NO SCHOOL IS AN ISLAND

FOSTERING COLLABORATION IN A COMPETITIVE SYSTEM

ROSE PATTERSON

THE NEW ZEALAND INITIATIVE

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2014

The New Zealand Initiative is an independent public policy think tank supported by chief executives of major New Zealand businesses. We believe in evidence-based policy and are committed to developing policies that work for all New Zealanders.

Our mission is to help build a better, stronger New Zealand. We are taking the initiative to promote a prosperous, free and fair society with a competitive, open and dynamic economy. We develop and contribute bold ideas that will have a profound, positive, long-term impact.

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Rose Patterson is a Research Fellow at The New Zealand Initiative working on education policy. She published three reports on teacher quality in 2013–14 with co-author John Morris, which included a research trip to Singapore, Finland, the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada. Before joining the Initiative, she taught English in Japan, and worked for four years as a Researcher for the Health Sponsorship Council, a Crown Entity that promoted healthy lifestyles. Rose has a Master's degree in Psychology in child development and a Bachelor of Commerce with a major in Marketing from the University of Otago. Rose writes regularly for the Initiative's weekly newsletter Insights and for stuff.co.nz, and has made radio and television appearances on educational issues.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Initiative's last education report, *Teaching Stars: Transforming the Education Profession*, took policy ideas from successful education jurisdictions overseas to look at how New Zealand might strengthen the quality of its teaching profession. One of the major trends internationally is the move away from top-down bureaucratic models of schooling improvement. Teachers and schools are best placed to learn from each other, particularly in New Zealand's highly devolved education system.

This fourth report in the Initiative's series on education looks at one type of model of this kind of lateral professional learning that already exists in New Zealand - Learning and Change Networks (LCN) - which around 10% of schools are currently involved in.

Policymakers reading this report, however, shouldn't limit their consideration to this one model. A 2012 report by the New Zealand Council of Education Research (NZCER) found that 72% of primary and intermediate schools collaborate in some kind of professional cluster. The philosophy behind LCNs, nevertheless, is impressive because it addresses some of New Zealand's systemic issues. While the competitive elements of New Zealand's self-managing school system have driven quality changes in education, good practice is slow to spread, because competition for students disincentivises schools from sharing their secrets to success with other schools. The LCN framework encourages collaboration within a competitive system; enabling teachers to learn from one another to build their capacity.

The LCN strategy represents an appropriate balance of top-down and bottom-up change. It started as a strategy to support primary and intermediate schools to lift achievement in National Standards. But it is demand driven. Networks of schools (which range from between 3 and 27 schools in size) voluntarily form as LCNs, and then receive facilitation support from the Ministry of Education and the University of Auckland which has the provider contract. There is no extra funding provided aside from that facilitation, which works out to around 24 days of facilitation per network (on average) over a two-year period. Facilitators work in and out of different LCNs.

So how effective are LCNs? Ministry analysis found a 17.2 percentage point increase in the proportion of students achieving 'at' or 'above' standard between 2012 and 2013 for schools that provided data, compared with a 9.4 percentage point increase for a matched control sample. The Initiative undertook a more conservative approach to analysis, comparing National Standards results for schools that joined in 2012 with schools that had never joined, for each decile. Although one decile grouping showed some detectable differences, the numbers were small. More time is needed under the LCNs before progress can be fully assessed. It is certainly worthwhile continuing to monitor the effect that LCNs are having on achievement outcomes. In the meantime, the LCN strategy is a promising one, for the reasons outlined in this report.

There is a philosophy behind the LCN strategy that schools own and drive their own change. It is a flexible, self-learning strategy, rather than one with hard-and-fast bureaucratic rules. The facilitators who work with each LCN are skilled at adapting their level of support to the needs of the network. They encourage students, families/whānau, teachers and school leaders to work together to identify the achievement challenge they need to work on and they dig deep to ask what needs to change to address that challenge. The most common 'change priorities' identified through this process are greater family/community connection, 'student agency' (student ownership of their own learning), and improved instruction.

This report does not drill down into the detail of how each network works together, as this varies considerably from network to network. However, it does identify the key features of the LCN strategy that seem to lead to success. First, as already mentioned, the LCN strategy represents an appropriate balance of structure and freedom – a 'light touch' bureaucracy – and facilitators adjust the amount of support they provide to each network over time. With time, internal capacity within each LCN increases.

Second, each student is considered the centre of their own network of learning, which recognises that learning happens beyond classroom walls and outside of school time and is facilitated by many people, not just teachers. It attempts to authentically engage the people in children's lives who can help to enhance their learning opportunities. This is a positive model given the importance of engaging parents with the education system, and given that family background is even more of an influence on student learning than teachers are.

Third, LCNs seem to work when the key ingredients of relationships and trust are present. Each LCN needs appropriate time to build those relationships and agree on a shared achievement challenge, and this common purpose helps to unify people and build trust. Once the trust is there, it is possible to have challenging conversations and a sense of peer accountability emerges. In this way, it is possible for LCNs to benefit from the dual effects of competition and collaboration. Competition provides the sharper edge of accountability in the background, where schools are motivated to attract funding on a per-student basis, but collaboration enables educators to learn from each other about what works. Working with parents and students themselves is a deeper form of collaboration again.

Finally, one of the most compelling aspects to LCN is that are ideas and knowledge are not only shared within each LCN, but the facilitators cross-pollinate that knowledge across LCNs.

This report was written just prior to New Zealand's 2014 general election and makes recommendations under two scenarios; a National-led government and a Labour-led government, building on the election policy platforms of both parties.

National's hallmark education policy is Investing in Educational Success (IES) where schools would form into networks of around ten schools called "Communities of Schools" and receive additional funding for career-stretch roles for teachers and leaders. As the policy stands, Communities of Schools would receive around $12,000 operational funding to work together (plus salary top-ups for those taking on the leadership roles). Much can be learned from the LCN strategy. The recommendations to tweak the IES policy are as follows:

- Provide the additional operational funding to each Community of Schools once it has registered and encourage Communities of Schools to use that funding to establish relationships, trust, and the common purpose, before even thinking about the teacher career roles. It is worthwhile to take the time to get this right. The use of this funding should be at the discretion of each Community, and could be used to contract facilitation support from the University of Auckland LCN team or alternative providers. External impartial facilitators would help ease initial tensions, bring in knowledge of how networks of schools can work together, and help build internal capacity.
- Current successful LCNs should be encouraged to lead the way to show other Communities of Schools how it can be done.
- Communities of Schools should be encouraged to take time to build the career pathway aspect of the policy. It is more important to first get Communities of Schools working together harmoniously, and to allow leaders to emerge who may apply for those career stretch roles. Communities of Schools should not rush to automatically promote people into all the available roles. Depending on the capability of teachers within each Community, it may be worthwhile first building capacity in the 'Within-School Teacher' roles before

establishing the 'Across-Community Teacher' roles (a step up in that career path). Again though, this should be up to the discretion of each Community depending on their stage of development and internal capacity.

Labour plans to scrap the IES policy, reduce class sizes by funding 2,000 more teachers across the system, and to bring back a School Advisory Service where excellent teachers and leaders would be seconded for up to 3 years to act as mentors and leaders. This report recommends the following tweaks:

- Although the education sector is divided in its support for the IES policy, the idea of Communities of Schools seems to be fairly well supported. Labour should continue this aspect of the policy regardless. Communities of Schools could then use, if they wished, the extra teacher resource to provide more classroom release time to encourage teachers to work together within their own schools and across schools in the network.
- Alter the School Advisory Service to a School Facilitator Service. Communities of Schools could access facilitation support once they register. Facilitators could be based locally but employed by a national service that would bring facilitators together to cross-pollinate knowledge across the country. This policy should be highlighted as a career path with more responsibility and pay, to represent a career step for educators.

Regardless of the political stripes of government, education policy should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Self-management and competition has lifted the game and enabled many schools to provide a better education for many students. But across the political spectrum, it is recognised that there are barriers to permeating good practice throughout the system. There is already momentum to encourage more collaboration and connections between schools within a self-managing system. LCN is one strategy to encourage this collaboration in a way that continues to respect New Zealand schools' autonomy. Rather than a top-down model of change, facilitators help build connections between schools and with the wider community of people (families and whānau) who can enhance learning opportunities for students. Whether Labour or National lead the next government, there are lessons to be learnt from the excellence in New Zealand's education system. This report illuminates those lessons.

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INTRODUCTION

Professional collaboration within schools, supporting ongoing adult learning, is one of the most promising ways to improve student performance.

— Cathy Wylie, Chief Researcher, NZCER[1]

I've worked in schools for years, seen hundreds of schools in my job, and I've never seen people so excited.

— Jean Annan, Strategy Development Advisor, Learning and Change Networks[2]

[The LCN strategy] is an innovation in its true sense of the word and off the scale in comparison to what is happening around the world.

— Valerie Hannon, Director, Innovation Unit, London[3]

HOW THIS REPORT CAME ABOUT

This report is the result of a collision of two main ideas: that meaningful change in education happens when educators drive and own change from the ground up, and that New Zealand education has pockets of excellence to learn from.

First, educators are the ones who should drive improvement. As UK think tank Reform notes, school improvement cannot be done to schools; it is far more effective when schools own improvement strategies. Indeed, the New Zealand Initiative's second report on teacher quality, *Around the world: The evolution of teaching as a profession*, identified overseas examples of policies to encourage teacher development through teacher collaboration. A common thread of that international research is that the best jurisdictions "build capacity laterally, not centrally". Centrally controlled prescriptive systems take professionalism away from teachers. Instead, education systems should allow teachers and schools to lead capacity building. This is particularly important in New Zealand's self-managing school system, where schools already possess a great deal of autonomy.

Second, New Zealand has pockets of excellence. Graeme Aitken, Dean of Education at the University of Auckland, noted a missing piece of the puzzle in the Initiative's series of three education reports. The Initiative had 1) looked at the policy settings in New Zealand, 2) looked overseas for examples of policy settings to lift the quality of teaching and teachers, and 3) had recommended policies that could be adapted to the New Zealand context. Yet it hadn't profiled examples of excellence in our own backyard.

This report fills that gap. It identifies and profiles a systematic strategy – Learning and Change Networks (LCN) – which encourages lateral, rather

1 Cathy Wylie, Opportunities for teacher collaborative practices in a self-managed school system: The New Zealand experience (Wellington: NZCER & Stout Centre, Victoria University, 2011).

2 Quoted in Jude Barback, "Leading Learning and Change across the country", Education Review (November 2013), Web, www.educationreview.co.nz/magazine/november-2013/leading-learning-and-change-across-the-country/#.VCEMXqhTjeY.

3 Quoted in Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4 (Auckland UniServices Limited, University of Auckland, 2014), p 37, https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/education/about/learning-change-networks/Milestone%204%20report%20final.pdf.

than top-down, capacity building. As Brian Annan, Provider Team Director for LCN at the University of Auckland, says, networks of schools collaborating together to lift achievement "look within to find their expertise in the first instance"[4], echoing the view that excellence in New Zealand's education sector exists already.

The job of policymakers is to remove the barriers that obstruct good practice from spreading and enable excellent teachers to unleash the potential of other teachers, in a way that is not mandated from the top, but is supported by peers. New Zealand's Ministry of Education established the LCN strategy in 2012 to build this kind of school ownership for change and improvement, partnering with the University of Auckland as the provider of services to schools networking together as LCNs. The goal was for schools to voluntarily cluster with other schools, creating 60 networks. As at July 2014, there were 53 networks, with 286 schools and kura out of around 2,500 schools in New Zealand. Broken down by school sector, there were 7 early childhood providers, 19 kura, 240 primary schools, and 20 secondary schools involved in LCN.

