

CONFERENCE REPORT 2015

Editor Liz Hawes

RESIST! RESIST! RESIST! That was the clarion call from lead keynote presenters Professors Alma Harris and Meg Maguire from the United Kingdom and Professor Diane Ravitch from the United States of America, as they addressed NZPF's 2015 conference on global education reforms. They described the reforms as having crushed the quality public education systems of both their countries, leaving barely mediocre private academy and charter schools in their wake. The three academic heavy-weights fired up principals who were attentively glued to their seats right through the final day of conference. No one wanted these sessions to end.

The programme for the conference was built around the theme of '*Seeing Education through different lenses*' and recognising the famous axiom of Ann Oakley and Keith Burke that '*every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing*'. In other words, always examine the dominant discourses carefully lest they are obscuring our view and limiting our thinking. Presentations fell into three categories, the lens of today, the wider lens, and the lens of tomorrow. It was a cleverly constructed way to examine what we already do well in New Zealand and to show case some of our own leading educational experts and researchers; to scrutinise the wider education policy implications both here and internationally; and to explore education issues that we will be facing in the future.

Memorable conferences like this occur rarely. They require a sharp, intelligent visionary with educational wisdom, and a skilled, dedicated organising team. The Wellington conference got both. Liz Millar, principal of Ngaio School was convenor and the Wellington Regional Primary Principals' Association provided the necessary team of expertise. The conference committee was well supported by the events company 'Conference Works'. Warm congratulations to them all. Everything about this conference from opening to closure engrossed the delegates. It was a programme that linked together seamlessly through the charm and gentle wit of MC Jehan Casinader.

More than 400 delegates filled the Renouf Foyer of Wellington's Michael Fowler Centre for the opening powhiri. With the official procedures over, the Prime Minister, Mr John Key, addressed the gathering.

He opened by graciously and generously congratulating all the principals in the room for the wonderful work they do for the children in our schools. **He said how incredibly proud he is of the quality of teaching and leading in our schools and said that is why the vast majority of children do so well.**

He acknowledged too that some of our children do not have ideal home lives where it is normal to be read a story at night and be told they are loved by caring parents. He acknowledged that some children are neglected and others are not being adequately nurtured or nourished in their own homes.

Whilst he did not suggest that schools should be solving all of these social problems he did say that for some of these children, school offered them hope which they wouldn't get elsewhere. He noted that the government recently increased beneficiaries' income by \$25 a week but was quick to also say that he did not expect this to solve everything.

Key acknowledged the improvements in achievement results in recent times, adding that NZ is not alone in having a tail of underachievement and that 'nearly every country would have that'.

He said he would welcome ideas about how the government could support professional development for leaders and said that *IES* was a good way to keep good teachers in teaching and reward them rather than just offer them management units.

Celebrating through the lens of today

NZPF President, Denise Torrey, gave the opening address on the first day of the conference programme explaining that there have been many system initiatives in recent years, which don't easily 'fit into an overarching national direction'. She said that there appeared to be an absence of a shared vision for education in New Zealand.

Consequently, she turned her attention to finding out how the initiatives fitted with 'the fundamental purpose of education'. That search left her with more questions than answers. She opened a debate on the topic beginning with a period of time during which the purpose of education was crystal clear. That was in the late 1800s at the time of the industrial revolution when the purpose for mass education was to 'teach the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic and socialise children into the ways of [industrial] work and social conformity.'

With the industrial revolution long over, what, asked Torrey, is the purpose of education today? To answer this question she suggested that at one level the purpose might still be to impart skills, knowledge and values and include socialisation. But it might also include empowerment of children to manage their own learning in a rapidly changing world where we are becoming increasingly dependent on creativity, problem solving and critical thinking. That, she said, would imply a personalised curriculum and teaching style, a far cry from the standardised instructional and rote learning styles of the late 1800s.

So where, she asked, would policies like national standards in reading, writing and maths and the Progress and Consistency Tool fit into today's personalised

curriculum? Well, not at all, said Torrey, because they are designed to reduce personalisation and subjectivity as much as possible.

She then turned her attention to modern day employers, presenting the findings of a recent 'Economist' survey on skills required for the work place. The survey ranked problem solving, team work, communication, critical thinking and creativity as the top five skills for job hunters today. Employers would also be favouring a broad curriculum and personalised approach to learning, said Torrey.

Finally she turned to the educational experts including Sir Ken Robinson for their views on the purpose of education today. Again she met similar arguments with Robinson espousing the personal, cultural, social and economic purposes of education. He too recommended a personalised curriculum, the teaching of tolerance and cultural respect through music and the arts, cultivating active citizenship and through a broad curriculum, teaching global awareness, financial, business and entrepreneurial skills literacy, civic and health literacy and environmental literacy.

She concluded that 'until we reach an agreed sense of the purpose for education in New Zealand today we will continue to be overwhelmed and bewildered by myriad policy initiatives none of which emanate from a common purpose'.

