



Preparing Our School Leaders – Ensuring That They Are ‘Principalship Ready’

Mr Rob Nairn

Research findings of Centre for Education Statistics & Evaluation, 2015, “Effective Leadership”, Learning Curve, Issue 10 indicates that principals have the second biggest in-school impact on student outcomes after classroom teaching. Education has changed; the way students learn has changed yet the way we select school leaders has not changed. Increasing workload and failing to attract the right people into the role is impacting performance and it is impacting on the health and wellbeing of school leaders.

In an increasingly autonomous environment, evidence suggests that fewer people are applying for the role of principal and that many of those applying for the role do not have the necessary knowledge, skills, capabilities or experience to have an impact in that role.

In undertaking a Winston Churchill Trust Fellowship, I examined principal / school leadership development and collected evidence about the best way to prepare future leaders so that when they are placed in the role they are ‘principalship ready’ and able to have a positive impact in their school.

Associate Professor Ng Pak Tee National Institute of Education Singapore said - “If you put them in (principal role), they don’t just swim, they swim with style”

By identifying the people with the appropriate skills (our next leaders), providing them with opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and experience, appointing the appropriate people when they are ready for the role and supporting them in that role we should see higher performing school leaders, developing higher performing teachers who produce improved outcomes in our students. This has economic and social benefits at all levels.

I will examine the different roles and responsibilities of future focussed school leaders and the principles that underpin effective leadership development. I will also explore the problem of principal health and wellbeing and the how this set to become a major issue in the future.

Associate Professor Rob Nairn Churchill Fellow 2017