NETWORKING: A HUMAN WAY OF DOING THINGS

It is important to note, before profiling the LCN strategy in this report, that LCN is not the only type of collaborative educational network operating in New Zealand. While around 10% of schools are involved in LCN, there are many other informal, organic networks of schools in various stages of development working together to share learning throughout New Zealand. As Annan explains, "Learning and Change [LCN] is not Nirvana. It's a version [of networking] that some people are interested in".[5] By no means then should the reader exclude examples of other organic models when considering how networks work and how government policy might enable those networks to further harness their potential.

An example of such a model is the Manaiakalani cluster, formed in 2007, in the Tamaki basin of Auckland. It is the most famous example of a collaboration of schools and families engaging children in learning using digital devices. While Manaiakalani partnered with LCN to share their knowledge with other LCN networks, coming under the umbrella of LCN, its history precedes LCN. Manaiakalani considers itself as a "cluster of schools working in a community" rather than an LCN per se, and has its own plans to extend and adapt the programme to other interested school networks.

Other examples of networks mentioned by contacts and interviewees for this report include ConnectEd in the Waikato, a network of 42 schools. Anthony Royal of Ngā Pū Waea (the National Māori Broadband Working Group) has started trusts in Otaki and Porirua to network schools, and the Excel Rotorua Education Initiative is networking principals across Rotorua to establish a large e-learning community. Other networks are the Wellington Loop, which focuses on e-learning; the Upper Hutt cluster; the Wainuiomata cluster; the Shine Porirua Education Initiative; and the countrywide Virtual Learning Networks.

Most of these examples are from the Wellington area, but there are countless more. These networks all have different histories, characteristics, levels of formality, purposes, shapes and sizes. They are organised along different parameters like geography, stage of schooling, and subject area of focus, and have different degrees of working together. Some are clusters of primary schools that feed into secondary schools; some have been initiated by the schools themselves and some by community groups; some have developed organically; and some have a history in Ministry-funded initiatives. Although Annan is involved with the LCN as a strategy, he notes that "the whole notion of networking is not a strategy. It is a way that humans do things".[6]

4 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

5 Ibid

6 Ibid.

Indeed a 2012 survey of primary and intermediate schools by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) found that 72% of New Zealand schools belonged to a professional cluster of some sort, 14% were with LCN, and 9% with Positive Behaviour for Learning.[7] Some clusters that were previously funded by the Ministry were continuing; 15% were part of Information and Communications Technology clusters, 7% part of Extending High Standards Across Schools, and 6% part of Network Learning communities. In 43% of New Zealand schools, staff visited colleagues in other schools to learn from one another.

Even within the more formal LCN, there is a great degree of variability. The size of networks ranges between 3 and 27 schools, for example, and like other networks, LCN schools are organised along different lines (for example, by geography, feeder schools into local secondary schools). Although LCN is targeted towards decile 1–3 schools, higher decile schools are not excluded from joining.

While educators naturally form their own networks, this report does focus on the formal LCN model as an attempt by the Ministry to encourage networking to loosen boundaries between schools. The aim of LCN is to lift achievement for 'priority learner groups' by identifying the learning needs of children who are often left behind.

The kids that the LCN initiative is designed for are the ones for whom opportunities need to be manufactured, because it's not going to happen for those kids just by leaving them to their own devices. They need support, a hand up... but it's also about them helping themselves up and others helping them do so.[8]

LCN as a more formal method of networking is enabling collaboration within what is essentially a competitive system. As James O'Shaughnessy of UK think tank Policy Exchange said in 2012:

[New Zealand's] highly atomised framework is both the system's greatest strength and weakness. On one hand, the autonomy given to schools and teachers has generated exciting innovations at the local level. On the other hand, system-wide change occurs at a slow pace. And collaborative frameworks have yet to be built into education practices.[9]

MORE THAN TECHNOLOGY

Many of the examples of networks listed above have a technological component to them or are focussed on digital learning, exploring the use of digital devices as tools to aid learning. Technology can be used as a learning tool in various ways, and can open connections between people in education. "Networks are now reporting that the use of digital technologies is opening up greater possibilities for lateral learning of all network participants".[10] However, this report concentrates on the way that people can come together to lift educational outcomes, rather than the tools per se. And there seems to be a recognition within the education system that technology is not the panacea. Thomson explains:

The tools [digital devices] give us the opportunity and access to lateral learning and to look at what's happening in Finland, or at Manaiakalani, for example. But then we have to ask how [the digital devices] are going to improve outcomes for our students, rather than just copy the idea. We think about how to apply it in our own context.[11]

7 Cathy Wylie and Linda Bonne, Primary and intermediate schools in 2013: Main findings from the NZCER national survey (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2014).

8 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

9 James O'Shaughnessy, Competition meets collaboration: Helping school chains address England's long tail of educational failure (London: Policy Exchange, 2012), p 36, www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/competition%20meets%20collaboration.pdf.

10 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4, op. cit. p 34.

11 Robin Thomson, Personal Interview.

WHAT THIS REPORT IS AND WHAT IT'S NOT

This report aims to capture the thinking behind the LCN model, and provide the reader with an idea of what happens within and between networks of schools. While the overarching framework and strategy of LCN is manufactured at the centre, the LCN strategy by design is constantly adapting and self-learning. LCN is not a one-size-fits-all approach, so instead of trying to provide a full description of the model, this report covers the broad framework and interprets the key features that seem to make the programme successful.

The report is formed from interviews with school leaders in the Naenae cluster, impressions gained from observing LCN facilitators work with school leaders in the Tasman cluster, desktop research, and quantitative analysis of National Standards results to discern differences in outcomes between LCN and non-LCN schools (see Chapter Three).

It is worth noting that both the Manaiakalani and Naenae clusters profiled in this report are lighthouse examples of where networking shows promising outcomes – these clusters get many visits from other schools and networks. On the plus side, they are examples of excellence that other networks are learning from. It is difficult, however, to generalise whether this excellence is indeed spreading to other networks and schools. It is also worth noting that sometimes success comes down to luck, timing, and the personalities and commitments of people involved.

The information in this report will not be new to many people involved in LCN, or in education more generally. But it is important to highlight the exciting and excellent work going on in our education system for those who sit outside the system and are unaware of LCN and the international attention it is getting. Thinking about networks in an even wider sense, New Zealand business leaders who support the New Zealand Initiative and have an interest in education may be interested in tapping into education networks to share their own knowledge and skills and also learn from the education sector. The hope is that this report will continue the cross-pollination of knowledge that LCN is all about, share the concept of LCN with the business world, policymakers, and the interested public, and highlight the importance of thinking about education and learning as something that occurs in every facet of our lives, not just within four classroom walls. Every student is at the centre of their own network of learning.

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CHAPTER ONE
LEARNING AND CHANGE NETWORKS

We hope to create a self-sustaining system that can learn from the system.

— Jackie Talbot, former National Manager, LCN, Ministry of Education

THE HISTORY OF LEARNING AND CHANGE NETWORKS (LCN)

In 2010, the National-led government introduced National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics for primary and intermediate schools (years 1 to 8). In July 2011, the government set aside $7 million funding to support schools with National Standards over a two-year period. With that, the Ministry of Education contracted the University of Auckland's UniServices to provide facilitation services for groups of schools voluntarily forming as "Learning and Change Networks" (LCN). The University of Auckland holds the contract as the official provider for this work, but it is a partnership between the Ministry and the University of Auckland and both organisations deploy staff as facilitators who work with networks of schools (LCNs) around the country. The University of Auckland is contracted to provide 1,140 facilitation days in total over a two-year period. They aim to work with 60 networks overall, which equates to around 24 facilitation days per network on average.

Before LCN, the Ministry had led the Schooling Improvement Strategy, which also involved grouping school leaders together to learn through joint interventions. Leaders learned to use achievement data to diagnose gaps in learning and worked on enhancing pedagogy to address those gaps. Annan explains how prior to LCN he was interested in looking at not only how schools networked together in the way of the Schooling Improvement Strategy, but thinking about networking from a student-centred point of view, with the learner at the centre of their own network of people who could help them learn: family/whānau, teachers, school leaders but also peers and the wider community. "I was leaning more towards communities of practice than schooling improvement interventions, but we knew this contract would have to create a bridge from one to the other"[13] (from Schooling Improvement to LCN).

Annan's advice for LCN was to bring together three elements. First, to take from the Schooling Improvement methodology the intent to support schools to identify and address student achievement challenges among priority learners in literacy and numeracy, and continue to grow effective teaching and leadership. Second was Annan's idea of children and young adults leading investigations into their own learning arrangements with support from teaching professionals and families. Third was to promote lateral learning and change among those groups of students, families/whānau, teachers and school leaders.

This research started with LCN as an example of how teachers can collaborate in a network of support, challenge and encouragement to build their own skills and knowledge, given that expertise already sits within the system. But the LCN approach is much more extensive, recognising that parents and students also have knowledge, expertise and skills to draw upon. From a resourcing perspective for policymaking, teachers

12 Quoted in Jude Barback, "Leading Learning and Change across the country", op. cit.

13 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

are the most important factor within the school for student achievement. But LCN is more holistic, recognising that children learn all the time, in all places, and from all people. Learning is not limited to four classroom walls and between school bells. The network of people in a student's life can come together to enhance learning opportunities.

THE PROCESS OF LEARNING AND CHANGE

There is a broad framework to the LCN process that the Ministry's Lead Development Advisors (who sometimes work as facilitators) and University of Auckland's facilitators use. For example, while there are three phases of development under LCN, these are not discrete periods of time and work. And while there are three key roles in each network of schools, there are no hard-and-fast rules about who is involved, when and where. The LCN facilitation team and the school networks themselves are continually learning about what works, and the process is flexible and adaptive enough to respond to local contexts. However, this section provides a loose description of the general process and framework.

Schools interested in participating voluntarily form a network with other schools. The first phase involves setting up the infrastructure – seeing whether the network qualifies for LCN – and setting schools up with the provider – the University of Auckland. The second phase is about developing understanding. Facilitators from the University of Auckland together with Lead Development Advisors from the Ministry help networks identify their 'achievement challenge' and 'change priorities', and encourage the LCN to work with a wider network of people who have an interest in and an effect on children's learning. This includes four main groups: the students themselves, families/whānau, teachers, and school leaders. These groups work together to identify their achievement challenge, which is usually something quite specific, for example, reading comprehension. The change priority is how the LCN decides to address the identified achievement challenge (there can be more than one change priority).

WHAT IS A PRIORITY LEARNER?

There are some inconsistencies in the way priority learners are defined and, therefore, which children are captured by the definition. Since Māori and Pacific students, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, children with special education needs, and English-language learners all tend to be overrepresented in underachievement, the term priority learners is sometimes code for these groups of children. The other definition of priority learners seen in the reporting on LCN is children who are achieving below National Standards. This definition picks up children from the sub-groups identified above, as well as others who may require more support to lift their achievement.