Professor Angus MacFarlane

An esteemed academic from Canterbury University, and descendent of the Ngā Pūmanawa e Waru o Te Arawa tribe in the Rotorua district, Professor Angus MacFarlane is a well-respected leader in Māori education in New Zealand. In keeping with the conference theme, he entitled his presentation '*Footsteps from the past to inform the present*'.

For Māori, he said, our future is in our ancestry and we can't just start today and plan for the future without reference to the past. He took his audience back to 1873 and his own ancestors, giving us a brief history of the birth and career of Makereti Papakura who, as a Māori woman, he told us, was raised by her elders and learned her genealogy, history, te reo and tikanga, became a performer, a leader and a guide at Whakarewarewa before taking herself off to Oxford in England where she later became a scholar and married. 'She was at ease in two worlds,' he said, 'but always ratified her thoughts from te ao Māori.' This story would resonate in what MacFarlane had to say about his own work and aspirations for Māori in a bicultural world.

He took us on a brief stroll through the history of Māori and Māori education in New Zealand up to the twenty-first century. He talked of factors that negatively affected Māori children including loss of land, an alien education system, disease, different styles of housing and clothing, pressure from identifying as Māori, and as he put it '...a culturally deprived education system'.

Using the language of Professor Jamie Bellich, he described early education for Māori, from 1867 and the Native Schools Act as an attempt to 'change Māori into brown Britons'.

Today, he said, we have optimism with initiatives such as school-wide PB4L, Te Whariki, Te Kotahitanga, Te Kauhua and Ka Hikitia. These initiatives open doors for Māori and this replenishes them, he said.

MacFarlane then outlined how Eurocentricity in both research and in teaching practice can be damaging because it excludes other ways of thinking or theorising and this can legitimise world-wide inequality.

'We can have the professional practice of teaching enriched if we take note of Māori knowledge and ethnic epistemology', he said.

He then excited his audience about a new movement interested in culturally relevant pedagogies that has emerged in recent times, led by thinkers such as Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux. New Zealand too has its contributors to this movement with thinkers and theorists such as Mason Durie, Ted Glynn, Russell Bishop, Rose Pere, Jill Bevan-Brown and more. **The work of these thinkers is beginning to impact, as teacher deficit theorising, denial of cultural difference, and low teacher expectations for Māori are becoming past thinking.** This new wave of Māori researchers is '...restoring hope and aspiration for Māori,' said MacFarlane. He described the shift as '...from deficit to constructivism???'.

For MacFarlane change is all about changing the contexts within which Māori children can learn and achieve. He rates the Māori Education strategy Ka Hikitia as an important document to guide culturally responsive schools and emphasised the importance of the classroom climate, especially for at-risk learners.

It's about connecting with culture and the students' experiences, he said, and having high academic and behavioural standards. It's about being aware of the nuances of dominant discourses and being prepared to change them and identifying potential in Māori students so they can be transformed into high achievers.

The successful classroom, according to MacFarlane's own research, would be built around the concepts of whanaungatanga (relationships) rangatiratanga (teacher effectiveness), kotahitanga (bonding), manaakitanga (caring) and pumanawatanga (morale, tone and pulse). In this way the teacher recognises that there are 'ethnically linked ways of thinking, feeling and acting', says MacFarlane, and that sets the scene for challenging assumptions, seeking data, enjoying experiences and respecting others feelings. These are the strengths that emanate from the culturally responsive classroom.

MacFarlane believes that we are on the brink of creating a new history for Māori in education, premised on some basic imperatives of building on existing approaches to incorporate an 'educultural' presence, introducing culturally responsive teaching at

the initial teacher training level, growing a sociocultural consciousness, using Ka Hikitia, shifting attitudes, using good teachers and harnessing wise leadership. He concluded his presentation by challenging the principals to join those ground breaking researchers and professionals in their quest to challenge the status quo and adopt new ways of thinking so that all schools can become culturally receptive.

Cathy Wylie

The second conference speaker was another home-grown researcher, Cathy Wylie from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). Cathy's most recent publication is the book *Vital Connections*, which prompted an educational debate on what has been lost some twenty-five years after the introduction of the 'Tomorrow's Schools' policy. Her argument led the reader to conclude that connections and collaborations that once built strength and support for school leaders, was now a chance happening rather than anything systematic and that school leaders were in need of a reliable system to facilitate greater collaboration and structures to support their well-being. She used a line from the famous *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* poem as a metaphor for *Tomorrow's Schools* saying, 'When she was good she was very very good and when she was bad she was horrid'.

In the spirit of MacFarlane, Wylie took an optimistic view of the future for education saying that **New Zealand schools have the conditions to bring out the best in school self-management and without doubt the NZ Curriculum is the jewel in its crown.** Current challenges, she said, included isolation, ability to recruit the right person for a particular school, unrealistic workloads, variable Board of Trustees capability and 'expecting schools to solve systemic issues.'

