

Transformational Leadership supporting the implementation of B.Y.O.D at Evans Bay Intermediate

Gone are the days of sitting in rows awaiting the instruction of the teacher, yet our education systems are modelled on that of an industrial economy, a model used to replicate the workforce of that time (Robinson, 2008). This model is no longer relevant today as our economy demands vastly different skills from our learners, as reflected in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). In order to equip students with the skills they need, a change in the system is essential and through effective leadership this can be achieved. Franciosi argues that traditional models of leadership should be discarded for modern alternatives such as transformational leadership, one that fosters communication and human relations (Franciosi, 2012). Therefore, teachers need to become agents of change, move away from previous models and shift towards ones that are driven by autonomy, mastery and purpose (Scheninger, 2014). Firstly, this essay describes the change initiative I was involved in, along with its outcomes and the various roles required in order to implement such a change. Next, the leadership theories are introduced and the advantages and disadvantages of each one are outlined against the change initiative. Following this, the success of the change initiative is critiqued against these theories by evaluating their styles and attributes. Finally, a discussion on the implications of the change initiative is discussed as well as suggestions for future practise.

In 2015, with the appointment of a new principal, came her vision to move our school towards, “a school that allowed students to access information as and where they need it” (L. Bray-Burns, personal communication, January 15, 2016). In order to make this happen, our school would need to become one where students were actively using devices. Although each classroom had a set of eight chromebooks, a 1:1 ratio would be better suited, hence the formation of a bring your own device (B.Y.O.D) pilot program. The purpose of this pilot was to identify the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a 1:1 device program. The success of this trial would determine whether or not we would go forward the following year. Being involved in the trial required documenting findings and reporting to those involved in the process.

My role as a classroom teacher was critical in this process. I had been selected by the Board of Trustees because of my interest towards incorporating digital resources within the classroom. Given that I was venturing into an area of teaching that I had not been taught, it was my responsibility to undertake my own teaching inquiry, this included school visits and evaluating trending research.

I attended fortnightly meetings, with the Principal, our I.T technician and another classroom teacher involved in the process. Our meetings consisted of discussions around what was successful and areas for improvement. Following these discussions we worked together to

establish an I.C.T agreement, as well as a strategic plan, which could be presented to the Board of Trustees.

Throughout the trial I acted as a mentor for staff and assisted them with their integration of ICT. I encouraged staff to visit my classroom in order to observe how a 1:1 ratio of devices could work. I visited and confided in the other classroom teacher involved to compare teaching strategies.

After two terms, we presented our findings to the Board of Trustees. After review, the decision was made not to proceed with school-wide implementation until certain infrastructure changes were made. After consultation with the two teachers involved in the pilot, it was agreed that their classrooms would continue in 2016, as parents had already invested in the program the previous year.

Leadership, as defined by Daft, is “an influence relationship among leaders who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes” (Daft, 2008, p. 5). In simple terms, leadership is about moving people towards a shared vision that both the leader and the follower desire. However this has not always been the case, historically leaders were viewed as the sole person in authority (Copland & Boatright, 2006). In a school-context, the principal's role was that of a top-down supervisor who was regarded as the expert, took on administrative roles and did not confide in the opinions of the follower. In order to shift towards a vision to that of Daft's, the top-down approach would need to be substituted for that of a facilitator, coach or mentor (Senge, 1990). Such qualities are evident in a transformational approach to leadership, which was seen during the change initiative.