Annan says the benefit of getting children and their families, to identify their own learning challenges in the understanding phase is that it uncovers information that teachers and leaders might not otherwise have. The traditional approach has been to look at student achievement data – for example, a school might identify that its students are struggling with reading comprehension. The typical response after identifying this challenge would be to simply do more reading comprehension exercises. But talking to children uncovers their real challenges with reading comprehension. The LCN process "draws out ideas for change that are hard to see".[14] One LCN, for example, discovered through this process that students were anxious about red pen marks from teachers through their books and this was demotivating. As a result, the LCN encouraged children to write for a wider audience rather than just something they had to do for the teacher to mark. "The emphasis shifted from writing as a chore for the teacher to writing for people

14 "Background of the strategy", The University of Auckland, Web, education.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/learning-and-change-networks/lcn-background.html.

interested in my [the child's] ideas...the kids loved that mindset shift and became totally motivated to write".[15]

In this second phase, schools map the current situation around the achievement challenge, figure out what practices are already happening, and analyse trends and patterns within the network. The process of identifying change priorities creates a "compelling momentum to change"[16] by choosing two or three core things that the network of people (students, families/whānau, teachers, and school leaders) wish to focus on. Rob Mill, a Lead Development Advisor from the Ministry of Education's LCN team, who facilitates LCNs around the country, says it is surprising how often networks independently identify the same types of change priorities through this process.

An LCN report released at the end of 2013 reviewed the practices of a cross-section of 21 networks, and broadly categorised the change priorities identified by those LCNs into 12 categories.[17] The number of networks out of 21 identifying each change priority is listed in brackets (note that networks could identify more than one change priority):

- family/community connection (19);
- student agency (15);
- instructional (15);
- cultural and linguistic responsiveness (7);
- 21st century learning (7);
- organisational (6);
- evaluative capability/data analysis and use (6);
- lateral learning (6);
- e-learning (6);
- engagement (6);
- leadership (4); and
- active participation of all groups (2).

The third phase is where all these groups come together to implement change. During implementation in the third phase, schools may trial with just one class or with the whole school. "Some people figure out who are the enthusiastic students and start with them. It's important to start with the interest, and grow energy around that interest".[18] In the fourth phase, LCNs embed new, effective practices in a sustainable way while eradicating things that don't work.

In December 2013, the LCN team at the University of Auckland categorised existing networks according to their different stages of development. At that time, 10 networks were still developing infrastructure, 17 were in an early understanding phase, and 25 were in a late understanding phase.

There are three key leadership roles in each LCN: a principal who acts as a conduit to governance and strategic resources, an 'enthusiastic leader' who drives the initiative after receiving intensive training; and a 'practitioner evaluator' who is interested in the effectiveness of the strategy and looks at whether schools are doing what they said they would and whether the initiative is working. Facilitators from the Ministry and the University of Auckland help networks to build capacity for these roles.

No extra funding is provided to schools for LCN by the government. Teacher release-time out of the classroom is funded by schools' own operational budgets or from non-contact time already provisioned under collective contracts (10 hours per term for primary school teachers). The LCN team provides facilitation support, depending on the achievement challenge identified and the change priority decided on. Dorothy Burt from the Manaiakalani cluster, for example, which is focussed on e-learning, is facilitating many of the networks that have identified 'blended digital learning' as their change priority.

15 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

16 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

17 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, Auckland UniServices Limited, University of Auckland, 2014), https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/education/about/learning-change-networks/LCN%20Milestone%20Report%203%20.pdf.

18 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

CHAPTER TWO
KEY FEATURES OF SUCCESS

THE STRUCTURE-FREEDOM CONTINUUM

Many schools, particularly under New Zealand's self-managing model, don't appreciate being told what to do. LCN represents an appropriate balance of top-down and bottom-up models of schooling improvement – a kind of light-touch bureaucracy. It provides an adaptable framework and some broad defining characteristics, but it is largely up to each LCN to drive and embed the change they would like to see.

LCN facilitators float across a continuum of structure and freedom, depending on how much support schools need and ask for. Facilitators have a strong philosophy of letting schools do it for themselves, rather than imposing a by-design top-down approach from the Ministry.

> The facilitator is not an external expert bringing in knowledge; rather, they're walking alongside participants to pull the knowledge out of the group and grow confidence that the group already has much of the knowledge necessary to address the achievement challenge. If they can't find the knowledge within the group, they can find it beyond the group, such as from other groups or on the Internet, or they have to face up to constructing new knowledge if it does not exist.[19]

As a result, a high level of peer accountability is emerging, as observed for this research in a network meeting in the Tasman cluster. Annan quotes one network leader:

> We are enjoying the level of autonomy and shared accountability of the network, as opposed to a level of accountability that the Ministry put over the top. It allows the network to be a living, changing and developing learning network of professionals. We are accountable to our learners and community.[20]

Dave Appleyard, Principal of Rata Street School from the Naenae LCN cluster, says "outside support lessened, inside capability grew" in his network under LCN, reflecting "a pattern of increasingly devolved networks" that is emerging under LCN in New Zealand schools.[21] This reflects the journey of each LCN, starting off with more support from facilitators and cutting back as internal capacity increases and external requirements diminish.

The demand-driven rather than supply-driven model helps tremendously; it is not a top-down interventionist approach. "We have schools that join [networks] because there's lots of talk, lots of energy – and they want to be part of it", says Mill.[22]

Thomson says the LCN approach was difficult to introduce to schools initially because schools were used to experts coming in and running Professional Learning and Development (PLD) courses for teachers. The following quotes shows how PLD is changing.

> Teachers [in the past] were passive – they could sit there and listen for a couple of hours and theoretically go away and do stuff.[23]

> They used to send people in and deliver [PLD], but that's not how it works now... we say, this is what we want to work on and these are the needs of our students and we want a package

19 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

20 Quoted in Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4, op. cit. p 31.

21 Ibid. p 22.

22 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

23 Ibid.

that is going to help us improve our skills around that.[24]

One of the things it [Learning and Change] isn't is PLD. And it takes quite a while for some of the networks to move out of there. They sit there and wait, asking, "When are you going to tell me how to do this?"[25]

The notion that PLD is something that is done to teachers, with an expert coming in and telling teachers how it's done, is firmly entrenched in schools because that has been the traditional model, and that is how teachers tend to think of PLD. The LCN model represents a more modern form of PLD where teachers continually learn and develop to better facilitate student learning. It is a model driven by the profession.

Under LCN, school networks own their change priorities. The LCN facilitation team has also been trying to develop evaluative capability among networks. Traditional PLD is about an external provider coming in, evaluating, and moving on, whereas Mill says that schools "need to evaluate as they go so they can make changes as they go".[26]

Parallel to the continuum of top-down to bottom-up models of change is the continuum of teacher-directed to student-directed learning. The difference in the LCN initiative as opposed to older models is that it is not a structured interventionist approach into a specific area of learning; it leans more towards the student-directed end of the continuum.

It's moving from a "fix it" schooling improvement view, where adults analyse the achievement challenge and design an intervention and do it to kids. The whole LCN thing is that you listen to and learn from kids about what is in their heads about how they learn, why they learn that way, and what they're interested in. We take notice of those responses and work with the kids and families to decide what needs to be adjusted. And kids go, "You're interested in me?"[27]

The LCN model recognises that children can talk about how they learn and whether they are capable of making adjustments, even if they have trouble with learning curriculum content, which is a good starting point to getting children to reflect on and drive their own learning.

This is an inroad to creating student agency [ownership], with students taking responsibility for and being engaged in their own learning. We need to activate them and support them in that activation.[28]

It's not just about letting leaders decide. It's about listening to what the kids are saying. What are they saying about the teaching? What are the parents saying? What are the school leaders saying?[29]

One of the tools for 'listening' that LCN facilitators show LCNs how to use, is going through an exercise with students, getting them to draw diagrams that show how they learn and who they learn from. This uncovers rich information from children about how they view their own learning, and school leaders report receiving much richer information and a clearer understanding of their priority learners.[30]

As Mill explains, "Kids are learning in a digital environment where they're able to source information, pursue interests, connect with other people, and share things – it's open and free ranging".[31] The education system must adapt to the way children are learning nowadays.

The Initiative's first report on teacher quality, *World class education? Why New Zealand must strengthen its teaching profession*, examined some of the false dichotomies in education. One of those

24 Robin Thomson, Personal Interview.

25 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

26 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

27 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

28 Ibid.

29 Dave Appleyard, Personal Interview.

30 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4, op. cit. p 32.

31 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

dichotomies was the learner-directed (freedom) versus teacher-directed (structured) approach.

Is the balance shifting too heavily towards the freedom approach, with "students as the drivers of their own learning" [32] under LCN? To illustrate this concern by way of example, imagine a teenager learning to drive without adult supervision. In reality, teenagers learn to drive with an adult in the passenger seat, slowly letting go of their control as the learner's driving skills develop. Annan puts these concerns at ease: "It's not about moving from structure to freedom, it's about floating across". It is the teacher's very challenging role to constantly move across a continuum of structure and freedom according to where the students are and to adjust how much support they need.

When we first started LCN, we thought it was about moving from teacher-directed to student-directed learning, but in actual fact that's not true. All of us sometimes need to be told what to do – sometimes it is best for students and adults to co-construct learning, and at other times, students are best placed to self-direct their learning. It is a matter of students and adults negotiating with one another about which arrangements are best.[33]

The distinction is not so much whether there is more or less control, but whether students have a say in needing more free or more structured learning. "Does the teacher control those things or does the student have a right to ask those questions?" asks Annan.[34] The role of a teacher today is far more complex than it once was:

The challenge for a teacher is to move backwards and forwards depending on the individual and what the learning intentions are... so the skills we are expecting of teachers now is far greater...[35]

The potential concern that LCN focuses too much attention on the student and not enough on building effective teacher practice was also mitigated during the interviews for this report. As interviewees explained, if there is a gap in effective teacher practice, it tends to get picked up during the process of talking with students, families/whānau, teachers, and school leaders.

Many networks that had not been part of the erstwhile Schooling Improvement Strategy, which was aimed at improving instruction, found during the LCN change priority process that instruction needed to change. Annan believes that though Schooling Improvement has been dropped as a policy, 'building teacher practice' can still be a change priority under the LCN model if that is identified. In fact, 15 of 21 networks identified 'instruction' as one of their change priorities.[36] Schools also have different philosophies about how they teach and the balance of structure and freedom they wish to pursue, and it is up to facilitators to respect this.

Interestingly, even when LCNs have good intentions about building student ownership around their own learning, this isn't necessarily easy. Mill describes one LCN where students had developed their own learning goals but when asked to articulate their goals, only 24% of students could so (compared to 80% of teachers and 70% of parents who could articulate students' goals).

It was an adult-driven process so was it going to make a difference? No. So they went back and gnashed their teeth. We gave them some ideas, and they did it again and now it is student centred.[37]

LCN is about working smarter, not harder. People learn skills and knowledge from others, whether in the workplace, from books, from the Internet, or through courses. LCN is a way of enabling teachers to learn from one another and also encouraging schools and communities to actively learn from

32 Brian Annan, Personal interview.

33 Ibid.

34 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

35 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

36 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit.

37 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

one another. It is about teachers working out what really engages children in learning.

Teachers have been working their butts off. Can you get them to work harder? In some cases, yes, but in most cases they already work hard enough so we need to get them to change the way they work rather than making them work harder. Many of them are at the point of diminishing returns so we have to look at things in a different way.[38]

A lot of kids in our schools are still bored out of their brains, partly because they've been told to work harder and longer, they've been told that they're needy, they've been told that they need to do more supplementary stuff such as homework. But they're not being asked how they learn, why they learn that way, or how we can leverage off doing stuff they find really cool.[39]

THE LEARNER AT THE CENTRE OF THEIR OWN LEARNING NETWORK

Under LCN, learners are put at the centre of their own network by getting them to draw 'learning maps', showing who they learn from and where they learn from; families are involved in this process as well. In a cross-section of 21 networks, 15 identified 'building student agency' as one of their main change priorities.[40]

Schools that previously reported finding it difficult to engage parents and whānau are finding that parents and whānau of their priority learners are welcoming the opportunity to support their children's learning outcomes...[41]

The involvement of parents, family and whānau is an essential part of LCN. Many of the educators interviewed for this report said they had strong relationships with their local communities and families, but not so much success in getting those communities and families involved in the learning process. "Parents were engaged but not involved".[42] Involving families in learning is much more than just fundraising at the school fair or helping out with school trips. As Thomson says, "It's not just, 'can you come with us on this trip', but 'we're planning this, can you come have a look and tell us what you think?'". Thomson explains that LCN has really changed the way schools work with families.