Despite indisputable gains in student engagement and general educational success, one promise of *Tomorrow's Schools* was to be responsive to meet the needs of Māori education. Some twenty-five years later the Government says that the system has failed Māori and Pacific Island students and gaps related to social inequalities of the 1990s have greatly increased.

With self-management we lose a connected system, said Wylie, 'we have lost system coherence.'

Wylie believes that a coherent system begins with a clear purpose for education which includes values and goals from which we can develop frameworks, relationships and roles. The focus at all times must be the whole learner taking account of their context, the NZC and leadership development, all examined from an 'Inquiry' lens. This would include reflection and analysis of progress across the whole curriculum.

Between 2007 and 2010 there were considerable gains in teacher collaboration, e-learning opportunities, student achievement, teacher morale and job satisfaction but from 2010 to 2013 it all came to a halt. In particular stress levels had increased with

37% (of principals?) reporting stress as a factor in 2010 and 48% in 2013. Wylie proposes a number of reasons for the stalled progress including national standards, cuts to PLD, loss of dialogue, heightened competition, higher sense of 'reputation and 'risk'.

Some improvements have occurred since 2013 with more principals turning to connect with colleagues in networks or groups, sharing common issues, attending conferences and providing mutual support. Some are also learning from each other through mentoring, structured school visits and inquiry projects.

Obstacles however remain with almost 60% of primary schools in direct competition and 41% taking one fifth or more of their students from outside of their school zone. Principals are also looking for career pathways beyond principalship.

Wylie proposes that there are ways forward which include using time more flexibly, using inquiry to improve practice, valuing openness within school and working across schools to share challenges, learn from each other and share resources.

She finally looks to schools' relationships with the Ministry encouraging a resetting of the role and relationships. Just as Wylie favours greater connectedness amongst principals, she also promotes greater connectedness with the Ministry through developing a connected learning infrastructure together, based on openness and inquiry and finally she concludes that there needs to be joint work with the sector on policy and system learning development.

Dr Chris Jansen

A senior lecturer in educational leadership from Canterbury University, Dr Chris Jansen reflected on how innovation can create educational opportunities.

Jansen's opening slide, resembling a 'dyspraxic spider's web', might well have driven a few to covertly attend to their email traffic, but they were soon drawn back and were richly rewarded with his reminder of Alvin Toffler's famous statement 'The illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.'

He took notions like co-construction, collaboration and partnership, all ideas which we consider worthy goals and twisted them into a curly question. Are these really goals or just the means to an end? Daringly he then took his audience into the world of possibilities where 'the end' is not predetermined but co-created.

He led us through a series of questions about why we might collaborate and speculated on 'what if' scenarios. For instance 'what if we collaborated with others to increase our impact and influence or to collectively address a wider threat or opportunity?' Appealing notions indeed!

In education he suggested possible drivers for collaboration would come under three sources. These would be for learning attributes, including innovation and problem solving, self-management of learning and knowledge creation; the impact of technology, including connectedness, global reach and empowerment of learners; and shifts in our educational 'business as usual' such as modern learning environments, co-teaching and student self-management.

He then demonstrated how working together on these can lead to both opportunities, especially teacher peer development as well as risks, such as parents questioning the need for change.

The next phase of his presentation addressed how we should organise ourselves and create a design for collaboration.

He showed us a hierarchical structure and a network structure and asked his audience what was the one thing that a hierarchy cannot do? The answer should not have surprised. It cannot do collaboration or partnership. Only networks, messy and loose as they might sometimes be, can be innovative, responsive and collective. His original slide now began to make sense. Collaboration and networks, he explained are movements. They are living systems. A brief description of how the 'Student Army' organised itself in the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquakes perfectly illustrated the way in which collaborating around a common goal can 'take on a life of its own' and sometimes result in unexpected outcomes, such as, in this case, also attracting other groups such as 'Grey Power' to be involved.

In the end, he said, it is co-creation and co-design that enable innovation and ownership, rather than starting with a solution.

The Hon Steve Maharey

By now the audience was beginning to feel some common themes emerging across speakers and the Vice Chancellor of Massey University did not deviate from the trend. His notion of the way ahead for future education, like the speakers before him, pointed to construction of learning over instruction and placed personalised learning at the centre.

The world today is one of great complexity and disorder, he told his audience. Classrooms are increasingly filled with a diverse range of cultures, abilities and children with learning challenges. **It is no longer a time for teaching content through instruction, which naturally assumes an ordered world**, he said.

Maharey outlined a 'second way' for children to learn through creating and applying knowledge and through construction and competencies. This approach, he said assumes a complex and disordered world

He acknowledged that to thrive in today's world, the skills children require are not the same as those required for a more ordered world. Like his predecessors, he listed

critical thinking, self-management of learning, adaptability, risk taking, collaborating, creativity and life-long learning as the critical skills for succeeding in life today.

