).

Effective schools will to embrace the power of technology to open the world of opportunity across time and space, for their young people, and work with them on how to survive and gain success in this international digital democracy.

We need Boundary Breaking places where new types of learning communities are developed. We need an appropriate conceptual framework for improving learning - and that must start with improving the learning experiences of those who provide the learning experiences - our teachers.

We might then have learning communities where students and teachers work together building educational experiences which make a real *difference* to people's lives. They would be learning communities built on mutual respect where people are taught how to critically think about, interpret and organise information rather than obtain a specific set of knowledge.

Tomorrow's schools are about teaching people how to live in the information world, in this global society, and giving them *those* experiences. These Boundary Breaking spaces work at developing life-long learners who can identify and deal with problems and work creatively towards finding solutions.

And in this information age, these places of learning realise that the ability to use information critically, to extract relevant meaning from text and screen, may be one of the most important skills any person in society could have.

Conferences with titles and themes such as *breaking boundaries, and the leaders who come to them to debate these important issues*, are important to this process of transformation for school effectiveness and improvement! Only by continuing to structure time out like this, for critical reflection - for thinking - to climb the tallest tree and look around - can we begin to see the big picture, and then the conscientization gained may help us to understand that when we think we have finally got there, there is no there (Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1993). Take control of time and space and use them to their fullest potential. Capture them and use the possibilities they afford.

Set structures in place to ensure that you can be critically reflective. Continue to be boundary breaking – starting with your *own* practices. We *each* have the greatest and most important challenge – we are the leaders of today, developing tomorrow’s leaders. Each and every one of them will be important to our future.

Kia kaha. Ka kite ano.

I’d like to finish with a song, a waiata from our Maori people, which they use when weaving with flax – but that has an important message for us all to reflect on. It links with my University’s motto - Ko te tangata – simply THE PEOPLE – the most important thing in the world.

This waiata (song) says:

If the centre shoot of the flax is pulled out

The flax will die

Leaving no place for the bellbird to sing.

As important as these conservation factors are if I was to ask myself

What is one of the most important things in the world?

I would answer It is that person, that person, that person

That is, it is each and every person.

It is we who will create and sustain the world of tomorrow.

Hutia te rito
Hutia te rito o te harakeke
Kei hea te komako e ko
He aha te mea nui i te ao
Maku e ki atu e
He Tangata He Tangata
He Tangata Hei

If the centre shoot of the flax is pulled out
The flax will die
Leaving no place for the bellbird to sing.
As important as these conservation factors are if I was to ask myself
What is one of the most important things in the world?
I would answer It is that person, that person, that person
That is, it is each and every person.

Thank you.

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