Through LCN networking, each group [including parents] is being encouraged to become more involved in deciding how to take the appropriate level of responsibility to lift student learning to national expectations.[43]

Indeed, the most frequent change priority, identified by 19 out of 21 networks as the key to unlocking the potential of their priority learners, was 'family and community connection'.[44]

There is great potential under LCN for parents and schools to figure out how to work together to strengthen their children's learning. The Ministry undertook one of its Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) reports more than 10 years ago on parental engagement in learning.[45] The Education Review Office (ERO), in an evaluation report of parental engagement, summarised the research from that BES report:

A key message emerging from the New Zealand and international research is that effective

38 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

39 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

40 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit.

41 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4, op. cit. p 29.

42 Dave Appleyard, Personal Interview.

43 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4, op. cit. p 30.

44 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit.

45 "The complexity of community and family influences on children's achievement in New Zealand" (Ministry of Education), http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/7692/bes-community-family-influences.pdf.

centre [early childhood centre]/school-home partnerships can strengthen support for children's learning in both home and centre/school settings. What is remarkable about such partnerships is that when they work, the magnitude of the positive impacts on children can be so substantial, compared to traditional institutionally-based educational interventions.[46]

Ten years later in 2013, parliament appointed an Inquiry into Engaging Parents in the Education of Their Children. The Minister received the select committee's report in July 2014, and the government is expected to respond in October. Indeed, there seems to be a lot of concern and interest around authentic parental engagement in learning in New Zealand, and LCN seems to be an effective model for getting people to think about the entirety of a child's network of learning, which of course includes parents, wider whānau, and the child's community.

It's about dropping adult-driven, supply-driven intervention logic for kids and starting to say, mums, dads and kids should be involved in the design and implementation and evaluation of the learning strategy.[47]

LCN facilitator Mary Wootton, for example, says parents may have particular information about their children and how they learn that teachers might not know. The facilitator's role is to support the network to encourage schools to engage with their families in an authentic way – to listen and respond to the parents rather than consult or tell the parents what they think parents need to know.

Naenae [an LCN] parents said, we want to learn how to give kids feedback on their blogs because we want to be giving them useful feedback, we don't want to just write "good story"... The teachers in the school ran an evening with the parents on how to give good feedback.[48]

Part of this research was to attend a meeting with five Tasman cluster principals to learn about what they were doing in their network. One principal in the Tasman area shared an idea that generated a lot of excitement and enthusiasm among the Tasman network. He ran workshops getting parents to do the same writing tasks the students were doing, walking them through how the writing tasks were assessed. He found that parents were amazed by the amount of work that goes into assessing tasks – these workshops have since helped build parents' understanding of their children's education. This principal shard that story with his own network, but it is likely that the facilitators will also share the idea with other networks.

LCN facilitators have learned the importance of involving families from the beginning.

All networks... need to be aware that authentic participation of family, whānau and community is more difficult to achieve if they are kept on the periphery of the network by a firmly established core professional group.[49]

Maintaining parental involvement is also really important. "Sometimes if [schools] get offered PLD they say, it doesn't fit our change priorities... we've done the research and we have an agreement with the parents of these priority learners and the leaders to develop these change priorities together".[50] Mill says there is a constant effort to ensure LCN doesn't slip back into passive parental involvement in learning. "We develop a partnership by being a true partner. It's quite a different way of thinking".[51]

46 "Partners in learning: Schools' engagement with parents, whānau and communities" (Education Review Office, May 2008), http://ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Partners-in-Learning-Schools-Engagement-with-Parents-Whanau-and-Communities-May-2008/Executive-Summary.

47 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

48 Mary Wootton, Personal Interview.

49 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4, op. cit. p 3.

50 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

51 Ibid.

ADAPTIVE AND ADAPTABLE

Although the LCN model is more bureaucratic and manufactured than those that develop more organically, it is adaptive to local contexts and evolves as networks learn about what works, both between and within networks.

Several networks said they had appreciated engaging with a methodology that had allowed them to adapt procedures to best suit their concept.[52]

Indeed, it is a reflective, evolving, mutually-dependent process. The feedback and observations are helping guide the project to its next step, and strengthen it along the way. Networks are learning from the experiences of the more advanced networks as they transition into implementation, and the Ministry is learning from the networks as they progress from phase to phase in their similar and differing ways.[53]

The importance of the facilitation process adapting to the local context is particularly important in New Zealand's self-managing school system.

It is not possible to force networks into any one of those preferences [for a structured or free approach] in New Zealand's liberated schooling system.[54]

It is particularly important that the UniServices/Faculty and Ministry LDA [Lead Development Advisor] teams do not take the high ground and make these choices for networks. It is foolhardy to judge networks or individuals as "difficult" because they are presented with a structure frame when they prefer an open frame. It is equally foolhardy to leave a network or individual to flounder when they have been presented with an open frame but desire more structure.[55]

Just as effective teachers move across a continuum with students with the level of support they need to learn, LCN facilitators move across a continuum depending on what the network needs. Some networks will desire more support and structure while others will prefer to do things for themselves.

Getting the right amount of scaffold, not too much and not too little, is the art of successful facilitation and LDA [facilitation] support in the LCN strategy.[56]

What is most interesting is that networks are not going through a paint-by-numbers process and using all the tools available to them in a lockstep manner. Rather, they tend to put some tools into the foreground and others in the background to arrive at a set of context-specific change priorities.[57]

Even within networks, network plans are considered as living documents and "catalysts for connecting participants and modified as new knowledge is acquired, constructed and shared".[58]

Amazingly, the LCN model has with time become more adaptive rather than more bureaucratic. Speaking of the LCN facilitators the University of Auckland and the Ministry, Annan explains that "additional to the continuous learning, is the willingness to adapt, to let go, to acknowledge insecurity in going into the unknown and to move on."[59] Annan describes what it was like with networks at the beginning: "In comparison to recent services [new clusters joining LCN],

52 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit. p 67.

53 Jude Barback, "Leading Learning and Change across the country", op. cit.

54 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit. p 117.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit. p 4.

58 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit. p 3.

59 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4, op. cit. p 11.

it was a slow, structured and methodical interactive environment".[60]

Another note on bureaucracy is that it is foolish to assume that exemplary cases can be somehow scaled up, particularly in New Zealand's self-managing education model. Community ownership is essential, rather than top-down change. Annan prefers to think of it as diffusion strategy rather than scaling up.[61]

It is also not possible to force people to work together. Annan notes that the Ministry wanted the LCN facilitation team at the University of Auckland and the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) to work together on different network collaborations, for example.

> The government wanted the NZPF collaboratives to go under the umbrella of LCN and the Ministry tried to make that happen for six months, but the NZPF wanted to go in one direction and we were not keen to form an unwilling partnership. There was a stand-off. You can't force people to act in a certain way, so scaling up is not a good idea.[62]

LCN as an entire model is also constantly changing. In 2013, Martin Jenkins evaluated LCN, and OECD officials also visited New Zealand in 2013. Their reports looked at the LCN strategy objectively and recommended changes, and many of those changes have since been implemented.

60 Ibid.

61 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

62 Ibid.

THE CROSS-POLLINATION OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

> We hope to create a self-sustaining system that can learn from the system.
>
> *— Jackie Talbot, National Manager of LCN*[63]

One of the most striking features of LCN is how facilitators cross-pollinate knowledge from network to network in a way that activates "lateral learning within and between LCN networks... new networks benefit from cutting-edge facilitation based on learning from the other networking arrangements".[64]

A Tasman cluster network meeting attended for this research was facilitated by Mill and Linda Bendikson, an LCN facilitator from the University of Auckland.

Most of the talking at the meeting was by the principals themselves. The facilitators interjected every so often with a guiding or probing question. But what was most remarkable was how the facilitators gently brought in the knowledge they had learned from other networks. Mill and Bendikson are both highly experienced educational leaders in their own right. It would have been easy for them to take on the role of experts. However, their facilitation was not done in the style of telling principals how to do their job. Instead, they led with examples. Mill, for instance, spoke of a Southland LCN network that was doing something similar to the Tasman LCN cluster, and shared what the Southland LCN had learned, much to the interest of the Tasman LCN principals.

Another important point is that different LCNs are recognised for their different strengths. While Manaiakalani, for example, is specialised in the pedagogy of digital technology, the Naenae

63 Quoted in Jude Barback, "Leading Learning and Change across the country", op. cit.

64 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4, op. cit. p 2.

cluster is strong in teacher practice. Thomson says of the Naenae cluster, "We don't have to be like Manaiakalani but we can learn from them". While facilitators cross-pollinate knowledge between networks, school leaders often talk among themselves too, like Dave Appleyard from Rata Street School in Naenae and Russell Burt from Pt England School in Manaiakalani do.

TRUST, RELATIONSHIPS, AND THE COMMON PURPOSE

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Emile Durkheim, the French sociologist, said when people come together around a shared object or value, they will work together to defend it. Our ancestors came together around a hearth. A strong theme emerging from LCN is that it taps into the idea of the collective good to work together to lift student achievement. "At the principalship level, there is a belief that the greater good is in working together".[65] History tells us that individuals uniting for a common purpose can have powerful results.

Appleyard talks about "a collective responsibility" in the Naenae network, in that teachers feel a responsibility to prepare students for the next stage of schooling. Indeed, "belonging comes from sharing in the activity and the struggles associated with the establishment and cultivation of networks".[66]

The collective good in school networking is important because we can make better traction by working together than working on our own.[67]

Working as a group, you're problem-solving together. I believe all of our schools have their own identity – they don't look the same. But we are using the expertise and bouncing ideas off each other... As a principal, I just feel tremendously well supported by that group of people.[68]

This sense of group cohesion needs time to build. Like Manaiakalani, the Naenae cluster of schools already had a history of working together before LCN, which helped them get started under LCN. Most networks start off as associations along sporting or cultural lines, and move into banding together to lift student learning and achievement.

However, establishing that trust can be difficult when schools are competing for limited resources (funding follows students). The next section delves into how collaboration and competition need not be mutually exclusive in the schooling sector. For now, a discussion on what is perhaps the core characteristic of successful networks – the common moral purpose.

The LCN strategy is about establishing the learning needs children have, and working together to address those needs. "Without a need you won't get people working together. You've got to find the need. The need in New Zealand is the group of students we're struggling to make a difference with", says Mill.[69] Because LCN is about addressing specific achievement challenges identified by each network, there is a strong sense of common purpose, contingent on trust.

The presence of a common entity that bound networks together, such as a shared purpose, common achievement challenge or close geographic location, was viewed as an essential ingredient for success... High levels of trust were seen to support the LCN process and once trust had been gained, strong working relationships had formed among schools as networks embraced the LCN process.[70]

65 Dave Appleyard, Personal Interview.

66 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 4, op. cit. p 22.

67 Dave Appleyard, Personal Interview.

68 Robin Thomson, Personal Interview.

69 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

70 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit. p 70.