He told his attentive audience that the NZC was a document to be proud of and that he was honoured to have had oversight of its development during his term as Minister of Education. He was quick to note however, that to implement it effectively required successful teaching and school organisation, community engagement, strong leadership and good support. He also listed assessment as an important process emphasising the formative over summative.

Maharey then proposed a 'third way' for learning which takes a further step towards student self-management and empowerment. Still based in the personalised learning frame, students would become active participants in constructing their own learning by making their own decisions about why, how and what they learn.

He concluded by saying that in a rapidly changing world only the flexible, creative and innovative will succeed. Education therefore must respond and must do so rapidly.

Dr Peter Cammock is the managing Director of Leadership Consulting Ltd and Director of the Leadership Lab. The audience knew they were in for a treat by the title of his presentation, 'The Dance of Leadership' and his heightened 'joie de vivre'.

Cammock did not disappoint, enthusiastically opening his presentation with a series of short poems. The poems implied that there are choices in leadership and we can construct events optimistically and futuristically or we can focus on the negatives of the past.

He presented a model of management and leadership showing the difference between a centralised hierarchy and a decentralised network approach. Whilst the hierarchical model is about planning, organising and controlling, resulting in compliance, order and efficiency, the network approach is about envisioning, engaging, motivating and inspiring and results in commitment, positivity and innovation. It was quite clear that he favoured the latter model.

Cammock promoted the idea of 'choosing happiness' through conversations involving the mind, emotions, thoughts, relationships and engagement. 'It is through conversation that we glean meaning, direction and life purpose' he said.

Another way he suggested we can make our work meaningful is to see our job as a 'calling' or vocation which benefits both the individual and the organisation. Seeing your job as a calling, he said, is associated with high individual and organisational performance.

He concluded his presentation as enthusiastically as he began with more poetry extolling the virtues of a purposeful life all of which can be gained by seeing life's work as a 'calling'.

Looking through the Wider (Policy) Lens

Professor Michael Fullan from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education is no stranger to New Zealand educators, having been contracted to the New Zealand Government as an advisor to help implement the *Investing in Education Success* policy. He entitled his presentation *Convergence for moving forward*. In his view, moving forward was about whole system reform at both the macro and micro levels. The rewards for successful reform he listed as improved pedagogy, improved achievement, raising the bar and closing the gap.

He shared some of his own research, conducted in Toronto, from which he deduced that **if you want good results, don't count on external factors to motivate change and don't obsess about targets**. He suggested focussing on a small number of ambitious goals and capacity building.

Fullan cited some successful examples in both Ontario and California but warned 'never imitate others' success, just learn from them.'

The remainder of his presentation was devoted to his work in New Zealand advising the Minister and Ministry on the *IES initiative*. He conceded that the policy had been foisted onto the system and got a reaction! In his view *Tomorrow's Schools* could not work because it is a market model and nor, he said, can a top down model.

Leadership from the middle is the most powerful way to proceed, according to Fullan, because there is more ownership and coherence. He had some warnings about the process saying 'If you over-plan at the beginning you make a complex problem more problematic...so 'I like your 'loosey-goosey' approach', he said, in reference to the new element in the *IES* debate, the *Joint Initiative*.

He suggested that we should take advantage of leadership from the middle through the 'communities of schools' because each part of the middle gets better internally, and you learn from each other laterally, he said. In this way you improve professional capital.

Fullan offered a list of simple essentials for effective collaboration.

1. Developing high trust relationships
2. Focusing on ambitious student learning goals linked to measurable outcomes
3. Continuously improving instructional practice through cycles of collaborative inquiry
4. Using deliberate leadership and skilled facilitation within flat power structures
5. Frequently interacting and learning inwards

6. Connecting outwards to learn from others
7. Forming new partnerships among students, teachers and families
8. Securing adequate resources to sustain the work

These resonated with the majority of Fullan's audience who already engage in clusters and collaborative groups for a variety of reasons and already recognise the factors that make them successful.

He also looked to school cultures saying that 'talented schools improve weak teachers and talented teachers leave weak schools', adding that 'the sustainability of an organisation is a function of the quality of its lateral relationships'.

Finally he talked about 'fault lines' in the *IES* implementation, which he listed as the superficial leadership??, the achievement challenge, the use of data, how deep the work [inquiry] might be, support for improvement, the lack of 'systemness' identity, the Ministry's capacity and the potential to get it wrong.

He concluded with a video clip demonstrating that technology cannot do everything and we will always need human conversations.

Professor Meg Maguire, Professor of Sociology of Education at Kings College, London, had set intriguing expectations with the title of her presentation '*At the Centre of the Storm*'. What storm and what relevance would this storm have to principals in New Zealand?

