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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

Poipoia te kakano kia puawai Nurture the seed and it will blossom

Michele Morrison

Editor

As educators know only too well, change is ubiquitous, both planned and unplanned, initiated and imposed, short-lived and long-lasting. Further, building relationships and systems that stimulate, support and sustain innovation requires careful deliberation and a great deal of hard work. As the *Journal of Educational Leadership Policy and Practice* transitions from a print-based subscription mode to an open source digital platform, it is fitting that we pay tribute to the national executive of NZEALS for their vision and intrepid spirit in traversing new publication ground. We remain indebted to our national secretary and JELPP technical editor, Emerita Professor Ann Briggs, who led negotiations with Exeley, New York, and production editor, Yvette Shore, who ensured the digital system alignment necessary for us to embark on this exciting new chapter. The whakatauki, poipoia te kakano kia puawai, speaks to the promise of small beginnings and we are confident that JELPP's arrival on the global open source stage will bring added richness to journal offerings.

The four articles in this first digital general issue focus on aspects of change. In the lead article, *A systems perspective on exploring the sustainability of leadership initiatives in a secondary school setting*, Kala Retna and John Davies examine pedagogical innovation in a Singaporean secondary school. Their case study findings reveal, on the one hand, teacher optimism in the potential of design thinking (DT) to nurture creative and critical skills in students and, on the other, teacher discord over implementing design thinking in their teaching. This anomaly not only serves to highlight the learning and teaching divide, but also the interconnected human and technical dimensions of change. This makes an integrated systems approach essential in identifying, exploiting and ameliorating factors that variously enable and constrain change initiatives. Drawing on Senge's disciplines of learning organisations, the authors advocate a five phase "human-centred and empathy-driven" change process that simultaneously meets individual need and aligns resources in the pursuit of organisational goals. They conceptualise this within a causal loop diagram that accommodates dynamic, non-linear and interdependent system components, thereby alerting leaders to the holism of change and a mechanism for interpreting 'virtuous', 'vicious' and 'reinforcing' patterns of individual and systems behaviour. Retna and Davies conclude that not only does this form of data analysis build nuanced understanding of why change succeeds or fails; it shows where leaders need to intervene, relationally and operationally.

Continuing the system alignment theme, Rachel Geesa, Nicholas Elam, Renae Mayes, Kat McConnell and Kaylee McDonald home in on evaluative mechanisms by which American school leaders might better support school counsellors to meet students' academic, social, emotional, college and career needs. Findings from their exploratory study involving 324 school leaders in three states reveal the need for stronger collaboration between these distinct vocations, with particular regard to professional expectations and responsibilities. In the school setting, educators' knowledge of and ability to evaluate school counsellor performance against the foundation, management, delivery and accountability components of the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) National Model for comprehensive school counselling programmes is essential. School leaders less familiar with ASCA standards are inclined to evaluate counsellors in the same manner as teachers, to the detriment of school climate, student and counsellor wellbeing. This highlights the importance of professional development

that enables practising and aspiring principals to discern role uniqueness and complementarity, evaluate school counsellor performance in meaningful ways, and use this data to co-construct and augment holistic counselling provision. Readers will be prompted to reflect on actual and potential roles that school counsellors might play in their particular setting, the degree to which schools integrate educative and counselling functions, and the manner in which the latter is appraised.

As the biblical reference in the title suggests, *Lazarus School Rising* focuses on the transformation and renewal of a school “on the precipice” of educational demise. Commencing their article with a direct appeal to reader emotions, Andrew Bills, Amy Hamilton and Ben Wadham blend narrative, case study and action research to tell a story of change necessitated by declining market share and the need to fundamentally reimagine school ideology and purpose. It is a story of activism and partnership, in which committed parents, teachers and university researchers fight the neoliberal survival game, re-envisioning learning and teaching in a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) curriculum that simultaneously preserves their moral imperatives for inclusion, equity and creativity, and restores community confidence in the school’s ability to offer a quality education to senior levels. Far from sanitising events in a neat linear process, the authors demonstrate that profound change is “tricky business” requiring an ethic of care, hope and courage. They point to collaborative school-university partnerships as “a form of altruistic enterprise” that serves to enhance student engagement, strengthen rather than undermine social cohesion, and park, however temporarily, pressure to generate external research funding.

While *Lazarus School Rising* highlights the benefits of school-based research for participants, these are not universally acclaimed by practitioners. In the final article in this edition, *You’re Not First on Their List*, Megan Smith, Martin Thrupp and Patrick Barrett report on the challenges of conducting empirical research in the New Zealand schooling field. As the first author’s doctoral research experience provides the catalyst for inquiry, this journal contribution draws on auto-ethnography and participant communication to explore the intricacies of research initiation and involvement. Smith found that divergent work flows, multiple demands on time, neoliberal accountability requirements, and recent political press for teacher-led research initiatives all conspired to constrict her field access. The irony here is that research that seeks to surface the multifarious nature of teacher and school leader responsibilities temporarily exacerbates the workload overload that it often seeks to address. Further, the rigorous data collection, analysis, and theorising accompanying doctoral research significantly delays the reporting of outcomes that schools are most interested in, thereby reducing the practical appeal of such external research. Extrapolating from personal experience in a single case study school, Smith explores the notion of research fatigue and raises important implications for the research-policy-practice nexus.

Research fatigue in all its guises presents an ever present threat to researchers who find their socially just research agenda constrained by institutional pressures to channel and fund knowledge production, to time-poor teacher and school leader participants consumed by the tyranny of the mandatory and urgent, and to communities and societies who lack the situated understanding necessary to envision and evolve a better world. This is to be resisted at all costs, because inherent in most research is the potential for critique and insight that brings life, joy and hope to the vital work that educators do. Researchers, educators, and publishers all play a crucial role in ensuring that issues that matter remain at the forefront.

Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi.
With your basket and my basket the people will live.