As an LCN participant said "The biggest issue we had to deal with was to break down the barriers that exist between schools to ensure we built 'trust' among the schools".[71]

Appleyard too emphasises the importance of trust. "If the trust isn't there, it's more complicated. Because whoever is facilitating, the leaders or whoever, are trying to build that up at the same time as moving forward."[72]

With high trust comes the ability to challenge others.

We were lucky to work with Brian Annan, who was very challenging and said, "You've got to stop this just being nice to each other thing, and you've got to be prepared to be asked challenging questions and ask challenging questions – that's the willingness to unpack what's really going on".[73]

COMPETITION OR COLLABORATION?

"Will you cross the barricades of competition and collaborate for the sake of our children?" we asked. "Yes!" they replied.[74]

There is a place for competition but the future is about people working together.[75]

This section explores why schools have managed to cross the barricades of competition to learn from one another in LCN, starting with a history of how our system came to be competitive, moving onto a discussion of the differences in the meaning of the word 'competition' in educational settings and business settings, and ending with a discussion on how competition and collaboration can be mutually enhancing rather than mutually exclusive.

Some have attributed the large gaps between high and low performance in New Zealand's education system (by international standards) to the way schools compete for student numbers. The theory is that the 'Tomorrow's Schools' reforms of 1989 gave schools the freedom to drive up performance for many schools and many students, but that this left lower performers behind without the support to improve.

For a short history lesson, the Picot report was a landmark 1988 report, by Brian Picot and a group of business leaders and educators. It recommended abolishing the bureaucratic Department of Education and the 10 education boards in the country, establishing a smaller Ministry of Education, and devolving power completely to schools, with 2,500 small boards of trustees for individual schools to be set up as Crown entities. In 1989, then Prime Minister David Lange announced a major overhaul of the administration of New Zealand's school system based on the recommendations of the Picot report. ERO was established, responsibility was devolved to boards of trustees for each school, and boards were made responsible for hiring school principals.

Indeed, the dual model of autonomy and accountability is known to be a successful combination for schools internationally. Power was devolved to local boards, and the competition from the school down the road provided a form of accountability – the incentive to provide the education that parents desired for their children. And for the most part this seems to have worked well – New Zealand does have a high performing education system. But many argue this has come at a cost. Why would a successful school share its secrets of success with a school down the road with dwindling student numbers? Since the disincentive for schools to learn from each other may prevent

71 Ibid. p 71.

72 Dave Appleyard, Personal Interview.

73 Robin Thomson, Personal Interview.

74 Manaiakalani storytellers and Frances Hancock, "Maori and Pacific children at home in a digital world: Our story", Manaiakalani ASB report (Manaiakalani Education Trust), p 7, www.asbcommunitytrust.org.nz/sites/default/files/Manaiakalani%20long%20version%20-%20Final.pdf.

75 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

collaboration, the temptation for policymakers is to drive top-down change to improve schooling.

Mill, who is also a former secondary school principal, explains:

I have a sense of the degree of isolation in which principals operate and the competitive nature that surrounds them and the work they do for their community... Tomorrow's Schools is a competitive model that has its strengths but some significant drawbacks, which the overseas research shows and anybody in New Zealand can see.[76]

Yet schools have been able to work collaboratively under LCN and other network arrangements. It is possible.

So what is competition, anyway? Many people working in educational settings are suspicious of business models and economics. Much of this wariness comes down to different understandings of concepts. For example, 'competition' has positive connotations for economists, and negative for many educators. In economics, competitive pressures drive improvement and innovation. Let's apply this concept to the school system: If a school down the road has a poor reputation, parents may choose to bypass it in favour of a school that can better serve their child's needs. As the school roll drops, this places an incentive on the first school to improve.

Many schools see this as a negative, particularly if other schools start encouraging parents to bypass their school. A 2013 survey by the NZCER found that 59% of primary and intermediate schools said they competed directly for students. Around 16% of primary school principals indicated they were spending more on marketing or other aspects of their school than they would like to, trying to increase enrolments.[77] In the NZCER's 2012 survey of secondary schools, 80% of respondents said they directly competed for students, and 25% said they spent more on marketing than they would like.[78]

The NZCER surveys show that most parents use personal knowledge and contacts, relationships and proximity to choose primary and intermediate schools for their children. When deciding on a secondary school, parents take into account school visits, personal knowledge and networks, living in the school zone, opinions of other parents, decisions of their children's friends, and experiences of other children the family.

Despite the figures that show that schools are directly competing for students, the principals spoken to for this report said they often have a 'gentleman's agreement' with other schools not to poach students. One principal explained that when a parent tries to enrol a child from another school, he gets straight on the phone with the principal of that school to find out what is happening. "I wouldn't say it's not competitive... but that doesn't mean you can't be collegial". It is difficult to know, however, whether this attitude is widespread.

Thomson says she feels a wider sense of responsibility to education:

We don't have a prospectus but when parents come in, we show them around, and I feel that it is my responsibility to the greater good of education because even if they choose not to come here, they know a bit more about the system.[79]

O'Shaughnessy explains the importance of competition and collaboration:

Within public sector markets, just as in private sector ones, collaboration is actually a much more important feature than competition. Most productive work in any industry takes place within a firm; that is the crucible of innovation. Competition between firms plays

76 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

77 Cathy Wylie and Linda Bonne, Primary and intermediate schools in 2013: Main findings from the NZCER national survey, op cit.

78 Cathy Wylie, Secondary schools in 2012: Main findings from the NZCER national survey (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2013), www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Secondary%20Schools%20in%202012-web.pdf.

79 Robin Thomson, Personal Interview.

a smaller yet essential part, providing the sharp edge of accountability that ensures collaboration is productive and does not slide into complacency...[80]

Although Mill acknowledges the drawbacks of the self-managing model, he says: "Competition can have some plusses because it sharpens what you're doing and concentrates your thinking".[81]

O'Shaughnessy quotes Steve Munby, Chief Executive of the National College in the UK:

Accountability and competition are good things and should be welcomed by all those who want to raise aspirations and help children achieve their potential. But just as I believe competition for the sake of competition is unhelpful, so too is collaboration for the sake of getting along – the worst kind of collaboration is the sort that sees schools huddling together, endorsing each other's views and practices and generally keeping one another comfortable.[82]

Indeed, while Thomson feels a sense of moral responsibility to the wider community of educators and students, the competitive aspect of New Zealand's self-managing education system was what drove her to improve her school. She says people were bypassing the school when she started as principal years ago. "It was hard, but we just kept working at what's best for the kids, what's going to drive the best outcomes". In a similar vein, Appleyard suggests: "Do your best for your school, let it speak for itself, and then parents can choose".

When the right ingredients (trust, relationships, a history of working together, and a common moral purpose) are present, it is possible to retain the sharpening effect of competition and yet work collaboratively.

Moving people from the competitive space into the collaborative space, while still retaining the autonomy that the schools and principals and boards cherish – that is the challenge.[83]

Indeed, a common theme that emerges from the interviews conducted and the background material for this report is that LCN has led to the "growth [of] collaboration (and breakdown of competition) within and across networks".[84] But what schools may not be thinking about is that the competitive aspect is still there as that sharper edge of accountability, enhancing collaboration rather than preventing it, sitting in the background as the incentive to keep improving and learning from other schools. In the same token, while competition is necessary, it is not sufficient. To continue Mill's quote:

Competition can have some plusses because it sharpens what you're doing and concentrates your thinking, but it doesn't necessarily share the best thinking that occurs.[85]

It is only possible to reap the benefits of collaboration and competition when there is trust and a common purpose between those competing.

80 James O'Shaughnessy, Competition meets collaboration: Helping school chains address England's long tail of educational failure, op. cit. p 24.

81 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

82 James O'Shaughnessy, Competition meets collaboration: Helping school chains address England's long tail of educational failure, op. cit. p 25.

83 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

84 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit. p 6.

85 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

MANAIAKALANI

Manaiakalani contribution to the LCN strategy has opened the eyes of other network leaders around the country to those [networking] possibilities.[86]

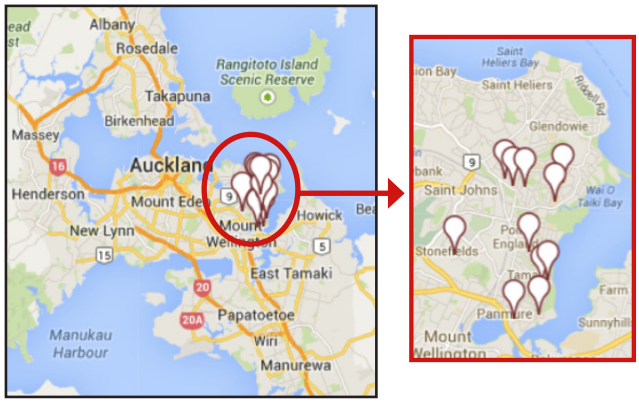

Figure 1. Schools in the Manaiakalani cluster in the Tamaki region of Auckland

The Manaiakalani story is well known in education circles, and increasingly in the public sphere, both at home and abroad. Starting in 2007, the Manaiakalani Education Trust brought together a cluster of 11 schools in the Tamaki area of Auckland. These were decile 1a schools and represented low-income, mostly Māori and Pacific communities – those who traditionally had not done well in New Zealand's education system.

Manaiakalani was bought under the LCN umbrella in 2013, as there was demand from around the country to learn from those involved in the model. Dorothy Burt a teacher at Pt England School (one of the Manaiakalani schools), who is one of the key figures and champions of the Manaiakalani cluster from the beginning, has also become a facilitator under the LCN umbrella, sharing her knowledge of using blended digital learning to enhance student achievement in networks across the country.

The Manaiakalani programme utilises digital devices to enable students to learn anytime, anywhere. Parents cover 30% of the cost by paying the devices off at $3.50 per week over three years. With an average income of just $19,000, it is considered exceptional that the majority (85%) of parents pay on time. As the Education Act prevents schools from leasing netbooks and carrying the debt for such programmes, the Manaiakalani Education Trust was set up as a charitable trust to lease devices and own the broadband network, and also to provide training.

The LCN programme in Manaiakalani is looked upon as a model of how to systematically move schools towards using digital technology to engage children and enhance their learning, and is often profiled for its ground breaking approach to digital learning. It is a network of schools working together collectively, that also networks with the local community, business people and the philanthropy sector to enhance learning. It is a partnership between schools, parents, the University of Auckland, government agencies including the Ministry of Education, philanthropic organisations, donors, consultants, and commercial partners. Te Puni Kokori, for example, provides some funding to the Manaiakalani Education Trust to employ someone to engage with family and whānau – out of this, a group of parents have been trained as leaders. People bring their expertise together to work towards a shared vision. For example, a group of 12 'hackers' from help solve IT issues.

The Manaiakalani cluster of schools was retooling its learning environment upon the strong foundations of the school's history of working together.[87]

An important element of Manaiakalani's success is that school principals in the Tamaki area

86 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit. p 38.

87 Jean Annan, Manaiakalani Cluster Documentary.

had been working together in different types of principal clusters since the 1990s. It started with the Tamaki Achievement Pathway project from 2001 to 2011, undertaken to improve literacy and numeracy. During this time, a set of seven schools were also involved in a cluster of ICT Professional Development from 2004 to 2006. Realising that students were engaged by digital learning, 12 lead teachers developed the Extending High Standards Across Schools project using digital resources to enhance literacy. As Jean Annan of the Woolf Fisher Research Centre at the University of Auckland notes, these project partnerships across the Tamaki basin also included coordinated sports, and shared Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour. These projects had set the scene not only for digital education, but perhaps more importantly, for schools to collaborate and work together.