Maguire swung into action and within the first few minutes, had flashed a UK news item up on the big screen. It drew loud painful howls of recognition from the 550 strong audience. The headline read '20% of London pupils leave primary school unable to read or count'. 'Where have we heard that before?' 'One in five are failing!' howled the audience again, echoing Minister Parata's 'crisis' call about the state of education in New Zealand.

The item perfectly mirrored all the concerns that New Zealand principals have expressed since the introduction of national standards, public achievement information and league tables; fears that these will lead to obsessions with assessment data, threats of school closure for 'under-performance' and chains of charter schools marching in to decimate the public school system. It was a nightmare vision through the lens of the future. Is this really how we could end up?

Maguire was relentless. Her next slide showed the former Education Minister sitting at a desk with an open book, next to a small child banging her head on the desk beside him. The caption read '*Some children may face official assessments in all of the first four years of primary school. The year one screening check can be resat in year two. Now ministers are to trial a second re-sit of the phonics test in year three for those who have already failed it twice...*' One particular group of children face

more of the same, year after year: assessment preparation, then assessment, then repeat'

A number of statements followed including one from the 2010 White Paper's forward by Prime Minister David Cameron which reads:

'What really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past' (Department of Education, 2010, p.3)

But the one that really got the audience going was from the current UK Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan. It read: *'We will expect every pupil by the age of 11 to know their times tables off by heart, to perform long division and complex multiplication and to be able to read a novel. They should be able to write a short story with accurate punctuation, spelling and grammar.'*

More gems were rolled out from the UK's Education Secretary including that hit squads could be sent in to take over a school within hours of a critical Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) judgement and fast-track them into academies (charter schools). The same treatment would apply to 'coasting' schools if they didn't urgently improve and raise standards.

'It has been impossible', she said, 'to stop the tsunami of reform throughout 2010-15 and it is set to continue.' **'The acceleration of change is amazing. In England, we haven't got a system left.'**

Teachers are the object of policy, not the agents,' she said. **'These are not reforms, but deforms,' she insisted.**

Maguire quoted from academic and policy critic, Peter Mortimer who wrote an 'outspoken study of British Schooling', called 'Education under siege'. In his book, he drew attention to the incentivisation for competition, she told us, because 'Ministers believe that only the stiffest competition will bring about school improvement.' At the same time these Ministers are giving extra funds to academies and free schools (charter schools) irrespective of whether the locals need or want such schools.

Finally Maguire presented some shocking narratives from UK principals and teachers to demonstrate the intolerable stress levels and conditions that educational professionals are currently enduring. She said that **it was now becoming almost impossible to recruit teachers or head teachers.** 'We lose 60% of teachers at the five year mark,' she said.

She concluded in the words of a Bob Dylan song with a warning to the Kiwi audience. **'Reforms have been inspected, detected and rejected,' she said. 'Don't go down this path.'**

Professor Alma Harris, Head of Educational Leadership at the Institute of Education London, and currently Director of the Institute of Educational Leadership at the University of Malaysia? (Malaya doesn't exist any more), like her counterpart Meg Maguire, quickly captured her audience.

She opened her address on 'High Performance' by emphasising the importance of context, which is too often forgotten. She also told us that not all change is for improvement and on connections, she said that Fullan had stated you cannot mandate what matters and neither, she said, can you mandate collaboration.

Harris made it clear that she believes we should aim for success for every child in every setting. Some people would argue that's not possible, she said, but I would say, 'So whose child are you going to fail?' 'Can you just hear it?' she challenged her audience, 'Oh, this would be a great school but parents keep sending the wrong children!'

'We continue to see attempts to improve schools and systems in ways that are manifestly unlikely to work,' she said. 'So much reform, so little change.'

Harris drew delight from her audience saying that **we need to rethink what high performance means and 'press the pause button on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is distorting education.**

Of course the policy makers love measures like PISA, she said, but there are other issues it does not measure including diversity, inclusion and exclusion, higher education, competing evidence and context.

Whilst everyone knows that Finland, Singapore and Chinese Asian countries do well in PISA rankings, we must remember that Finland is a homogeneous country with tight boarder controls so diversity is not the same issue that it is in New Zealand and the UK. Special education and inclusion is non-existent in Singapore and where do the Chinese Asians want to go to university? Not China, but the UK, USA and New Zealand.

In critiquing PISA, she said, 'if you use competing evidence, you get a different result. PISA takes no account of context and that is the biggest factor contributing to performance.'

She put the challenge, saying 'if you choose the *Global Youth Wellbeing Index* as your measure, what country would be top in the rankings then? Australia would be number one and China number fourteen. Everyone would be rushing to Australia! Using one measure for an education system skews the data.

She also said that whilst Shanghai's success is chiefly attributed to hard working teachers and students, less is said about parents paying vast amounts of money on private tuition so young people can be drilled.

The unfortunate consequence of international league tables like this is that we get unintended consequences. The spotlight goes on teachers who 'must be underperforming'. It also results in greater standardisation and increased private involvement in education.