Building upon Burns's theory of leadership as either transactional or transformational, Bass describes a transformational leader as one who inspires and stimulates followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes, as well as responding to individual needs allowing them to develop their own leadership capacity (Bass, 2006). According to Newmann, Principals should create visions that focus on authentic student learning (Newmann, 1993) which is what our Principal did when she initiated the B.Y.O.D pilot. She also demonstrated the following characteristics of a transformative leader:

1. A vision that inspired others
2. Held integrity and modelled by example
3. Maintained a positive attitude and scaffolded staff
4. Recognised individual growth and performance
5. Encouraged ideas from others and embraced creativity
6. Allowed measured risks

(Franciosi, 2011)

The advantages of having a leader like this meant that as a follower, you were valued and your opinions mattered. Within the scope of transformational leadership there is Laissez-Faire, which is when the team members are left to make their own decisions. There is also a large emphasis on teamwork, communication and participation which meant we were all seen as equals and were able to share ideas during fortnightly meetings. Another benefit is that a transformational leader develops the leadership of their team so that they pass on such skills through the system, therefore sustaining the change (Fullan, 2009).

The disadvantage of this type of leadership is the reliance on all staff to complete tasks. Due to the nature of this leadership, many tasks are delegated and sometimes motions cannot move forward until all tasks are complete. Another disadvantage is that a vision may lack the finer details of how to achieve this and therefore would require procedural leaders to ensure routine work is completed (Kent University, n.d., para. 6). Enthusiasm will only take you so far, given that transformational leaders rely on their emotions, they may burn out employees by setting unrealistic deadlines, or may implement changes that do not align with research or they may overlook research entirely (Reid, 2009).

Following the pilot program, the Board of Trustees have decided that the school will not be moving forward with B.Y.O.D until changes have been implemented. Therefore, while our change initiative was not successful in achieving its desired outcomes, the trial was successful in identifying these necessary changes.

The reason the trial was a success was the fact that there was a trial in the first place. The PPTA Change Management Toolkit, insists that all change initiatives should begin with a trial and goes on to outline the eight steps leaders should take in order to implement successful change (PPTA, 2015). Our Principal had already received the staff's buy-in, a term that Kotter uses to describe how leaders must use their visions to inspire others to act (Kotter, 1990), the next step was to create a plan. The Principal did not do this on her own, as would be seen in an authoritative style of leadership, instead she included all those involved in the process, a demonstration of Participative leadership (Kent University, n.d). This was evident during our team meetings as everyone contributed towards the decision making process.

The Principal was aware of individual's strengths and capabilities and therefore assigned appropriate tasks accordingly (Hadjithoma-Garstka, 2011). Due to this approach, staff felt valued and worked beyond expectations. It was through having an inspirational leader that challenged me intellectually that I could develop the learner profile for the school when called upon. All of which are characteristics of a transformational leader (Bass, 2006).

There were also times where Laissez-Faire leadership could be seen (Kent, n.d). One example of this is when classroom teachers were left to make their own decisions about which websites or resources they were going to use. The benefit of this style of leadership meant that, I was not restricted and could use the trial to its full potential. It also showed that the Principal had trust in her staff.

Having a clear vision and plan in place was critical for the success of this trial, however, as equally important, were the attitudes of those involved. It was through the rapport our Principal had built with staff that enabled those involved to strive for excellence. Daniel Goleman refers to this as, Emotional Intelligence; it is based on the personal qualities a leader brings to the role, their ability to respond to emotions both in themselves and in others (Goleman, 2000). Having seen how our Principal interacted with our team, I was then able to re-enact such behaviour as I was mentoring and assisting others with ICT. What I witnessed through this change initiative was a leader who led by example, one who varied her leadership style according to the situation (Goleman, 2000) and in doing so was able to inspire others.

Having reflected on the leadership I observed throughout the change initiative, I agree with Goleman when he says that a good leader is one who is able to adjust their leadership style to fit any given situation and that there is a need for more than one style of leadership. The success of a change initiative leans towards transformational leadership and strategic planning. If I were to continue with this change initiative, I would model my leadership approach on that of a transformational leader. These leaders put the success of the school ahead of themselves. They understand the shift in authority that has occurred and by valuing what others have to offer, they no longer have to be seen as the one with all the answers. Transformational leaders are admired because they lead by example; everyone is of equal value, opposite to that of a hierarchical system. As schools shift their teaching practices from previous industrial models to those of the 21st century then it is only natural that leadership methods should follow suit.

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