There are two points to note here. The first is that schools had already chosen to work together to build relationships, trust and connections. The second is that it happened in a rather organic way. In other words, it wasn't a central body deciding from above that a cluster of schools should work together using digital tools to enhance student learning.

Over a period of clustering and pooling resources we learnt to trust one another with our resources, data, problems and successes. We also embraced collective decision making.[88]

The Manaiakalani Innovative Teacher Academy was started in 2013 and eight 'lighthouse' or exemplary classroom teachers were selected to undertake research to improve student learning. The academy also has an induction programme for new teachers.

As mentioned, the Manaiakalani Education Trust is now working with other networks of schools across the country and some of that is under the LCN umbrella. For example, Manaiakalani is providing extensive support to the Ako Hiko Education Trust which was established in February 2014. This Ako Hiko trust is rolling out 400 digital devices across six schools, including digital immersion pedagogy. One Manaiakalani teacher is working across the schools in the Ako Hiko cluster for three days per week this year.

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88 Manaiakalani storytellers and Frances Hancock, "Maori and Pacific children at home in a digital world: Our story", op. cit. p 6.

THE NAENAE CLUSTER

The Naenae cluster is organised as a group of primary schools that feed into Naenae College, in Lower Hutt. It started with principals informally meeting, and then the cluster worked together on the Literacy Professional Development Project (LPDP), which ran from 2004 to 2010 throughout New Zealand.

Several years ago, the Ministry identified underachievement at Naenae College and invited the Naenae cluster to take part in the erstwhile Schooling Improvement Strategy programme, in recognition that achievement in primary school was a necessary precursor to National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) in secondary school. This programme was implemented over four to five years. Clusters received substantial funding for this, but they brought in outside expertise on contracts.

We came together from the bottom up, which coincided with the Ministry saying Naenae has to do something different, and so the talk about establishing a more formal network happened and moved into a schooling improvement model that focused on effective teaching practice.[89]

As principal of Rata Street School Dave Appleyard, notes while Naenae saw great progress in teacher practice, there were still kids "who weren't moving fast enough".[90] This is when the cluster decided to move into the LCN space.

Naenae not only has a relentless focus on learning, but also a good balance of acknowledging that while many of its students do come from disadvantaged backgrounds, it is a school's job to overcome that as best as it can. "Teachers make the difference... we'll try to overcome things with clothing and breakfast, the leaders will organise that, but teachers will teach".[91]

THE NEW ZEALAND INITIATIVE

89 Dave Appleyard, Personal Interview.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE
EFFECTIVENESS

The Ministry has established an LCN National Standards database to track progress for LCN students. National Standards places children as achieving 'above', 'at', 'below' or 'well below' what is expected for their year level in reading, writing and mathematics, and is based on Overall Teacher Judgments (OTJ). Teachers use their choice of a range of standardised assessment tools and their own professional judgment to determine their OTJ and where each child is sitting on National Standards.

As at December 2013, 389 schools were involved in LCN in New Zealand, and 53 of those schools provided 2012 and 2013 National Standards data to the Ministry to track LCN success. The small number of schools providing data was due to the limited time frame to submit data; many schools were only in the early stages of identifying which students they would be working with and tracking for progress. Some schools provided whole-school data on each subject, and others provided data just for the specific cohort and subject involved in LCN – for example, year 7 boys 'below' or 'well below' in writing. The Ministry compared achievement data for the selected students for those 53 schools with a control sample of National Standards data.

The analysis found a 17.2 percentage point increase in the proportion of students achieving 'at' or 'above' standard between 2012 and 2013, and this was statistically significant. Nationally, there was a 1.5 percentage point increase in the proportion of students achieving 'at' or 'below', and a 9.4 percentage point increase for the matched control sample.

More detail on the Ministry's analysis and findings can be found in the Learning and Change Networks Milestone 3 report.[92] The report does, however, acknowledge the limitations of "a selection bias towards specific students that had a pre-disposition to change as a way of trialing the LCN methodology".[93] Taking the selection bias a step further, it is not possible to rule out the possibility of a bias among schools that provided data showing the most positive results.

To address this limitation, the New Zealand Initiative took a more conservative approach to the analysis and looked at the change in the proportion of students 'well below' and 'below' National Standards between 2011 and 2012, and between 2011 and 2013. Schools joining LCN in 2012 were compared with schools that had never joined. To measure like with like, this analysis was undertaken for each decile as the most appropriate proxy for the socio-economic background of children. The data was collected from the Education Counts website.

New Zealand Initiative preliminary results comparing all LCN schools that joined in 2012, and all non-LCN schools, within the same decile, do not detect much effect thus far. There is a suggestion of some reasonable beneficial effect within a specific decile group, but only two to six schools joined LCN for each decile in 2012. The small number makes it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions. Further work will be needed to fully assess LCN effectiveness in improving student outcomes once 2014 National Standards data becomes available. In particular, regression analysis over a longer period holding decile constant will provide more reliable results than within-decile comparisons.

The LCN strategy is aimed at helping priority learner students, so it may be that under the Initiative's analysis, gains for priority learner

92 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit.

93 Ibid, p. 13.

students are masked when looking at aggregated school-level results. This may be why previous analysis (See Milestone 3 report)[94] found a much larger positive increase of 17.2 percentage points for LCN schools.

The analysis undertaken so far by the Initiative, is indicative of some positive trends for LCN schools; the trial is worth continuing and expanding, with further monitoring of outcomes. It is still early days and the Initiative believes the approach of LCN to be promising. As Mill explains:

> Anecdotally, we have found that many of the priority learners have responded positively to someone getting to know them and their parents as a learner. This has initiated the start of a change from them being passive learners to becoming more active and assuming some responsibility for their learning...[95]

Enough time should be allowed for networks of schools to embed their practice before change can be discerned and fully evaluated. The Initiative would like to repeat the same analysis when the 2014 National Standards data becomes available, controlling for decile effects. The Ministry also plans to repeat its analysis with 2014 data when schools submit it for their priority learners.

THE NEW ZEALAND INITIATIVE

94 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit.

95 Rob Mill, Personal Interview.

CHAPTER FOUR
POLICY IMPLICATIONS

New Zealand has a self-managing school system that gives tremendous autonomy and freedom to individual schools. This allows schools to deliver education that best meets the needs of their own community. Parents have a great deal of choice; recent NZCER surveys show that 94% of parents get their first choice of primary/intermediate school for their child,[96] and 91% their first choice of secondary school.[97] Although there is some enrolment zoning that limits choice to a degree, largely there is choice. And because funding follows students, New Zealand's system is competitive, providing an incentive for schools to deliver an education that meets the needs of their community. The flipside is that good practice is difficult to spread throughout the system; there are disincentives to collaborate and bridge the divisions between schools competing for students. Despite this, schools do work together, with 72% of primary and intermediate schools collaborating together in some form of a professional cluster, according to NZCER research.[98]

The LCN strategy by all accounts has moved about 10% of schools further towards collaboration with the specific aim of improving learning and lifting achievement, by respecting school autonomy in a way that is flexible and adaptive enough to respond to local circumstances.

This report was written just before the 2014 general election. This Chapter provides policy advice on what can be learned from LCN and incorporated into the key policy promises of National and Labour, under two alternative scenarios.

96 Cathy Wylie and Linda Bonne, Primary and intermediate schools in 2013: Main findings from the NZCER national survey, op cit.

97 Cathy Wylie, Secondary schools in 2012: Main findings from the NZCER national survey, op cit.

98 Cathy Wylie and Linda Bonne, Primary and intermediate schools in 2013: Main findings from the NZCER national survey, op cit.

NATIONAL: INVESTING IN EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS (IES)

DEVELOPMENT TO DATE

In January 2014, Prime Minister John Key announced the Investing in Educational Success (IES) policy to create new career pathways for teachers and leaders. Part of that policy is that schools would voluntarily band together and form 'Communities of Schools'. While the Prime Minister's announcement initially centred on the career pathway aspect, the ideas of collaboration among teachers and the formation of Communities of Schools have since risen to the forefront in IES discussions. The policy has the potential to address several key components of successful education jurisdictions overseas that were identified in the Initiative's report in *World class education? Why New Zealand must strengthen its teaching profession*. The IES policy:

- offers career progression;
- allows teachers to lead their own profession through school-based PLD; and
- builds capacity laterally, not centrally.

Since January, the education sector has been further developing the design of the IES policy. The broad framework was announced in January and an IES Working Group was formed, representing 11 sector leaders and supported by a Secretariat representing the New Zealand School Trustees' Association (NZSTA); the two main teachers' unions (New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) and New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI)); and the Ministry of Education. The group met six times between February and April 2014 and put together

a Working Group report for the Minister, who presented it to Cabinet in May. In June, the Minister released that report to the public.

By all accounts, all parties worked together constructively on the report. Back in March, the NZEI announced that its members would vote on whether the NZEI should continue to be involved in the formation of the IES policy, but continued to engage in the Working Group in the meantime. However, in August, the vast majority (93%) of its members voted that they did not have confidence in the policy as it stood. Almost three-quarters (73%) of NZEI members voted to reject the proposed policy outright rather than negotiate to change it. The NZEI withdrew from all involvement in this policy, and in September, the month of the general election, NZEI teachers rallied around Member of Parliament offices across New Zealand to further signal their rejection of the policy. Meanwhile, earlier in August, the Ministry had reached an agreement with the secondary teachers' and principals' unions – the PPTA and the Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand (SPANZ), respectively – to push forward with the policy.

The implications of the divided unions for the IES policy should National govern is uncertain. Even so, one part of the Communities of Schools policy is that it must reflect the educational pathway of a child, which means including primary and secondary schools in each Community of Schools. If it was to work, primary and secondary school teachers would need to put aside their differences and work together.

In the meantime, details of the IES policy are being developed. A Communities of Schools work stream has presented its first report, and two more work stream reports are due, one on professional standards for new teaching and leadership positions and one on the selection, appointment and appraisal of those new positions.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE IES POLICY

This section provides a brief overview of the IES policy as it stood in September 2014. The full cost of the policy is $359 million over four years, and $155 million per year each subsequent year.

As it stands, Communities of Schools can be formed voluntarily but need to meet the following criteria:

- Communities need to include around 10 schools each (between 8 and 12) and represent the different stages of schooling to help students better transition from primary to intermediate to secondary schooling.
- Communities need to form on a geographical basis, although there may be some exceptions to this.
- Communities of Schools need to identify a shared achievement challenge and work together to address it – not unlike the LCN strategy.

THE THREE KEY CAREER ROLES

There are three new roles under the IES policy, and an additional principal allowance. The official titles for those roles are Lead Teacher, Expert Teacher and Executive Principal. The IES Working Group, however, has suggested amending the titles, given their connotation of managerial hierarchy. The language of the current official titles defeats the purpose of more collaborative work and distributed leadership. The Minister has indicated her openness to changing the titles but says she "will need to be persuaded that the current simple, functional titles need replacing".[99]

99 "Investing in educational success: Design and implementation", Cabinet Paper (Ministry of Education, 28 May 2014), www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Investing-in-Educational-Success/ies-cabinet-paper-28-may-2014.pdf.

The working titles, alternatively, are cumbersomely wordy but better reflect the spirit of enhanced collaboration, so these will be used here.