'Standards aren't wrong,' said Harris, 'Standardisation is wrong!'

'Children are not appliances so don't treat them as toasters needing standard electrical current!'

This is the real problem with PISA she said. It's when the measure becomes the target.

'Improving schools is not so impossible, she told her audience, what is more difficult is sustaining that change.'

What really makes a difference is leadership, she said, because it is the key to improved school and system performance. She examined different types of leadership from individual charismatic leadership where the one principal does everything, to distributed or shared leadership and leadership where the purpose is to develop more leaders.

She distinguished five levels of leadership from the capable individual to the team manager, the competent manager, the effective leader and at the top the executive leader. True leaders, she said, don't create followers, they create more leaders. They are the leaders who focus on larger goals, are ambitious for the institution rather than themselves and distribute leadership widely.

'It is practising leadership that matters more than who is the leader,' she said and that involves relationships and connections. She described how leadership involves team work where teams are formed for a specific purpose and where teams may have fluid membership according to the task or expertise required. She also talked of the importance of professional learning communities for leadership development.

In closing she left the audience with three powerful messages. First, was to consider the context beyond the data and seek deeper explanations; secondly when considering change, focus on the right things not the latest things and finally, make connections within your school because that's where the potential for high performance really resides.

Her final message was for the education sector of New Zealand to unite against the standardisation and privatisation of our excellent education system with its world class curriculum before it collapses as has happened in the UK, the USA and now Australia. Resist! Resist! Resist! she cried.

Professor Diane Ravitch, Research Professor at New York University, addressed the audience from Long Island, through a video link. The virtual presentation was no less powerful than had she been physically present.

Ravitch got straight to the point in her opening greeting 'I have some words of warning,' she said. 'You must avoid being infected by GERM (Global Education Reform Movement). It is not about reform, she said. 'It's about privatisation and eliminating public education.'

She had stunned the audience into silence. It's not that New Zealand principals haven't heard this message before. They just haven't heard it so starkly before.

'It's about eliminating public education!' she repeated.

She then explained that the process begins with a narrative about declining standards and schools failing children which leads to a narrative of 'schools being in crisis.' Well, none of that's true, she said.

'What drags down performance in the United States,' she said, 'is poverty, more than any other factor. But **politicians and power brokers don't want to talk about poverty they want to talk about reform.**'

'Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans was a perfect opportunity to turn all the schools into charters,' she said with more than an ounce of sarcasm. 'With charters you have no unions, no tenure and no security,' she added.

There is this loudly expressed view amongst the power brokers that we must be data driven and American test scores are internationally ranked about middle. Therefore schools must be failing. This is not true, Ravitch again insisted. It is all linked to poverty. But there is a further belief that if you standardise testing and the curriculum and everyone has common testing then all children will be successful and all poverty will disappear.

Tests are central to all schooling in America. So much so that we are reaching the point where children no longer read books, just the bits they need for the test, said Ravitch.

The testing culture that is now endemic to the American education system is a multi-billion dollar industry and leading the charge is Pearson. Pearson Education, as it was known until 2011, is a British-owned education publishing and assessment service to schools and corporations and to students. Pearson owns a wide range of educational media brands and reaches across 70 countries internationally with 60% of its sales in North America. It also owns the *Financial Times*.

What is happening now is that we have education as a 'for profit' industry which we have never seen before. It attracts the entrepreneurs from Wall Street, the Gates Foundation and other large Foundations. They swoop in once they hear that a school needs 'turning around'. That's shorthand for school closure and conversion

to a charter school. There is a belief that teachers are motivated by incentives such as performance pay and the argument is that you will get higher test scores. Motivational psychology tells us that teachers are not motivated by money but rather by a sense of mastery and of autonomy. But the waters have become murky as education has become more corporatised. Corporate reformers can't imagine a profession not being driven by profit.

One thing that doesn't count in this new environment is experience, which is not incentivised at all. It's about saving money on teachers so you get many new teachers coming and going. The economists say that experienced teachers do not get higher test scores from their students so you may as well have young inexperienced teachers who cost less. There are teachers in schools who have had five weeks' training getting great test results. So teaching is become a stepping stone rather than a career and many good teachers are leaving.

What all of this has done is opened the door for computers to become teachers and indeed there are already 'virtual charter schools' where students are just given the computer and the materials. Admittedly there is a 50% drop out from these virtual schools but they persist. This is the ultimate in eliminating human relationships from education, Ravitch told us.

It's a costly business evaluating teachers by test scores but this has been imposed by the Obama administration as part of the economic recovery strategy. The whole education reform programme is a \$5billion investment called *Race to the Top*. It is not surprising Obama has had to look to the Gates Foundation to help out. Cleverly the Gates Foundation has also poured money into the unions. That way, there is no resistance. Further, Obama relies on the Gates Foundation donations to boost his own election campaign coffers. He wouldn't get re-elected without their generous support. He also relies on Wall Street for donations to his election campaigns and that is why he must maintain an 'anti-public-education stance', supporting standardisation.