There would be one Community of Schools Leader (Community Leaders, henceforth) for each Community of Schools – a principal with "collaborative leadership skills".[100] The government has budgeted for 250 such roles for the 2,500 or so schools in New Zealand (under the scenario that all join up to Communities of Schools). While the initial announcement mentioned an additional allowance of $40,000 per annum, the figure has been negotiated down to $30,000 in a Memorandum of Understanding serving as a precursor to the Collective Agreements for 2013–16.

These Community Leaders would continue to be employed by their current board, and would be employed in that role for a fixed term of two years with the possibility of a two-year extension. They would work across the Community of Schools for two days out of five (on average), and reflecting concerns that this would be a significant loss to the employing board, funding would be provided to backfill that time. This is also expected to provide a career stretch for deputy and assistant principal while some principals take that step up, and a stronger leadership career pathway as well.

Across-Community Teachers (Community Teachers, henceforth) would work across their Community of Schools for two days per week on average. The government has budgeted for 1,000 such roles across the country, and four or five teachers would be expected to be appointed in each Community. These would also be two-year fixed term roles with the possibility of a two-year extension. While initially it was announced that Community Teachers would be paid an additional $20,000 per annum, the memorandum (as above) indicates it would be $16,000. The employing board would also receive backfill funding. Community Teachers would coach and mentor other teachers. Reflecting that this is a teaching as opposed to a management career path, Community Teachers would continue teaching in the classroom for at least 8 class contact hours per week.

Within-School Teachers would open up their own classrooms to other teachers in their own school. Around 5,000 positions would be open, and other teachers in the school would be given additional release time to learn from these Within-School Teachers. While the initial remuneration figure was announced as $10,000, it has now been adjusted to $8,000. These teachers would maintain 16 class contact hours per week, and there are likely to be two Within-School Teachers per school.

The memorandum also provides additional operational funding to school boards to work as communities. Each year, each school would receive $1,000 to cover the costs of forming and maintaining a Community of Schools, plus $750 per Community Teacher and $400 per Within-School Teacher – and the Community of Schools would decide how to spend those funds. The board employing the Community Leader would also receive an additional $1,000 to support induction and networking. This additional operational funding equates to about $12,000 of additional funding across a Community of 10 schools.

The initial policy announcement proposed about 250,000 hours of Inquiry Time (release-time for teachers for collaborative learning) – equating to around 5 hours per teacher per year – but allocation would be at the discretion of each school. However, the IES Working Group wanted a better balance of Inquiry Time to additional allowances:

> The sector leaders considered the level of the allowances to be higher than needed to create the incentive and reward sought for the roles, and considered that an increased provision of Inquiry Time could be provided while staying within the overall funding parameters.[101]

100 "Frequently asked questions: Investing in Educational Success", Web, www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/specific-initiatives/investing-in-educational-success/faq/.

101 "Investing in educational success: Design and implementation", op. cit.

As well as these three key roles, there are also 20 Principal Recruitment Allowances of $50,000 per year for schools to recruit principals to turn their schools around. Usually, principals are paid on the size of their school but these allowances are based on "the size of the challenge".[102]

WHAT CAN IES LEARN FROM LCN?

In the Learning and Change Networks Milestone 5 report, Annan notes the need to strengthen connections between key people involved with LCN and those developing the IES policy.

> Those connections have involved largely ad-hoc consultation at network leader meetings with no visits to schools and communities to explore networking developments between students, teacher, and families/whānau, which is at the heart of LCN network.[103]

A guide developed for schools about Communities of Schools says schools will identify a shared achievement challenge with board members, parents, whānau, staff and students, and propose a plan to involve family and whānau in addressing that achievement challenge. It appears from this that policymakers have applied features of the LCN strategy to the development of IES in this respect. This step will happen after a Community of Schools has been formally approved but before funding is provided.

Policymakers need to be aware that communities, depending on the extent to which they have already worked together (or have not), would need time to establish relationships and trust, and to work together to identify the achievement challenge.

RECOMMENDATION 1:
Provide additional operation funding first, and encourage schools to use it to contract facilitation support

Before advertising and filling the new teacher roles in a Community of Schools, it is essential that Communities of Schools first undergo a development period of working together and establishing trust, relationships and a common vision, as well as a shared achievement challenge, using the additional operational funding of around $12,000 per community per year. Once a Community of Schools has registered as a Community, it should receive this additional funding. This funding should be used for this purpose prior to advertising and filling the new roles. Some networks of schools under the current LCN umbrella may, however, be further along in their development and could access funding for the new roles quite quickly. Policy settings must ensure that this is adaptable to the needs of each Community of Schools.

At least for the first tranche of Communities of Schools signing up, communities could be encouraged (but not forced) to contract the LCN team at the University of Auckland or other potential providers with appropriate facilitation experience, should they wish to access it during the development period. This would have several benefits:

- It would provide an impartial external facilitator before formal leadership (the Community Leader) is established. This may ease initial tensions as schools in the community build trust and relationships. External facilitators would bring knowledge of how to build trust and encourage collaboration within a competitive model.
- Facilitators would bring extensive experience in supporting networks of schools in a way that builds capacity. When facilitation support is eventually phased out, facilitators would leave, but their knowledge and skills would remain with the school communities.

102 "Frequently asked questions: Investing in Educational Success", op. cit.

103 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 5

- Using current LCN facilitators would provide the right mix of challenge and support without being top down or managerial. They also act as role models for effective leadership to potential leaders within Communities of Schools.
- Depending on the stage at which people are selected for the new roles in a Community of Schools, the process of working together as a Community to identify the shared achievement challenge would allow natural leaders to emerge, helping teachers identify whether they would like to apply for the new roles and also helping school leaders identify potential talent. In a survey of 27 LCN networks, 20 described how distributive leadership was emerging in their schools.

  The networks included comments about increased role differentiation, instances of leaders mentoring newer or less involved leaders... and "networks found that some people merged as leaders unexpectedly".[104]
- Facilitators could provide moral support and scaffolding to Community Leaders. The facilitators interviewed for this report were ex-principals now highly experienced in working with multiple networks across the country. Communities can tap into the vast knowledge of facilitators to develop the capability of their Community Leaders.
- It could build on the LCN process of working with students, whānau and the wider community to identify the achievement challenge and the changes needed to raise student achievement. Facilitators could cross-pollinate their knowledge of what other networks have done to genuinely involve parents and whānau in their children's learning and enable students to build their own agency for learning.
- As more Communities of Schools come on board, Community Leaders could become facilitators in other communities just starting up – representing another step in the career pathway for later consideration.

The University of Auckland team is recommended for facilitation support during this essential set-up phase, but it should be acknowledged that the LCN facilitation model is not for everyone, as Annan says:

The thought of having our LCN facilitation for everyone is flawed. It's not something that you could replicate across the whole country because it's only the people interested to be involved who will connect and get value from our facilitation. Other people are interested in and enjoy different forms of facilitation.[105]

As mentioned earlier in this report, schools have different philosophical approaches to education. Annan's group is focussed on more student-centred learning, but this may not be the best fit for every Community of Schools. There might be other groups that can offer that facilitation support might be more appropriate for a Community of Schools to choose from, and each should have choice in how they use their additional operational funding. The Ministry could encourage other potential providers of facilitation services to register their interest, and give Communities of Schools lists of potential providers they may wish to contract. Once a Community of Schools has registered as a community, it should receive this additional funding.

RECOMMENDATION 2:
Do not rush

The process of forming Communities of Schools to receiving funding for the new career pathway roles should not be rushed. LCN shows that it takes six months to a year for a network of schools to firmly decide on its shared achievement challenge and get to the heart of what needs to change. Working with families and genuinely involving them in their children's learning from the outset has its

104 Brian Annan (ed.), Learning and Change Network Milestone 3, op. cit, p. 67.

105 Brian Annan, Personal Interview.

challenges and tensions, which schools would need time to work through.

Until the official career path funding is provided, Communities of Schools should be encouraged to take the time to establish the collective purpose and get it right. There is a small additional cost to government for this in the way of the additional operational funding of around $12,000 per Community of Schools, but there is also great benefit in getting it right in the beginning. This will take some commitment from Communities of Schools, but LCN shows this is possible because even without specific funding or release-time, schools do put in the effort as they see the benefits that collaborative work brings to their students.

RECOMMENDATION 3:
Shine the light on pioneers

Well-established networks, particularly pioneers like Manaiakalani and Naenae, could be encouraged to pioneer the IES policy. These networks already have the core principles of success: a history of working together, good relationships, trust, a commitment to lifting student achievement, and a common vision. Schools and networks should learn from one another laterally. IES is entirely voluntary, so Communities of Schools would only slowly come on board. It is likely that many schools will take a 'wait and see' approach to see how other Communities of Schools work together, and learn from their successes and mistakes. Manaiakalani, Naenae and others could be the lighthouse examples leading the way.

RECOMMENDATION 4:
Take time to build the career pathway

Singapore has a career pathway similar to IES but has taken many years to build that pathway rather than automatically promote people into roles all at the same time. It takes five years to become a Senior Teacher in Singapore, another three to five to become a Lead Teacher, another five years to become a Master Teacher, and a further three to five years to become a Principal Master Teacher. Singapore is deliberately and systematically building leadership capability.

Of course, 6,000 teachers are not going to be automatically promoted under IES, as Communities of Schools would come on board in a staggered fashion. And while Singapore is a good model, it should be adapted for New Zealand's self-managing context. It is essential that Communities of Schools have the flexibility and discretion to promote their teachers into these new roles in ways that work best for each Community of Schools.

However, Communities of Schools might like to consider whether they should first build up the capability and capacity of Within-School Teachers to work collaboratively with other teachers before making Community Teacher positions available. In saying that, there will be highly experienced and capable teachers who are already accustomed to being leaders in a more informal sense, and are accustomed to providing leadership and working collaboratively with other teachers, and they may be ready and deserving of that next career stretch. This is why Communities should have discretion in when they decide to access funding to make the new positions available.

RECOMMENDATION 5:
Design roll-out to facilitate evaluation

Project evaluation should be built into project design. If the IES policy is valuable and worth continued funding and effort, then we should be able to establish that cleanly from data on student outcomes.

One effective way of establishing the effectiveness of funding is to roll the funding out in a randomized step wise trial design. Blocks of schools would be sorted randomly into those offered the opportunity to access funding to join Communities over the next several years. This kind of design allows clean comparisons of schools of similar characteristics that differ by whether they were allowed to join earlier or later. At the end of the accession period, an evaluation period would allow us to tell whether schools joining earlier enjoyed superior outcomes to those joining later. It could be worthwhile

modelling the evaluation on the research methods used by researchers who looked at the effects of free breakfasts in schools.[106] The same type of evaluation approach should also be considered under the scenario of Labour's policies.

TEACHERS' RESPONSE TO IES

The NZEI has rejected the IES policy, but the sense from talking to primary school principals for this research was that educators are in favour of the networking and collaboration aspect of IES.

> I agree in principle because I really believe that collaborating in a community is critical and that the intermediate and the college and all of us need to work together...[107]

However, the idea of a select group of teachers getting paid more was not a comfortable one.

> How would that [IES] work? We've got six very strong people who have been working collaboratively for the collective good. It's saying that one person knows all or can do all, and we know they can't.[108]

One of the main fears of the IES is that the people promoted into the new teacher roles would be managerial in their approach. However, line management would still be in place under current management structures, like Principals and Deputy or Assistant Principals, and Heads of Departments. The new career structure represents an opportunity for lateral learning from highly skilled, expert teachers, and gives teachers an opportunity for a career stretch (LCN already does this to an extent). Accountability still goes up line management, and expert teachers are lateral colleagues who are recognised with additional remuneration for their expertise.