By now, Ravitch had transported her audience far from learning children, actual teaching and real school leadership, but when it seemed it could not get worse, she had this to say.

'There are schools that calculate the 'value-add' score and those that simply have literacy and numeracy scores. So if an Art teacher is being evaluated in a school that does not have a 'value-add' score they will be judged by the reading scores of the school's reading teacher! This is called 'attributed evaluation' and this really has happened in the State of Florida. It may be unfair, but it is not unconstitutional, she assured her disbelieving audience.

To illustrate the environment in which education sits in America, Ravitch explained the example of the Walton family who own Wal-Mart one of the biggest retail outlets in America. They have a very large education foundation and support one in four privately owned schools. Some of those schools have very high test results because the schools are filled with white middle class students and they can exclude those who might muddy their results. Teachers in these schools may be portrayed as miracle workers but in fact they are just using the system. The Waltons also give

generous donations to those standing for the local Council in the areas supporting those schools. The subtle message from the reformers is that they are pushing for the future whilst resisters are just trying to protect the status quo. The reformers are of course winning because they have wealth on their side.

Ravitch had delivered the most terrifying of messages, but said there were areas where you can have influence without money. These she listed as the Bloggers' network, Twitter, Facebook, and in America, the 'Opt-Out' Movement. Opt-Out is a movement started by parents who decided they won't allow their children to take the test. Last year there were 60,000 such parents, this year there are 200,000. New York, she said, is a hot bed of the 'Opt-Out' movement. The dream is that you present the test and nobody takes it. It would be a bit like having a war with no soldiers, she said.

So it is important to get the message out to parents. You need a media campaign, a social network campaign and as leaders of schools you need to talk to parents, she counselled.

And her final words for her Kiwi audience?

Resist! Resist! Resist! she insisted. Public schools are vital to a democracy.

Phil O'Reilly is the Chief Executive of BusinessNZ and he addressed his audience through the business lens of tomorrow. There were six factors influencing New Zealand's future, according to O'Reilly.

The first is that we are globally connected, he said. That refers to more than just Australia and China he cautioned. The next place for manufacturing will be Africa, he told his audience.

Secondly, New Zealanders are friends with everyone. We have no enemies and we have never invaded anyone. We are able to be friends with America and China at the same time, which will only become more important in the future.

We are very good at high value industry and niche industries. Take the rocket lab in Canterbury for example, he said. That is a classic example of a high value technology and services business.

We are much more than a farm, even if agriculture does play an important part in our economy. We are also good at high technology engineering and making movies, he said. Although our research and development spend is low, where it has been increased the benefits are obvious. We are a small country and distant from most others, so we are isolated which does create problems for us, he said.

We have high quality institutions, a corruption free bureaucracy and court system, good border control and a high quality education system. Because we are corruption free we are able to have an efficient economy and free and open debate, he said. However we do business with a variety of countries, not just European countries. Some of our trading partners are not corruption free and we have to adapt to that.

The implications of these factors are that it's not all about Asia. Rather think Latin America. They are an emerging power house and we get on very well with them. Think Middle East and Africa as they become more globalised. They too find it easy to connect with us.

Resilience and connections will matter in the future, said O'Reilly and it is good that the NZ Curriculum recognises this. The future will see us making more frequent on-line and off-line connections, he said.

New Zealand Society will change as we become more multi-cultural. For example, right now we have refugee families in Mt Roskill. People will have different ideas so we will have to carefully deliberate to know what changes will advantage all of us. We are fortunate to have good social cohesion in New Zealand and can use that to integrate many cultures to our mutual benefit.

There will however be some challenges to that social cohesion and also to various institutions. The government will not be able to solve all of these problems and so we can expect talk of the private sector being involved as well. There are also implications for the education system. Work ready skills will be critical. There will be many high value, high skill jobs, while low skill jobs will diminish.

Both hard and soft skills matter. We will need hard skilled scientists and technologists but also those with the soft skills of high emotional IQ, customer service and self actualisation. We already produce people high in these soft skills and New Zealanders abroad are often recognised for them. We are good at connecting and recognising the context of others which is a highly valued skill.

Another set of skills we do need are those of Science & Technology but students are not readily taking up these subjects. It may be that we need to look to incentives for these areas or at least better understand why students are not choosing these subjects.

There are also some problems. Poverty is holding kids back. Mostly these kids are in rural and regional locations. There is no doubt that kids in decile one schools come from deprived homes. There are some excellent examples of schools in New Zealand that have developed models to address problems associated with poverty and other low decile schools could benefit from sharing some of those ideas. O'Reilly suggested it was much more sensible to look to our own good practice than to look overseas for models. 'It's what's good for New Zealand that matters, he said, not what's good for Switzerland.'