In other professions, leaders are not expected to do it all or know it all. They are, however, expected to identify and harness other people's skills and knowledge to build a strong team, and they are expected to share their skills and knowledge with more junior staff members.

IES provides two clear tracks: a management track and a teacher track. The NZEI need not fear that the policy is about helicoptering in heavy-handed bosses. The genuine intention behind the policy is to enable excellent teachers to share their skills and knowledge with other teachers to build capacity. In saying this, while this is the intention at the top, the way teachers work together under this policy depends on the teachers themselves. That cannot be controlled by government policy.

The primary school teachers and principals who would be promoted to the new roles would still presumably be NZEI members, so there is much opportunity for NZEI, should they come to accept the policy under the scenario of another term of a National-led government, to use its influence to ensure that its members carry out these roles in a collaborative, supportive and challenging way.

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106 Mhurchu, C.N., et al. "Effects of a free school breakfast programme on children's attendance, academic achievement and short-term hunger: results from a stepped-wedge, cluster randomised controlled trial." Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health. 63.3 (2013): 257-64. PubMed. Web. 2 Oct. 2014.

107 Robin Thomson, Personal Interview.

108 Dave Appleyard, Personal Interview.

LABOUR: CLASS SIZE AND THE SCHOOL ADVISORY SERVICE

In July 2014, the Labour Party announced its key election plank for education – reduce class sizes in schools. The party plans to fund 2,000 more teachers to do this, but it should be made clear that the government cannot mandate class sizes under the current system; the government can only change the funding formula so that schools are entitled to more teachers per student than now. It is up to schools to decide how to deploy those resources. Schools may, for example, give teachers fewer contact hours, or they may choose to reduce some class sizes for particular subjects, students or year levels.

The autonomy that schools have to deploy resources in a way that works best for their communities and students is indeed highly prized in New Zealand's self-managing school system. Not even Singapore's centrally and tightly controlled education system mandates class size. According to a Ministry of Education official there interviewed for the Initiative's report *Around the world: The evolution of teaching as a profession*, mandating class size "unduly restricts the principal on how they can deploy their teachers across different subjects or student profiles".[109] The New Zealand Secondary Schools' Staffing Group,[110] which was formed out of the Terms of Settlement for the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement 2011–13, looked into class size in 2011. All parties agreed with the objective of "maintaining flexibility of class sizes in secondary schools".[111] So, it is safe to say that though Labour promises to reduce class sizes, all it really can do is fund more teachers for the system. At an aggregate level, 2,000 teachers over 2,500 schools is 0.8 FTTE teachers per school, although this will change depending on school size and some other factors.

Labour plans to cancel the IES policy to fund the 2,000 extra teachers, and bring back a School Advisory Service that would "have the power to second excellent teachers and school leaders for a period of up to 3 years to act as mentors and trainers".[112] Part of this would include a College of School Leadership, which could second up to 100 school leaders for up to two years to act as mentors and trainers.

The idea of a School Advisory Service and a College of Leadership provides an alternative pathway for teachers who wish for a career stretch that will allow their knowledge and skills to be shared with other teachers. It also gets around the problem of boards of trustees losing their 'best' teachers two-fifths of the time under the IES model. One potential issue though is that the teachers and leaders seconded to the advisory service would lose their connection with the classroom for up to three years.

RECOMMENDATION 1:
Retain Communities of Schools

Labour has indicated it would scrap the IES policy. Given that the education sector has generally been warm to the school collaboration aspect of the policy, it should at least retain Communities of Schools in some form to build on the work of the LCN networking approach.

RECOMMENDATION 2:
Alter the School Advisory Service to School Facilitator Service

The reaction to the IES policy as heavy-handed people coming in to manage schools is potentially even more problematic under a School Advisory Service. A potential alternative that builds on

109 Timothy Yap, Personal Interview.

110 Comprising of the Ministry of Education, Post Primary Teachers' Association, New Zealand School Trustees' Association, Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand, and New Zealand Secondary Principals' Council.

111 Report of the Secondary Schools' Staffing Group (Ministry of Education and Post Primary Teachers' Association, 2012), p 3.

112 "Backing quality education", Labour Party, Web (2014), www.labour.org.nz.

the LCN model is the idea of a School Facilitator Service instead. Schools could continue to cluster together as networks, as per the Communities of Schools or LCN models, and benefit from one dedicated facilitator who would works across those schools to build cohesion across the community. Communities of Schools would still need to come together in an official capacity to benefit from this resource, which would provide the incentive to collaborate in an otherwise competitive system. Facilitators would be responsible for bringing schools together and facilitating relationship and trust building.

There are two potential options here. The first is that facilitators would be based locally but would be employed by a national service that would bring facilitators together for training and development and to cross-pollinate the knowledge of networks across the country. They would be employed for and trained in facilitation skills primarily, rather than for specific pedagogical skills or subject knowledge. They would help networks identify the gaps in their learning and facilitate the brokerage of learning and development opportunities for their Community.

The second option is still a national service that would employ people for their facilitation skills and specific specialisations e.g. digital learning. Those people would be deployed to Communities of Schools throughout the country, depending on the focus of each Community of Schools.

The Labour policy does not specify how many people would be appointed to the advisory service, but under the proposed model here, that would be determined mostly by demand from schools that voluntarily form into Communities of Schools. Initially, the first few facilitator positions would be open across the country, and would likely attract a high calibre of candidates to start off the service with the best in the country to role model what effective facilitation and leadership looks like.

RECOMMENDATION 3:
Use extra teacher resources for collaboration

Under the Labour scenario, schools could also choose to use the extra resources provided under the alteration to the student-to-teacher ratio (the class size policy) to have teachers work together within and across their Community of Schools, working with a facilitator to draw out their knowledge and skills and open up more professional sharing and collaboration among teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 4:
Highlight the career pathway aspect

Regardless of whether Labour calls it an advisory or facilitation service, its policy does represent a step in a career path with more responsibilities and presumably more pay. Bright and ambitious people who want to have a meaningful and rewarding career have many options today. Currently, the pay scale for teachers reaches the maximum after eight years of service, and further development represents a step out of the classroom towards school management. The advisory or facilitation service could be framed as an opportunity to break through that glass ceiling. Although the roles are only available for up to three years, this means other people would get a chance and is not that different from the IES positions, which are only available for up to four years.

RECOMMENDATION 5:
Learn from the model of working with students and families

One of the key features of LCN is that facilitators encourage LCNs to work with students and families to dig deep into the achievement challenge and what needs to change. Facilitators under the proposed Labour model should continue to use similar approaches.

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CONCLUSIONS

Teachers working together and learning from one another is essential to spreading good teaching practice and promoting effective ways of working with students and their families. New Zealand has a self-managing school system that makes top-down solutions to build teacher capability difficult. Yet New Zealand has excellent teachers who can help grow other teachers to improve their practice, and it is up to policymakers to adjust the settings to encourage, rather than force, more teacher collaboration in a lateral sense.

Regardless of whether National or Labour leads the next New Zealand Government, there are opportunities to learn from the LCN strategy, one form of networking in New Zealand, and adapt the parties' respective planned policies to open up more collaboration between teachers and schools and extend the current teachers' career pathway.

While it is early days to evaluate the effectiveness of the LCN strategy on achievement for priority learners, analysis for this report, and data presented by the Ministry, points in the direction of promising lifts in student achievement. Certainly, LCN is creating much enthusiasm among educators and families.

There are some elements of LCN that seem to be key to encouraging schools to work together in a competitive environment. One is time to form relationships and trust, where teachers and leaders not only work together within and across schools, but also work with students themselves and their parents and whānau from the outset. This helps the people involved in children's learning to dig deep and determine the key to unlocking the learning potential of priority learners. Understanding these achievement challenges and the common purpose to addressing these challenges needs time and the willingness to work together. Facilitators play an essential role as impartial outsiders to help build the capacity within networks of schools to work together in this manner, and much of the success of LCN comes down to facilitators' experience and skill in adjusting the balance of structure and freedom to best help networks of schools achieve their goals. Community ownership rather than top-down models of change are also essential. And for the bigger picture at a system level, a large benefit of the LCN approach is the cross-pollination of knowledge across networks that facilitators can provide.

National's teacher career pathway and school collaboration policy (IES) where groups of 10 schools join as Communities of Schools, represents a major step towards systematising collaboration within a competitive system. But LCN and common sense tell us that this is not going to be easy. The New Zealand Initiative recommends that Communities of Schools should be able to access the additional operational funding provided for under the policy from the outset to help with the set-up of the community in the essential trust- and relationship-building phase, prior to establishing the formal career positions. Communities of Schools should have the option of continuing to use facilitation support from the University of Auckland's LCN team or other contractors well-placed to help facilitate. In saying this, LCN is only one way of networking and collaborating, and under New Zealand's self-managing model, these Communities of Schools should have the option to use that operational funding the way that is right for them. At a national level, policy should allow for the option.

The set-up phase should take as long as it needs, and career pathway roles should be advertised and appointed only after schools become comfortable working together and natural leaders emerge. Communities of Schools could choose to build the Within-School Teacher role capacity before establishing the next stage in the career path, unless there are already people within their Community who could take that leap easily. Again, this is a general suggestion but schools know their own circumstances and still need the freedom to make those decisions.

Should the Labour Party lead the next government, there is also scope to use elements of their election policy promises to build on the ideas of LCN to build teacher collaboration and a career path for teachers. First, although Labour have indicated they would scrap the IES policy, they could retain the idea of voluntary Communities of Schools. They could alter the promised School Advisory Service to a School Facilitation Service, modelled on the facilitation provided by LCN. Communities of Schools could choose to use their additional teacher resource provided for under Labour's class size policy to give teachers more time to work with each other within and across communities and with their facilitator, rather than reduce class sizes per se. Labour should communicate the role of facilitator as a clear step up in a career pathway, to help break through the current glass ceiling of pay and responsibility for teachers. This will help ensure teaching becomes an attractive career choice for ambitious and bright young people.

As the Initiative's fourth report on teacher quality, the research for this report started off as an investigation into the good practices of teachers working together and how teachers are collaborating to share their practice and lift their capability. The report evolved into something bigger during the research process as it became clear that teacher collaboration is only one aspect of LCN.

While teachers are the most important factor for student achievement within the school, LCN recognises that students learn in places beyond classroom walls from all people in their lives. The spirit behind LCN, the idea of children at the centre of their own network of learning – bringing teachers, school leaders, parents, whānau and the community together as a cohesive whole around the student – is the way forward. And while LCN is empowering students themselves to ask what their own learning barriers are, and asking others to help overcome those barriers, this does not diminish the importance of quality instruction. Indeed, the process used in LCN often uncovers that instruction could be improved and creates the momentum for change.

It is the Initiative's hope that whichever platform of policies go ahead after the 2014 general election, that all political parties recognise the importance of encouraging teachers and schools to collaborate. There is excellence in the system. It is up to policy makers to adjust the settings to allow New Zealand teachers to build on the excellence that already exists.

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No School is an Island is the story of an innovative New Zealand model of schools working together: Learning and Change Networks. But have these clusters of schools been effective in lifting student achievement?

This report evaluates the success of these school networks, and shows what it takes for schools to work well together. Understanding how schools can (or can't) cooperate is vital if the government's flagship policy of investing $359 million in teaching careers and 'Communities of Schools' is to be successful.

No School is an Island continues the Initiative's series on teacher quality. For the future of this country, few if any things are more important than the quality of education. This report shows how teachers can share the excellence that exists in the education system already, to enable all children and young people to learn and achieve to their potential.

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