He also suggested that schools need on-going conversations with businesses to co-invest in New Zealand schools if we wish to maintain our high quality education system.

Dame Diane Robertson is the CEO of the Auckland City Mission, who also has a background in teaching. Her topic question was 'What stops people moving out of poverty?'

Poverty is Robertson's business and she has mapped and researched the topic in depth. She used genograms, which are a bit like a family tree to better understand the complex relationships within the families of her clients and service maps and debt maps to better understand how these clients were being supported, or not. This allowed her to map, for example, a food journey. It can be a very long journey to get food from a food bank, including bus trips, visits to WINZ for the letter verifying that the client does not have money for food, then further bus trips to get to the food bank, then to the budgeting agent before a food parcel is allocated, she said. Some who have never had this experience are very quick to say that it's the family that has to change.

Every principal in the audience was aware of factors that prevent children learning. They often include lack of food and of course hungry children can't concentrate. But it's not just lack of food - some mothers won't send their children to school because they are ashamed not to have a school lunch to give them. Broken school attendance is also detrimental to learning.

To think that 'food-in-school' will resolve the issues is simplistic thinking. These families also have housing issues and frequently move from school to school as they move house or lodgings, said Robertson. They are also isolated, often have no friends, don't go to birthday parties, haven't got fees for trips or excursions and are in poor health, she said. And the mothers who are trying to manage life better by not eating themselves suffer reduced cognitive functioning. It is not that they are any less intelligent or able to learn it is that they are hungry and often cold. Those two factors can reduce IQ by 13 points.

Women dealing with poverty have no energy left over for their children, said Robertson. It's not that they don't try. It is energy sapping seeking food, going from agency to agency and being treated like scum, whilst trying to hide from the debt collector while your cognitive ability is impaired.

'Parents want their kids to do better. They want education for their kids. They often take training courses that don't lead to jobs, but do lead to more debt, she said. **'Education is a way out of poverty, but poverty stops people participating in the first place.'**

Robertson did not feel that the answer to this dreadful social ill was the schools' responsibility. She suggested that the root of the problem lay in inequality.

Whilst she acknowledged that social workers in schools did make a difference, until there are systemic changes, we are doing no more than just patching the problem, she said. 'People talk about navigators to lead people through a screwed up system. Why not change the system?' she said.

Robertson would happily offer some advice for change.

1. Every child in a healthy home
2. Food
3. Debt consolidation – for many low income families 90% of the income is spent on debt and food is a discretionary item

4. There are many NGOs competing for funding and these agencies need to work together
5. Stop imposing more on women in poverty

Dr Jennifer Garvey-Berger is an expert in leadership who believes a leader's job is about developing people to be their 'biggest' selves, and that requires leaders to be constantly learning. She talked about '*Leading the possible and preparing for an unknowable future*'

The world is not simple it is complex and often chaotic, said Garvey-Berger. If we try to apply basic 'cause and effect' methods to making changes, we are likely to fail unless we are in a completely predictable world. In education that is very unlikely.

She presented a framework called the Cynefin Framework, adapted from Dave Snowden. The framework describes four different worlds from the predictable, where everything is obvious, to the predictable where things are not entirely obvious, to the complex unpredictable world and on to the chaotic unpredictable world.

She suggested that there is probably a world which we choose for our school to operate in most of the time. But that may not be the world in which your school should remain. She invited the audience to think about which world their school should be moving towards and why.

Different challenges might evoke different responses, she suggested. For example, if we were to address poverty, we wouldn't apply the obvious predictable method because we don't know what the steps might be to resolve it. We also don't know the context within which it exists. We need the conversation first. It is more likely that in Garvey-Berger's view, such an issue would in the end be progressed by nudging the system.

Garvey-Berger encouraged listening as an important leadership skill because it is through listening that common ground is often found. 'Frequently, she said, **we agree on the same goals, but differ on how to find a path to reach them.** Good leaders she said, will be prepared to see the other point of view and even adopt it. That builds strong relationships and empowers others. When preparing for the unknown, Garvey-Berger said, critical thinking and knowledge creation are most important. That requires understanding how others think not just what they know.

In conclusion...

The conference programme's theme of seeing education through different lenses brought a coherence to the different topics which gave it a very pleasing shape and sense of rationality.

Messages that came through strongly and repeatedly stressed that self-selected collaborative activities where all members have a common purpose can be beneficial to leadership development and to learning communities. A further issue echoed repeatedly was the fact that New Zealand's education system lacks clear purpose and direction.

The conference clarified that here in New Zealand we can be proud to have some excellent examples of sound research, contextualised to our environment and conducted by our own researchers from which all principals can learn and improve their leadership practice.

It is timely that we continue to take on board the strong warning from speakers from both the UK and the USA that global reforms are dangerous and destructive and should be resisted.